

L.C. RAPP COLLECTION OF SLATS RODGERS MATERIALS
Finding Aid

Compiled by
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Museum of South Texas History
Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives
Edinburg, Texas

2014



CONTENTS OF INVENTORY

Summary	# 3
Biographical/Historical Note	# 4-5
Scope and Content Note	# 5

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SUMMARY

Size	1 folder of documents, 14 photographic slides
Geographic Locations	Brownsville, Texas; Mission, Texas; Cleburne, Texas; Zapata, Texas; McAllen, Texas
Inclusive Dates	1930-1990
Bulk Dates	1930-1954
Languages	English
Summary	The collection consists of photocopies of original documents and photographic slides owned by L.C. Rapp, which document a small portion of Slats Rodgers' career as a pilot.
Access Restrictions	The collection is open for research. If you wish to examine items in the manuscript group, please contact the Archivist at 956-383-6911 to make an appointment to visit the Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives (MHMMA) reading room.
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Related Collections	Hidalgo County Historical Commission records (Slats Rodgers historical marker at McAllen International Airport), RGDOC 192B-1, D:15
Citation	L.C. Rapp collection of Slats Rodgers materials. Margaret H. McAllen Memorial Archives, Museum of South Texas History, Edinburg, TX.
Stack Location(s)	SMC 42, RGDOC 2, B:1; RGPFO 103; RGLI 1

BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORICAL NOTE

Floyd Hurtial “Slats” Rodgers was born on March 7, 1889 in Tunnel Hill, Georgia. His parents were Charlie and Alice (Russell) Rodgers. When the family moved to Texas, Rodgers was called “Slats,” because he was so thin. He married Rosie Oliver in 1915, but they eventually divorced. They had four children.

Rodgers became an aviation pioneer in Texas. In 1912 he built an airplane with the help of John C. Fine, an engineer. Rodgers didn’t know how to fly, so he spent six weeks taxi testing. He accidentally flew when he lifted off to avoid a ditch during one test. He flew for two hundred feet before he crashed. The plane had a drooping wing, so Rodgers called it *Old Soggy*. It was the first plane built in Texas to successfully fly. Rodgers is also known as the first man in Texas to receive a pilot’s license and also the first to have it revoked.

During his career Rodgers was a civil flying instructor for the U.S. Army, a barnstormer, a bootlegger, and a crop duster. During Prohibition, he flew whiskey from Mexico to Texas. As a cover for that operation, Rodgers established a flying circus known as Slats Rodgers and the Love Field Lunatics that operated out of Dallas, Texas.

In 1927 Rodgers moved to Edinburg, Texas where he began Aero Dusting Service. He worked a number of dusting jobs before he got a contract with the Bentsen Brothers.

After his second marriage, Rodgers bought a ranch in Bandera, Texas where he also opened a steakhouse. In 1950 he moved to McAllen, Texas where he opened the Steak House in the Betty Rose Subdivision just off Highway 83.

Rodgers died in McAllen in 1956 nine years after Chuck Yeager broke the sound barrier. He was survived by his wife Elsie W. Rodgers; his daughters Mrs. E.J. Syers, Mrs. W. Maurice Harrison, Mrs. W.W. Stolz and Mrs. S.A. Macaluso; his step-daughter Mrs. Rosalie Goodenough; and his step-son Roy Rapp Rodgers. Rodgers is buried at Laurel Hills Cemetery in Mission, Texas.

L.C. Rapp is a step-grandson of Rodgers.

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SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

The collection consists of photocopies of original documents and photographic slides owned by L.C. Rapp, which document a small portion of Slats Rodgers' career as a pilot. Formats included in the collection include correspondence, certificates, news clippings, publicity items, a book chapter, identification cards, and photographic slides.

The publicity items are for the book *Old Soggy No.1: The Uninhibited Story of Slats Rodgers* by Hart Stilwell and Slats Rodgers. Some of the correspondence concerns the publication of that book as well as one published after Rodgers died.

The identification cards are Rodgers pilot's licenses. Several pieces of correspondence between Rodgers and the Georgia Department of Public Health pertain to Rodgers' application for a birth certificate so he can obtain his pilot's license.

The book chapter is "Slats Rodgers on Flying Circus Acts," from *Plane Talk: Aviators' and Astronauts' Own Stories* compiled by Carl R. Oliver and published in 1980.

The slides show bi-wing planes used in barnstorming and crop dusting. Five of the slides show Rodgers at the controls of *Old Soggy No. 1*.

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