

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service National Historic Landmark Nomination National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Hawthorn Hill

other names/site number Wright Mansion

2. Location

street & number 901 Harman Avenue not for publication

city, town Oakwood vicinity

state Ohio code OH county Montgomery code 113 zip code 45419

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
		<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: _____

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 2

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling
DOMESTIC: secondary structure

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling
DOMESTIC: secondary structure

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19th and 20th CENTURY REVIVALS:
Classical Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation limestone
walls brick
roof asphalt shingles
other wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Completed in 1914, this two and one-half story brick house was designed by Wilbur and Orville Wright with the assistance of the Dayton architectural firm of Schenck and Williams in the then popular Neoclassical style.¹ The building exterior is biaxially symmetrical, with the front and back facades virtually identical. The interior floor plan also exhibits an unusual degree of formal order and symmetry. Sited on a knoll surrounded by lawns and large trees, the estate included seventeen acres. While reduced in area today, the grounds surrounding the house and its companion three-bay garage remain intact with some variation to foundation plantings.

A limestone faced poured concrete foundation supports walls of white face brick over structural clay tile. The mortar color matches the brick color. All the trim and ornament is painted white to coordinate with the brick. Black asphalt shingles have replaced the original shingle material.

Four wooden colossal Ionic columns extend two stories on both the front and back to support pediments. The recessed triangular surface, or tympanum, of each pediment contains a fanlight. Classically detailed pilasters serve as a transition between the porticos and the rectangular mass of the building. The large first floor entry doors are flanked by leaded glass sidelights. Above on the second floor Palladian windows extend behind ornamental balconies. Flanking the Palladian windows are oval bull's eye windows with a frame of voussoirs and a radiating glazing bar system resembling the fanlights.

The house has a low pitch hipped roof truncated at the top with a wooden balustrade. The five-foot tall entablature features modillions resembling a dentil band to visually support the cornice. Gutters are built-in to the deep cornice. Side porches are topped with balustrades that match the roof balusters and the balusters under the porch rail. Simpler Tuscan columns and a

¹The style of the house seems a compromise between the Wrights fondness for southern colonial homes and the contemporary fashion.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

National Historic Landmark Criteria: 1, 2

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Engineering

Invention

Transportation

NHL Theme: XIV-Transportation

H-Airplanes and Air Travel

VIII-Technology

B-Transportation

Period of Significance

1912-1948

Significant Dates

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Wright, Orville (primary)

Architect/Builder

Wright, Wilbur and Orville, designers

Schenck and Williams, architects

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Hawthorn Hill is nationally significant because it was designed by Wilbur and Orville Wright, inventors of the airplane, and this building, more than any other work of architecture, reflects their personalities. In addition, Hawthorn Hill is nationally significant because for thirty-four years it served as the base of operations for one of the United States' greatest aviation heroes, and became a gathering place for greats and near greats in U.S. aviation history. Although Wilbur Wright died in 1912 before construction of the mansion began, he, too, had a hand in its careful planning and siting. Hawthorn Hill has a special place in the history of aviation as a reflection of the success and acceptance of the Wright brothers and their airplanes. Hawthorn Hill is a direct expression of the wealth and fame reaped by the brothers after their triumphant return from Europe to Dayton in 1909. Having become world heroes and amassing a fortune from their invention of the airplane via royalties, exhibitions, and sales, the Wrights undertook plans for a house to reflect their new found status and material success. In the mansion, Orville Wright received and entertained noted inventors and celebrities including Charles Lindbergh, Thomas Edison, Alexander Graham Bell, Carl Sandburg, Admiral Richard Byrd, President Franklin D. Roosevelt, King Constantine of Greece, Ohio Governor James Cox, General Omar Bradley, Arthur Godfrey, and James Stewart. It has been said that Hawthorn Hill was Orville Wright's "machine for living."¹ The home's interior systems clearly express Orville Wright's personality, its principal occupant from 1914 until his death in

¹Tom D. Crouch, The Bishop's Boys: A Life of Wilbur and Orville Wright (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1989), p. 477.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Wright State University

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property approximately 4.5 acres

UTM References

A

1	6
---	---

7	4	2	0	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	4	0	0	5	1	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

 Zone Easting Northing

B

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

 Zone Easting Northing

C

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Part of lot 93, beginning at a point in the middle of Park Avenue 2.85 chains from the west end of Park Avenue, thence south 8° 50' east 458.20 feet to a corner; thence north 85° 50' east 458.20 feet more or less to the west line of Harman Avenue to a corner; thence north on the west line of Park Avenue 456.72 feet to the point of beginning, city of Oakwood, Ohio, as recorded in Executor's Deed on December 7, 1948.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary is the legal boundary of the Hawthorn Hill property owned by National Cash Register Corporation.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By Jill York O'Bright, Historian; David G. Richardson, Historian;

name/title Ron Cockrell, Historian; and William S. Harlow, Historical Architect

organization National Park Service, Midwest Region

date January 18 and August 30, 1990

street & number 1709 Jackson Street

telephone 402-221-3426

city or town Omaha

state NE zip code 68102

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 2

scaled down version of the main eave entablature unite the porches with the core building by retaining graceful proportions. Prominent chimneys extend through the roof on the east and west sides. Windows in the side upstairs bathrooms open through the chimney. Plane gabled roof dormers feature cornice returns and arched tracery windows. The prominent window style is a six-over-one double hung window used throughout the structure. These are grouped on the first floor to produce triple windows. The keystone lintels feature brick voussoirs with Bedford Indiana limestone keystones. Window sills and all outside steps are also limestone.

The main stair hall dominates the interior as the central organizing feature. Downstairs, the hall divides dining spaces from leisure spaces. Upstairs, seven bedrooms are placed symmetrically around four bathrooms. Skillfully incorporated in the overall order of the plan, the northwest quarter of both floors is reserved for housekeeping functions. Like many large houses in the area, the open high attic space was designed for possible conversion to a ballroom.

Following Orville Wright's death and the transfer of the property to National Cash Register Corporation (NCR) for use as a guest house, much of the interior was redecorated ca. 1950 and again in 1989. Most of the interior finishes and furnishings were updated. Much of the original furniture is now on display at the Kettering-Moraine Museum; other pieces remain stored in the home's attic. The heavy mahogany doors personally stained by Orville were painted to match the architraves. Rich Oriental rugs replaced custom Donegal carpets; wallpaper replaced damask; and new heavy draperies with valances are the common window treatment. Despite these changes in finishes, all the decorative molding, pocket doors, wainscoting, mantels, the grand staircase, ornamental plaster and glass, silver and nickel plated hardware, and many of the fixtures remain in place. Moreover, the library has been retained as Orville used it. In addition to his books, paintings, and memorabilia, the library contains furniture modified to Orville's design.

Current plans by NCR include restoring the main floor to its original appearance based on a portfolio of photographs taken at the time of Orville's death. Upstairs, an additional bath has been added to increase privacy for guests.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 2

1948.² Throughout the house Orville expressed his inventive genius and creative spirit by devising many labor-saving mechanisms and gadgets. While living at Hawthorn Hill, Orville conceived some of his final inventions, aeronautical and otherwise.

History

Hawthorn Hill was the outcome of a great deal of planning and forethought on the part of Wilbur, Orville, and their sister Katharine to build the perfect domicile for the family. Although the family had spent forty-two years at their home at 7 Hawthorn Street, the old West Dayton neighborhood was declining and the house's seven rooms could no longer accommodate the stream of visitors who accompanied the growing acclaim of the brothers. As a result, in March 1910, the Wrights purchased a lot in Dayton on which to build a new home. However, Katharine Wright thought the lot too small, too near the center of the city, and altogether inappropriate for the building they envisioned.³ Hence, in 1911, Wilbur and Orville searched for a more suitable lot. In February 1912, they purchased a seventeen-acre wooded tract on high ground in the affluent suburb of Oakwood, Ohio. The Wrights dubbed it "Hawthorn Hill" for the many hawthorn trees which dominated the hillside.

As for the styling of the house, the Wrights were steadfast in their choice: a southern colonial-style mansion, much like those the brothers saw in Virginia during the Fort Myer flight

²Author Betty Lacey compared the Wrights' Hawthorn Hill to Thomas Jefferson's Monticello, comparing Orville's active participation in the design of the structure and his inclusion of a variety of labor-saving inventions to Jefferson's design of Monticello. The comparison is somewhat overstated, since Jefferson was the sole architect of Monticello, while the Wrights hired an architect to transfer their ideas into working drawings. Recognizing this distinction, the comparison has some value in understanding how Hawthorn Hill was an extension of the brothers, particularly Orville. See Lacey, "Hawthorn Hill," Dayton Journal Herald, 10 June 1969.

³Crouch, The Bishop's Boys, p. 476.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 3

demonstrations of 1908 and 1909.⁴ While both Wilbur and Orville drew up the preliminary plans for their colonial mansion, it was Orville who took much more of an interest in the project than his brother. Nonetheless, Wilbur clearly expressed his opinions to Orville:

In looking over the proposed plan of the new house I see that most of the rooms are smaller than in the original plans, and only the price has been enlarged. You are wasting entirely too much space on halls, etc.... I see plainly that I am going to be put into one of the south bedrooms so I propose a new plan for them. In any event I am going to have a bathroom of my own so please make me one.⁵

Wilbur died in May 1912, but not before Orville and he had approved final plans for the house which were prepared by the local architectural firm of Schenck and Williams.⁶ The Wrights hired the architectural firm to transform their ideas into construction documents. As part of his own personal mourning process, Orville closely supervised Hawthorn Hill's fabrication himself, frequenting the construction site whenever his schedule permitted. In fact, it was not uncommon during the construction to see the Wrights and their relatives picnicking at the site: "We went to Orville's dooryard--suppered there--and spent the evening on Orville's roof. It is 42 feet above the ground. We had a nice breeze there."⁷

The mansion's interior and furnishings received the same attention as the exterior. Every detail had to be to Orville's complete

⁴Mary Ann Johnson, A Field Guide to Flight: On the Aviation Trail in Dayton, Ohio (Dayton: Landfall Press, 1986), p. 71.

⁵Wilbur Wright to Orville Wright, 26 May 1911, in Miracle at Kitty Hawk: The Letters of Wilbur and Orville Wright, ed. Fred C. Kelly (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1943; reprint ed., New York: Farrar, Straus and Young, 1951), p. 382.

⁶Dayton Herald, 11 November 1948.

⁷Bishop Milton Wright Diary. 29 June 1913, Wright Brothers Collection, Wright State University, Dayton, Ohio.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 4

satisfaction. After the workmen had finished staining the mahogany doors in the house, Orville thought the finish too reddish and promptly restained the doors himself.⁸ Likewise when the imported Irish carpets arrived, Orville found the design was not exactly in line with the fireplace in the living room, so he drew a detailed sketch of how the carpet design should fit around the fireplace and sent the carpet and sketch back to Ireland.⁹

Why was Orville Wright so preoccupied with Hawthorn Hill, giving it the same degree of intense creativity and inventiveness that he and his brother devoted to aeronautics? Because Orville inherited his mother's extreme introversion, he "invented" Hawthorn Hill as "his means of insulating himself from the world."¹⁰ Orville's painful shyness caused him to shrink away from public speaking. During countless public ceremonies where Orville Wright was an honored guest, he made it known in advance his wish not to make any remarks. Therefore, no audio recording of his voice exists. According to Historian Tom Crouch, "The house was Orville's machine for living"¹¹ where he found pleasure in maintaining its utility systems which he designed. Crouch observed:

The domestic spaces that Orville fashioned with such care, and the bits and pieces of homespun technology with which he furnished them, were his psychological shield. Wrapped in an environment of his own design and construction, he created a private world that he could control.¹²

⁸Horace A. Wright, "Recollections," in Wright Reminiscences, comp. Ivonette Wright Miller (Dayton: Air Force Museum Foundation, 1978), p. 157.

⁹Graham Justus, "Hawthorn Hill Has a Special Place in World History," NCR Factory News, June 1965, p. 4.

¹⁰Crouch, The Bishop's Boys, p. 476.

¹¹Ibid., p. 477.

¹²Ibid., p. 479. This became especially true following his father's death in 1917, and Katharine's estrangement from Orville following her marriage in 1926, and death in 1929.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5 - -

Construction of Hawthorn Hill was completed in the spring of 1914. On April 28, Bishop Wright, Katharine Wright, and housekeeper Carrie Grumbach moved into Hawthorn Hill in Orville's absence. In mid-May, the landscaping was completed, and by June, the double garage was ready to house Orville's Franklin automobile.

Orville Wright's Hawthorn Hill has often been compared to Thomas Jefferson's Monticello because both estates possess many labor saving devices and gadgets contrived by their occupants. Hawthorn Hill never needed a serviceman for the plumbing, heating or wiring because Orville insisted upon "fixing" it himself. The day Orville had his fatal heart attack, he had been dismantling and repairing the bell system he had rigged to operate the doorbells and buzzers located in the kitchen.¹³

Other contraptions of Orville's design included a special system of chains and rods that allowed him to control the furnace from upstairs rooms. For Carrie Grumbach's convenience, Orville devised a central vacuum system built into the walls that only needed emptying but once a year (Carrie found the system troublesome and refused to use it). As for the plumbing, Orville concocted an early day version of a water softener involving the collection, pumping, and filtering of rainwater through a series of cisterns.¹⁴ This purified water was used in a huge shower also designed by Orville and located in his bathroom. Beneath the bathroom floor was another Wright contrived feature, a series of shields and drains to prevent the staining of the ceiling below.¹⁵

Orville's ingenuity did not stop with the home's mechanical

¹³Dayton Daily News, 14 November 1948.

¹⁴Justus, "Hawthorn Hill," p. 4.

¹⁵Jay R. Petree, "Memories of My Cousin Orville Wright," in Wright Reminiscences, comp. Ivonette Wright Miller (Dayton: Air Force Museum Foundation, 1978), p. 133.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

systems;¹⁶ he also conceived of many other convenient apparatuses. To aid in spring cleaning, Orville crafted a unique set of tools to take down, clean, and replace the silk damask hanging on the mansion walls.¹⁷ In his bathroom, Orville constructed a special rack to dispense his homemade toiletries, and in the kitchen was a one-of-a-kind toaster capable of slicing and browning bread to perfection. Orville installed a buzzer system in the dining room which he used to call Carrie from the kitchen during meals. The library, Orville's favorite room in the house, was equipped with several comforting features such as an easy chair fashioned with reading stand and a matching adjustable footstool suited to ease the pain Orville often experienced in his legs as a result of an airplane crash at Fort Myer in 1908.¹⁸

Not only did these inventions make life easier for Orville Wright and his family, they also served to foster a sense of security for the retiring and diffident Wright brother. Orville's fame invited constant public attention. According to Historian Tom Crouch:

During the mid-1920s, Orville emerged as one of the most revered men of his generation. There was a mythic quality to his fame. As the sole survivor of the team that had given flight to the world, he was seen as the living embodiment of an American tradition of heroic invention that stretched back to the early years of the Republic. He was, quite literally, a legend in his own time--an exemplar and an inspiration for future generations of Americans.¹⁹

Historian Crouch continued:

¹⁶All of Orville's modifications to the house described to this point are still in place and workable. The dining room buzzer system and the modified armchair and stool in the library, described below, are also still in place.

¹⁷Petree, "Memories of My Cousin," p. 133.

¹⁸Wilkinson Wright, 23 May 1989, Interview with Jill York O'Bright and David Richardson, Dayton, Ohio.

¹⁹Crouch, The Bishop's Boys, p. 472.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 7

Distinguished visitors to Dayton were obliged to call at Hawthorn Hill. The celebrities ranged from Carl Akeley, the big game hunter and showman, Nobel Laureate Dr. Robert Millikan, poet Carl Sandburg, and physicist Michael Pupin, to such aviation personalities as General William Mitchell [advocate of a large, independent air force], Admiral Richard Byrd, and the great scientist/engineer Theodore von Karman.²⁰

The banquets, medals, awards, honorary degrees, and visits from distinguished guests were only the beginning. The Wright brothers were the most memorialized Americans of the twentieth century. Of all their countrymen, only Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln have inspired commemorative zeal to match.²¹

Indeed, Orville Wright continued to lend his creative genius to serve his country. Although he relinquished the lease on the bike shop at 1127 West Third in favor of building his own laboratory at 15 North Broadway, Orville signed on as a consulting engineer at Dayton-Wright, a company organized by Edward A. Deeds and Charles F. Kettering to manufacture airplanes. During World War I, Orville was a commissioned major in the aviation section of the Signal Officers Reserve Corps and stationed in Dayton to continue researching and developing aeronautical technology. Engaged in developing "flying boats" or seaplanes, Orville also tinkered with missiles. He was still working on the "Kettering Bug," an unmanned flying bomb powered by a four-cylinder engine, after the Armistice was signed. His last significant contribution to aeronautics came in conjunction with James H. Jacobs in developing and patenting the split flap-trailing edge device to increase lift and allow a pilot to reduce speed in a steep dive. In 1919, when the Dayton-Wright Company was purchased by General Motors and the Dayton plant closed four years later, Orville ceased conducting active aeronautical research, but his influence on the industry remained intensive through service on a number of aeronautical boards and commissions. Wright served on the Daniel and Florence Guggenheim Fund for the

²⁰Ibid., p. 502.

²¹Ibid., pp. 503-4.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

Promotion of Aeronautics, and helped decide which areas of research would be funded to spur the growth of the infant U.S. industry. The Guggenheim Fund helped produce substantial breakthroughs in aeronautical technology.

Orville Wright's most important supervisory and guiding role began in 1920 when President Woodrow T. Wilson appointed him to serve on the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA), a body which supervised and promoted research in aeronautics. Wright's service to NACA spanned twenty-eight years, the longest term in its history, and in no small part helped make the United States a dominant air power by the eve of World War II. During that war, Orville continued to play an "active and visible" role, particularly through his work on a military code machine. Orville performed his NACA responsibilities seriously through his exemplary attendance at meetings, some of which he helped host in Dayton. Wright was a strong advocate of independent inventors before NACA. NACA established the facilities which created the technological base of aeronautical research responsible for developing the early U.S. space program. In recognition of his many distinguished years of service to NACA, President Harry S Truman presented Orville Wright with the Award of Merit.²²

To the outside world, Orville Wright seemed quite shy and reserved, but inside his sanctuary of Hawthorn Hill, Wright was a great family man, conversationalist, and practical joker. At Hawthorn Hill, Orville was free from the public eye. Hence, the estate was the site of many family gatherings at which all could enjoy themselves. The mansion was the location of traditional Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners as well as the site for special occasions such as the weddings of Orville's nieces, Ivonette Wright Miller and Leontine Wright Jameson. The funeral services of Bishop Milton Wright and Katharine Wright Haskell were also held at Hawthorn Hill.

²²Ibid., pp. 468-473, 521; and Harry A. Butowsky, "Man in Space: A National Historic Landmark Theme Study, Phases I and II (Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1984). Orville Wright also received the American Distinguished Flying Cross, the French Legion of Honor medal, and eleven honorary degrees from U.S. and European universities.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 9

Orville Wright generated some of his last patents and inventions at Hawthorn Hill. It was at the 1923 Hawthorn Hill Christmas Eve dinner that Orville introduced the family to his latest contraption, a toy he called Flips and Flops.²³ The toy was such a success with the family, Orville patented the gizmo and assigned its manufacture to a company owned by his relatives. After sales of the toy peaked and then began to slope downward, the company changed its focus to specialty advertising including miniature airplanes. Not only did Orville design and build the printing press used to apply advertising to the toy planes, but he also engineered the machine which produced the plane's parts.²⁴

Other projects Orville undertook while residing at Hawthorn Hill included the development of an automatic record changer and an automatic transmission system intended to shift a car as needed when climbing hills. It was also while living at Hawthorn Hill that Orville conducted new wind tunnel tests and refined the split-wing flap for slowing down airplanes during landings.²⁵

One of the most famous guests at Hawthorn Hill arrived on June 22, 1927. Charles Lindbergh came to Dayton upon Orville Wright's invitation, several weeks after he had flown nonstop over the Atlantic Ocean. Lindbergh was making his way back to St. Louis after his joyous reception in New York, and landed his "Spirit of St. Louis" at Wright Field outside of Dayton. When Lindbergh explained his promise to financial backers to make no further public appearances until his St. Louis homecoming, Orville took him directly to Hawthorn Hill. Thousands of disappointed Daytonians, waiting downtown in anticipation of seeing the Lindbergh/Wright motorcade, began converging on Hawthorn Hill. Inside, Ivonette Wright Miller recalled:

Dinner was about to be served when from nowhere people began to appear on the front lawn. Soon the front lawn was crowded, then the side lawns and the hillside at the

²³Ivonette Wright Miller, comp., Wright Reminiscences (Dayton: Air Force Museum Foundation, 1978), p. 23.

²⁴Crouch, The Bishop's Boys, p. 479.

²⁵Johnson, Field Guide to Flight, p. 43.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

back. It was not a crowd but a mob, pushing and shoving, trampling the flower beds and bushes, climbing trees, all clamoring for a look at Lindbergh. When people came up on the porch, the occupants of the house took refuge on the second floor. But the mob persisted, demanding at least a glimpse of their hero. Finally, Orville Wright, more to save his house from ruin than to gratify the crowds, appealed to Lindbergh, and he made a brief appearance on a little balcony of the front portico, tall and boyish, with Orville Wright at his side. The crowd seemed satisfied and dispersed.²⁶

Wright maintained a close friendship with Lindbergh for many years.

Orville Wright's last labor of creation began in 1947 when Edward Deeds, chairman of the board of National Cash Register Corporation (NCR), asked him to reconstruct the 1905 Wright Flyer III, the world's first practical airplane. Deeds wanted to exhibit the Flyer III in his Carillon Park, a center commemorating the Dayton area's role in the history of transportation. Wright meticulously supervised the aircraft's reconstruction and helped design the exhibit building.²⁷

When Orville Wright died on January 30, 1948, the Dayton community was dismayed to learn that he made no provision in his will for Hawthorn Hill. In response to widespread concern that the house should be preserved, the city of Oakwood investigated turning the mansion into a memorial library, school, or community center but concluded it to be unviable. The Wright heirs then put Hawthorn Hill on the open market whereupon Edward Deeds of NCR purchased it.²⁸

Today, Hawthorn Hill still serves NCR as a guest house for overseas visitors and dignitaries. The house was redecorated shortly after its purchase by NCR, and only the library remains exactly as it was when Orville lived there. In a special niche built into the

²⁶Crouch, The Bishop's Boys, p. 503.

²⁷Ibid., p. 521.

²⁸Lacey, "Hawthorn Hill," Dayton Journal Herald, 10 June 1969.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 11 - -

entrance reception hall, the bronze sculpture presented in 1908 to the Wright brothers by the Aero Club of Sarthe, France, can still be seen. Overall, Hawthorn Hill exhibits a high degree of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.