

NATIONAL AIR AND SPACE ARCHIVES  
THOMAS DeWITT MILLING COLLECTION

Accession XXXX-0133

National Air and Space Museum  
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Kate Igoe

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THOMAS DeWITT MILLING COLLECTION  
1.5 cu.ft. (4 boxes)

**BIOGRAPHICAL NOTE**

Thomas DeWitt Milling contributed mightily to the American heritage of flight. Possessor of the Aero Club of America's License 30, Expert Aviator License 3 and numerous awards and honors, Milling became a key figure in the early years of aviation. His illustrious career in both civil and military spheres garnered widespread acclaim.

Milling was born on July 31, 1887 to Judge Robert E. Milling and Ida Roberts in Winnfield, Louisiana. He attended public schools in Franklin, Louisiana and metamorphosed there from a timid child to a bold young man. Deciding on a military career, he entered the United States Military Academy in 1905.

After graduation from West Point, Milling entered the Fifteenth Cavalry and was posted to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. A year of overseeing the commissary there proved uninspiring and he was surprised and delighted when transferred to the Aviation Section of the Signal Corps. In 1911, both Milling and another young lieutenant, H.H. "Hap" Arnold, were sent to receive flying instruction at the Wright Brothers' Flying School in Dayton, Ohio. The two qualified for their Aero Club of America pilot certificates on the same day, July 6, 1911. It would be an association that would last for many years. Arnold and Milling became the army's first two regular pilots and served together in varied posts involving flight instruction and military testing.

Only a few months after learning to fly, Milling was to achieve acclaim by winning the Tri-State Biplane Race, flying from Boston to Nashua, New Hampshire to Worcester, Massachusetts to Providence, Rhode Island back to Boston, a total of 175 miles. At the time, this constituted the longest cross-country race of its kind in the country. Milling flew it in a Wright biplane, without the use of a compass. It was his first night flight and its dramatic finish was accomplished with the help of several large bonfires to provide guidance. Milling won several other contests that day, against a field of experienced fliers.

At an autumn 1911 meet on Long Island, Milling again proved his skill and daring in several events. It was here that he carried two passengers to establish a new endurance record.

The next year found Milling at Fort Riley, Kansas, conducting research for the Army on aerial machine gun fire, bomb dropping and artillery fire observation.

In 1913, the Army's handful of planes were transferred to Texas City, near the Mexican border. While posted there, Milling set another record for an endurance flight with a passenger (Lieutenant W.C. Sherman of the Corps of Engineers). The nonstop flight from Texas City to San Antonio was made with a Burgess-Wright tractor biplane equipped with a 70 hp Renault engine. During the four hours and twenty-two minutes aloft, Sherman was able to make the first military map ever drawn from an airplane, measuring 15 feet long. Speaking later of the Texas City trip, Milling's commanding officer, Major General W.H. Carter, hailed Milling as "one of the foremost aviators of the world."

In addition to the above mentioned accomplishments, Milling was instrumental in the field of flight instruction, helping to establish the first Army aviation school in College Park, Maryland in 1911 and other schools across the country. The years prior to America's entry into World War One also saw Milling commanding a detachment on the Mexican border, whose mission included surveillance and the pursuit of Pancho Villa.

During the First World War, Milling began as Chief of Air Service Training, American Expeditionary Forces. By 1919, he was Chief of the Air Service, First Army.

Milling retired in 1933 due to ill health but was recalled to service in 1942 and retired again in 1946. He was later awarded the rank of Brigadier General.

Before his death on November 26, 1960, Milling received, among other honors, America's Distinguished Service Medal, France's Legion of Honor and Belgium's Order of Leopold by Belgium. Milling was also a member of the Early Birds, a celebrated group of fliers who soloed before December 17, 1916.

## **CONTENTS NOTE**

The Thomas DeWitt Milling Collection (accession XXXX-0133) contains approximately 1.5 cubic feet of material relating to this pioneer aviator. It includes correspondence, photographs and a large proportion of manuscript material. As Milling's career spanned half a century, the material in the collection ranges over fifty years.

The National Air and Space Museum (NASM) obtained the collection in parts, receiving material in 1963 and 1972. A small portion of the photographic materials have been moved into this collection from NASM's videodisc files, where they had been placed after being reproduced. Original order of the materials, where identified, has been maintained.

## **SERIES**

Series I: Personal

Series II: Career

Series III: Reports and Manuscripts

Series IV: Oversized Materials

## CONTAINER LIST

### SERIES I: PERSONAL

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
1	1	Biographical Information
	2	Flight Reports
	3	Texas City to San Antonio Flight
	4	Certificates and Honors
	5	Correspondence Related to United States Military Academy 1904-1905
	6	Miscellaneous Personal Correspondence 1952-1957
	7	Clippings from Biographical File
	8	Clippings 1911-1939
	9	Photographs

### SERIES II: CAREER

Most of the material in this series consists of military orders and correspondence related to Army matters.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
1	10	Military Data and Memoranda 1911-1913
	11	Military Data and Memoranda 1920-1930

### SERIES III: REPORTS AND MANUSCRIPTS

Included in this series are manuscripts by Milling and by Billy Mitchell. The two fliers were friends as well as colleagues. In the 1925 court martial of Mitchell, Milling testified for the defense.

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
2	1	<i>Early Flying Experiences</i> by T. DeWitt Milling
	2	Early Flying Experiences: The First Corps Aviation School by T. DeWitt Milling (Draft)
	3	Early Flying Experiences with the First Signal Corps Aviation School by T. DeWitt Milling (Draft)
	4	Reports and Manuscripts by T. DeWitt Milling
	5	<i>Report of Inspection of United States Possessions in the Pacific and Java, Singapore, India, Siam, China &amp; Japan</i> by Brigadier General William Mitchell October 24, 1923

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Series III (continued)

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
2	6	<i>Preliminary Report of Inspection of Air Service Activities in the Hawaiian Department by Brigadier General William Mitchell December 10, 1923</i>
	7	<i>Report of Inspection Trip to Europe, Italy, Germany, Holland and England</i> by Brigadier General William Mitchell Index and Pages 315-499
	8	<i>Report of Inspection Trip to Europe, Italy, Germany, Holland and England</i> by Brigadier General William Mitchell Pages 500-910
3	1	<i>Report of Inspection Trip to Europe, Italy, Germany, Holland and England</i> by Brigadier General William Mitchell Photographic Supplement
	2	Photographs to Accompany General Mitchell's Report
	3	Reports and Manuscripts by William Mitchell
	4	Reports and Manuscripts
	5	Maps and Charts

**SERIES IV: OVERSIZED MATERIALS**

<u>Box</u>	<u>Folder</u>	
4	1	Diploma from United States Military Academy, Class of 1909, dated October 12, 1937 Diploma from the Command and General Staff School, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas June 17, 1927
	2	Notice of Appointment to United States Military Academy, effective June 15, 1905 Notice of Appointment as Second Lieutenant of Cavalry, effective June 11, 1909 Wright Company Flying Report (four copies) Expert Aviator's Certificate Number 3, October 2, 1912 Notice of Appointment as First Lieutenant of Cavalry, effective June 12, 1916 Notice of Appointment (Temporary) Lieutenant Colonel in the Signal Corps, effective August 5, 1917 Rating as Military Aviator, August 8, 1917 Notice of Appointment to Colonel, Air Service (Aeronautics), effective August 14, 1918 Notice of Appointment as Captain in the Air Service, effective July 1, 1920 Notice of Appointment to Major in the Air Service, effective July 1, 1920 (two copies) Certificate of award of Distinguished Service Medal for Exceptionally Meritorious and Distinguished Services in the Performance of Duties of Great Responsibility as Colonel, Air Service, United States Army, Chief of Staff and later as Commander of the Air Service, First Army, American Expeditionary Forces March 26, 1926 Early Birds Membership Certificate December 3, 1928

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<b><u>Box</u></b>	<b><u>Folder</u></b>	
4	2	Notice of Appointment to Colonel on the Retired List, effective August 1, 1933 Order of Daedalians Membership Certificate, October 15, 1936 Notice of Appointment to Brigadier General on the Retired List, effective June 13, 1940 Air Service Field Officers School Certificate
	3	Portrait of Colonel Thomas DeWitt Milling in uniform, taken in 1930s
	4	Certificate of decoration as Chevalier de l'Ordre National de la Legion d'honneur, May 22, 1919 (conservation problem)