

REFERENCE CODE: AkAMH

REPOSITORY NAME:

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Guide prepared by: Sara Piasecki, Photo Archivist

TITLE: Russel Hyde Merrill Papers

COLLECTION NUMBER: B1957.007

OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTION

Dates: circa 1898-1957

Extent: 1 box, 0.4 linear feet

Language and Scripts: The collection is in English.

Name of creator(s): Russel Merrill, E. Andrews, T. Davis

Administrative/Biographical History:

Russel Hyde Merrill was born in April 8, 1894 in Des Moines, Iowa, to Samuel and Fannie Hyde Merrill. He trained as an aviator during World War I, receiving his certification in March 1918. In Portland in 1925, Merrill and Roy Davis purchased an airplane and flew it to Alaska and back; they flew again to Alaska in 1926 in a second airplane. In 1927, Merrill relocated to Anchorage and began flying for Anchorage Air Transport. Merrill went missing on a flight that left Anchorage on September 16, 1929, and was later reported dead after crashing in Cook Inlet.

Scope and Content Description:

The collection consists of 41 photographs (including prints, negatives, and photographic postcards), correspondence, personal papers, news clippings, and other ephemera pertaining to the life and aviation career of Russ Merrill. For more information, see Detailed Description of Collection below.

Arrangement: Arranged by format and subject.

CONDITIONS GOVERNING ACCESS AND USE

Restrictions on Access: The collection is open for research use.

Physical Access: Original items in good condition.

Technical Access: No special equipment is needed to access the materials.

Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use:

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Preferred Citation:

Russel Hyde Merrill Papers, Anchorage Museum, B1957.007

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Acquisition and Appraisal Information

Donated to Cook Inlet Historical Society by brother L. J. "Jerry" Merrill through Bob Reeve in April 1957. Transferred from CIHS to the Museum.

Processing Note

Three images were transferred to the Archives, and later combined with additional materials into one accession. At the time of original processing, possibly in the 1980s, photos were individually accessioned 1-41. The images were subsequently rearranged into subject folders. At some point between further processing in 2003, and rearrangement in 2015, photos 1, 3, 4, 6, and 7 were misplaced, although some evidence suggests that numbers 4, 6, and 7 might not have been assigned. Merrill's Oregon pilot's license was on display in the Alaska Gallery from the 1980s until 2014.

Separated Materials

Negatives scanned and removed to freezer in 2015.

RELATED MATERIALS

Spirit of Russ Merrill Audiotapes, B1982.089

Durrell/Stillman Collection, B2001.019

Merrill Field Records, B2003.012

SUBJECTS

Merrill, Russel, 1894-1929

Anchorage Air Transport, Inc.
Merrill Field Airport (Anchorage, Alaska)
Air pilots—Alaska
Aeronautics—Alaska
Aircraft accidents—Alaska
Barrow (Alaska)
Curry (Alaska)
Nome (Alaska)

Detailed Description of the Collection

F1: Photographs

- .1 – [missing]
- .2 – [four men with Anchorage Air Transport Travel Air airplane on floats, sitting on the mudflats, Merrill in cockpit, one man shooting film or stills with camera. Has copy neg]
- .3 – [missing]
- .4 – [missing]
- .5 – Dedication, Merrill plaque & beacon [group gathered at ceremony at Merrill Field, flag-draped memorial underneath steel girding of transmission tower at right. Cf. .14]
- .6 – [missing]
- .7 – Anchorage Air Transport Inc. Passenger and Express Rates. A.A. Shonbeck, Manager [flyer. List of destinations, fares for 1-3 passengers, freight rate per pound]
- .8a – Townsend, Des Moines [studio portrait of Merrill, circa 1909]
- .8b – Child, Grinnell, Ia. [studio portrait of Merrill, circa 1915]
- .8c – Harry Davey, photographer, Palo Alto [studio portrait of Russel Merrill, right, possibly with father and brother, circa 1922]
- .8d – Hostetler, 1917 [studio portrait of Merrill wearing Navy uniform]
- .8e – Townsend, Des Moines [studio portrait of Merrill, circa 1909]
- .9 – Russel Merrill's plane, Travel Air 7000 J-4 (he was killed in this plane) on the right Noel Wien's Stinson Detrioter (Wien Alaska Airways) taken at Fairbanks [two men standing next to Anchorage No. 1 biplane at left, pilot climbing into cockpit, large group of men and woman standing next to second biplane at right, Weeks Field]
- .10 – Russ Merrill, USN Air Service [studio portrait of Merrill wearing Navy uniform. Has neg]
- .11a – Portland, Oregon [vignetted portrait of Merrill standing next to airplane. Detail of 11b]
- .11b – Russel Hyde Merrill with his aunt, Annie Merrill, in Portland, 1926 [two people standing on beach, airplane in background. neg only, with modern contact print]
- .12a – [vignetted portrait of Merrill wearing coveralls, standing next to airplane. Detail of 12b]
- .12b – Russel Hyde Merrill with Curtis M.F. He and Roy J. Davis flew it to Anchorage in 1925 [portrait of Merrill standing next to Curtiss Model F amphibious airplane. neg only, with modern contact print]
- .13 – [portrait of Merrill as young boy, standing next to house, circa 1898? Print mounted to glass]
- .14 – Russel Merrill memorial, Sept. 1929, at Merrill Field. Ray Peterson knocked it [communications tower] down with Curtiss Robin [crowd gathered for dedication of plaque]

and beacon at Merrill Field, flag-draped plaque in center underneath tower, automobiles parked at right. Cf. .5]

.15 – [studio portrait of Merrill in Navy uniform. Removed from Navy pilot's license, 1918]

.16 – Russel Merrill's children [studio portrait of older woman with two young boys]

.17 – Jan. 12, 1913 [family of five posed on wooden porch in winter, Russel second from left]

.18 – Dr. A. D. Haverstock & a friend's baby. Russ was here nite before he took last trip, Sept. 1929 [man standing outside log cabin, holding infant]

.19 – Mrs. D. Price & Lois Price Haverstock. Russ spent evening here nite before he took last trip in Sept. 1929, at home at Seward, Alaska [two women standing in front of log cabin]

.20 – [photograph of memorial plaque, reading "To that dauntless pioneer of the air, Russel Hyde Merrill, whose life's aim was the development of aviation in Alaska, September 16, 1929"]

.21 – The midnight sun at Barrow about June 21st. Exposures about ½ hour apart. Lagoon in foreground (there is still ice under water) and ice-covered ocean in background [time-lapse photography of midnight sun]

.22 – 34. Le Conte Bay. E. Andrews photo [postcard, addressed from Thyra & Russel to Miss A.D. Merrill, postmarked Petersburg July 24, 1925]

.23 – 5500. Dock Street, Ketchikan, Alaska. c. D[?] [postcard, addressed from Thyra to Miss A.D. Merrill, postmarked Ketchikan June 21, 1925]

.24 – Looking out over ice-covered Arctic Ocean a few days before we left, about July 1st [scenic of shore ice]

.25 – 484. Mendenhall Glacier. c. T. Davis [postcard, addressed from Russel to Miss Annie D. Merrill, dated Juneau July 31, 1925]

.26 – Still at Curry! [...] This picture shows landing field here in foreground. Hotel is building furthest to the right [postcard, addressed from Russel to Jerry Merrill, dated January 7, 1929]

.27 – A sod house or igloo at Barrow [barabara in center, modern house at left, church in background at right]

.28 – Hospital at Barrow, where I spent many happy (?) hours [hospital and two outbuildings on tundra]

.29 – Curry Hotel, Alaska Railroad [Curry Hotel and greenhouse, Alaska Railroad platform at left. Postcard, addressed from Russel to Jerry Merrill, dated January 3, 1929]

.30 – Nome, no ice in ocean here [aerial of Nome]

.31 – Church at Barrow [exterior of Utqiagvik Presbyterian Church]

.32 – A half breed Esquimo [young Inupiat child wearing fur-trimmed parka, sitting on high chair on porch]

.33 – [two men reclining on rocky ground in Cascade Mountains near Timberline Lodge, Merrill at left]

.34 – On top of Mt. Hood Lodge, Oct. 5, 1919 [Merrill wearing three-piece suit, sitting on wooden bench outdoors]

.35 – On top of Mt. Hood Lodge, Oct. 5, 1919 [Merrill wearing three-piece suit, sitting on wooden bench outdoors]

.36 – [two men wearing climbing gear, hats, sunglasses, and sunscreen standing on snow outside Timberline Lodge, Merrill at right]

.37 – [Merrill wearing military uniform posed outside long low building, 1919?]

- .38 – [two men wearing climbing gear, hats, sunglasses, and sunscreen standing on snow outside Timberline Lodge, Merrill at left]
.39 – [Merrill wearing climbing gear, hat, and sunglasses, probably at Timberline Lodge]
.40 – [Merrill wearing aviator's cap, jacket, and boots standing at end of dock, 1920s]
.41 – [Merrill wearing brimmed hat, suit coat, necktie, and lace-up boots posed outdoors in brush, 1920s]

F2: Original photo folders

F3: Biographical information

Research conducted by Jerry Merrill in 1937-1938

F4: Licenses (1918-1926)

Note: portrait from Navy pilot's license, 1918, accessioned as photograph .15 – see F1

F5: Correspondence (1904-1918, no date)

- Russel to Father, March 2, 1904
- Russel to Jerry, Naval Air Station, Key West, January 27, 1918
- Russel to Jerry, Naval Air Station, Key West, February 15, 1918
- Russel to Jerry, Naval Air Station, Key West, March 29, 1918
- Christmas card. No date

F6: Correspondence (1923-1929)

- Russel to Jerry, Coronado, California, December 20, 1923
- Russel to Jerry, Vancouver, British Columbia, June 20, 1926
- Russel to Jerry, Ketchikan, October 20, 1926
- Russel to Jerry, Ketchikan, October 22, 1926
- R.H. Merrill to E.E. Grout, Ketchikan, November 6, 1926
- Russel to Jerry, Anchorage, March 3, 1927
- Russel to Jerry, Anchorage, March 12, 1927
- Russel to Jerry, Anchorage?, April 1, 1927
- Russel to Jerry, Candle, April 17, 1927
- Postcard. R.H. Merrill to unknown recipient, May 31, 1927
- Russel to Jerry, Anchorage, June 3, 1927
- Russel to Jerry, Anchorage, June 18, 1927
- Russel to Jerry, Anchorage, December 3, 1927
- Russel to Jerry, Anchorage, December 3, 1927
- Russel to Jerry, Anchorage, December 7, 1927
- Russel to Jerry, Anchorage, January 21, 1928
- Russel to Jerry, Seward, March 19, 1928
- Russel to Jerry, Anchorage, April 14, 1928
- Thyra to Jerry, Anchorage, May 19, 1928
- Russel to Jerry, Anchorage, August 5, 1928
- Russel to Jerry, Anchorage?, August 11, 1928

- Russel to Jerry, Anchorage, August 19, 1928
- Russel to Jerry, Anchorage, September 13, 1928
- Russel to Jerry, Curry, January 4, 1929
- Russel to Jerry, Anchorage, February 27, 1929
- Russel to Jerry, Anchorage, March 7, 1929. With "Exhibit A: Anchorage Air Transport, Inc., Financial Statement for the year ended December 31, 1928"
- Russel to Jerry, Anchorage, May 3, 1929
- Russel to Jerry, Anchorage, May 17, 1929
- Russel to Jerry, Anchorage, May 20, 1929
- Russel to Jerry, Anchorage?, May 24, 1929
- Russel to Jerry, Anchorage, June 6, 1929
- Russel to Jerry, Anchorage, June 30, 1929
- Russel to Jerry, S.S. *Yukon*, August 6, 1929
- Thyra to Jerry, Anchorage, October 4, 1929

F7: Telegrams, Barrow crash (1928)

- Thyra to Jerry, May 26?
- Annie D. Merrill to Jerry, May 28
- Jerry to Annie D. Merrill, May 28
- Jerry to E.D. Merrill, May 28
- Thyra to Jerry, June 5
- Jerry to Thyra, June 27
- Anchorage Air Transport to Jerry, June 28
- Jerry to Anchorage Air Transport, June 28
- Jerry to Russ, June 28
- Anchorage Air Transport to Jerry, June 29
- Jerry to E.D. Merrill, June 29
- Jerry to Mary Hyde, June 29
- Anchorage Air Transport to Jerry, July 3
- Jerry to Anchorage Air Transport, July 3
- Thyra to Jerry, July 7
- Jerry to Anchorage Air Transport, July 18
- Shonbeck to Jerry, July 19
- Thyra to Jerry, July 25?
- Thyra to E.O. Allen, August 1
- Russel to Jerry, September 3
- Russel to Jerry, September 14
- Typescript. "From Anchorage Daily Times, Anchorage, Alaska, June 8, 1928. Official log as left by pilot R.H. Merrill."

F8: Telegrams, Death (1929)

- Thyra to Jerry, September 28
- Thyra to Jerry, September 29
- Jerry to Thyra, September 30

- Jerry to E.D. Merrill, September 30
- E.D. Merrill to Jerry, September 30?
- Jerry to Thyra, October 2
- Jerry to E.D. Merrill, October 3
- Thyra to Jerry, October 3
- Jerry to E.D. Merrill, October 4
- Thyra to Jerry, October 9
- Jerry to Annie D. Merrill, October 10
- Jerry to E.D. Merrill, October 10
- Jerry to Thyra, October 10
- Thyra to Jerry, October 22
- Jerry to Thyra, October 23
- Jerry to Annie D. Merrill, October 23

F9: Death, Cope deposition (1929)

- Alonzo Cope in the Anchorage Precinct, Territory of Alaska, December 9, 1929

F10: Correspondence and clippings, Durrell-Stillman trip (1929)

- Jerry to Joseph H. Durrell, November 9
- Joseph H. Durrell to Jerry, November 22
- Jerry to Joseph H. Durrell, November 29
- Joseph H. Durrell to Jerry, December 6
- Jerry to Joseph H. Durrell, December 11
- Clipping. "J.H. Durrell, former Fort Dodger, writes of Alaskan big game hunt." *Fort Dodge messenger & chronicle*, Thursday, October 31
- Clipping. "Durrell tells of big game hunt." *Fergus Falls daily journal*, Saturday, November 16

F11: Correspondence (1930)

Charles G. Clarke to Thyra, Los Angeles, California, March 31

F12: Clippings – Flights (1925-1929)

F13: Clippings – Barrow crash (1928-1954)

F14: Clippings – Death (1929-1930)

F15: Clippings – Merrill Field (1930, 1933)

Guide updated: May 2, 2017