



Smithsonian

National Air and Space Museum

Wright Brothers Collection

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2018

National Air and Space Museum Archives
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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	Wright Brothers Collection
Date:	1909-1945
Identifier:	NASM.XXXX.0376
Extent:	0.25 Cubic feet (1 slim legal document box)
Language:	English .
Summary:	This collection consists mostly of correspondence between the Wright brothers and the following people: J.W. See; Ralph H. Upson; Henry Ford; Ernest Jones; Frank Coffyn; O.G. Simmons; C.R. Peterkin; Otto Mallery; Maynard; and Lester Gardner. Also included are sketches, an NAA letter signed by witnesses: Etheridge, Dough and Moore attesting to the 1903 flight, and the Wright Brothers' original bid for the military contract.
Digital Content:	Image(s): Wright Brothers Collection

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Various Donors, Gift, unknown, NASM.XXXX.0376

Processing Information

Arranged, described, and encoded by Jessamyn Lloyd, 2018.

Preferred Citation

Wright Brothers Collection, NASM.XXXX.0376, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

No restrictions on access

Conditions Governing Use

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Biographical / Historical

Wilbur Wright was born April 16, 1867, his brother Orville Wright on August 19, 1871. They, along with sister Katharine and brothers Reuchlin and Lorin, were raised near Millville, Indiana and in Dayton, Ohio by their mother, Susan Wright, and father, Milton Wright, bishop of the United Brethren Church. As young men,

Wilbur and Orville launched a printing business and a bicycle shop. An interest in aeronautics, spurred by the accounts of the experiments of Otto Lilienthal, prompted Wilbur to request information on the subject from the Smithsonian Institution in 1899. In August of 1900, Wilbur built his first glider and that year and the next the brothers tested gliders at Kitty Hawk. The Wrights constructed a wind tunnel to gather accurate aeronautical data and, benefiting from this new information, another glider was built in 1902. In 1903, the brothers were ready to begin construction of a powered craft. With the assistance of mechanic Charles Taylor, they added a 4-cylinder, 12-horsepower engine and propellers to the 1903 Flyer and it was sent to Kitty Hawk for testing. At 10:35 am, December 17, on Kill Devil Hill, Orville achieved a flight of 12 seconds--traveling a distance of 120 feet. By 1908 the Wrights were demonstrating their machines in Europe. The U.S. Army Signal Corps advertised for bids for a two-seat observation aircraft and in 1908 and 1909, the Wrights flew at official Army trials at Fort Myer, Virginia. (It was here that powered flight's first fatality occurred: the tragic death of Lieutenant Thomas Selfridge.) The Army was to purchase the Military Flyer (Signal Corps No. 1) for \$30,000 in 1909. In that same year, The Wright Company was established to manufacture Wright aircraft. Wilbur died in Dayton, Ohio on May 30, 1912. Orville Wright would live until January 30, 1948.

Scope and Contents

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Arrangement

Correspondence is arranged by recipient, other materials are arranged by topic.

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, Military
- Airplanes
- Airplanes -- Design and construction

Types of Materials:

- Correspondence
- Sketches

Names:

- Coffyn, Frank, 1878-1960
- Ford, Henry, 1863-1947
- Jones, Ernest La Rue, 1883-1955
- Peterkin, C. R.
- See, James Waring, 1850-1920.
- Upson, Ralph Hazlett, 1888-1968
- Wright, Orville, 1871-1948

Wright, Wilbur, 1867-1912

Container Listing

Box 1, Folder 1	Misc. Wilbur Wright Notes, Sketch, and Correspondence with Mr. Ralph H. Upson and Mr. J.W. See, 1909-1911 Language: English.
Box 1, Folder 2	Orville Wright Correspondence with The National Aeronautic Association, 1925
Box 1, Folder 3	Misc. Orville Wright Correspondence: Ford and Jones, 1929, 1937
Box 1, Folder 4	Contract for Frank Coffyn (Mechanic and Aviator for the Wright Company), 1910
Box 1, Folder 5	Correspondence between Orville Wright and Mr. O. G. Simmons, 1912
Box 1, Folder 6	Correspondence between Orville Wright and Mr. Otto T. Mallery, 1933
Box 1, Folder 7	Correspondence from Orville Wright to Brummitt, 1945
Box 1, Folder 8	Original Bid of Wright Brothers for Military Airplane, 1911
Box 1, Folder 9	The Wright Brothers, Correspondence with J. W. See, 1911
Box 1, Folder 10	The Wright Brothers, Correspondence with Lester Gardner, 1933-1945
Box 1, Folder 11	Misc. Wright Material, 1912-1928 and undated Notes: Mr. Coffyn - Katharine Wright Correspondence; List of Attendees of Michigan Alumni during International Civil Aeronautics Conference; 2 copies of "The Beginning of Human Flight"
Box 1, Folder 12	The Wright Flyer and Aviation Flight Log Wright Hydroaeroplane Navy No. B-1, Circa 1911 and undated
Box 1, Folder 13	NAA Letter Signed by Witnesses Etheridge, Dough, and Moore Attesting to 1903 Flight, 1928
Box 1, Folder 14	The Wright Brothers, Maynard Correspondence, 1911
Box 1, Folder 15	Correspondence between Wrights and Mr. C. R. Peterkin, 1909
Box 1, Folder 16	Wright Brothers' Statement to Aero Club of America, Autographed by Orville Wright, 1906, 1944