



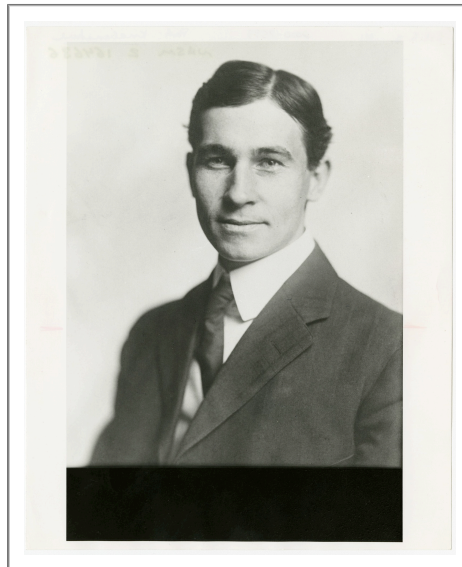
# Smithsonian

## *National Air and Space Museum*

### A. Roy Knabenshue Collection

Kate Igoe (1997); Allan Janus (2019)

1997, 2019



National Air and Space Museum Archives  
14390 Air & Space Museum Parkway  
Chantilly, VA 20151  
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<https://airandspace.si.edu/archives>

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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	National Air and Space Museum Archives
<b>Title:</b>	A. Roy Knabenshue Collection
<b>Date:</b>	circa 1890s-1960s
<b>Identifier:</b>	NASM.XXXX.0136
<b>Creator:</b>	Knabenshue, A. Roy (Augustus Roy), 1876-1960
<b>Extent:</b>	3.6 Cubic feet (8 legal document boxes)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	This collection contains approximately three and a half cubic feet of material relating to the life and career of A. Roy Knabenshue. The collection includes correspondence, photographic material, drawings of aircraft, and flight records.

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Mrs. A. Roy (Jane) Knabenshue, NASM.XXXX.0136.

### Processing Information

Finding aid prepared by Kate Igoe, 1997.

Finding aid encoded by Elizabeth Bauerle, 2011.

Updated by Allan Janus, 2019.

### Preferred Citation

A. Roy Knabenshue Collection, Acc. NASM.XXXX.0136, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

### Restrictions

No restrictions on access.

### Conditions Governing Use

Material is subject to Smithsonian Terms of Use. Should you wish to use NASM material in any medium, please submit an Application for Permission to Reproduce NASM Material, available at [Permissions Requests](#) .

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## Biographical Note

Augustus Roy Knabenshue was born July 15, 1876 in Lancaster, Ohio to Samuel S. and Salome Matlack Knabenshue. The family later moved to Toledo, Ohio where Roy's father became editor-in-chief of the *Toledo Blade*. It was there that Roy became interested in lighter-than-air flight after seeing a balloon ascension when he was five years old. His interest continued to grow in the years that followed and in 1899 he bought a

captive balloon and its equipment. The next season, he began to take short leaves of absence from his job at Central Union Telephone Company and was operating his balloon at fairs and carnivals, charging attendees for ascensions. To protect his day job and spare his socially prominent family embarrassment, Knabenshue used the name "Professor Don Carlos" at his balloon engagements. By 1900, Knabenshue had begun to fabricate additional spherical balloons himself, for use in free ascensions.

In October of 1904, Knabenshue took a new balloon to Saint Louis to enter it in contests associated with the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. There he met Thomas S. Baldwin, who had brought his dirigible the *California Arrow* to the event. The airship proved incapable of take off with Baldwin at the controls, and the slimmer Knabenshue was asked to substitute as pilot. Possessing no experience with dirigibles, Knabenshue accepted Baldwin's instructions and on October 25 became the first person to successfully pilot a dirigible in the United States.

Roy Knabenshue's name would be associated with the term "first" many times in the next few years. In 1905, Knabenshue built his own airship, the *Toledo I*, and flew it at its namesake city on Independence Day. A month later, Knabenshue made the first flight of an airship over Manhattan, taking off from Central Park and circling the Times Building. On December 17, 1908, he made the first successful night flight of a dirigible in the United States.

By 1909, Knabenshue had teamed up with Lincoln Beachey to fly airships at various events. Beachey was to fly a Knabenshue dirigible a year later at the Los Angeles International Air Meet, held at Dominguez Field, Los Angeles, which Knabenshue was instrumental in organizing. Knabenshue also raced his own airship during the event, setting several records.

His success attracted the attention of the Wright brothers, who were considering entering the exhibition field. Knabenshue was hired to manage the Wright Exhibition Team beginning in 1910, and worked with the team periodically for the next few years. Associated professionally at times with Glenn Martin, Walter Brookings and James V. Martin, by 1917 he had formed the Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation to produce dirigibles, kite balloons and parachutes. During the First World War, this company made captive observation balloons for use by the United States Navy.

In 1933, Knabenshue began working for the National Park Service. His duties included surveying air routes, and the management of an autogiro project.

After suffering a heart attack in 1949, Knabenshue retired. He died on March 6, 1960, at the age of 83, and was buried at the Portal of the Folded Wings, Valhalla Memorial Park, North Hollywood, California. He had held Balloon License Number 31, Dirigible License Number 4, built ten airships and numerous balloons, was a prominent member of the Early Birds of Aviation, and had earned a significant place in American aviation history.

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## Scope and Contents

The A. Roy Knabenshue Collection (accession XXXX.0136 and related accession XXXX.0370) contains approximately three and a half cubic feet of material relating to the life and career of a daring aeronaut and the United States' first successful dirigible pilot. The collection includes correspondence, photographic material, drawings of aircraft, and flight records. The material spans over seventy years, from the end of the nineteenth century to the nineteen-sixties.

The National Air and Space Museum (NASM) received these materials in several parts in the early 1960s. Material was donated by Mrs. A. Roy (Jane) Knabenshue and their son, Glenn Knabenshue. Original order, where identified, has been maintained.

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## Arrangement

- Series 1: Personal

- Subseries 1: Biographical
- Subseries 2: Articles and Manuscripts
- Subseries 3: Correspondence
- Series 2: Career
- Subseries 1: The Wright Company
- Subseries 2: National Park Service
- Series 3: Photographs and Scrapbooks
- Series 4: Drawings
- Series 5: Subject files
- Series 6: Miscellaneous

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## Names and Subject Terms

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

### Subjects:

Aeronautics  
Airships  
Ballooning  
Balloons, Captive

### Types of Materials:

Correspondence  
Diaries  
Drawings  
Manuscripts  
Photographs

### Names:

Early Birds of Aviation (Organization).  
Knabenshue, A. Roy (Augustus Roy), 1876-1960

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Personal, 1908-1971 and undated

#### 1.1: Biographical, undated

Box 1, Folder 1	<a href="#">Knabenshue Genealogical data</a>
Box 1, Folder 2	<a href="#">A. Roy Knabenshue biographical information</a>
Box 1, Folder 3	<a href="#">Souvenir booklets</a>
Box 1, Folder 4	<a href="#">Events and meetings</a>

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#### 1.2: Articles and Manuscripts, 1939-1971

Scope and Contents: A book-length unpublished manuscript of "Chauffeur of the Skies" is to be found in this Subseries. This autobiographical work chronicles the experiences and exploits of Roy Knabenshue's early career. "Aviation the Hard Way" exists only in skeletal form, consisting of a table of contents and a list of illustrations. It is unclear whether this was intended as an independent work or a different form of the biographical manuscript.

Box 1, Folder 5	<a href="#">"Aviation the Hard Way" by A. Roy Knabenshue</a>
Box 1, Folder 6	<a href="#">"Chauffeur of the Skies" by A. Roy Knabenshue, pages 1-100</a>
Box 1, Folder 7	<a href="#">"Chauffeur of the Skies" by A. Roy Knabenshue, pages 101-201</a>
Box 1, Folder 8	<a href="#">"Business Possibilities with United States Army...." by A. Roy Knabenshue</a>
Box 1, Folder 9	<a href="#">Articles by A. Roy Knabenshue</a>
Box 1, Folder 10	<a href="#">Newspaper articles, 1939 - 1965</a>
Box 1, Folder 11	<a href="#">Magazine articles, 1966 - 1971</a>

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#### 1.3: Correspondence, 1908-1969

Box 1, Folder 12	<a href="#">Correspondence of A. Roy Knabenshue, 1908 - 1940</a>
Box 1, Folder 13	<a href="#">Correspondence of A. Roy Knabenshue, 1943 - 1953</a>
Box 1, Folder 14	<a href="#">Correspondence of A. Roy Knabenshue, 1954</a>

Box 1, Folder 15

Correspondence of Glenn Knabenshue regarding A. Roy Knabenshue, 1965 - 1969

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## Series 2: Career, 1936-1942 and undated

### 2.1: The Wright Company, undated

**Biographical / Historical:** Hired as general manager of the Wright Exhibition Team in 1910, Knabenshue worked with other early aviation luminaries like Arch Hoxey, Frank Coffyn, and Ralph Johnstone. Responsibilities included enforcing the Wrights' prohibition against flying on Sunday (often the only day a worker had free), and forbidding flights with female passengers. Knabenshue left the Wright Team after a year to nurse an ailing brother, but returned on several occasions as his schedule allowed. After the sale of the Wright Company in 1916, Knabenshue continued to work for the company for a short time. His relations with Orville Wright remained cordial, as is reflected in the contents of this series.

Box 2, Folder 1      [The Wright Company](#)

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### 2.2: National Park Service, 1936-1942 and undated

**Biographical / Historical:** In 1933, Roy Knabenshue was hired by the National Park Service, where he would work for eleven years. Material in this series includes documents pertaining to Knabenshue's work on a Park Service project involving the use of Kellett autogiros. The series includes business correspondence from Knabenshue's work with the Park Service.

Box 2, Folder 2      [National Park Service](#)

Box 2, Folder 3      [Autogiro](#)

Box 2, Folder 4      [Autogiro Parts record](#)

Box 2, Folder 5      [Autogiro reports, H. Clay MacBair, Jr., February-June 1941](#)

Box 2, Folder 6      [Autogiro reports, J.D. Driscoll, 1941-02 - 1941-03](#)

Box 2, Folder 7      [Travel records, 1936 - 1941](#)

Box 2, Folder 8      ["A Study of Transportation Facilities for Visitors to National and State Parks"](#)

Box 2, Folder 9      [Correspondence, 1936 - 1940](#)

Box 2, Folder 10      [Correspondence, 1941-01 - 1941-04](#)

Box 2, Folder 11      [Correspondence, 1941-05 - 1941-07](#)

Box 2, Folder 12      [Correspondence, 1941-08 - 1941-12](#)

Box 2, Folder 13      [Correspondence, 1942](#)

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## Series 3: Photographs and Scrapbooks, undated

Scope and Contents: In 1980, the National Air and Space Museum began a project to copy its photographic collections to laser videodiscs. The project included several photographic scrapbooks from the Knabenshue Collection, which were then stored in the NASM Archives Department's videodisc files. These photographs have been withdrawn from those files to resume their original place in the A. Roy Knabenshue Collection. However, to facilitate retrieval for research, their order and numbering from the videodisc project have been maintained within this series.

Knabenshue Collection photographs which were not copied for the NASM videodisc projects follow, and are arranged by primary subject.

Several oversized photographs are included in Series 6.

Box 3, Folder 1	<a href="#">NASM Videodisc Photographs 102555-106891</a>
Box 3, Folder 2	<a href="#">NASM Videodisc Photographs 164453-164524</a>
Box 3, Folder 3	<a href="#">NASM Videodisc Photographs 164543-164589</a>
Box 3, Folder 4	<a href="#">NASM Videodisc Photographs 164658-164737</a>
Box 3, Folder 5	<a href="#">NASM Videodisc Photographs 164738-164872</a>
Box 4, Folder 1	<a href="#">NASM Videodisc Photographs 164873-164919</a>
Box 4, Folder 2	<a href="#">NASM Videodisc Photographs 164923-164969</a>
Box 4, Folder 3	<a href="#">NASM Videodisc Photographs 164970-165025</a>
Box 4, Folder 4	<a href="#">NASM Videodisc Photographs 165002-165039</a>
Box 4, Folder 5	<a href="#">NASM Videodisc Photographs 165040-165079</a>
Box 5, Folder 1	<a href="#">Airplane photos</a>
Box 5, Folder 2	<a href="#">Balloon and airship photos</a>
Box 5, Folder 3	<a href="#">Photographs of people</a>
Box 5, Folder 4	<a href="#">Miscellaneous photos</a>
Box 5, Folder 5	<a href="#">Loose scrapbook pages</a>
Box 5, Folder 6	<a href="#">Scrapbook of Glenn Knabenshue</a>

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## Series 4: Drawings, 1912-1930 and undated

Scope and Contents: The A. Roy Knabenshue Collection includes thirty-seven drawings of Knabenshue designs, including the airship tent, balloon hangar, airship components, and engines. These are listed below and it should be noted that many of these drawings bear the notation "FRAGILE." A few may be too damaged to be reproduced, and are in need of conservation. On request, NASM Archives staff can review the condition of original drawings.

Item A1004	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: California Rigid Dirigible, 1924 Notes: Size and Format: 31 x 113 inches; Blueprint, Torn. Reproduction Restriction: Fragile.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: Dirigible: Three Engine, One Engine with Vertical and Horizontal Propeller, 1930 Notes: Size and Format: 18 x 58 inches. Blueprint, Folded. Reproduction Restriction: Fragile
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: Dirigible: Three Engine Notes: Size and Format: 21 x 62 inches; Blueprint, Folded. Reproduction Restriction: Fragile.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: Dirigible: Front View With Suspended Engine Gondola, 1930 Notes: Size and Format: 9 x 13 inches; Blueprint.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: Dirigible: Aft View With Suspended Engine Gondola Notes: Size and Format: 9 x 13 inches; Blueprint.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: Instrument Board Arrangements: Boards No. 1 and No. 2 Notes: Size and Format: 8 x 19 inches; Blueprint.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation Notes: Size and Format: 6 x 10 inches; Blueprint. Number index for Drawing: Items 1-40 (No drawing attached).
Item Dr044	B.F. Goodrich [Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation]: Balloon Hangar: Front Elevation, 1917 Notes: Size and Format: 20 x 30 inches; Blueprint.
Item Dr044	B.F. Goodrich [Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation]: Balloon Hangar: Details of Foundation, 1917 Notes: Size: 20 x 30 inches.
Item Dr044	B.F. Goodrich [Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation]: Balloon Hangar: Foundation Plan, 1917 Notes: Size and Format: 20 x 30 inches; Blueprint.
Item Dr044	B.F. Goodrich [Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation]: Balloon Hangar: Side Elevation, 1917

	Notes: Size and Format: 20 x 30 inches; Blueprint.
Item Dr044	B.F. Goodrich, [Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation]: Balloon Plan Hangar, 1917 Notes: Size and Format: 20 x 30 inches; Blueprint, Torn. Reproduction Restriction: Fragile.
Item Dr044	B.F. Goodrich [Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation]: Balloon Hangar: Detail of Wall and Roof Trusses, 1917 Notes: Size and Format: 20 x 30 inches; Blueprint, Torn, Stained, Encapsulated. Reproduction Restriction: Fragile.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: Inboard Profile of Aircraft Fuselage Attached to Balloon Notes: Size and Format: 18 x 31 inches; Blueprint. Sheet 1 of 2.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: Valves and Air Distribution Manifolds Notes: Size and Format: 19 x 27 inches; Blueprint. Sheet 2 of 2.
Item Dr044	Consolidated Steel Corporation [Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation]: Hangar 150 x 500 feet: Side & End Elevations, 1929 Notes: Size and Format: 24 x 30 inches; Blueprint.
Item Dr044	Naval Aircraft Factory [Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation]: Transverse Frames, 1920 Notes: Size and Format: 24 x 27 inches; Blueprint, Torn. Reproduction Restriction: Fragile.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: Side & Front Elevation: Dirigible, 1914 Notes: Size and Format: 12 x 30 inches; Blueprint.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: Floor Plan, 1914 Notes: Size and Format: 12 x 30 inches; Blueprint.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: Side Elevation: Gondola, 1914 Notes: Size and Format: 12 x 30 inches; Blueprint.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: Longitudinal Section: Gondola, 1914 Notes: Size and Format: 12 x 30 inches; Blueprint.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: Engine Section Side and Cross Sections, 1914 Notes: Size and Format: 12 x 30 inches; Blueprint.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: Plan: Top View, Guy Wires, 1914 Notes: Size and Format: 12 x 30 inches; Blueprint.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: Guy Wires, Side View, 1914 Notes: Size and Format: 12 x 30 inches; Blueprint, Torn. Reproduction Restriction: Fragile.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: Propeller and Hub

Notes: Size and Format: 16 x 28 inches; Blueprint, Torn. Reproduction Restriction: Fragile.

Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: Hangar, Side Elevation, Cross Section, End and Bottom View Notes: Size and Format: 24 x 30 inches; Blueprint.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: Dirigible Tent, Side View Notes: Size and Format: 20 x 36 inches; Blueprint.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: Dirigible Tent, Top View Notes: Size and Format: 20 x 36 inches; Blueprint.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Manufacturing Corporation: Side View Dirigible Guy Wires Notes: Size and Format: 20 x 66 inches; Blueprint, Torn, Folded. Reproduction Restriction: Fragile.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: Hangar: Side and End Elevations, 150' x 46' x 50', 1912 Notes: Size and Format: 29 x 70 inches; Blueprint, Torn, Folded. Reproduction Restriction: Fragile.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: All Metal Rigid Ship: Front View, Bottom Half Notes: Size and Format: 34 x 37 inches; Blueprint.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: California Rigid Dirigible: Rings 1-9, 1924 Notes: Size and Format: 30 x 42 inches; Blueprint.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: California Rigid Dirigible: Rings 10-25, 1924 Notes: Size and Format: 30 x 42 inches; Blueprint.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: Navy Mark Lattice A-U, Cu - Cd [Bracing/Trusses] Notes: Size and Format: 30 x 42 inches; Blueprint.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: Navy Mark Lattice Ed - Eu, Fu - Fd [Bracing/Trusses] Notes: Size and Format: 30 x 42 inches; Blueprint.
Item Dr044	Knabenshue Aircraft Corporation: Navy Mark Lattice Bu - Bd, Du - Dd [Bracing/Trusses] Notes: Size and Format: 30 x 42 inches; Blueprint.

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## Series 5: Subject files, undated

Scope and Contents: This series is composed of files maintained by Knabenshue for his own research and use.

Box 6, Folder 1	<a href="#">Aircraft Equipment</a>
Box 6, Folder 2	<a href="#">Aviation-related legislation</a>
Box 6, Folder 3	<a href="#">Motor vehicle trailers and tourist camps</a>
Box 6, Folder 4	<a href="#">Reports</a>

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## Series 6: Miscellaneous, 1903-1963 and undated

Scope and Contents: Material in this series consists of miscellaneous collection material.

Box 6, Folder 5	Miscellaneous Documents <a href="#">Image(s): Miscellaneous documents</a>
Box 7, Folder 1	<a href="#">Record of Flights in ship and registry of passengers, 1913-1914</a>
Box 7, Folder 2	<a href="#">Record of Flights in ship and registry of passengers, 1914</a>
Box 8, Folder 1	<a href="#">Nineteen Certificates Honoring Various Aviation Pioneers Awarded December 17, 1963 at the National Aviation Hall of Fame, Dayton, Ohio, 1963-12-17</a>
Box 8, Folder 2	<a href="#">"Compliments of Roy Knabenshue" Souvenir Booklet</a>
Box 8, Folder 3	<a href="#">Oversized Scrapbook Page Labelled "June 3, 1903 Indianapolis, Indiana", 1903</a> Oversized photograph of Knabenshue adjusting rigging of dirigible. Summary: Oversized photograph of Knabenshue adjusting rigging of dirigible.
Box 8, Folder 4	Nine Oversized Photographs (NASM.XXXX-0370) <a href="#">Image(s): Nine oversized photographs</a>

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