

MS-348

**William Preston Mayfield Photograph Collection
Egbert Donation**

**Special Collections and Archives
Wright State University Libraries**

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Introduction

The Mayfield photo collection was given to Wright State Special Collections and Archives in five installments donated by Randle Egbert D.D.S. starting in December of 1997 with the final installment in December 2006. It consists of 10 photo boxes and approximately 1638 photographs, post cards, and first days.

The photographs consist of photos of the Wright Brothers first flights, other first pilots, early planes and helicopters, photos taken by F. Hermes, photos of Dayton area businesses, homes, churches, and monuments, as well as aerial shots of the Miami valley, downtown Columbus, and the Ohio State University. Postcards are of early flights, the Wright Flyer, The Wright Brothers Celebration, flights in Europe, other early pilots, European postcards, advertisements, museum exhibits, and Wright Brothers monuments. First Days are from all over the world. The collection also contains an oversized photograph of the Wright Flyer and a drawing of the flyer which are housed in the archives map case.

The photographs, postcards, and first days range from the 1910s to 1960. This collection visually documents early flight history in Dayton as well as the larger impact of the first flights on America and the world. It also provides vivid pictures of the growth of the city of Dayton and the homes in the area, as well as contains a vast collection of aerials showing our state capital.

Copyright restrictions apply to the use of the Mayfield Photo Collection

The Mayfield Photo Collection is organized into 6 series

- Series I: Wright Brothers early flights
 - Subseries A: Pilots and Flights in America
 - Subseries B: Family Photos
 - Subseries C: Balloon Flight
 - Subseries D: Planes and Pilots
 - Subseries E: F. Hermes Photographs
- Series II: Postcards and First Days
 - Subseries A: Wright Brothers
 - Subseries B: Wright Brothers in Europe
 - Subseries C: Wright Brothers Celebration
 - Subseries D: Flight Demonstrations in American
 - Subseries E: The Wright Flyer
 - Subseries F: Other Flights and Pilots
 - Subseries G: Celebration
 - Subseries H: Advertisements
 - Subseries I: Artistic
 - Subseries J: Wright Brothers Museums/Memorials
 - Subseries K: First Days
 - Subseries L: Miscellaneous

Series III: Dayton Businesses and Homes

Subseries A: Dayton Business

Subseries B: Homes

Subseries C: close Aerials of Dayton

Subseries D: NCR

Series IV: Subject Photos

Subseries A: Buses and Trains

Subseries B: Cars/Dealerships

Subseries C: Monuments and Churches

Subseries D: Artistic

Series V: Columbus aerials

Subseries A: Aerials of Columbus Area

Subseries B: Ohio State University

Subseries C: Downtown Columbus

Series VI: Dayton aerials

Subseries A: Dayton Aerials

Subseries B: Other Areas in Miami Valley

Biographical Sketch

William Preston Mayfield, the first person to ever create an aerial photograph from a heavier-than-air flying machine, was born in Lexington, Kentucky in 1896. At the age of fourteen he was a photographer for the *Dayton Daily News*. It was at this time that his love for photography first blossomed.

On a cold day in 1910 Mayfield was invited to go up with Orville Wright in the Wright flyer. While in the air Mayfield leaned out over the wing and took a photograph of the ground below. This photograph would become the first photograph ever to be taken from an aircraft. From this point on Mayfield would make a name for himself photographing early aviation “firsts” including the first historic flight of the helicopter, as well as one of the earliest fatal aircraft crashes.

Over the next sixty years Mayfield’s photography would be in demand from air shows to the creation of photographs for newsreels and films. He photographed the rich and the famous of the time including (but not limited to) President Woodrow Wilson, Babe Ruth, and Henry Ford (these photographs are not part of the collection). In addition to these accomplishments Mayfield continued to be in demand as a commercial photographer, which accounts for the many photographs of Dayton area businesses and homes. Later in life he found a passion for high aerial shots as demonstrated by the wealth of aerials depicting the state capital and the Miami Valley.

He died at the age of 77 on January 17, 1974.

Scope and Content Note

The William Preston Mayfield Photos document the career of an innovative photographer whose career spanned over sixty years of photographs in Dayton and the Miami Valley. Through these photographs the researcher can gain a visual understanding of the early evolution of flight as well as the growth of Dayton and the Miami Valley.

Series I: Wright Brothers early flights

These photographs are of flights, aircraft, air shows and the people who surround the first thirty years of flight. Photos of interest: first helicopter flight (subseries A). This series contains many photographs of planes built and flown before 1930 as well as several interesting photos of air shows and pilots. This series also contains several photographs taken by F. Hermes an early photographer of the Wright Brothers. A larger photograph and a drawing of early flyer are cross referenced and can be found: OS73. All of these photographs range in dates from 1914 to 1940s although many are unmarked.

Series II: Postcards and First Days

This series is the most unique of the collection and consists of postcards and First Days from all over the world depicting mostly the Wright Brothers with many other early pilots as well. Of particular interest are the postcards from Europe of the Wright Brothers flights in France. Also interesting are the holiday postcards, advertisements, and artistic postcards which incorporate the Wright Flyer. These items range in date from 1910s to the 1960s most of these have dates on the back.

Series III: Dayton businesses and homes

This series contains photographs of Dayton's downtown, businesses and homes ranging in date from the 1910s to the late 1950s. Of particular interest are those photographs in the beginning of the series showing the aftermath of the 1913 flood as well as pictures of city life in the early 1900s. There are also many photographs of prestigious homes in the Dayton area. Most of these photos are unmarked and undated those that are dated are from 1920s and 1930s.

Series IV: Subject photos

This series is a collection of many different types of photographs including photos taken of a race between a street car and airplane. Also in the collection are photos taken for advertising purposes of local car dealerships. At the end of this series are artistic and abstract photographs. Most of these photos are unmarked and undated they range in date from 1910s to the 1950s.

Series V: Columbus aerials

This is the largest series in the collection and consists of several hundred photographs of downtown Columbus and The Ohio State University. Many of these photographs are dated on the back under the Mayfield seal they range in date from 1949-1959.

Series VI: Dayton aerals

This series is made up of aerial photographs of the Dayton area and in its suburbs as well as other areas in the Miami Valley including Wilmington, Springfield and Lima, Ohio. Many of these photographs are marked and dated on the back under the Mayfield seal they range in date from 1949-1959.

Container Listing

Series I	Wright Brothers Early Flights	Date
Box	Items	
1	Pilots and early flights	
OS73	Large photograph of early flight	
1	Family photos	
1	Balloon flight	
1	Planes and pilots	
OS73	Large drawing of early flyer	
1	F. Hermes photos	
Series II	Postcards and First Days	
2	Wright Brothers	
2	Wright Brothers and Europe	
2	Wright Brothers Celebration	
2	Flight demonstrations in America	
2	Wright Flyer	
2	Other flights and pilots	
2	Celebration	
2	Advertisements	
2	Artistic	
3	Wright Brothers museums and monuments	
3	First Days	
3	Miscellaneous	
Series III	Dayton Businesses and Homes	1920-1959
4	Dayton businesses	
5	Homes	
5	Close aerials of Dayton	
5	NCR	
Series IV	Subject Photos	
6	Buses and Trains	
6	Cars and Dealerships	
6	Monuments and Churches	
6	Artistic	
Series V	Columbus Aerials	1949-1959
7	Downtown	
8	Downtown	
9	Ohio State University	
Series VI	Dayton aerials	1949-1959
10	Dayton	
11	Other areas in the Miami Valley	