

Wright Memorial Commission

MS – 134

Wright State University
Department of Special Collections and Archives

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Introduction

The records of the Wright Memorial Commission were accessioned into the Wright State University department of Archives and Special Collections in October, 1983. They were donated by Phyllis Smith of the Miami Conservancy District.

The papers in this collection date from 1912-1943 and fill one Hollinger box. The collection is arranged as follows:

- Series 1: Correspondence and Records of Trustees, 1912-1920
- Series 2: Correspondence and Records of Trustees, 1922-1943
- Series 3: Correspondence and Records, Miami Conservancy District, 1938-1940
- Series 4: Miscellaneous

There are no restrictions on the use of these records.

Additional information on the Wright Memorial Commission can be found in the Dayton Air Service Incorporated Committee, MS-136.

Brief Historical Sketch

The following was taken from The Wright Brothers Memorial: Transfer of Ownership from The Miami Conservancy District to The United States Air Force, September 9, 1978.

The Wright Brothers Memorial dates back to 1912 when a group of Dayton citizens recommended that an appropriate memorial should be erected to celebrate the Wright Brothers contribution to aviation. In February of 1913, a nationally known sculptor was commissioned to design a memorial. It was in March of that year that Dayton and other communities of the Valley were devastated by flood. Immediately after the flood, the completion of the flood control projects of The Miami Conservancy District were given top priority, thus suspending further planning of the monument.

After completion of Huffman Dam in 1922, Colonel Edward A. Deeds reorganized The Wright Brothers Memorial Commission for the purpose of completing the memorial. The site selected for the memorial was Tate Hill, at the south end of Huffman Dam. The location chosen was significant in that it overlooks the site of the hangar where the Wrights prepared for their history-making flight at Kitty Hawk and the site of the first flight in a heavier-than-air machine, in a complete circle, made in September 1904.

The Miami Conservancy District Board of Directors approved a resolution in September 1938 to proceed with the design and development of a Wright Brothers Memorial Park. The labor to construct the memorial was provided by the Civilian Conservancy Corps.

The Miami Conservancy District Court approved an appraisal of the benefits of the park to the City of Dayton in January 1939. The City of Dayton has provided funds for maintenance of the park since 1939, and the Miami Conservancy District has since maintained the park.

The memorial and park were completed in 1940. The dedication ceremony was held on August 19, 1940. This was National Aviation Day and Orville Wright's 69th birthday. Orville Wright was present for the ceremony.

The city of Dayton requested the District to seek an alternate source of funds for maintenance in 1974. The District Board of Directors on December 31, 1975 authorized the transfer of property to the United States Air Force.

Henceforth, the park and memorial shall be maintained by the Air Force for the people of the United States of America.

Scope and Content

The records of the Wright Memorial Commission contain mainly correspondence. Articles of incorporation and dissolution, minutes and financial reports are also included.

Series 1 contains the earliest records. They date from 1912-1920. These records include articles of incorporation (1912), correspondence, minutes and articles of dissolution (1920).

The materials in Series 2 contain the second articles of incorporation (1922), minutes, and correspondence of the Wright Memorial Commission Trustees. Most of the correspondence is written by Ezra Kuhn, secretary of the commission, and it is concerned with the commission's business proceedings. These records date from 1922-1943.

Series 3 contains materials that document the physical development of the memorial from 1938-1940. These records consist mainly of the correspondence of C.H. Eiffert, chief engineer, Miami Conservancy Commission and include extensive correspondence with the Olmstead Brothers, the landscape architects of the memorial.

Series 4 consists of a summary leaflet about the memorial, its history and the transfer of ownership from The Miami Conservancy District to The United States Air Force.

Materials are arranged chronologically within each series.

Container Description

| <u>Box</u> | <u>File</u> | <u>Description</u> | <u>Date</u> |
|--|-------------|---|---------------|
| Series 1: Correspondence and Records of Trustees | | | |
| 1 | 1 | Correspondence and Records of Trustees | 1912-1913 |
| | 2 | Correspondence and Records of Trustees | 1914-1920 |
| Series 2: Correspondence and Records of Trustees | | | |
| 1 | 3 | Correspondence and Records of Trustees | 1922-1936 |
| | 4 | Correspondence and Records of Trustees | 1938 |
| | 5 | Correspondence and Records of Trustees | 1939-1943 |
| Series 3: Correspondence and Records, Miami Conservancy District, 1938-1940 | | | |
| 1 | 6 | Correspondence and Records | 1938-1939 |
| | 7 | Correspondence and Records | 1939-1940 |
| Series 4: Miscellaneous | | | |
| 1 | 8 | Leaflet – <u>The Wright Brothers Memorial: Transfer of Ownership from The Miami Conservancy District to the United States Air Force</u> (Chronological History of Wright Bros. Memorial) | Sept. 9, 1978 |