



Smithsonian
National Air and Space Museum

Langley Experiments Scrapbooks

2001

National Air and Space Museum Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	Langley Experiments Scrapbooks
Identifier:	NASM.XXXX.0294
Date:	1914-1915
Extent:	0.23 Cubic feet ((1 slim legal box))
Creator:	Curtiss, Glenn Hammond, 1878-1930
Language:	English

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Glenn H. Curtiss, gift, unknown, XXXX-0294, NASM

Restrictions

No restrictions on access

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

Nine days before the Wright brothers' first successful flight, Smithsonian Secretary Samuel Langley had the trial for his steam-powered machine, called the Great Aerodrome. Heavily funded by the United States government, the Aerodrome broke apart almost immediately upon takeoff in a highly-publicized event, and Langley and the Smithsonian Institution suffered embarrassment over the incident. After Langley passed away in 1906, his successor, Charles Walcott, claimed that although Langley may not have flown that December morning the Aerodrome was certainly capable of it. Walcott's "proof" was in a rebuilt version of Langley's Aerodrome, which was later successfully flown by American airplane manufacturer Glenn Curtiss. Curtiss, who was engaged in a patent suit with the Wright brothers, rebuilt and flew Langley's Aerodrome with 1914 modifications with the hope of showing the courts that the Wrights did not invent the airplane. While Curtiss eventually lost the patent suit, the flight was used by the Smithsonian to redeem Langley's role in the history of flight.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of two scrapbooks kept by Glenn H. Curtiss and filled with photographs of himself and Samuel Langley. The photos show the two men and their experiments with Langley's aircraft, the Langley Aerodrome. The trial flights were conducted on Lake Kewka, near Hammondsport, NY. Each photo is labeled with a caption and a date. The second (chronologically) book of the set is a continuation of the photos of the Langley experiments by Glenn H. Curtiss, and while the photos are numbered, they have no captions or labeling on them. Some dates are available on the photos. Curtiss' autograph appears inside the cover of one scrapbook.

General

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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 -- Law and legislation
- Aeronautics -- Records
- Langley Aerodrome A (Great Aerodrome, Man-Carrying Aerodrome)
- Langley Aerodrome A, Curtiss 1914 Rebuild
- Langley Aerodrome Family

Types of Materials:

- Photographs
- Scrapbooks

Names:

- Curtiss, Glenn Hammond, 1878-1930
- Langley, S. P. (Samuel Pierpont), 1834-1906
- Walcott, Charles D. (Charles Doolittle), 1850-1927
- Wright, Orville, 1871-1948
- Wright, Wilbur, 1867-1912