



Wright Memorial on Wright Brothers Hill overlooks Huffman Prairie Flying Field.

CREATING A SUITABLE MEMORIAL

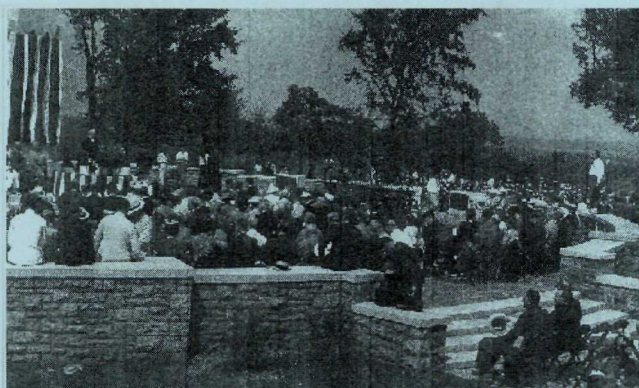
Wright Memorial on Wright Brothers Hill is a 27-acre designed landscape, planned and constructed between 1922 and 1940 by the Wright Memorial Committee, the Miami Conservancy District, and the National Park Service, in consultation with the Olmsted Brothers landscape architectural firm. Orville Wright was personally involved with the development of the memorial. Plans to erect a memorial in honor of Dayton residents Wilbur and Orville Wright first began with the creation of the Wright Memorial Committee in 1912. Its members, including such Dayton notables as Edward A. Deeds and John H. Patterson, initially decided on a granite boulder with a bronze inscription recalling the Wright brothers' historic flights on December 17, 1903, at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. In 1913, Dayton experienced a devastating flood, which put all plans on hold. Construction of a revised design finally began in 1938 on land owned by the Miami Conservancy District overlooking the Huffman Prairie Flying Field, where the Wright brothers perfected the airplane in 1904 and 1905. An African American camp of the Civilian Conservation Corps helped carry out the plans designed by the Olmsted Brothers. The naturalistic landscape design of the 27-acre parcel provides the setting for the formal memorial and plaza.

DEDICATION

Wright Memorial was dedicated on August 19, 1940, which was Orville Wright's 69th birthday. Orville and several of his early aviation students were present, including Army Air Corps commander General Henry "Hap" Arnold. In his remarks during the dedication program, Edward A. Deeds, chairman of the Wright Memorial Committee, paid tribute to the inventive genius of the Wright brothers: *"Probably in no instance in the history of scientific achievement is there a more outstanding example of accomplishment based on original research and scientific development and made practical by inventive genius."*

Part of the crowd gathered at Wright Memorial for the August 19, 1940 dedication.

(Photo courtesy of Special Collections and Archives, Wright State University.)



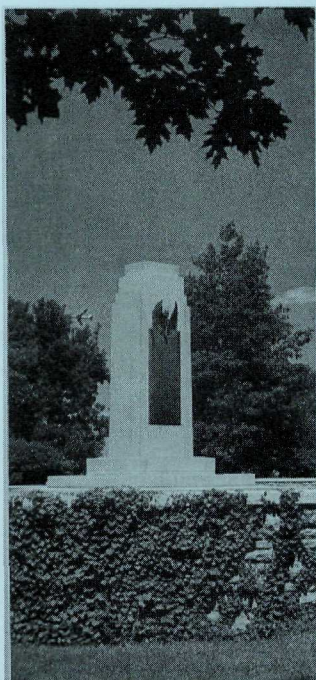
DESIGN

The monument is a 17-foot high obelisk made of pink North Carolina granite, from the same quarry as that used for the Wright Brothers National Memorial in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina. A bronze plaque commemorating the Wright brothers' accomplishments adorns the shaft. Four smaller bronze plaques are located on the memorial's inner wall encircling the plaza. One names early flyers trained at Huffman Prairie Flying Field; another notes the contributions Wright-Patterson Air Force Base has made to aviation; the third indicates the direction to nearby Huffman Prairie Flying Field; and the last directs you to Native American burial mounds on the site. Built by the Adena Culture, the mounds date between B.C. 500 and 200 A.D. They are listed on the National Register of Historic Places.



Because of their archeological significance, The Wright Brothers Hill Mound Group was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in February 1974.

ANNUAL CEREMONY

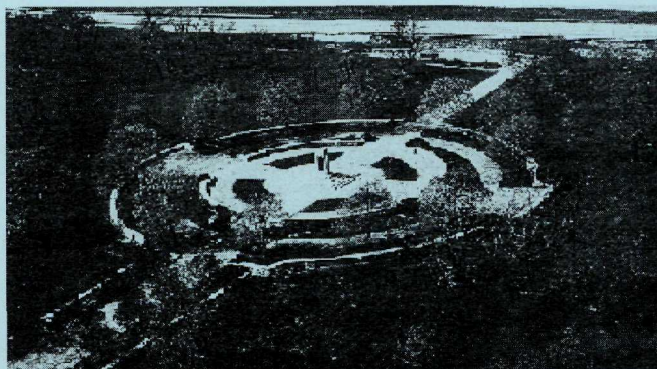


In 1978, the Miami Conservancy District transferred the memorial site to the Air Force as part of the 75th anniversary of powered flight. One of the provisions of the property transfer was that the site be preserved as a public memorial in tribute to the Wright brothers. The Air Force conducts a ceremony at the memorial every December 17th to commemorate the Wright brothers' first flights at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, in 1903. A high-ranking Air Force official gives a brief presentation, a wreath is laid at the base of the memorial, followed by a fly over. A relative from the Wright family is present at the ceremony.

In 1992, Congress created Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park. Huffman Prairie Flying Field is one of four units of the park. Although Wright Memorial is not part of the park proper, it is considered an adjunct site because of its link to the Wright brothers and the flying field.

REHABILITATION

Between 1978, when the Air Force acquired the property, and 1996, very little other than routine maintenance was needed at the memorial. By 1996, however, the memorial was beginning to show the effects of time and was in need of repairs. The 88th Air Base Wing Office of Environmental Management at Wright-Patterson Air Force Base asked the Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation, in conjunction with the Denver Service Center, both units of the National Park Service, to prepare plans to rehabilitate the site. In September 1997, Wright-Patterson Air Force Base awarded a contract to Kelchner Environmental of Centerville, Ohio, who, with their subcontractor, Parks Construction, replaced the bluestone at the plaza area, repaired the steps, walls, and entry gates, and restored some of the landscaping around the plaza. The new bluestone is identical to the original in color, size, pattern, and source. The project, which began in October 1997, was completed in August 1998.



Aerial view of Wright Memorial.