



# Smithsonian

*National Air and Space Museum*

## James Vernon Martin Papers

Ruth Steen, 1997; Elizabeth C. Borja, 2021

2021

National Air and Space Museum Archives  
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## Collection Overview

<b>Repository:</b>	National Air and Space Museum Archives
<b>Title:</b>	James Vernon Martin Papers
<b>Date:</b>	1894-1979
<b>Identifier:</b>	NASM.XXXX.0162
<b>Creator:</b>	Martin, James V. (James Vernon), 1885-1956
<b>Extent:</b>	1.97 Cubic feet (4 legal document boxes, 1 legal folder, 1 oversize folder)
<b>Language:</b>	English .
<b>Summary:</b>	James Vernon Martin (1885-1956) was an aviator and inventor during the early days of aviation. This collection consists of material documenting the life of James Vernon Martin. The material includes letters, photos, and documents relating to his Merchant Marine career and his aircraft and aeronautical inventions. Also included are documents pertaining to his conspiracy charges against the government and aircraft industry, as well as his attempts to revive Augustus M. Herring's patents. There are also documents regarding Lily Irvine, his wife, and her career as a pilot.
<b>Digital Content:</b>	<a href="#">Image(s): NASM.XXXX.0162-M0000001-00140</a>

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## Administrative Information

### Acquisition Information

Edna Jahn, gift, 1964, NASM.XXXX.0162. Also NASM Generated.

### Other Finding Aids

[NASM.XXXX.0236, James V. Martin Scrapbook](#) ; [NASM.XXXX.1003, James V. Martin vs. United States Navy Department Exhibit Book](#)

### Processing Information

Originally arranged by Ruth Steen, 1987. Revised, described, and encoded by Elizabeth C. Borja, 2021.

### Preferred Citation

James Vernon Martin Papers, Acc. NASM.XXXX.0162, 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 / Historical

James Vernon Martin (1885-1956) was an aviator and inventor during the early days of aviation. He joined the Merchant Marine (1900) before attending the University of Virginia and Harvard (graduate degree, 1912). While at Harvard he organized the Harvard Aeronautical Society (1910), served as its first director, and, through the Society, organized the first international air meet in the United States (1910). He traveled to England in January 1911 for flight training and received Royal Aero Club F.A.I. Certificate #55.

While in England, Martin met and married Lily Irvine. Born in South Africa to Scottish parents, Irvine learned to fly from Martin, making her first successful flight at Hendon in 1911. In July 1914, with Tony Jannus as her mechanic, Irvine completed one of the largest flights across water from Sandusky, Ohio, to Euclid over Lake Erie, breaking a speed record set by Glenn Curtiss in 1910.

After returning to the U.S. in June 1911, Martin traveled the exhibition circuit for several years. He made the first flights in Alaska in 1913, accompanied by Irvine. During 1915 he flew test flights for the Aeromarine Company. In 1917, he formed the Martin Aeroplane Company in Elyria, OH on the strength of nine aeronautical patents, including his automatic stabilizer (1916) and retractable landing gear (1916). He joined the Merchant Marine and became Master of the SS Lake Fray in May 1919, earning the Order of St. Stanislaus from Russia in appreciation for assistance rendered to the Russian North-Western Army. In 1920 he moved the company to Dayton, OH as Martin Enterprises and offered free use of his patents to the American aeronautical industry, though evaluations of the efficacy of his inventions were mixed. He moved to Garden City (Long Island), NY in 1922, renaming the company as the Martin Aeroplane Factory.

In 1924, Martin sued the United States government and the Manufacturers Aeronautical Association, claiming that they conspired to monopolize the aviation industry. The suit was dismissed in 1926, but Martin continued to press his claims of collusion through the 1930s. Martin also became the assignee for aviation pioneer Augustus M. Herring and attempted to revive claims on Herring's early patents.

During World War II, he worked for the Office of Research and Development before returning to the U.S. Maritime Service in 1944, serving as first mate on a ship and then commanding a troop transport in the Pacific. After he left the service in 1946, he tried to raise interest in a large catamaran flying boat, the Martin "Oceanplane," but failed in the face of the growth in commercial trans-ocean service by conventional aircraft.

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## Scope and Contents

This collection consists of material documenting the life of James Vernon Martin. The material includes letters, photos, and documents relating to his Merchant Marine career and his aircraft and aeronautical inventions. Also included are documents pertaining to his conspiracy charges against the government and aircraft industry, as well as his attempts to revive Augustus M. Herring's patents. There are also documents regarding Lily Irvine, his wife, and her career as a pilot.

The majority of materials were donated by Edna Jahn, Martin's friend. But there are also materials from other National Air and Space Museum Archives collections that were incorporated later into the Martin Collection. Collections include: [Wright Field Technical Documents \(NASM.XXXX.0428\)](#) and [National Air Museum Photography Collection \(NASM.XXXX.0572\)](#). When possible, these materials were placed in folders designated as "NASM Generated." There are also curatorial documents generated by the Smithsonian Institution regarding the acquisition of Martin artifacts Martin K.III Kitten (A19250004000); Model, Tractor Biplane (A19350061000) and Medal, Order of St. Stanislaus First Class (A19880024000).

Note: The digital images in this finding aid were repurposed from scans made by an outside contractor for a commercial product and may show irregular cropping and orientation in addition to color variations resulting from damage to and deterioration of the original objects.

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## Arrangement

Materials are arranged into five series: Biographical Material, Martin Aircraft and Automobiles, Patents and Litigation, Photographs, and Newspapers and Magazines. Within each series materials are arranged roughly chronologically.

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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
- Aeronautics -- 1903-1916
- Aeronautics -- Competitions
- Aeronautics -- Exhibitions
- Aeronautics -- Law and legislation
- Aircraft industry
- Aircraft industry -- United States
- Periodicals

Types of Materials:

- Correspondence
- Drawings
- Financial records
- Photographs
- Publications

Names:

- Aeromarine Plane & Motor Co.
- Harvard Aeronautical Society
- Harvard Boston Aero Meet
- Manufacturers Aircraft Association
- Martin Aeroplane Co (Martin, James Vernon)
- Martin Aeroplane Factory (Martin, James Vernon)
- Martin, James V. (James Vernon), 1885-1956
- Martin, Lily Irvine
- United States. Merchant Marine

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## Container Listing

### Series 1: Biographical Material, 1909-1971

Scope and Contents: This series consists of biographical materials for James V. Martin. Documents include correspondence; photographs of Martin, Lily Irvine, his wife, and their son Hamilton; membership cards and licenses; and awards. There are also materials from his time in the Merchant Marines first as Master of the SS Lake Frey in 1919 and again in World War II. Materials are arranged chronologically.

Note: Documents with personally identifiable information (PII) have not been digitized.

Box 1, Folder 1	<a href="#">Biographical Information, 1923-1971</a>
Box 1, Folder 2	<a href="#">Pilot's License, Memberships, and Awards, 1911-1956</a>
Box 1, Folder 3	<a href="#">Passport, 1946</a>
Box 1, Folder 4	<a href="#">Miscellaneous Correspondence, 1912-1953</a>
Box 1, Folder 5	<a href="#">Photographs - Family - Martin, Lily Irvine (pilot/wife), Hamilton Martin (son), 1909-1946</a>
Box 1, Folder 6	<a href="#">Personal Banking, 1919-1925</a>
Box 1, Folder 7	<a href="#">Correspondence, Edna Jahn to Erik Hildes-Heim (Early Birds), 1962</a>
Box 1, Folder 8	<a href="#">SS Lake Frey, May 8, 1919-July 30, 1919</a>
Box 1, Folder 9	<a href="#">SS Lake Frey, August 2, 1919-December 24, 1919</a>
Box 1, Folder 10	<a href="#">Master of Steam and Motor Vessels License, December 13, 1937</a>
Box 1, Folder 11	<a href="#">Wartime Service Documents, 1919; 1944-1946</a>

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## Series 2: Martin Aircraft and Automobiles, 1909-1953

Scope and Contents: This series consists of materials from Martin's aviation career, including aircraft he flew and his companies Martin Aeroplane Company, Martin Enterprises, and Martin Aeroplane Factory. There are also documents regarding Martin Automobiles. Materials are organized chronologically by aircraft (if able to be identified).

The materials that can be identified as donated from the original Martin Collection have been noted as such. There are also materials from National Air and Space Museum Archives collections that were incorporated later into the Martin Collection. Collections include: Wright Field Technical Documents (NASM.XXXX.0428) and National Air Museum Photography Collection (NASM.XXXX.0572). When possible, these materials were placed in folders designated as "NASM Generated." There are also curatorial documents generated by the Smithsonian Institution noted as such.

Box 1, Folder 12	Harvard No. 1 (1910) - Photographs - Martin Collection and Wright Field, 1909-1910
Box 1, Folder 13	Queen-Martin Biplane, 1911 (J. V. Martin Design) - Photographs - NASM Generated, 1911; 1970s
Box 1, Folder 14	Martin (J.V.) - Company Documents, 1917-1946
Box 1, Folder 15	Materials Testing Laboratory, Case School of Applied Science, Cleveland, Ohio, 1917-1918
Box 1, Folder 16	Martin (J. V.) K.III Kitten - Technical Documents / NASM Curatorial and Exhibition Materials, 1918-1938
Box 1, Folder 17	Martin (J. V.) K.III Kitten - Photographs - Martin Collection, 1917-1918
Box 1, Folder 18	Martin (J. V.) K.III Kitten Photographs - NASM Generated, 1970s
Box 1, Folder 19	Martin (J. V.) "Double Tractor" Bomber (1917) - Photographs - Martin Collection and NASM Generated, 1914-1918; 1970s
Box 2, Folder 1	Martin (J. V.) K.IV (USN KF-1) - Photographs - Martin Collection, 1918-1921
Box 2, Folder 2	Martin (J. V.) K.IV (USN KF-1) - Photographs - NASM Generated, 1970s
Box 2, Folder 3	Martin (J. V.), General, Retractable Landing Gear - Photographs - Martin Collection and NASM Generated, 1922; 1970s
Box 2, Folder 4	Martin (J. V.), General, Aerodynamic Stabilizer - Photographs and Documents, 1916-1946
Box 2, Folder 5	Martin (J.V.) Aircraft - Photographs - Martin Collection and NASM Generated, 1911-1917; 1970s
Box 2, Folder 6	Martin (J.V.) Oceanplane - Documents, 1942-1953

Box 2, Folder 7      [Martin \(J.V.\) Oceanplane - Photographs, circa 1944](#)

Box 2, Folder 8      [Martin Automobiles - Documents and Photographs, 1929-1952](#)

Box 2, Folder 9      [Martin Automobiles - Photographs, circa 1948](#)

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## Series 3: Patents and Litigation, 1894-1948

Scope and Contents: This series consists of materials pertaining to James V. Martin's conspiracy charges against the government and aircraft industry, as well as his attempts to revive Augustus M. Herring's patents. Within the two categories of Martin patents and Herring patents, materials are arranged chronologically and or by country of filing.

Box 2, Folder 10	<a href="#">Patents - Martin - Information Cards, undated</a>
Box 2, Folder 11	<a href="#">Patents - Martin - Lists, Correspondence, and Documents, 1920-1933</a>
Box 2, Folder 12	Patents - Martin - France, 1926 Notes: Contents of file not digitized.
Box 2, Folder 13	<a href="#">Patents - Martin - Germany, 1925-1926</a>
Box 2, Folder 14	<a href="#">Patents - Martin - United Kingdom, 1917-1927</a>
Box 2, Folder 15	<a href="#">Patents - Martin - United States, 1919-1927</a>
Box 2, Folder 16	<a href="#">Patents - Martin - Elastic Tires and Driving Mechanism for Airships, 1917-1948</a>
Box 2, Folder 17	<a href="#">Patents - Martin - Litigation Correspondence, 1922-1937</a>
Box 2, Folder 18	<a href="#">James Martin v. The United States, Court of Claims Decision, March 7, 1938</a>
Box 3, Folder 1	<a href="#">Patents - Augustus Herring - Martin Petition to Revive Patents, Folder 1 of 2, 1910-1926</a>
Box 3, Folder 2	<a href="#">Patents - Augustus Herring - Martin Petition to Revive Patents, Folder 2 of 2, 1923-1925</a>
Box 3, Folder 3	<a href="#">Patents - Augustus Herring - Patent 615353 - Docket Envelope and Reproduction Request, 1896-1923</a>
Box 3, Folder 4	<a href="#">Patents - Augustus Herring - Hugo Mattulath Estate, 1923-1925</a>
Box 3, Folder 5	<a href="#">Augustus Herring Materials: Scrapbook, Correspondence, and Articles, 1894-1924</a> Notes: Scrapbook: Material inside envelopes was not scanned. Correspondents: Hiram Maxim, Laurence Hargreave, and (to J.V. Martin regarding Herring) E.C. Huffaker.

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## Series 4: Photographs, 1909-1970s

Scope and Contents: This series consists of aviation photographs. The collection was originally processed with very little description. Most of the original order from this processing has been maintained. Photos that can definitely be attributed to the Martin Collection have been placed in the categories of Martin aircraft and non-Martin aircraft. Photos that can be identified as NASM generated are identified as such. Photographs that were not labelled as Martin Collection but are not NASM generated were designated "Possibly Martin Collection."

Box 3, Folder 6	<a href="#">Photographs - Martin Collection - Martin Aircraft [1 of 3], 1911-1918</a> Notes: Aircraft include: Grahame-White and Farman at Hendon, Aeromarine flown by Martin, K.III Kitten, Double Tractor Bomber, K.IV
Box 3, Folder 7	<a href="#">Photographs - Martin Collection - Martin Aircraft [2 of 3], 1917-1921</a> Notes: Aircraft include: K.III Kitten, Workshop (probably Elyria, Ohio), "Double Tractor" Bomber, K.IV
Box 3, Folder 8	<a href="#">Photographs - Martin Collection - Martin Aircraft [3 of 3], 1915-1921</a> Notes: Aircraft include: K.III Kitten, Double Tractor, Aeromarine flown by Martin, Workshop (probably Elyria, Ohio)
Box 3, Folder 9	<a href="#">Photographs - Martin Collection - Non-Martin Aircraft, 1909-1929</a> Notes: Aircraft include: Curtiss aircraft, Hubert Latham, Waltham Aviation Field, Dornier, Wright, Charles Willard
Box 3, Folder 10	<a href="#">Photographs - Possibly Martin Collection - Martin Aircraft, 1911-1918</a> Notes: Aircraft include: K.III Kitten, Miss Lily Irvine, Queen Martin, and Double Tractor Biplane
Box 3, Folder 11	<a href="#">Photographs - Possibly Martin Collection - Non-Martin Aircraft, 1911-1922</a> Notes: Aircraft include: Verville, Beachey, Aeromarine, Curtiss, German
Box 3, Folder 12	<a href="#">Photographs - NASM Generated, 1970s</a>

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## Series 5: Newspapers and Magazines, 1907-1961

Scope and Contents: This series consists of newspaper and magazine articles, most containing content or advertisements about Martin aircraft. There is a folder of articles about Lily Irvine, Martin's wife, and her attempt to fly over Lake Erie in 1914.

Note: Only digital assets directly pertaining to Martin or Irvine are attached.

Box 4, Folder 1	<a href="#">Miscellaneous Documents, 1907-1961</a>
Box 4, Folder 2	<a href="#">Aero Club of America Bulletin, January 27, 1912</a>
Box 4, Folder 3	<a href="#">First Flight in Alaska - Articles and Photographs, July 1913</a>
Box 4, Folder 4	<a href="#">Lily Irvine Articles, 1914</a>
Box 4, Folder 5	<a href="#">Flying, Vol. 7, No. 6, "Method of Measuring Distances for Crossing Atlantic Flight," by J. V. Martin, July 1918</a>
Box 4, Folder 6	<a href="#">Aerial Age Weekly, Vol. 8, No. 15 - Martin Advertisement - Article "Martin K.III Single Seater", December 23, 1918</a>
Box 4, Folder 7	<a href="#">The Libertarian (2 issues), March 1924; October 1924</a>
Box 4, Folder 8	<a href="#">Washington Post - "Inventor of First Plane Never Saw It Fly" (S.P. Langley), May 17, 1925</a>
Box 4, Folder 9	<a href="#">U. S. Air Services, "James V. Martin as F. W. O'Malley Saw Him", November 1935</a>

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