

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:04,000
<music - upbeat, with an old record sound>

2
00:00:04,000 --> 00:00:08,000
<music - upbeat, with an old record sound>

3
00:00:08,000 --> 00:00:12,000
<music - upbeat, with an old record sound>

4
00:00:12,000 --> 00:00:16,000
<music - upbeat, with an old record sound>

5
00:00:16,000 --> 00:00:20,733
Huffman Prairie Flying Field is located on Wright Patterson Airforce Base

6
00:00:20,733 --> 00:00:24,000
which is just a few miles from Wright State University

7
00:00:24,000 --> 00:00:28,900
and, that is the site of the Wright Brothers experimental flying field

8
00:00:28,900 --> 00:00:32,000
that they used in 1904 and 1905

9
00:00:32,000 --> 00:00:36,000
and all the way up through about 1915. It was the site of

10
00:00:36,000 --> 00:00:40,700
the Wright Brothers School of Aviation where they trained over 100 pilots to fly.

11
00:00:40,700 --> 00:00:44,066
There's so many stories

12
00:00:44,066 --> 00:00:48,000
about Huffman Prairie Flying Field, especially during the

13

00:00:48,000 --> 00:00:52,000

years that Wilbur and Orville were experimenting, trying to perfect

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00:00:52,000 --> 00:00:56,000

the airplane in 1904 and 1905. They tried to keep

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00:00:56,000 --> 00:00:58,766

their experiments secret at the Flying Field.

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00:00:58,766 --> 00:01:04,866

They would actually ride the traction line, the trains, out from Dayton to the Flying Field

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00:01:04,866 --> 00:01:11,600

And, after a while, people started to realize what was going on at Huffman Prairie Flying Field.

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00:01:12,000 --> 00:01:16,000

The conductors on the trains would actually hold us their trains to

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00:01:16,000 --> 00:01:20,000

try to arrive at same time that the Wright's would be flying,

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00:01:20,000 --> 00:01:24,766

and the Wright's tried to time their flights so that nobody could see them <steam engine sound underneath>.

21

00:01:24,766 --> 00:01:28,000

So, you've got this, interesting, um

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00:01:28,000 --> 00:01:34,600

activity going on where the public really did want to get a look at what was going on and the Wright's were trying to keep it secret.

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00:01:34,600 --> 00:01:40,700

By 1910, of course, the Wright's had flown in Europe and had become famous worldwide,

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00:01:40,700 --> 00:01:44,200

and people were flocking to Huffman Prairie Flying Field.

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00:01:44,200 --> 00:01:48,900

And so we have photographs of lots of townspeople lined up along the fence row

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00:01:48,900 --> 00:01:52,666

They had come out to the Prairie in wagons, horse drawn wagons

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00:01:52,666 --> 00:02:00,000

and bicycles, any way they could get there. We have these wonderful photographs of the pilots

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00:02:00,000 --> 00:02:08,000

who were learning to fly, clowning around for all these spectators along the fence row while they were waiting for the wind conditions to be right.

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00:02:08,000 --> 00:02:12,000

<music>

30

00:02:12,000 --> 00:02:16,000

Our Wright Brother's collection has lots of

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00:02:16,000 --> 00:02:20,600

letters, original letters written by members of the Wright family

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00:02:20,600 --> 00:02:24,000

to one another or correspondence between their friends and family

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00:02:24,000 --> 00:02:26,266

to the Wright's and back and forth.

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00:02:26,266 --> 00:02:31,100

And those letters reveal so many stories about what was going on in the family.

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00:02:31,100 --> 00:02:36,000

One of my favorite letters that we received about five years ago

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00:02:36,000 --> 00:02:40,000

is a letter written by Milton Wright, the father of the Wright brothers,

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00:02:40,000 --> 00:02:42,966

to a niece of his who lived in Indiana.

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00:02:42,966 --> 00:02:48,000

And Milton is writing this letter in September of 1910. And just a couple of months

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00:02:48,000 --> 00:02:52,433

before that in May, he had taken his one and only flight in an airplane.

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00:02:52,433 --> 00:02:56,566

He was in his eighties, and he flew with Orville at Huffman Prairie.

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00:02:56,566 --> 00:03:00,366

And he's writing to his niece about it. I got really excited when I

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00:03:00,366 --> 00:03:10,466

started reading this letter thinking Milton is going to really, heavily describe what it was like off to take off and fly over Huffman Prairie and land again.

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00:03:10,466 --> 00:03:16,766

And he only says one line. He says - I was no more afraid than if I had stepped into a buggy.

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00:03:16,766 --> 00:03:24,266

I think that the Huffman Prairie Flying Field represents something tangible

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00:03:24,266 --> 00:03:34,533

that people can go and visit. They can stand there and look out across the prairie and they can also look at the original photographs, of what took place there.

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00:03:34,533 --> 00:03:40,000

You know if you stand at the prairie today, it just looks like a prairie. There are plants. You can hear the birds singing.

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00:03:40,000 --> 00:03:44,000

You can take a walk on the trails around there.

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00:03:44,000 --> 00:03:48,000

And it's a prairie, it's a nature preserve.

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00:03:48,000 --> 00:03:56,000

But if you look at the photographs, and keep that in your mind as you stand there and look at the prairie you can almost hear the sounds

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00:03:56,000 --> 00:04:05,900

of the spectators along the fence or them starting the engines on these fliers. Or the pilots hollering back and forth to one another.

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00:04:05,900 --> 00:04:12,000

You can hear the whir of the propellers. And I think the significance of the

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00:04:12,000 --> 00:04:23,033

of the prairie is that it connects people to a site, yes. But it also connects them to an event, something very unique that happened in Dayton

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00:04:23,033 --> 00:04:29,566

that represents this new invention, flight, that was going to change so much in our world.

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00:04:29,566 --> 00:04:36,000

So, it's a combination of standing in the physical place, but also realizing and trying

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00:04:36,000 --> 00:04:39,766

to imagine yourself standing there along the fence row with all those spectators

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00:04:39,766 --> 00:04:44,000

and seeing something totally new that you'd never seen before.

57

00:04:44,000 --> 00:04:48,000

Music <While they were dancing around>