

General William Mitchell Papers
A Finding Aid to the Collection in the Library of Congress



Manuscript Division, Library of Congress
Washington, D.C.
2013

Contact information: <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc/mss/mss.contact>

Catalog Record: <https://lcn.loc.gov/mm78033142>

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Prepared by Manuscript Division Staff

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Collection Summary

Title: General William Mitchell Papers

Span Dates: 1888-1946

Bulk Dates: (bulk 1907-1946)

ID No.: MSS33142

Creator: Mitchell, William, 1879-1936

Extent: 21,000 items

Extent: 67 containers plus 1 oversize

Extent: 25 linear feet

Language: Collection material in English

Location: Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

LC Catalog record: <https://lccn.loc.gov/mm78033142>

Summary: Army officer, farmer, and author. Diaries, correspondence, writings, and other material relating to Mitchell's court-martial; aerial operations of the army, the U.S. Army Signal Corps Aviation Section, later the U.S. Army Air Service, during World War I; and subsequent developments of air power.

Selected Search Terms

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the LC Catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically.

People

McSwain, John Jackson, 1875-1936--Correspondence.

Mitchell, William, 1879-1936.

Roosevelt, Franklin D. (Franklin Delano), 1882-1945--Correspondence.

Organizations

United States. Army--History--World War, 1914-1918.

United States. Army. Air Service.

United States. Army. Signal Corps. Aviation Section.

Subjects

Aerial photography.

Air power.

Courts-martial and courts of inquiry.

World War, 1914-1918--Aerial operations, American.

Occupations

Army officers.

Authors.

Farmers.

Provenance

The papers of William Mitchell, army officer, farmer, and author, were given to the Library of Congress by Elizabeth M. Byrd, William Mitchell, Jr., and Lucy Mitchell Gilpin in 1949. Additional papers were received by gift, deposit, and transfer, 1953-1971.

Processing History

The papers of William Mitchell were processed in 1957. Revisions and additions were made in 1980 and 1984. The finding aid was revised again in 2013.

Additional Guides

The Mitchell Papers have been described in the Library's *Quarterly Journal of Acquisitions* 6 (August 1949): 39-43 and 18 (May 1961): 136.

Copyright Status

Copyright in the unpublished writings of William Mitchell in these papers and in other collections of papers in the custody of the Library of Congress has been dedicated to the public.

Access and Restrictions

The papers of William Mitchell are open to research. Researchers are advised to contact the Manuscript Reading Room prior to visiting. Many collections are stored off-site and advance notice is needed to retrieve these items for research use.

Preferred Citation

Researchers wishing to cite this collection should include the following information: Container number, General William Mitchell Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Biographical Note

Date	Event
1879	Born, Nice, France
1898	Graduated, Racine College, Racine, Wis.
1898	Enlisted as a private, Company M, 1st Wisconsin Infantry, in Spanish-American War
1899	B.A., George Washington University, Washington, D.C.
1901-1904	Oversaw construction of Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System while stationed in Alaska
1904	Organized 1st Field Signal Company, Fort Leavenworth, Kans.; instructor in Signal School, Infantry and Cavalry School
1906	Served in army in San Francisco, Calif., after earthquake and in Cuba
1908	Graduated with distinction, Army School of the Line
1909	Graduated, Army Staff College
1909-1911	Served in Philippines
1913-1916	Duty on General Staff
1917-1918	Commander, air force, American Expeditionary Forces, with rank of brigadier-general, World War I
1919-1925	Director, Military Aeronautics in United States Air Service
1925	Court-martialed
1926	Resigned commission in United States Army
1926-1936	Retired to his farm near Middleburg, Va., where he engaged in stock raising and writing books and articles
1936	Died; buried in Milwaukee, Wis.

Scope and Content Note

The papers of General William ("Billy") Mitchell (1879-1936) span the years 1888-1946, with the bulk of the material concentrated in the period 1907-1946. Consisting of letters, diaries, clippings, photographs, writings, and other material, the

collection treats the early days of aviation as well as Mitchell's ideas and military career. The papers are organized into six series: [Diaries and Journals](#) ; [General Correspondence](#) ; [Family Correspondence](#) ; [Speech, Article, and Book File](#) ; [Subject File](#) ; and [Miscellany](#) .

Of particular interest among the unpublished writings are typescripts of books on Alaska as the key to the air defense of the United States, the Pacific as the probable scene of a second world war, and a history of aviation in World War I. These works, with illustrations, are accompanied by the diaries, reports, and eyewitness notes on which they were based. Other documents include typewritten transcripts of General Mitchell's testimony before various committees of Congress, many portions of which do not appear in the printed record; material relating to the court-martial of 1925-1926 that resulted in his resignation from military service; correspondence with members of Congress, especially John J. McSwain, chairman of the House Military Affairs Committee; letters endorsing Mitchell for appointment as assistant secretary of war for air; and a series of communications in 1932 and 1933 with Franklin D. Roosevelt whose candidacy for the presidency Mitchell supported.

Arrangement of the Papers

This collection is arranged in six series:

- [Diaries and Journals, 1917-1928](#)
- [General Correspondence, 1907-1946](#)
- [Family Correspondence, 1888-1927](#)
- [Speech, Article, and Book File, 1915-1928](#)
- [Subject File, 1911-1945](#)
- [Miscellany, 1918-1942](#)

Description of Series

Container	Series
BOX 1-5	<p><u>Diaries and Journals, 1917-1928</u></p> <p>Typescripts of diaries and clippings of portions of a diary published in <i>Liberty</i> magazine. Arranged by type of writing and therein date or title.</p>
BOX 6-19	<p><u>General Correspondence, 1907-1946</u></p> <p>Letters sent and received. Arranged chronologically. The period 1907-1920 is organized by month; 1921-1946 by year.</p>
BOX 19A-19B	<p><u>Family Correspondence, 1888-1927</u></p> <p>Correspondence of family members. Arranged chronologically.</p>
BOX 20-30	<p><u>Speech, Article, and Book File, 1915-1928</u></p> <p>Writings by and about Mitchell, including three of his books. <i>The Opening of Alaska, From Start to Finish of Our Greatest War</i>, and <i>Skyways</i>. Arranged by title or type of writing.</p>
BOX 31-47	<p><u>Subject File, 1911-1945</u></p> <p>Memoranda, reports, notes, war journals, bulletins, circulars, press releases, maps, charts relating to operations of the air corps in World War I and the subsequent developments of air power in the United States and other countries. Material on Mitchell's court-martial includes memoranda, reports, testimony, hearings, evidence, charge sheet, statements, indictment, clippings, and correspondence. Mostly arranged alphabetically.</p>
BOX 48-63	<p><u>Miscellany, 1918-1942</u></p> <p>Reports, memoranda, memorabilia, printed matter, clippings, and scrapbooks containing photographs, clippings, diagrams, and maps. Arranged by type of material.</p>

Container List

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BOX 1-5	Diaries and Journals, 1917-1928 Typescripts of diaries and clippings of portions of a diary published in <i>Liberty</i> magazine. Arranged by type of writing and therein date or title.
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BOX 1	July.-Dec. 1924 (6 folders)
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BOX 6-19	General Correspondence, 1907-1946 Letters sent and received. Arranged chronologically. The period 1907-1920 is organized by month; 1921-1946 by year.
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General Correspondence, 1907-1946

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BOX 20-30	Speech, Article, and Book File, 1915-1928 Writings by and about Mitchell, including three of his books. <i>The Opening of Alaska, From Start to Finish of Our Greatest War, and Skyways</i> . Arranged by title or type of writing.
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Speech, Article, and Book File, 1915-1928

Container

Contents

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BOX 31-47	Subject File, 1911-1945 Memoranda, reports, notes, war journals, bulletins, circulars, press releases, maps, charts relating to operations of the air corps in World War I and the subsequent developments of air power in the United States and other countries. Material on Mitchell's court-martial includes memoranda, reports, testimony, hearings, evidence, charge sheet, statements, indictment, clippings, and correspondence. Mostly arranged alphabetically.
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