

THE 100TH ANNIVERSARY OF THE FIRST WORLD FLIGHT

AND THE HIDDEN GEMS OF AVIATION'S BEST-KEPT SECRET

By Elisa Law

The end of World War One ushered in an era of dreams, quite literally, taking flight. Global headlines heralded new feats in aviation—records broken in speed, altitude, and duration—and aviators were celebrated as modern-day explorers. The conquest of the skies captured our collective imagination.

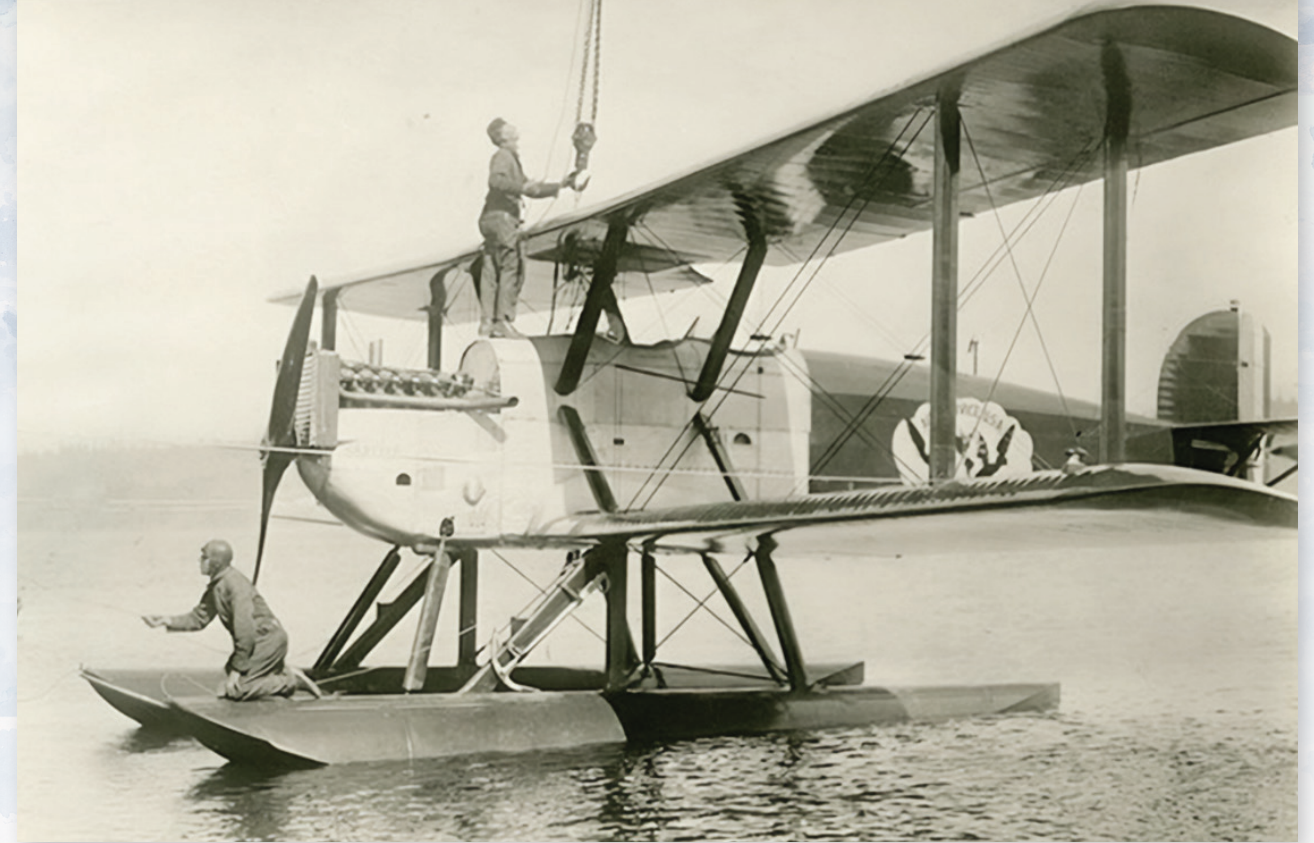
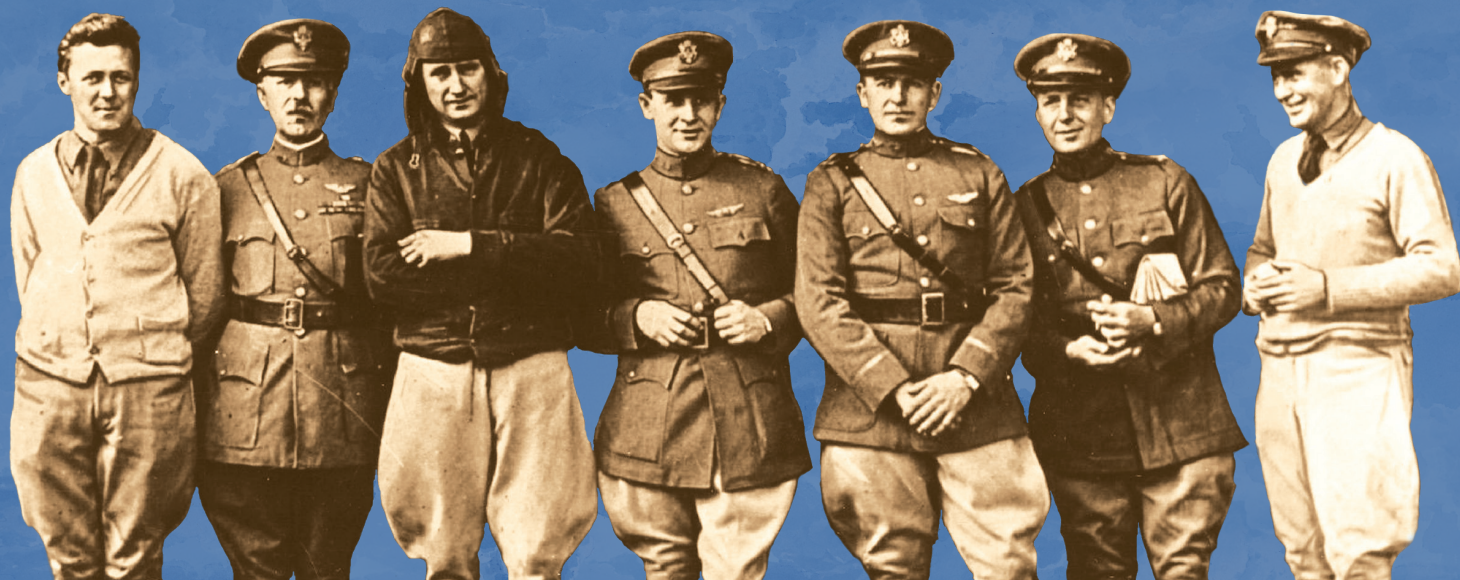
By 1923, talk of attempts to complete the first around-the-world flight was heard in Portugal, France, Italy, and England. Meanwhile, the United States Army Air Service was struggling to redefine its post-war role, transitioning from wartime operations to peacetime responsibilities. With an aging fleet of aircraft and limited resources to modernize, the Air Service turned its attention toward promoting aviation technology. Hearing there would soon be a race among nations to fly first around the world, Chief of the Army Air Service Major General Mason Patrick took action.

The First World Flight would be one of the largest peacetime military operations in history, and it would begin and end in Seattle, Washington.

Today, scattered around the Puget Sound region in archives, museums—and sometimes hidden in plain view—a trail of artifacts remains to tell the 100-year-old story of this extraordinarily bold accomplishment.

Left to right: Lt. Jack (John Jr.) Harding, Maj. Gen. Mason Patrick, Lt. Lowell Smith, Sgt. Henry Ogden, Lt. Leigh Wade, Lt. Leslie Arnold, Lt. Erik Nelson. Photo detail. Courtesy San Diego Air and Space Museum, Catalog No. 10_0015471.

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PREPARING FOR THE CHALLENGE

On March 22, 1924, eight chosen Army Air servicemen touched down at Sand Point Airfield, Seattle's first municipal airport (today, the airfield is the site of Magnuson Park and the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration Western Regional Center). The team of pilots and airplane mechanics were there to make final preparations for the longest air journey to date. The First World Flight fliers had assembled and picked up their airplanes at the Douglas Aircraft Company in Santa Monica, California, and the journey from there to Sand Point Airfield was regarded as a test flight, ensuring Seattle would go down in history as the official starting point.

The planes received their “big water shoes” (pontoons), covers, spare parts, and personal equipment at Sand Point. The Douglas World Cruisers were given names representing four corners of America: *Seattle*, piloted by the mission's commander, Major Frederick Martin with Staff Sergeant Alva Harvey; *Boston*, flown by Lieutenant Leigh Wade and Sergeant Henry Ogden; *New Orleans*, flown by Lieutenants Erik Nelson and John Harding, Jr.; and *Chicago*, flown by Lieutenants Lowell Smith and Leslie Arnold.

Major General Patrick assembled a logistics team to map out every detail of the fliers' route, coordinating with the Coast Guard, Navy, Army, and diplomatic corps to gather maps and climate information from the Equator to the Arctic. They scouted airfields and safe areas to make water landings and obtained permissions from 22 countries. Advance officers were sent along the route to collect information, make arrangements with foreign governments, and supervise the distribution of supplies including thirty spare engines, 91,800 gallons of gasoline, 11,650 gallons of oil, and boxes of spare parts. Thirty-six

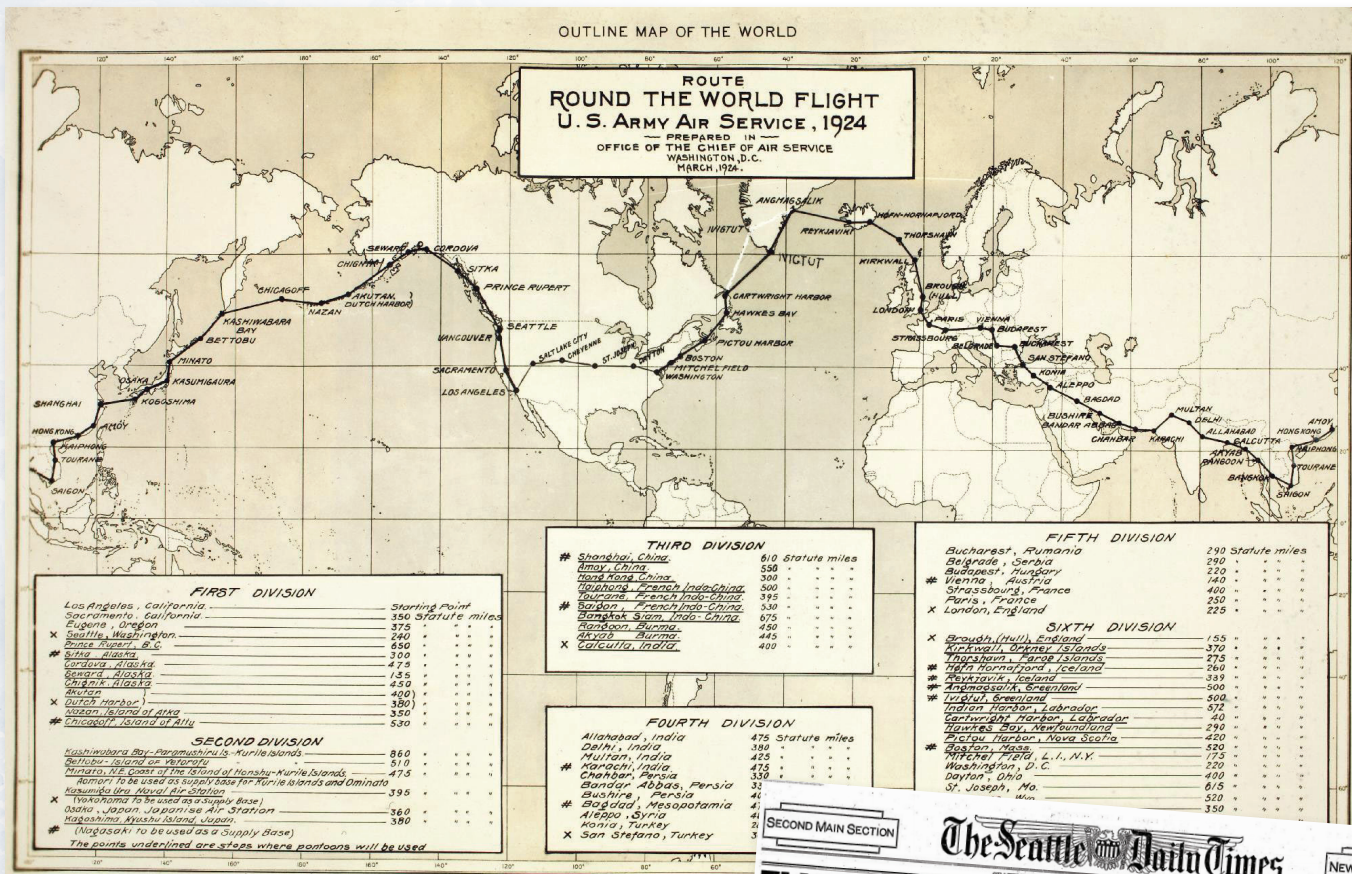
Major Martin, the original commander of the First World Flight, on the pontoon of the *Seattle*, and Sergeant Harvey above, preparing for departure from Seattle. The plane's wheeled chassis had been replaced by floats for water landings until the planes reached Calcutta, where the pontoons would be changed out for wheels again. Courtesy Marist College Archives and Special Collections, Lowell Thomas Papers, ID LTP.1544.09.38.

Navy Destroyers were strategically positioned around the globe, poised to carry supplies and rescue the pilots in the event of an emergency ocean landing.

The global circumnavigation would begin at Sand Point on April 6, 1924. The flight plan included 74 landings over 175 days, flying nearly 27,000 miles across seven geographic divisions.

While it may seem a foregone conclusion that the fliers would route back to Sand Point to mark the end of the First World Flight, the city to claim the finish line was hotly contested even as the journey was underway, and Maj. Gen. Patrick received a deluge of telegrams from Seattle boosters. Finally, on July 30, nearly four months into the mission, the Chief of the Air Service—War Department confirmed that Seattle would be the endpoint, sending the news via telegram to the Seattle Chamber of Commerce.

The airplanes designed by engineers Donald Douglas and Jack Northrup were made of wood, cloth, and wire, with open air cockpits. The airmen would be face-to-face with every weather condition encountered in a world-girdling trip: snow and ice, monsoon rains, and desert heat. Considering the instrumentation and technology of the time, this would be a daring and risky mission. In a 1990 oral history, Maj. Martin's son recalled, “No directional finding equipment. No radio. No way to contact anyone. And open cockpits. Good God, they were going to go off around the world in those conditions? It was absurd!”



LEFT: Six of the eight airmen chosen to attempt the First World Flight, posing in front of one of the Douglas World Cruiser airplanes. Left to right: Sgt. Henry H. Ogden, Lt. Leslie P. Arnold, Lt. Leigh Wade, Lt. Lowell M. Smith, Maj. Frederick L. Martin, and Sgt. Alva L. Harvey. Ages 28-36. Not pictured here are Lt. Erik Nelson and Lt. Jack (John Jr.) Harding. Courtesy Marist College Archives and Special Collections, Lowell Thomas Papers, LTP.1544.06.13.
RIGHT: SS Northwestern, the supply ship that carried supplies to Alaska. April 13, Juneau, Alaska. Courtesy Marist College Archives and Special Collections, Lowell Thomas Papers LTP.1545.04.20.

THE FLIGHT BEGINS: NORTH TO THE ALEUTIANS

The waters of Pontiac Bay surrounding Sand Point made for a scenic start to the journey. Before taking off, the fliers lightened their cargo loads, throwing out “non-essentials” like parachutes and extra underwear. A whopping 10,000 well-wishers gathered at the University of Washington Stadium to wave farewell.

The fliers set off with their Liberty engines roaring towards the Aleutians, where no plane had ever flown before. The ocean below became treacherous, with waves pounding hundred-foot-high sprays of spindrift into the air. The crew flew through a crossfire of sleet and hail. Air currents threw them up a thousand feet and dropped them suddenly low, “as if falling from a hole in the sky,” Lt. Lowell Smith recalled. After each grueling hop, the men spent three hours refueling and conditioning their Cruisers for the next day.

On April 30, the squadron began the hop from Chignik to Dutch Harbor, flying through dense fog. An hour and eighteen minutes into the flight, the *Seattle* crashed into a snowy mountain on the Aleutian Islands, destroying the plane. Maj. Martin and Sgt. Harvey were unharmed but had no way to communicate for rescue. When the *Seattle* did not arrive at Dutch Harbor, a rescue effort including U.S. Navy Destroyers and all manner of other volunteer fishing and cannery ships searched up and down the Alaskan coast. Days passed without word of the missing men.

Maj. Martin and Sgt. Harvey stayed with the plane for three days, burning it piece by piece to stay warm, while they waited for the fog to clear. On the fourth day, they were able to orient themselves and headed down the mountain. They suffered from snow blindness and grew weaker as they struggled through the wilderness. They slept in alder thickets and survived on spoonfuls of liquid meat rations and what small game they were able to shoot.

On May 7, eight days after the crash, an exhausted Maj. Martin and Sgt. Harvey found salvation in a trapper’s cabin stocked with enough pancake mix to eat their fill as they rested. They also found a condensed milk box reading ‘Port Moller Cannery’ which gave them some idea as to where they were. On the morning of May 10, they set off for Port Moller, walking along the beach for many miles until they spied the cannery. They had saved themselves, emerging from the ordeal weathered and worn, with Maj. Martin leaning on a walking stick.

Maj. Martin sent this message from the St. Paul Island wireless station: “At Port Moller—Crashed against mountain in fog on April 30th, at 12:30 o’clock. Neither of us hurt. Ship a total wreck. Our existence was due to concentrated food and nerve. Arrived at a trapper’s cabin located at southernmost point of Port Moller Bay morning May 7. Exhausted. Found food. Rested three days. Walked beach. Awaiting instructions here. (Signed) Martin.”

Maj. Martin and Sgt. Harvey were transported home and assigned duty at the Air Service headquarters. Their names



TOP: Map illustrating the intended First World Flight route, dated March 24; there were some changes in the route before the mission began, and some changes enroute due to conditions and mechanical issues. Courtesy San Diego Air and Space Museum, Catalog No. 10.0015514. BOTTOM LEFT: *Bidding Farewell to Old Mount Rainier*, Douglas World Cruiser on Lake Washington. Courtesy Marist College Archives and Special Collections, Lowell Thomas Papers, LTP.1545.04.06. BOTTOM RIGHT: *Seattle Daily Times*, April 3, 1924, courtesy NewsBank.



AVIATION ARTIFACTS

Scattered across the Puget Sound are artifacts and ephemera that tell the First World Flight story, now 100 years old. Here are the top ten, plus a bonus story about a “lucky charm” gone wrong.

1. THE HANGAR

The 64 x 140-foot metal hangar was the first military building installed at Sand Point and was used to house the Douglas Cruisers before they began their around-the-world flight.

TOP: March, 1925, image from *Naval Station Puget Sound at Sand Point* by Dennis Stuhau, 1992, courtesy of Elisa Law. BOTTOM: In 1931 the hangar was relocated to the Jefferson County Airport where it sits today. Courtesy *Flying Magazine*, “Historic Hangars of the Pacific Northwest” by Meg Godlewski, Dec. 18, 2022, photo by Summer Martell. <https://www.flyingmag.com/historic-hangars-of-the-pacific-northwest/>.



2. MAJOR MARTIN'S WALKING STICK

Major Frederick Martin (left), commander of the mission, and Sergeant Alva Harvey (right), were the crew flying the *Seattle*, photographed at the Port Moller Cannery. After the *Seattle* crashed on April 30, 1924, the airmen walked through the Alaska wilderness and ultimately found their way to the cannery on May 10. Maj. Martin's walking stick is now in the collection at the Museum of History and Industry (MOHI) in Seattle.

Image from First World flier Lt. Leslie Arnold's scrapbook. National Air and Space Museum Archives, United States Army Around the World Trip (Leslie Arnold) Collection, image: NASM-9A11670-034.





The wreckage of the *Seattle*, near Port Moller, Alaska. Courtesy Marist College Archives and Special Collections, Lowell Thomas Papers LTP.1545.03.34.

remain on the list of First World Flight fliers in honor of their contribution and in recognition of the hardships they endured.

TOKYO BOUND

On May 2, the Chief of the Air Service ordered the other three planes to journey on without Maj. Martin and Sgt. Harvey and placed Lt. Lowell Smith in command. The *Chicago*, *New Orleans*, and *Boston* hopped off from Attu Island in the Bering Sea. They flew above the fog, seeing nothing but the ice-capped tips of mountains. Continuing for 870 miles, they made an early landing to avoid a storm,

touching down near the island of Paramushiru, Japan (now Paramishir, Russia), with icicles dangling from their clothes. They had just completed the world's first Pacific Ocean crossing by air!

When they arrived in Tokyo on May 24, a crowd of 30,000 welcomed them, waving American flags and shouting "Banzai!"—a triumphant cheer meaning "ten thousand years of long life." Yoshinao Kozai, president of the Tokyo Imperial University, addressed the fliers, exclaiming "Your glory is shared by the whole of mankind." They had flown 5,657 miles between Seattle and Tokyo, and their time in the air had been 75 hours and 55 minutes.

AMERICANS AID BRITISH WORLD FLIGHT COMPETITOR

While the *Boston*, *New Orleans*, and *Chicago* fliers were in Japan, Major Archibald Stuart MacLaren, a pilot from the British team that was simultaneously competing to fly first around the world, crashed at Akyab in Burma and wrecked his plane. The British had positioned spare parts in Japan, but Maj. MacLaren had no way of getting to them in time to rejoin the race. Would the American team help?

American destroyer *USS Pope* on a goodwill tour to Japan in 1924 with a Douglas World Cruiser above. Writing on lower right side says "location is the port of Kushimoto." San Diego Air and Space Museum 10_0015581.

Colonel L.E. Broome, advance officer for the British flight, remembers the American fliers' response to hearing of MacLaren's misfortune:

We'll get the machine to MacLaren somehow [they said]. Within five minutes, these great-hearted sportsmen had roughed out practical plans . . . [to] rush a U.S. destroyer to Hakodate and then load and carry the huge cases . . . all the way to Akyab if necessary . . . The spoken or written word cannot convey the gratitude for [their] help and sympathy in our ill-fortune.

The American fliers arranged the delivery of MacLaren's spare plane from Tokyo by way of the *USS John Paul Jones* and *USS William B. Preston* which allowed the British Team to continue their journey. The American fliers and British team would pass each other flying over Yangon (Rangoon), Burma weeks later, each continuing their around-the-world attempts.

FLIERS IN CHINA

By June 4, the U.S. squadron had made their way south through Japan and were hopping off to China. Lt. Erik Nelson's recollections reflect his hopes that air travel would bring increased intercultural understanding and world peace:

And as we flew on and on toward China, my engine was running so smoothly that the ship seemed to be flying herself. I dropped into a reverie, and seemed to see dozens of giant planes passing me in the sky with passengers making weekend trips between Shanghai and San Francisco . . . It seemed to me that the airplane was destined to be the agent that would bring the races of the world into such intimate contact with each other that they would no more feel inclined to wage wars . . . If our Flight helps in any way to hasten this era, we shall be repaid a million times over for our efforts.

As they drew nearer to Shanghai, they flew over tens of thousands of sampans, steamers and junks. In preparation for their arrival, the harbor master had cleared several miles of waterfront on the Yangtze-Kiang River for their landing. They were thrown a brilliant reception at the home of a merchant prince and attended dinners with China's head of aviation, General Li.



Fliers in China, June 1924. Courtesy Marist College Archives and Special Collections, Lowell Thomas Papers, LTP.1544.03.45.

CHICAGO STRANDED IN CROCODILE'S LAGOON

By June 11, the fliers had hopped Shanghai to Amoy to Hong Kong to Haiphong. They hurried off to Saigon, spurred on by the news that the Portuguese aviators had already reached Burma. Somewhere near the Gulf of Tonkin off the coast of south China and Vietnam, the *Chicago* began to overheat. The motor was red-hot and pounding badly and by the time the squadron was gliding down toward a remote Indo-Chinese lagoon, the engine was going to pieces.

The *Boston* and *New Orleans* set off to get the *Chicago* a new motor while Lt. Smith and Lt. Arnold waited in the hot sun on the lagoon with their disabled aircraft. They soon ran out of drinking water, so Lt. Arnold went to shore in a dugout canoe with some local missionaries. With the \$50 he had on him (\$880 by today's standards), he purchased their communion wine and provisions. Meanwhile Lt. Smith, waiting for Lt. Arnold's return, drank from the crocodile-infested waters and later contracted dysentery.

The next day, the *Chicago* was tugged triumphantly 25 miles to Hue on the north-central coast of Vietnam by three sampans, a drum leading the rowing rhythm. The local population was out to greet them when they arrived. With a new Liberty 12 engine installed four hours later, the *Chicago* was back in the air.



AVIATION ARTIFACTS

3. DOUGLAS CRUISER SPARE PROPELLER

This spare propeller for the *Boston* is housed at The Museum of Flight in Seattle and was among the many essential spare parts used in the First World Flight. Courtesy The Museum of Flight, Seattle. Object ID 1974-8-15_1.

4. DOUGLAS WORLD CRUISER ARTILLERY SHELL

This is a shell from the artillery blast that signaled the completion of the First World Flight at Sand Point Field. It is among the artifacts in The Museum of Flight's collection. Courtesy The Museum of Flight, Seattle. Object ID 1984-0-11/1.



5. SEATTLE PUBLIC LIBRARY AVIATION COLLECTION

The Seattle Public Library Aviation Collection was started in 1928. It now consists of approximately 11,500 volumes, periodical runs, photographs, and vertical file materials, and includes articles and books about the First World Flight from 1923–1924. Photographs courtesy Elisa Law.





SWAMPS AND SAND DEVILS

From Siam to Burma, the six airmen risked a shortcut over the jungle across the northern end of the Malay Peninsula, saving 800 miles. Enroute from Akyab, Burma, to Kolkata (Calcutta), India, they crossed the dreaded Sundarbans—a great mangrove swamp-forest in the vast delta on the Bay of Bengal, infested with tigers and crocodiles. If the planes were forced to land there, it could take weeks for a search party to find them. Fortunately, they passed over without incident.

Electric telegraph and telephone wires and trees were cut down to allow the planes to fit through the city into the park in the center of Kolkata, where their pontoons were replaced with wheels for on-land stops across India and Europe. On July 1, the fliers were ready to head to Allahabad, flying along the East Indian Railway.

On July 4 as they flew across the Sindh Desert in Pakistan, sand devils—some as big as mountains—whirled about and made the air bumpy. “*The New Orleans* decided to have a fourth of July celebration of its own account and started to fly to pieces in mid-air,” Lt. Nelson remembered. They could not land on the baked mud below, cracked with gaping seams, so they flew on with tensions increasing. Both Lt. Nelson and Lt. Harding stood in their cockpits watching for a fire to break out as they brought their airplane to a landing near the city of Karachi, with oil flying into their faces and covering their goggles. *The New Orleans* got a new engine, the crew made repairs, and they kept on.



TOP: *Flying over herd of elephants*, Yangon, Burma, June 1924. Courtesy Marist College Archives and Special Collections, Lowell Thomas Papers LTP.1544.05.05.

BOTTOM: *Fliers in Allahabad, India*, July 1924. Courtesy Marist College Archives and Special Collections, Lowell Thomas Papers LTP.1545.02.04.

ARRIVING IN PARIS

Anxious to reach Paris by Bastille Day, the squadron spent just one day in the great city of Constantinople, Turkey before their next hop. In the July 15, 1924 *Le Matin* newspaper, Andre Viollis described the scene of the American fliers’ arrival in Paris:

Flying in a perfect triangle above us, the great planes come, with the sunlight glinting on their wings. One by one they drop to earth with the light grace of a dragonfly. Slim khaki figures emerge from the cockpits—one cries ‘Just in time for tea!’ Then Smith asks who are winning the Olympic Games. Wade lifts his goggles with a placid air. Nelson pulls off

his helmet, watches the camera-men, and then, with a full-throated laugh, takes a Kodak and shoots back in return. Congratulations, speeches, glasses of champagne . . . There are cries of ‘Vive la France!’ and ‘Vive l’Amerique!’ But where are the heroes? They have vanished. ‘Feeding their horses’ someone explains. And in fact, the fliers have left the throng, and with a gesture that is simple as it is symbolic, they are wiping down the engines to which they owe a part of their glory.

A WATERY GRAVE

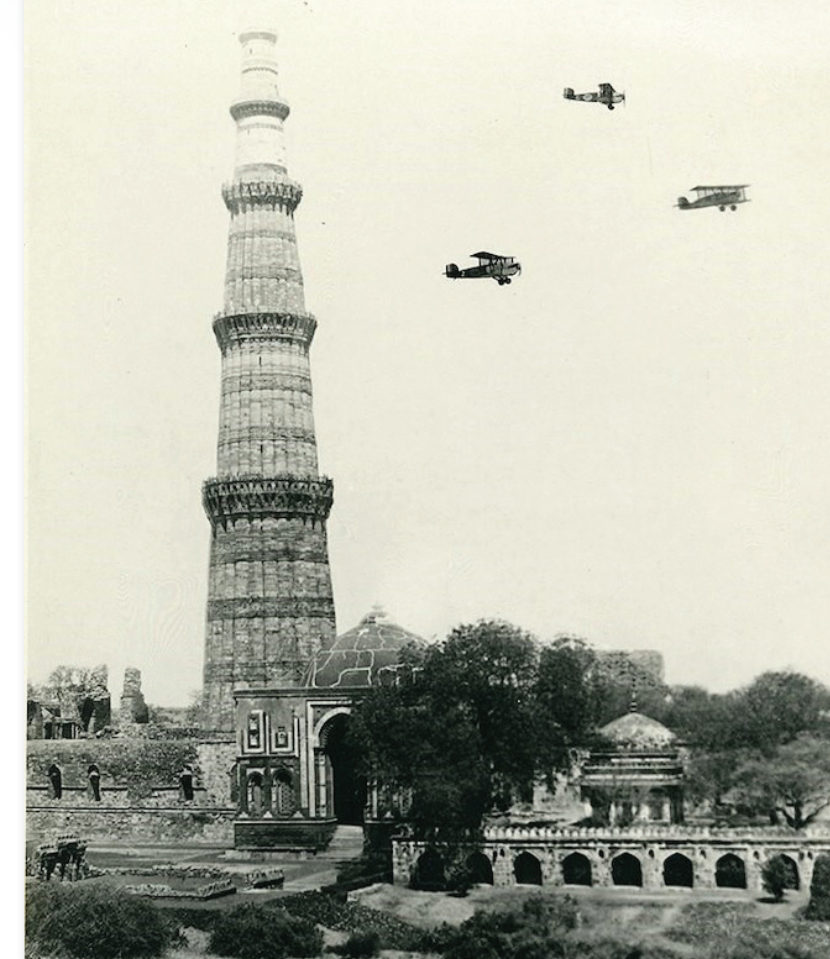
After arriving in England, the fliers spent almost two weeks in Brough preparing their planes for the most dangerous section of the journey. They declined an invitation to dine at Buckingham Palace in order to study maps, change their wheels out for pontoons again, and install new engines.

No airplanes had yet flown to Iceland or Greenland. Heavy fog and icebergs threatened their success, yet the three Douglas aircraft departed England on July 30 with the intention of accomplishing this feat. On the way to Iceland, the engine in the *Boston* failed and forced an emergency landing in a remote part of the North Atlantic Ocean. Lt. Wade and Sgt. Ogden awaited rescue for two hours on the frigid, gray swells with a lone gull for company.

The men were saved, but the *Boston* was not so lucky. While being towed by the USS *Richmond* scout cruiser, and only a mile off Iceland’s shore, the *Boston* capsized. “We were forced to abandon her . . . we cut the two lines, bade farewell to our friend who carried us so far around the globe, and headed for Iceland with heavy hearts,” Lt. Wade reported.

The *Chicago* and the *New Orleans* had landed in Hornafjörður, Iceland and were crestfallen to hear the fate of the *Boston*. They would have to continue to Greenland without Lt. Wade and Sgt. Ogden.

Meanwhile, Maj. Gen. Patrick arranged to ship the prototype Douglas Cruiser, which had stayed in America, to Nova Scotia. The prototype plane was named the *Boston II*. Lt. Wade and Sgt. Ogden would travel there by ship in time to rejoin the *Chicago* and the *New Orleans* so they could complete the First World Flight together.



TOP: *Flying over Delhi*, Delhi, India, July 1924. Courtesy Marist College Archives and Special Collections, Lowell Thomas Papers LTP.1544.05.10.

BOTTOM: *Boston* capsizing off the coast of Iceland. *The First World Flight* by Lowell Thomas, Houghton Mifflin publishers, 1925.

AVIATION ARTIFACTS

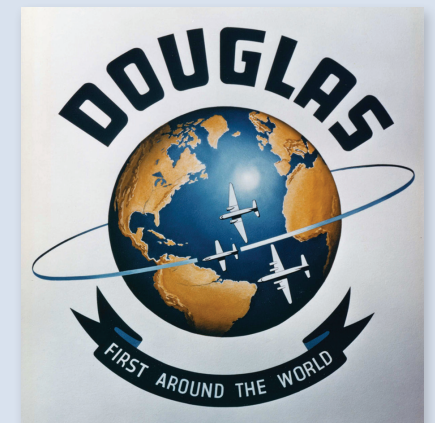
6. AMERICAN FLAG FLOWN FROM BOSTON II

The *Boston II* flew this 48-star flag from Nova Scotia to Seattle (the *Boston* had capsized off the coast of Iceland). It is preserved in The Museum of Flight’s collection. The Museum of Flight, Seattle. Object ID 2013-7-31/2.



7. BOEING LOGO

After the famous flight, Douglas Aircraft Company adopted the tagline “First Around the World” and a logo of the Douglas Cruisers tracing a course around the globe. In 1997 Boeing acquired Douglas and incorporated the same visual concept into its logo. When you see the Boeing logo, you are looking at First World Flight history!



ICEBERG AHEAD!

It was a particularly bad year for ice, and newspapers began speculating that the mission would have to be abandoned. Icebergs surrounding the harbor at Ammassalik Fjord in Greenland—the next planned stop—made landing and refueling there impossible.

Instead of giving up, the *New Orleans* and the *Chicago* decided to risk a longer flight to Frederiksdal for supplies and refueling. On August 21, the two planes set out from Reykjavik to fly the 835-mile stretch, the most dangerous hop in the entire journey. As they flew over the *USS Richmond* they could see “GOOD LUCK” painted on the deck in big white letters. The fog was thick, and towering icebergs jumped out suddenly from every direction. For eleven hours, the fliers endured this excruciating tension.

“Traveling along at ninety miles an hour, and only seeing 100 feet ahead, you can just imagine the close shaves we had while playing tag and leap-frog with those icebergs,” Lt. Smith wrote.

Miraculously, after losing each other in the fog and nearly crashing into a mountainous iceberg, both the *Chicago* and the *New Orleans* arrived in Frederiksdal. Three days later, they continued up the Greenland coast to Ivigtût, their next supply stop. While waiting for clear flying weather, they fished for trout, marveled at the northern lights, and watched movies.



Left to right: Lt. Leslie Arnold, Lt. Lowell Smith, President Coolidge, Secretary of War John W. Weeks, Lt. Leigh Wade, Lt. Erik Nelson and Lt. Henry Ogden at Bolling Field, Washington, D.C., September 9, 1924. Courtesy San Diego Air and Space Museum, Catalog No. 10_0015469.

CANADA-BOUND

On August 31, the fliers took advantage of clear weather to fly from Greenland across the Atlantic over the Davis Strait to Canada’s Labrador region. On the way, both fuel pumps failed on the *Chicago*, requiring Lt. Arnold to hand-pump gasoline into the engine from a reserve tank—for almost three hours!

The *Chicago* and *New Orleans* landed at Icy Tickle, Labrador where they received a congratulatory message from President Coolidge. Moving on, they navigated through foggy Belle Isle Strait to Newfoundland and continued to Pictou, Nova Scotia, where they rejoined Lt. Wade and Sgt. Ogden for the remainder of the mission.

In Nova Scotia they were greeted with Scottish bagpipes and lobster banquets. Factories shot steam into the air while tugs and ferryboats blew puffs of smoke. Warships gave gun salutes. The crew were gifted watches, silver wings, and keys to cities. Young women hugged and kissed them. The community rejoiced.

WELCOME HOME

Having made it back to North America, the fliers’ route took them south along the coast, where they met with enthusiastic receptions at each stop. President Calvin Coolidge himself waited for three hours in the rain to greet the fliers at Bolling Field in Washington, D.C. It was the first time that a U.S. President had left the White House to welcome citizens to Washington.

Lt. Smith described the near violent welcome they received upon their U.S. landings:

They tried to pull our ships . . . people were tearing bits off our clothing and snipping off buttons for souvenirs. One lady cut a chunk out of my collar with a penknife . . . somebody else took a keepsake out the seat of my trousers.

The last I saw of Jack he was being smothered by a dozen females. Hank was in the arms of another six. Erik’s bald head shown valiantly above the battle.

As they at last approached Seattle, the three planes broke their V-formation and flew abreast over Sand Point Field so that they would finish the flight at the same time.



“Some of the greeters in Seattle,” from Leslie Arnold’s scrapbook. Courtesy National Air and Space Museum Archives, United States Army Around the World Trip (Leslie Arnold) Collection, image: NASM-9A11670-170.

Technically, the wheels of the *Chicago* touched down first on the Sand Point Field at 1:28 pm, September 28, 1924 with the *New Orleans* and *Boston II* close behind. The airmen’s accounts recorded flying 26,345 miles in 363 hours and 7 minutes, from Seattle to Seattle in 175 days. Lt. Smith enthused:

Fifty thousand citizens of Seattle gave us a magnificent reception . . . couples arranged their marriages to coincide with the termination of the World Flight and there was a fashion for a time of wearing beauty patches cut in the silhouette of a Douglas Cruiser. They were even naming babies for us.

ABOVE AND BEYOND

So it was that the United States claimed the honor of being the first nation to circumnavigate the globe by air, proving to the world the skill of her engineers and the courage of her aviators. The success of the First World Flight was also largely owed to collaboration between the 22 countries on the flight path.

The historic flight helped drive Congress to develop the military air defense capacity of Sand Point and in 1929,

Naval Station Puget Sound was created. It operated for many years as a training and education facility for U.S. Navy aviators. The airfield and runways were torn down in the 1970s and the land was converted to Warren G. Magnuson Park, managed by Seattle Parks and Recreation. Its national designation as the Sand Point Naval Air Station Historic District commemorates its aviation history, along with the World Flight Monument standing sentinel at the entrance. Pacific Northwest sculptor Alonzo Victor Lewis created the winged obelisk.

“It was a granite shaft fifteen feet high with a globe at the top surmounted by a pair of bronze wings. On one side was a bronze plate bearing our names and the dates of our departure and return,” Lt. Smith described. He quipped, “We had certainly never expected to see our names on a monument until we were under it.”

In accomplishing the United States Army Air Force’s post-WWI goals of fostering public interest and trust in aeronautics, we can safely say that the First World Flight went above and beyond. 🌟

AVIATION ARTIFACTS

8. SEATTLE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE CORRESPONDENCE

Major General Mason Patrick received a deluge of anxious telegrams from the Seattle Chamber of Commerce and its allies just before the fliers made their return hop across the Atlantic. The telegrams give a glimpse of behind-the-scenes advocacy to ensure that the around-the-world flight would end at Sand Point. As an example, the July 28 telegram from the Seattle Chamber to Maj. Gen. Patrick reads, “Major General Mason Patrick - With our preparations well under way to celebrate successful end of world flight in Seattle United Press dispatch published here tonight sure you have changed mind and selected Los Angeles for finish. Stop. Believe report untrue and would appreciate your wiring us authority to explode it. Seattle Chamber of Commerce.”

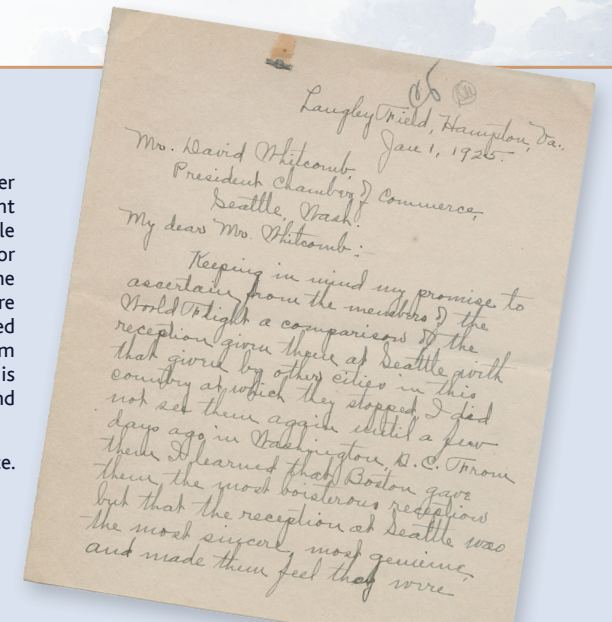
TOP: Telegram from Seattle Chamber of Commerce to Maj. Gen. Mason Patrick. July 28, 1924. Museum of History and Industry, Seattle, ID 1956.1145.1.03.01. BOTTOM: Telegram from Seattle Mayor Edwin J. Brown to Maj. Gen. Mason Patrick, July 29, 1924. Museum of History and Industry, Seattle, ID 1956.1145.1.07.01.



9. CORRESPONDENCE FROM FIRST WORLD FLIERS TO SEATTLE OFFICIALS

The fliers sent a telegram of thanks to the Seattle Chamber of Commerce in October following completion of the First World Flight to express their appreciation for the “excellent reception given us in Seattle.” Maj. Martin also sent a letter to the president of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce, dated January 1, 1925. He responded to the president’s request for a comparison of the receptions the fliers received around the world. He reported, “. . . the reception at Seattle was the most sincere, most genuine and made them feel they were received into the hearts of the people as did no other reception accorded them.” He added that he had appreciated the heartfelt sympathy that the people of Seattle shared with him and Sgt. Harvey as they were unable to complete the journey, noting “This experience is so vivid in my memory that I can recall it at will, to again live over the most beautiful and wonderful experience of my life.”

RIGHT: Letter from Maj. Martin to the president of the Seattle Chamber of Commerce. January 1, 1925. Museum of History and Industry, Seattle, ID 1956.1145.1.06.01.





AVIATION ARTIFACTS

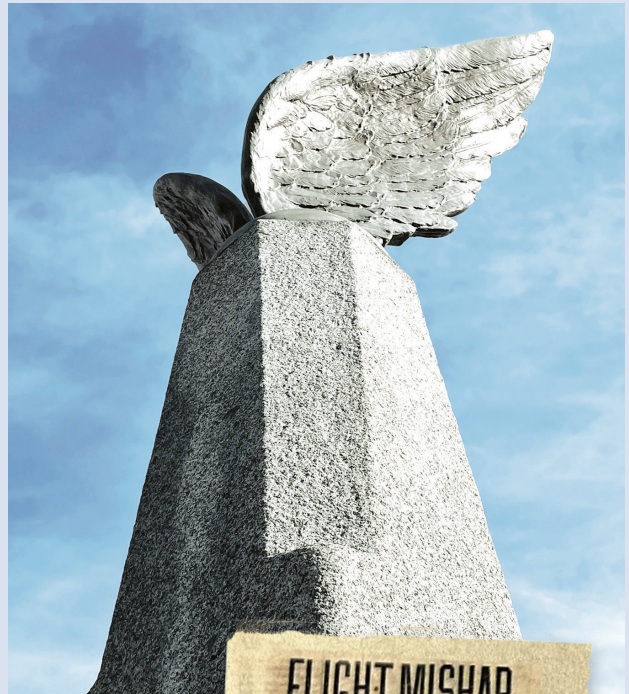
10. FIRST WORLD FLIGHT MONUMENT

The First World Flight Monument was created by sculptor Victor Alonzo Lewis and erected in 1924 by the Seattle Chamber of Commerce. When dedicated, the monument was placed close to the airfield's only runway. After it was hit by an aircraft it became apparent that the monument was too close. Today, the monument stands sentinel at the entrance to Magnuson Park on 74th Avenue NE and Sand Point Way. A bronze plaque on the monument reads:

Dedicated to U.S. Army Air Service officers in first round-the-world flight. Began April 6, 1924. Ended September 28, 1924, at Sand Point Airdrome on this field. 1st Lt. Lowell H. Smith, Pilot. Commander 1st Lt. Leslie P. Arnold. Flying Air Cruiser "Chicago". 1st Lt. Erik H. Nelson, Pilot 2nd Lt. John Harding, Jr. O.R.C. Flying "New Orleans" 1st Lt. Leigh Wade, Pilot 2nd Lt. Henry P. Ogden, O.R.C. Flying "Boston". Wrecked off Iceland, August 3, 1924. Resumed flight in "Boston II" from Nova Scotia. Maj. Frederick L. Martin, Pilot. Staff Sergt. Alva L. Harvey Flying Flagship "Seattle". Wrecked on Alaska Coast April 30 1924.

LEFT: The First World Flight Monument at Magnuson Park (formerly Sand Point Airfield). Courtesy Seattle Parks and Recreation.

RIGHT: Bronze wings complete the granite obelisk. Courtesy Elisa Law.



BONUS ARTIFACT: THE CURSE OF THE RABBIT'S FOOT

In the 1920s, aviation was still a relatively new and risky endeavor. Pilots faced numerous dangers and uncertainties. Some of them developed superstitions to cope with the perils. The First World Flight fliers were no exception. Lt. Leigh Wade knocked on wood half a dozen times a day and hated to see three cigarettes lit off the same match. Lt. Erik Nelson refused to carry flowers in his airplane. Each of the Douglas Cruisers carried a horseshoe, a four-leaf clover, and a rabbit's foot, all considered to be lucky charms.

Some say that it was Sgt. Alva Harvey's hasty discarding of the Seattle's rabbit's foot that brought the flagship plane crashing into a mountain in the Aleutian Islands. Sgt. Harvey, himself, seemed to question the power of the rabbit's foot when he said, "... when we sprung a leak in our pontoon on Lake Washington, I said 'Oh shucks, that rabbit's foot talk is all bunk,' and I threw it in Lake Washington. And it's there now," adding "Maybe I threw that rabbit's foot away too soon. Maybe not."

RIGHT: *Seattle Post Intelligencer*, May 26, 1924. Courtesy Elisa Law.

