

Aloys J. Wyen Collection

MS – 261

Wright State University  
Department of Special Collections and Archives

Processed by:  
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## **Introduction**

The Aloys J. Wyen Collection consists of the papers and photographs of early aviation pioneer, Aloys J. Wyen. Wyen was associated with the Wright Brothers in Dayton first in their bicycle shop and later at Huffman Prairie as a mechanic. He was with them at Belmont Park, New York, in 1910, and then flew at Los Angeles, California, from 1911 until 1916, when a crash hospitalized him for several months. He returned to Dayton and opened an automobile business. He later worked in aviation again as a mechanic with the WACO Aircraft Company of Troy, Ohio, and at Aeronca in Middletown, Ohio. The collection was donated to Special Collections and Archives in February 1995, by the daughters of Aloys Wyen: Mary Elizabeth Wyen, Shirley Wyen Huffman, Rita Wyen Martin, and Alvira Wyen Marburger. Consisting of .25 linear feet, the collection is organized into the following record series:

|             |                 |
|-------------|-----------------|
| Series I:   | Biographical    |
| Series II:  | Correspondence  |
| Series III: | Photographs     |
| Series IV:  | Wright Brothers |
| Series V:   | Miscellaneous   |

There are no restrictions on the use of this collection.

## Biographical Sketch

Aloys Joseph Wyen was born August 31, 1889 in Monchengladbach, Germany, the Rhineland area on the border of Holland. His mother, Mary (Hofer) Wyen was from the "Haus of Hofer" in the Rhineland. His father, Martin Wyen, was an officer in the Prussian army under Hindenberg. Aloys had two brothers: Frederick, born in 1887; and Peter, born in 1892.

In 1897, the family immigrated to America and settles in Mercer and Auglaize Counties, Northwest Ohio. Because of conditions in Germany and the threat of impending war, they did not want their son on the Prussian Army.

Their first year in America, the family came down with typhoid fever and Martin Wyen died. Two years later, with encouragement from her parish priest, Mary Wyen married John Schoenlein, a widower with six children, the youngest nine months. The family resided on a large farm in Mercer County, St. Peter, Ohio. Two years later, John Schoenlein died of a ruptured appendix.

In 1902, at the age of thirteen, Aloys went to Dayton, Ohio, where he initially worked for Orville and Wilbur Wright in their bicycle shop. Eventually, he also worked with the Wright Brothers at Huffman Prairie in flight mechanics in a shed which served as both a work shop and hanger.

For the next nine years, as a pioneer in flight mechanics, Aloys helped design and build the first planes, one of which is known as the Model R or Baby Grand, a small racing plane. Aloys designed and built the landing gear. It was taken to Belmont Park, New York, where it crashed and was later rebuilt. He also worked on the first American glider built by the WACO Aircraft Company in Troy, Ohio.

From 1911 to 1916, Aloys Wyen flew at Los Angeles, California. He crashed in 1916 and was hospitalized for many months. A souvenir memento that served as a remembrance to the day of his death at age ninety-six was a silver plate that was placed up his nose.

When released from the hospital in 1916, he returned to Dayton, Ohio, at which time he married Mary Hierholzer and started an automobile business. Aloys Wyen was a resident of Dayton for eighty one years. His spouse, Mary Wyen, was a resident for eighty three years. They had four daughters: Mary Elizabeth Wyen, Rita Louis Wyen Martin, Alvira Helen Wyen Marburger, and Shirley Ann Wyen Huffman.

Processor's Note: The above biographical sketch was written by Mary E. Wyen, Aloys Wyen's daughter.

## **Scope and Content**

### **Series I      Biographical**

This series contains biographical information on Aloys J. Wyen. Consisting of one file folder, it contains letters of reference, his obituary, notes written by his daughter, Mary E. Wyen, on his life and work, and information sheets completed for the Dayton Chamber of Commerce.

### **Series II      Correspondence**

This series contains correspondence to Aloys J. Wyen from friends and organizations interested in aviation and his relationship to the Wright Brothers.

### **Series III      Photographs**

The most significant series in the collection, these four files contain photographs of early aircraft which Aloys J. Wyen helped to build at Huffman Prairie with the Wrights and also photos of him in aircraft in Los Angeles in 1912. The series also contains photos of aircraft manufactured by WACO and Aeronca. Wyen was employed by both companies during his career in aviation. The series includes family portraits as well.

### **Series IV      Wright Brothers**

Series IV contains an original letter written by Milton Wright to W.H. Sheahan of the Aero Club of Pennsylvania, acknowledging his note of condolence at the death of Wilbur Wright. The letter is dated June 20, 1912. Also in this file is correspondence and plans related to the building of the Wright B Flyer by Wright Flyer B, Inc. Included in this file are letters from Wilkinson Wright to Mary E. Wyen concerning her father's relationship with the Wrights and the planes he worked on.

### **Series V      Miscellaneous**

The last series consisting of one file contains miscellaneous materials belonging to Aloys Wyen, such as postcards, a poem he wrote, and a news clipping on the publication of a Wright history.

## Container Listing

### Series I: Biographical

| <u>Box</u> | <u>File</u> | <u>Description</u>   | <u>Date</u>                                |
|------------|-------------|--|--|
| 1          | 1           | Letters of reference as to work experience<br>Dayton Chamber of Commerce, Aviation Dep. Info. Sheet<br>Obituary<br>Biographical sketch written by daughter, Mary E. Wyen | 1941-1942<br>1971<br>Dec. 17, 1985<br>1995 |

### Series II: Correspondence

| <u>Box</u> | <u>File</u> | <u>Description</u>   | <u>Date</u>  |
|------------|-------------|--|--|
| 1          | 2           | W.H. Sheahan (Aero Club of Pennsylvania) to Aloys J. Wyen<br>Stan (Old WACO buddy) to Aloys J. Wyen<br>Melba Hunt, Kettering Moraine Historical Society to Aloys J. Wyen<br>Dayton Area Chamber of Commerce to Aloys J. Wyen | July 23, 1946<br>Oct. 16, 1963<br>June 1971<br>1972-1974 |
|            | 11          | Correspondence of Mary Wyen  | 1996   |

### Series III: Photographs

| <u>Box</u> | <u>File</u> | <u>Description</u>  | <u>Date</u>                           |
|------------|-------------|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1          | 3           | Aviation- Huffman Prairie, Dayton, Ohio<br>4 views of Model R (Baby Grand)<br>Two of these match photos in the Wright Brothers Collection<br><br>Belmont Park, New York<br>Reprint from Wright Brothers Collection<br>Aloys J. Wyen in photo with Wilbur Wright | 1910<br><br>1910                      |
|            | 4           | Aviation- Los Angeles, California<br><br>Aloys Wyen in Glenn Martin plane (four copies)<br>Aloys Wyen standing next to plane (two copies)<br>Aloys Wyen and mock up of plane built for a man by the name of Williams of Philadelphia (three photos)             | 1912                                  |
|            | 5           | Aviation- Aeronca, WACO, and others<br><br>View of aircraft at Wright Field<br>First 15 place glider made in America at Troy, OH<br>Aeronca Arrow and Aeronca Tandem<br>WACO CG-4A<br>WACO designed CG-4A Troop Glider  | ca. 1940s<br><br>1943<br>n.d.<br>n.d. |

| <u>Box</u> | <u>File</u> | <u>Description</u>  | <u>Date</u>   |
|------------|-------------|---|---------------|
| 1          | 6           | General- Family Photographs   | ca. 1910-1980 |
|            |             | Postcard photo – Aloys Wyen and _____<br>Palace Studio, 118 S. Ludlow St., Dayton, Ohio | n.d.          |
|            |             | Oval Portrait of Aloys J. Wyen  | n.d.          |
|            |             | Aloys, Frederick and Peter Wyen (brothers)<br>Hoverman Studio, New Bremen, Ohio         | n.d.          |
|            |             | Wedding photos (two views)<br>Aloys J. and Mary Wyen                                    | 1916          |
|            |             | Aloys J. and Mary Wyen  | ca. 1980's    |
|            |             | Views of scenery, Los Angeles, California   | 1912          |
|            |             | View of house, possible Los Angeles   | n.d.          |
|            |             | View of interior of business establishment, factory<br>of machine shop, unidentified    | n.d.          |
|            |             | View of malted milk machine invented by<br>Aloys J. Wyen                                | n.d.          |

#### **Series IV: Wright Brothers**

| <u>Box</u> | <u>File</u> | <u>Description</u>   | <u>Date</u>   |
|------------|-------------|--|---------------|
| 1          | 7           | Letter from Milton Wright to W.H. Sheahan acknowledging<br>letter of condolence at Wilbur Wright's death | June 20, 1912 |
|            | 8           | Wright B Flyer, Inc.   | 1976          |
|            | 9           | Correspondence between Wilkinson Wright and Mary Wyen  | 1987-1988     |

#### **Series V: Miscellaneous**

| <u>Box</u> | <u>File</u> | <u>Description</u>  | <u>Date</u> |
|------------|-------------|---|-------------|
| 1          | 9           | Hope on Good Thoughts – poem by A.J. Wyen<br>Postcards, News clipping | July 1930   |