

Records Relating to Aircraft Accident Reports

Report: This report describes selected records of the General Records of the Department of State (Record Group 59), Foreign Service Posts of the Department of State (Record Group 84), Civil Aeronautics Board (Record Group 197), and the Federal Aviation Administration (Record Group 237), and the General Records of the Department of Transportation (Record Group 398) in the custody of the Civilian Records Staff at the National Archives at College Park.

I. RECORDS OF THE CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD

Aircraft accident reports can be found in the Minutes of Meetings of the Civil Aeronautics Authority 1938-40 and the Civil Aeronautics Board, 1940-78 (MLR A1 E-34A, boxes 1-511, location: 530/24/31/4-44/2) in the Office of the Secretary. The CAA minutes are arranged chronologically by year and the CAB minutes are arranged by year and month. There are accident reports, ranging from a paragraph to a several page report, located in each month of the minutes. The reports are submitted to the board anytime up to a year and a half after the date of the accident. Therefore, a search must be made of each month's minutes subsequent to the accident. The search involves checking the monthly index to determine the page number for the minutes. In some cases, particularly in the 1960's, the index will refer to a page listing board actions, which then refers you to an exhibit containing the accident reports. The accident reports include, at a minimum, information concerning the date, type of aircraft, owner, number of passengers, and some mention of the circumstances of the accident.

One example of these reports is Aircraft Accident Report #2-0001, issued September 23, 1959, concerning the crash of a Beech Bonanza near Mason City, Iowa, on February 3, 1959. Entertainers Buddy Holly, The Big Bopper, and Richie Valens were killed as a result of this crash. This report is located in the September 1959 minutes designated as exhibit 4824 (box 313, location 530/24/39/2).

Further information is located in the Accident Report Summaries, 1951-59 (MLR A1 E-56A, boxes 1-2, location: 530/26/45/4-5) in the Office of the Secretary. These records are arranged alphabetically by name of the city where the accident occurred. The reports are typewritten and are usually several pages in length, and may include photographs. This series contains only a selection of the accident reports for the period, usually of major accidents. The reports are probably duplicates of those found in the CAB minutes. There are indexes available arranged alphabetically by name of airline or aircraft, alphabetically by name of the location (city) of the accident, and chronologically. These indexes are located with the CAB finding aids.

The Records Relating to Investigations, 1952-64 (MLR NC 56 E-41, boxes 1-11, location: 530/24/49/2) in the Office of the General Counsel. These records are arranged by a subject-numeric filing scheme created by the Office of the General Counsel, and thereunder in part chronologically by year and in part alphabetically by name of airline.

These records include correspondence, memorandums, reports, depositions, and other records relating to major aircraft accident investigations. The records concern such matters as investigation

findings, probable cause or causes, investigation procedures, reopening investigations, prehearing procedures, safety regulations, accident prevention, aircraft inspection, fatality rates, inadequate training, and court decisions. These records resemble case files in their detail.

There is a folder list available in the finding aids. The records of a particularly famous aircraft accident can be found in the Bureau of Air Commerce, Records relating to the Post-Rogers Accident: Investigative Records, 1935 (MLR A1 E-1, Box 1, location: 530/24/27/1). This accident occurred at Walakpi, Alaska, on August 15, 1935. Will Rogers and Wiley Post were killed in the crash of the Lockheed Orion, model 9E. This series includes a statement of probable cause of the accident, aircraft accident report, weather reports, press releases, and related correspondence.

II. RECORDS OF THE FEDERAL AVIATION ADMINISTRATION

Aircraft accident reports prepared by the CAB are also located in the FAA Administrator's Subject/Correspondence Files, 1959-81 (location: 530/30/53/6-31/6/6). The records are arranged chronologically by year, and thereunder several different filings schemes. For 1959, the reports are located under "Accidents." For the period 1960-61, the reports are located in the file designation "INV-1, Aircraft Accidents and Incidents." For 1962, the reports are in "Flight Standard Service 1-1, Accidents." For the period 1963-82, the reports are under file designations "8020, Accidents and Incidents Investigations, 8020-4, CAB/NTSB Accident Reports." Included in the files are CAB accident reports, drafts of these reports, and related correspondence. There is some information concerning aircraft accidents in the General Subject Files of the Office of the General Counsel, 1932-59 (location: 530/31/19/5-22/4). This is not a good source for individual accident reports, but it does contain some useful general information on aircraft accidents.

There is a decimal for accident reports (decimal 622) in the Civil Aeronautics Administration Central Files and Subject Files, 1926-49, however the reports were apparently disposed of.

III. GENERAL RECORDS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

There are additional CAB and NTSB aircraft accident reports located in the Office of the Secretary, General Correspondence, 1967-72 (location: 530/32/4/1, boxes 203-206). The accident reports are located in file #6300 (Transportation Accident Investigation Reports). This file includes selected accident investigation reports and related correspondence.

IV. RECORDS OF THE FOREIGN SERVICE POSTS OF THE DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Records relating to aircraft accidents involving U.S. aircraft and/or U.S. citizens in foreign countries should be located in the diplomatic or consular post files in decimal 879.6 (for the period up to 1949). The decimals pertaining to transportation were disposed of after 1949. The post files are arranged by year and thereunder by the Department of State post file subject-decimal classification scheme.