

Guide to the  
Clara Adams Papers Addition  
1884-1971

Date Range: 1913-1940  
Bulk Dates: 1936-1939

2.2 Linear Feet

Accession Number: 1-07  
Collection Number: H1-07

Prepared by

Paul A. Oelkrug, C. A.

CITATION: Clara Adams Papers Addition, Document name/type, Folder number, Box number, Series number, History of Aviation Collection, Special Collections Department, McDermott Library, The University of Texas at Dallas.

Special Collections Department  
The University of Texas at Dallas

## Table of Contents

Biographical Sketch .....	1
Sources .....	2
Additional Sources .....	2
Series Description .....	3
Series I. Documents, 1913-1933. 5 Folders.....	3
Series II. Newspaper Clippings, 1919-1929. 1 Folder.....	3
Series III. Ephemera. 9 Folders.....	3
Series IV. Artifacts. 1 Folder.....	3
Series V. Images. 1.8 Linear Feet.....	3
Scope and Content Note.....	3
Provenance Statement.....	3
Literary Rights Statement .....	3
Note to Researcher.....	4
H1-07 CLARA ADAMS PAPERS ADDITION: CONTAINER LIST .....	5
Series I. Documents .....	5
Series II. Clippings.....	5
Series III. Ephemera.....	6
Series IV. Artifacts.....	7
Series V. Images .....	7

## **Biographical Sketch**

Clara Adams was born on December 3, 1855 in Cincinnati Ohio. Her parents were Walter and Ida Grabau and her paternal grandmother was Augusta von Hindenburg, a distant relative of German President, Paul von Hindenburg. Her mother, Ida, lived next door to Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin in Baden-Baden, Germany.

Clara received training at the Conservatory of Music in Leipzig, Germany, where her father was a professor of music. While studying there, Clara became an accomplished piano player. She also learned to speak several languages and had some artistic talent as well.

Clara married George Lincoln Adams of Boston, Massachusetts, a man forty years her senior. They built a home in Tannersville, Pennsylvania where her husband owned and operated a chain of tanneries in that state. Partly because of the age difference, their marriage was a short one. George passed away in 1929 making Clara a wealthy widow.

Clara Adam's main claim to fame is that she holds many firsts for women in aviation, not as a pilot, but as a paying passenger. Her first flight came in March 1914 at Lake Eustis, Florida where she went up in a Thomas Flying Boat piloted by Walter E. Johnson. This flight sparked an interest in aviation that lasted the rest of her life.

Clara was introduced to Lighter-Than-Air transportation through a letter of introduction by General Paul von Hindenburg to Dr. Hugo Eckener. She was given a ride on the ZR III during one of her test flights. The Zeppelin Company built the ZR-III for the United States Navy as war reparations for WWI. When the ZR-III was delivered to the Navy, the ship was christened the *USS Los Angeles*.

One of Clara's most memorable journeys took place in 1928 when the Graf Zeppelin made its first trip from Europe to the United States and back. Clara was the first woman to buy a ticket to fly across the Atlantic, paying the price of \$3,000.00. She was the only woman on the trip with the flight lasting seventy-one hours.

In 1931 she again became the first woman to purchase a ticket to fly on, what was then the largest aircraft ever built, the Dornier DO-X flying boat. The DO-X had left Germany for a multi-continent trip. Clara joined the DO-X's journey in Rio de Janeiro where the DO-X was to continue on to New York.

Clara was among the passengers that made the maiden flight of the Hindenburg in 1936, a sixty-one hour flight from Germany to Lakehurst, New Jersey. The same year she made the maiden voyage in the Hindenburg, Clara made another historic flight, the inaugural flight of Pan American's China Clipper; flying from California across the Pacific. All together, in 1936 Clara flew 27,000 miles.

During her many years of flying, Clara Adams flew in free balloons, gliders, Zeppelins, and various passenger aircraft. Along the way she met many famous flyers such as Amelia Earhart, Hugo Eckener, Edwin Musik, and the Stinson sisters to name a few. Her hobby was being a "historic first flyer," as she is sometimes called. She was never associated with any commercial concern or publications and was always a private passenger.

According to her passport, Clara Adams listed her occupation as "lecturer and writer," no doubt a vocation that grew from her many flying firsts. On her travels, she

always kept the collector in mind. She purchased and signed many first day covers, programs, schedules, menus, and other airline memorabilia.

Her flying came to an abrupt halt with the outbreak of WWII and although she may have continued flying, she made no more inaugural flights. It would not be until 1966 when she again made news. She flew with five of the original passengers and officers to celebrate the thirtieth anniversary of the first passenger flight across the Pacific.

Clara Adams died 10 February 1971 with her passing relatively unnoticed. However, she did plan her last plane ride. She had her body cremated and her ashes scattered over the ocean from an airplane.

Although not a pilot, Clara helped to contribute to the advancement of commercial aviation. Today, flying is taken for granted, but at a time when commercial aviation was in its infancy, she and other brave souls like her who believed in the future of mass passenger service braved the dangers and flew over great distances in aircraft whose airworthiness was questionable.

**Sources:**

*Clara Adams Collection*, Finding Aid, History of Aviation Collection, Special Collections Department, McDermott Library, The University of Texas at Dallas.

Provan, Jon. *Clara Adams*. Kelkheim, West Germany, New York: Luftschiff-Zeppelin Collection, Jon Provon, 1985.

**Additional Sources:**

*Erik Hildes-Heim Collection*, History of Aviation Collection, Special Collections Department, McDermott Library, The University of Texas at Dallas.

*Vice Admiral Charles E. Rosendahl Collection*, History of Aviation Collection, Special Collections Department, McDermott Library, The University of Texas at Dallas.

*Douglas Robinson Collection*, History of Aviation Collection, Special Collections Department, McDermott Library, The University of Texas at Dallas.

*Edwin C. Musick Collection*, History of Aviation Collection, Special Collections Department, McDermott Library, The University of Texas at Dallas.

*Stella Randolph Collection*, History of Aviation Collection, Special Collections Department, McDermott Library, The University of Texas at Dallas.

## **Series Description**

The *Clara Adams Papers Addition* is arranged in five series.

### **Series I. Documents, 1913-1933. 5 Folders.**

Information in this series includes background information, a synopsis of Clara Adam's aviation "firsts," written by Clara Adams, a letter from Augustus Post, and diaries.

### **Series II. Newspaper Clippings, 1919-1929. 1 Folder.**

*New York Herald* clipping of Clara Adams in hydroplane and record world passenger flight.

### **Series III. Ephemera. 9 Folders.**

Items in this series include baggage tags, schedules, brochures, timetables, menus, and a route map.

### **Series IV. Artifacts. 1 Folder.**

Patch from the Graf Zeppelin's envelope, stationary with Hugo Eckener's autograph, sketches by Clara Adams, and a Zeppelin scarf.

### **Series V. Images. 1.8 Linear Feet.**

Images include photographs of aircraft and people (some autographed), post cards signed by Clara Adams, and an album containing photographs and clippings.

## **Scope and Content Note**

The materials contained in this collection cover the years from 1913 through the 1930s and includes baggage tags route maps, schedules, menus, and a patch from the Graf Zeppelin's envelope. Photographs include images of some famous aviators, some signed; post cards, some signed by Clara Adams; aircraft such as the Dornier DO-X, the China Clipper, and other aircraft. There is also an album that contains photographs and clippings.

## **Provenance Statement**

This collection was purchased from Charles Apfelbaum, Rare Manuscripts and Archives, of Long Island, New York.

## **Literary Rights Statement**

Permission to publish material from this collection in any form, current or future, must be obtained from the Special Collections Department, McDermott Library, The University of Texas at Dallas.

## **Note to Researcher**

This collection is a separate collection from the existing *Clara Adams Collection* located in the History of Aviation Collection. If using both collections, please be sure to cite the respective collections accordingly.

A unique number that provides information about the format, record group, collection, series, box, folder, and image numbers identifies images in this collection. Requesting images by this number allows the staff to locate the image.

### **Record Group Code**

- 1 = CAT / Air America Archives
- 2 = Doolittle Archives
- 3 = Lighter Than Air Archives
- 4 = George Williams Jr. Aviation Library
- 5 = History of Aviation Archives

### **Image Format Code**

- P = Photograph / Postcard
- S = Slide
- N = Negative
- T = Positive Transparency
- C = Color
- B = Black and White

**Example:** 5CA5-2-1PB1

- 5 History of Aviation Archives
- CA Clara Adams
- 5 Series Number
- 2 Box Number
- 1 Folder Number
- P Photograph
- B Color
- 1 Image Number

## H1-07 CLARA ADAMS PAPERS ADDITION: CONTAINER LIST

### Series I. Documents

#### Box 1 Title, Dates, and Description

#### Folder

- 1 Background Information  
Contains information on the Graf Zeppelin, Hindenburg, LZ-130, women firsts, and August Post.
  - 2 Personal History  
History of aviation “firsts” by Clara Adams and her passport with the last entry showing her arrival at Lakehurst, New Jersey on the Hindenburg, dated 9 May 1936.
  - 3 Correspondence  
A typed letter sent to Clara Adams from August Post dated 26 January 1933.
  - 4 Diaries, 1913-1914 and 1915  
Two diaries containing entries, photographs, and artwork by Clara Adams.
  - 5 Diaries, 1917-1918 and 1918-1919  
Two diaries containing entries, photographs, and artwork by Clara Adams.
- ### Series II. Clippings
- 6 Newspaper Clippings, 1919-1929  
Clippings from the *New York Herald*, Monday, November 10, 1919, describing Clara Adams’ surprise greeting to her returning husband, a German language newspaper clipping about the Hindenburg disaster, and a clipping about the record world passenger flight in 1929 featuring Clara Adams.

## H1-07 CLARA ADAMS PAPERS ADDITION: CONTAINER LIST

### Series III. Ephemera

#### Box 1            Title, Dates, and Description

#### Folder

- |    |   |
|----|---|
| 7  | Baggage Tags<br>Three identical baggage tags from the Luftschiffbau Zeppelin-Hamburg-Amerika Linie. Tags have a blue background with white lettering and trimmed in yellow.   |
| 8  | Schedules<br>Six schedules from the Luftschiffbau Zeppelin-Hamburg-Amerika Linie showing flights by the Graf Zeppelin to South America dated 1934. All schedules are signed by Clara Adams.   |
| 9  | Brochure<br>Brochure signed by Clara Adams by the Luftschiffbau Zeppelin-Hamburg-Amerika Linie depicting interior scenes of the Graf Zeppelin.  |
| 10 | Schedule<br>1936 schedule published by the Deutsche Zeppelin-Reederei showing flights from Europe to North and South America with the Graf Zeppelin flying the South American routes and the Hindenburg flying the North American routes. |
| 11 | Schedule<br>August 1936 schedule published by the Deutsche Zeppelin-Reederei in English showing North Atlantic Service by the airship Hindenburg. Signed "Clara Adams cabin 19."  |
| 12 | Baggage Tags<br>Three baggage tags from Deutsche Lufthansa, Deutsche Zeppelin-Reederei, and Imperial Airways.   |
| 13 | Time Tables and Passenger Fares<br>Two Pan American Airways System and Associated Carriers time tables and passenger fare brochures dated August 1939. Both show route maps to Europe and South America.                                  |
| 14 | Menu<br>Two menus: One dated 11-12 July 1939 is a luncheon menu with "Trip No. 309" and "Captain Nixon" typed across the top. The other is from the PAA Airways Inn on Canton Island and is a breakfast menu dated 7 October 1940.        |

## H1-07 CLARA ADAMS PAPERS ADDITION: CONTAINER LIST

### Series III. Ephemera

#### **Box 1**      **Title, Dates, and Description**

#### **Folder**

- 15      Route Map and Schedule  
Pan American Airways System route map of the Flying Clipper Ships and connection airline schedule prepared for Clara Adams dated 16 June 1939.

### Series IV. Artifacts

- 16      Artifacts  
Contents include a patch from the envelope of the Graf Zeppelin, a piece of stationery bearing the signature of Hugo Eckener, two sketches by Clara Adams, and a Zeppelin scarf.

### Series V. Images

#### **Box 2**

- 1      Aircraft  
Aircraft include photographs of the Dornier DO-X seaplane, Avion Potez IX single engine passenger plane, Thomas Flying Boat, Boeing 314 Clipper, Sikorski Flying Boat, Short Brothers seaplane, Douglas DC-4 with triple tail, and the LZ-127 Hindenburg.  
Images: 5CA5-2-1PB1 to 5CA5-2-1PB34.
- 2      Aircraft (8x10)  
Aircraft include the Granville Brothers G.E.D.; Short Brothers Cavalier; images of the Boeing 314 Yankee Clipper including interior views of the cockpit, wing interior, flight engineer's station, and radio operator's station; and image of a Union Pacific passenger train.  
Images: 5CA5-2-2PB1 to 5CA5-2-2PB17.
- 3      Clara Adams  
8 x 10 photographs of Clara Adams in various poses and scenes.  
Images: 5CA5-2-3PB1 to 5CA5-2-3PB19.

## H1-07 CLARA ADAMS PAPERS ADDITION: CONTAINER LIST

### Series V. Images

#### **Box 2** **Title, Dates, and Description**

#### **Folder**

- 4 People  
Portrait of Lady Drummond-Hay; photographs of Clara Adams with various personalities including the Stinson sisters, Amelia Earhart, Hugo Eckener, Lady Grace Drummond-Hay; Howard Hughes, Charles A. Lindberg, and others. Several images of Clara Adams are signed.  
Images: 5CA5-2-4PB1 to 5CA5-2-4PB118.
- 5 Miscellaneous  
Images of a beached ship, sailing yacht in dry dock, and a large oval table set for dinner with a model of an airport in the center.  
Images: 5CA5-2-5PB1 to 5CA5-2-5PB6.
- 6 Postcards  
Multiple postcards of the Dornier DO-X in flight and signed by Clara Adams, the Dornier DO-X taxiing in the water, the DO-X at anchor (radial engine version), interior views of the DO-X, United Airlines Boeing passenger aircraft, Pan American Airways China Clipper in color, Graf Zeppelin and Hindenburg signed by Hugo Eckener, Tempelhof Airport, postcard to Clara Adams signed by Thea Rasche, and multiple images of Clara Adams in Athens.  
Images: 5CA5-2-6PC1 to 5CA5-2-6PC94.

#### **Box3** **Album**

- 1 Panama Canal  
Photographs of Clara Adams and others visiting the Panama Canal while under construction.  
Images: 5CA5-3-1PB1 to 5CA5-3-1PB21.
- 2 "Doc" Allen  
Images of "Doc" Allen in flight gear in Atlantic City, 1923.  
Images: 5CA5-3-2PB1 to 5CA5-3-2PB3.
- 3 Thea Rasche and Elinor Smith  
8 x 10 photograph of Clara Adams, Thea Rasche and Eleanor Smith.  
Image: 5CA5-3-3PB1.
- 4 Havana  
Snapshots taken by Clara Adams during flights over Cuba, 1922.  
Images: 5CA5-3-4PB1 to 5CA5-3-4PB28.

## H1-07 CLARA ADAMS PAPERS ADDITION: CONTAINER LIST

Series V. Images

**Box 3** **Title, Dates, and Description**

**Folder**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| 5 | Luft-Hansa<br>Flight of 16 November 1928. Clara Adams guest of German airline Luft-Hansa at Tempelhof, Berlin. Flight was in a Dornier Merkur.<br>Images: 5CA5-3-5PB1 to 5CA5-3-5PB7.   |
| 6 | Opal Kunz<br>Fitzmaurice Field Dedication contains clippings and photographs with many personalities identified and flight in Opal Kunz's "Betsey Ross" Travelair plane at Newark Airport.<br>Images: 5CA5-3-6PB1 to 5CA5-3-6PB4. |
| 7 | Captain William Sullivan<br>Flight of 9 November 1919 with images of Captain William Sullivan, Clara Adams, and Wesley Scharp.<br>Images: 5CA5-3-7PB1 to 5CA5-3-7PB11.  |
| 8 | Margaret Stinson<br>Clara Adams in San Antonio, Texas 12 February 1917 for a flight in a Wright Flyer with Margaret Stinson as the pilot.<br>Images: 5CA5-3-8PB1 to 5CA5-3-8PB4.  |