



Smithsonian
National Air and Space Museum

Thomas DeWitt Milling Collection

Kate Igoe

1997



National Air and Space Museum Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	Thomas DeWitt Milling Collection
Identifier:	NASM.XXXX.0133
Date:	1905-1940 (bulk 1917-1920)
Extent:	1.5 Cubic feet (4 boxes)
Creator:	Milling, Thomas DeWitt, 1887-1960
Language:	English English.
Summary:	This collection includes contains certificates, flight reports, correspondence and photographs relating to Thomas DeWitt Milling as a key role in the early years of aviation.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Mrs. Thomas Milling, gift, unknown year, NASM.XXXX.0133.

Processing Information

Arranged and described by Kate Igoe, 1997.

Preferred Citation

Thomas DeWitt Milling Collection, NASM.XXXX.0133, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

No restrictions on access

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical Note

Thomas DeWitt Milling contributed mightily to the American heritage of flight. Possessor of the Aero Club of America's License 30, Expert Aviator License 3 and numerous awards and honors, Milling became a key figure in the early years of aviation. His illustrious career in both civil and military spheres garnered widespread acclaim.

Milling was born on July 31, 1887 to Judge Robert E. Milling and Ida Roberts in Winnfield, Louisiana. He attended public schools in Franklin, Louisiana and metamorphosed there from a timid child to a bold young man. Deciding on a military career, he entered the United States Military Academy in 1905.

After graduation from West Point, Milling entered the Fifteenth Cavalry and was posted to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. A year of overseeing the commissary there proved uninspiring and he was surprised and delighted when transferred to the Aviation Section of the Signal Corps. In 1911, both Milling and another young lieutenant, H.H. "Hap" Arnold, were sent to receive flying instruction at the Wright Brothers' Flying School in Dayton, Ohio. The two qualified for their Aero Club of America pilot certificates on the same day, July 6, 1911. It would be an association that would last for many years. Arnold and Milling became the army's first two regular pilots and served together in varied posts involving flight instruction and military testing.

Only a few months after learning to fly, Milling was to achieve acclaim by winning the Tri-State Biplane Race, flying from Boston to Nashua, New Hampshire to Worcester, Massachusetts to Providence, Rhode Island back to Boston, a total of 175 miles. At the time, this constituted the longest cross-country race of its kind in the country. Milling flew it in a Wright biplane, without the use of a compass. It was his first night flight and its dramatic finish was accomplished with the help of several large bonfires to provide guidance. Milling won several other contests that day, against a field of experienced fliers.

At an autumn 1911 meet on Long Island, Milling again proved his skill and daring in several events. It was here that he carried two passengers to establish a new endurance record.

The next year found Milling at Fort Riley, Kansas, conducting research for the Army on aerial machine gun fire, bomb dropping and artillery fire observation.

In 1913, the Army's handful of planes were transferred to Texas City, near the Mexican border. While posted there, Milling set another record for an endurance flight with a passenger (Lieutenant W.C. Sherman of the Corps of Engineers). The nonstop flight from Texas City to San Antonio was made with a Burgess-Wright tractor biplane equipped with a 70 hp Renault engine. During the four hours and twenty-two minutes aloft, Sherman was able to make the first military map ever drawn from an airplane, measuring 15 feet long. Speaking later of the Texas City trip, Milling's commanding officer, Major General W.H. Carter, hailed Milling as "one of the foremost aviators of the world."

In addition to the above mentioned accomplishments, Milling was instrumental in the field of flight instruction, helping to establish the first Army aviation school in College Park, Maryland in 1911 and other schools across the country. The years prior to America's entry into World War One also saw Milling commanding a detachment on the Mexican border, whose mission included surveillance and the pursuit of Pancho Villa.

During the First World War, Milling began as Chief of Air Service Training, American Expeditionary Forces. By 1919, he was Chief of the Air Service, First Army.

Milling retired in 1933 due to ill health but was recalled to service in 1942 and retired again in 1946. He was later awarded the rank of Brigadier General.

Before his death on November 26, 1960, Milling received, among other honors, America's Distinguished Service Medal, France's Legion of Honor and Belgium's Order of Leopold by Belgium. Milling was also a member of the Early Birds, a celebrated group of fliers who soloed before December 17, 1916.

Scope and Contents

This collection contains certificates, flight reports, correspondence and photographs. Also included with the correspondence is a certificate of his appointment to West Point as well as various promotions to lieutenant, captain, major, and brigadier general. There is also a Wright Company flying report on Millings' training, a certificate for election into the Early Birds and a picture of him in dress uniform.

Arrangement

Container List: Series I: Personal; Series II: Career; Series III: Reports and manuscripts; Series IV: Oversized materials

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

Aeronautics
Aeronautics, Military

Types of Materials:

Certificates
Correspondence
Photographs

Names:

Early Birds of Aviation (Organization).
Milling, Thomas DeWitt, 1887-1960

Container Listing

Series 1: Personal

Box 1, Folder 1	Biographical Information Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 2	Flight Reports Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 3	Texas City to San Antonio Flight Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 4	Certificates and Honors Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 5	Correspondence Related to United States Military Academy, 1904-1905 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 6	Miscellaneous Personal Correspondence, 1952-1957 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 7	Clippings from Biographical File Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 8	Clippings, 1911-1939 Image(s)
Box 1, Folder 9	Photographs Image(s)
Box 4, Folder 1	Miscellaneous Personal Correspondence, 1953-1957 Image(s)
Box 4, Folder 2	Air Force Historical Foundation Image(s)

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Series 2: Career

Most of the material in this series consists of military orders and correspondence related to Army matters.

Box 1, Folder 10 Military Data and Memoranda, 1911-1913

[Image\(s\)](#)

Box 1, Folder 2 Military Data and Memoranda, 1920-1930

[Image\(s\)](#)

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Series 3: Reports and Manuscripts

Included in this series are manuscripts by Milling and by Billy Mitchell. The two fliers were friends as well as colleagues. In the 1925 court martial of Mitchell, Milling testified for the defense.

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|-------------------------------------|--|
| Box 2, Folder 1 | <i>Early Flying Experiences</i> by T. DeWitt Milling
Image(s) |
| Box 2, Folder 2 | <i>Early Flying Experiences: The First Corps Aviation School</i> by T. DeWitt Milling (Draft)
Image(s) |
| Box 2, Folder 3 | <i>Early Flying Experiences with the First Signal Corps Aviation School</i> by T. DeWitt Milling (Draft)
Image(s) |
| Box 2, Folder 4 | Reports and Manuscripts by T. DeWitt Milling
Image(s) |
| Box 2, Folder 5 | <i>Report of Inspection of United States Possessions in the Pacific and Java, Singapore, India, Siam, China & Japan</i> by Brigadier General William Mitchell, 1923 October 24
Image(s) |
| Box 2, Folder 6 | <i>Preliminary Report of Inspection of Air Service Activities in the Hawaiian Department</i> by Brigadier General William Mitchell , 1923 December 10
Image(s) |
| Box 2, Folder 7 | <i>Report of Inspection Trip to Europe, Italy, Germany , Holland and England</i> by Brigadier General William Mitchell- Index and Pages 315-499
Image(s) |
| Box 2, Folder 8 | <i>Report of Inspection Trip to Europe, Italy, Germany , Holland and England</i> by Brigadier General William Mitchell- Pages 500-910
Image(s) |
| Box 3, Folder 1;
Box 3, Folder 1 | <i>Report of Inspection Trip to Europe, Italy, Germany , Holland and England</i> by Brigadier General William Mitchell- Photographic Supplement
Image(s) |
| Box 3, Folder 2 | Photographs to Accompany General Mitchell's Report
Image(s) |
| Box 3, Folder 3 | Reports and Manuscripts by William Mitchell
Image(s) |
| Box 3, Folder 4 | Reports and Manuscripts
Image(s) |
| Box 3, Folder 5 | Maps and Charts
Image(s) |
| Box 4, Folder 3 | [Reports on Saint Mihiel Battle] |

[Image\(s\)](#)

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Series 4: Oversized Materials

- Box 5, Folder 1 Diploma from United States Military Academy, Class of 1909, dated October 12, 1937
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 5, Folder 1 Diploma from the Command and General Staff School, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas , 1927 June 17
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 5, Folder 2 Notice of Appointment to United States Military Academy, effective June 15, 1905
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 5, Folder 2 Notice of Appointment as Second Lieutenant of Cavalry, effective June 11, 1909
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 5, Folder 2 Wright Company Flying Report (four copies)
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 5, Folder 2 Expert Aviator's Certificate Number 3, 1912 October 2
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 5, Folder 2 Notice of Appointment as First Lieutenant of Cavalry, effective June 12, 1916
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 5, Folder 2 Notice of Appointment (Temporary) Lieutenant Colonel in the Signal Corps, effective August 5, 1917
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 5, Folder 2 Rating as Military Aviator, 1917 August 8
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 5, Folder 2 Notice of Appointment to Colonel, Air Service (Aeronautics), effective August 14, 1918
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 5, Folder 2 Notice of Appointment as Captain in the Air Service, effective July 1, 1920
Notice of Appointment to Major in the Air Service, effective July 1, 1920 (two copies)
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 5, Folder 2 Certificate of award of Distinguished Service Medal for Exceptionally Meritorious and Distinguished Services in the Performance of Duties of Great Responsibility as Colonel, Air Service, United States Army, Chief of Staff and later as Commander of the Air Service, First Army, American Expeditionary Forces, 1926 March 26
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 5, Folder 2 Early Birds Membership Certificate, 1928 December 3

- [Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 5, Folder 2 Notice of Appointment to Colonel on the Retired List, effective August 1, 1933
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 5, Folder 2 Order of Daedalians Membership Certificate, 1936 October 15
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 5, Folder 2 Notice of Appointment to Brigadier General on the Retired List, effective June
13, 1940, 1940
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 5, Folder 2 Air Service Field Officers School Certificate
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 5, Folder 3 Portrait of Colonel Thomas DeWitt Milling in uniform, circa 1930s
[Image\(s\)](#)
- Box 5, Folder 4 Certificate of decoration as Chevalier de l'Ordre National de la Legion d'honneur,
1919 May 22
[Image\(s\)](#)
Conservation Issue
- Box 5, Folder 4 War Department Military Aviator Certificate, 5 July 1912
[Image\(s\)](#)

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