



Pioneer Flight

The First Transcontinental Airplane Flight
By A. STEVENS HALSTED, JR.
(Paper delivered at Sunset Club, Los Angeles,
September 28, 1960)

Although the name of Calbraith Perry Rodgers does not appear in the annals of aviation until seven years after the historic flight of the Wright Brothers, he will go down in history as the first person to fly an airplane across the United States. Great excitement in both Europe and the United States followed the Kitty Hawk event of 1904, and aero clubs were quickly organized in the larger communities. The names of Glenn T. Curtiss, Roy Knabenshue, Glenn L. Martin, Lincoln Beachey, Arch Hoxsey and other Southern Californians whose names are now largely forgotten, were prominent in the news of fifty years ago. Without detracting from the feats of any of these pioneer flyers, however, it is nevertheless fair to say that Rodgers, because of his transcontinental flight, stands out more clearly in retrospect than the others.

As a backdrop to Rodgers' feat we might first take a look at some of the early birds who just a half century ago brought our community into prominence. A group of Angelenos, infected with an adventurous spirit, decided to hold America's first international air meet. They laid out an airfield on the outskirts of Compton on the old Dominguez Rancho, built a grandstand and scheduled the meet for January 10-21, 1910. The fact that no airplane had previously been flown west of the Rockies didn't deter them! The event, which proved to be one of the most sensational ever held in this country, drew the attention of the entire world.

During the ten days of the historic meet every kind of flying of which pilots and machines were capable, was exhibited to packed grandstands. An estimated crowd of over 175,000 persons attended. They came from far and near by special Pacific Electric train, auto, horse and buggy, and on foot. As an example of the enthusiasm for the event, more than 3,000 San Diegans made the excursion to Los Angeles.

Owing to the rigors of highway travel of that time, their automobiles were loaded onto 25 flat cars and shipped by train to Los Angeles for use during the holidays — a very early example of railroad "piggy-back." World's flying records were shattered in nearly every event. Balloon ascents, dirigible races and parachute jumps were added attractions.

Keen competition existed between the American flyers, led by the celebrated Glenn H. Curtiss, and the delegation of French aviators, captained by Louis Paulhan, a member of the French Signal Corps who had learned to fly a bare six months before. Although Curtiss, as America's first licensed pilot, was generally conceded at the time to be the outstanding flyer of them all, Paulhan, the colorful 26-year-old Frenchman, was the popular idol of the meet. His Farman biplane and Bleriot monoplane were the first of these models to be flown in this country. Paulhan successfully broke the world's record for altitude, reaching a height of 4,165 feet, a feat which inspired a prophecy that Los Angeles would be the biggest and brightest spot in aviation. He also made a flight from Dominguez Field to Lucky Baldwin's Santa Anita Ranch and back — 45 miles in 62 minutes — the longest cross-country flight the world had ever seen. Another day he flew over San Pedro, the new fortification (Fort MacArthur) and the harbor which, he said, he could have "bombed with ease." After the flight, Edward Clearly, manager of the Paulhan interests, threw his arms around the little man-bird and kissed him a dozen times on each cheek.

Cal Rodgers didn't participate in the 1910 Dominguez meet. In fact he was not to climb into an airplane for his first flight until June of the following year. During the period of a day and a half, he took six 15-minute lessons at the Wright School at Dayton, then said good-

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THE BRANDING IRON plans to publish more original articles, up to 3,000 words in length, dealing with every phase of the Old West. Contributions are solicited from active members, CM's, and friends.

College — he won United States Archery Championships in three different years and was Secretary of the National Archery Association for five years — Vaya con Dios.

Our old Compañero Arturo Woodward is leaving on a research trip in the very near future, for the Amon Carter Museum of Western Art, Fort Worth, Texas.

W. W. Robinson — Geo. Fullerton — Bob Woods — Coke Wood — Dr. Al. Shumate — W. H. Hutchinson all attended the Conference of California Historical Societies at Sacramento June 17-19 . . . Hutch was the speaker of the evening at the banquet held in Sutters Fort.

C. M. Dr. Al. Shumate presided at the Celebration of the 189th Birthday of San Francisco June 29th.



CORRAL MEETINGS . . .

May 12th meeting was held at Taix Cafe . . . Sheriff Erv Strong in the saddle . . . Speaker of the evening was David F. Myrick — the West's leading authority on early railroads and his subject was Arizona Railroads and Mines . . . Many of us are familiar with his monumental releases Vol. 1 & 2 of Railroads of Nevada and California — others are in preparation — he is a Director of the Nevada Historical Society and active in the California Historical Society — the Book Club of California — the Nevada Mining Assoc.

The June 12th meeting was held in Orange County at Andy Kirk's "Hossie Enda" situated midway between the late Judge Joseph E. Pleasant's Ranch, the only fortyner in Orange County, who located there in 1860, and, "Forest of Arden" the estate of the late Madame Helena Modjeska . . . Don Meadows spoke of the historical lore of Santiago Canyon, the place of our meeting.

The July 14th meeting was held at Taix Cafe with Sheriff Erv Strong in the saddle . . . Speaker of the evening was Dr. Doyce B. Nunn Jr. Editor of the Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly, his interesting subject being "Issac Graham" Captain de Los Riferos Americanos . . .

CORRAL CHIPS . . .

C. M. Dr. Al. Shumate was honored by the Spanish Government for his interest in Spanish colonial history and in Spain, he was presented the award Knight Commander of the order of Isabel la Catolica by the Spanish ambassador.

At their annual convention on May 29th the Grand Council of the Ancient and Honorable Order of E Clampus Vitus elected Sid Platford to the Office of Sublime Noble Grand Humbug.

Dr. George Hammond has been awarded a Fullbright Scholarship to teach Western History at the University of Madrid, Spain.

C. M. J. Robert Kest passed away June 14th — he was speech instructor at Orange Coast

THE PAPERS OF JEFFERSON DAVIS

This project is an effort to collect, edit, and publish a comprehensive edition of the letters, papers, and speeches relating to Davis' long career. Although we realize that it will never be possible to describe any documentary publication of any public figure as "The complete works of . . .," we are hoping to make this series as comprehensive as possible. In the effort to achieve this goal and locate hitherto unknown materials which relate to Jefferson Davis, survey letters have been forwarded to more than nine hundred libraries and manuscript repositories, plus announcements to newspapers, book dealers, and broadcasting stations. Now, we solicit your aid in furthering our attempts to find unpublished items.

Haskell M. Monroe Jr.

Signed

Box 1892, Rice University
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Pioneer Flight . . .

(Continued from page 1)

bye to his instructor and took off alone into the open sky. The Wright Brothers considered Rodgers the greatest natural flyer in the business. If he had been at Dominguez, it is safe to say that his daring maneuvers would have given Paulhan stiff competition for the crowd's fancy. A year later in extolling Rodgers' daring, the Pasadena Star said "his exploits completely put into the shade those of Paulhan, who appeared at the first Los Angeles meet."

A novelty attraction at Dominguez was when Paulhan, with Lt. Paul W. Beck of the Army Signal Corps, "bombed" targets marked on the field with bags of sand. The implication of this feature was overlooked by the thousands of watchers, but not by the few military observers present. A Los Angeles Times reporter on the scene also caught the significance of the incident which he expressed in the following quotation:

"Every war office in the world was watching when Lt. Paul Beck, USA, went up in Paulhan's biplane. To the audience on the ground, it was only an amusing little game of throwing tiny sacks of sand out of an aeroplane at a white patch of paper on the ground, something like the old game of bean-bags.

But to Lt. Beck and the two eager young captains of artillery who observed the experiments it was not in the least like

a game of beanbags. It was the raising of the curtain on the war drama of tomorrow."

World War I was slightly more than four years away. Unlike Curtiss, who saw the commercial and military possibilities of the airplane, Paulhan felt that flying should be developed only as a sport. The press carried the following ironical comment: "Interest in the army maneuvers at Dominguez Field was heightened when it became known that the Hague Peace Tribunal had just issued a bulletin asking all nations to sign an agreement which will make the throwing of bombs from aeroplanes 'unpermissible' in war." Looking back on it fifty years later, it is incredible that anyone could have been so naive!

A familiar figure at the early air meets, beginning with Dominguez Field, was Lincoln Beachey. He had the reputation of being one of the most daring aviators — his most reckless feat having been a flight under the suspension bridge at Niagara Falls. Beachey was the first pilot to do an inside loop. Some fellow Sunsetters may remember his flying at the San Francisco World's Fair in 1915. At Dominguez Beachey and Roy Knabenshue raced each other in cigar-shaped dirigibles.

Arch Hoxsey, a resident of Pasadena, was another great flyer in these early days. He had also received his training with the Wright Brothers. When he was 21, and for the remaining five years of his life, he was a member of the Wright team at all the principal air meets in the United States. With Ralph Johnstone, another Wright aviator, Hoxsey made the first moonlight flight. He also held records for high climbing and cross-country flying at a time when a 190-mile sustained flight was a gruelling test of pilot and machine. He thrilled the crowds at the Second Dominguez meet held in December, 1910, by a round trip flight from Dominguez to Mt. Wilson. His barograph showed that he attained an altitude of 10,005 feet; the flight required 2½ hours. The trip was observed by army officers who said the Hoxsey had proved the usefulness of the airplane for transporting the army across mountain ranges.

On the last day of 1910, Hoxsey went aloft at the Second Dominguez meet, against the advice of his fellow-pilots, who reported the air full of treacherous currents and whirls. Hoxsey ascended and performed evolutions for more than an hour at 7,000 feet. As he was descending and within 500 feet of the earth, he lost control and the machine crashed right in front of the assembled crowd. Prominent aviators who witnessed the tragedy placed the blame upon such causes as air sickness, "mountain fever", unfavorable wind currents and broken control wires. The last reason was most strongly stressed, and largely as the result of

this accident, the airplanes of 1911 came equipped with double controls. The many crashes which accompanied early flying earned for American pilots the reputation of being great dare-devils who stunted their planes beyond capacity. Another well-known aviator, John B. Morsant, was killed in New Orleans on the same day as Hoxsey, and the loss of these two outstanding flyers served as a warning against the taking of unnecessary risks in the air.

While Glenn L. Martin, like Rodgers, did not participate in the First Dominguez meet, he is identified with early aviation in Los Angeles. Martin, who was to become a celebrated airplane designer and builder, began his career here. As late as 1912 he was the only aviator to have flown below sea level. That flight, made in the Imperial Valley in July, 1911, was in 117-deg. temperature under the most arduous conditions.

These early planes were fragile. In a crash a flyer not only had to sustain a severe shock, but also he was in imminent danger of being crushed by the engine, which, in nearly all planes of this period, was located almost directly behind the pilot. Even a rough landing could jar the engine loose from its mountings. In addition to the flimsy construction of these machines, the pilot had little protection from the elements. He wore no safety belt, the general feeling at the time being that in case of a crash, it was better to be thrown clear of the plane. Goggles, helmets, mittens and heavy clothes were his only protection against the wind, rain and cold weather of *al fresco* flying.

In these air meets cash prizes were awarded for stunting and record breaking. Paulhan, in fact, received a \$50,000 guarantee for merely participating in the First Dominguez meet. Before long, however, aviation meets began to pall; people no longer attracted just by the sight of a flying machine. By the summer of 1911 greater emphasis was being placed on airplane transport than on exhibition flying. Distance races, of from 500 to 1,000 miles with cash prizes offered by newspapers or communities seeking publicity, became the vogue. Thus a premium was placed on the endurance of men and machines. Typical of this new emphasis on cross-country flying was the challenge of the Scientific American in its issue of August 5, 1911: "What is needed in America is a prize of \$50,000 to \$75,000 for a circuit race of 1,200 to 1,500 miles. If the Aero Club of America could organize such a race, it would show itself worthy of being the representative organization, and would encourage a development in aviation in a way that has never yet been done in this country."

In the summer of 1911, William Randolph Hearst's New York *American* offered \$50,000

for the first man who should fly across the American continent within thirty days. This contest attracted wide interest. The only important conditions were that the trip be completed in thirty consecutive days and in any event by October 10, 1911. Contestants were permitted to choose their own direction.

Of the small group that entered the competition, four of the pilots flew Wright planes, one a Curtiss, one a Bleriot and several used airplanes of their own design. Three of the contestants went all out and hired special trains to carry spare parts.

Cal Rodgers, a comparative newcomer to flying, decided to enter this race. After a total of an hour and a half of flying instruction at the Wright Brothers' school that June, he had entered an aviation meet at Chicago against all comers, and won the duration prize of \$11,000 for staying in the air for 29 out of a possible 33 hours.

Fresh from this triumph, Rodgers had enough money to buy his flying machine, but not enough to finance a special train to provide repair service en route and the mechanics to man it. His performance at the Chicago meet in August, however, had attracted the interest of Armour & Co. This concern was then launching a bottled beverage called "Vin Fiz — The Ideal Grape Drink," and it agreed to pay all expenses of Rodgers' flight except repairs to the machine. He was also paid \$5.00 a mile, in return for which he was to display Vin Fiz advertising on both the plane and his train.

The Wright Brothers agreed to build a model designed for speed, known as "Model Ex." But when Rodgers ordered this special plane for the cross-country hop, Orville Wright, who recognized Rodgers' natural genius for flight, warned: "We'll build the aeroplane for you, and it will be the best we can do; but you are trying the impossible. If the man has been born who can do it, you are the one, but the machine hasn't been made that can do it."

Cal Rodgers was a daring man. Orville Wright described him as having been born with four horseshoes in his pockets. He came from a family steeped in the best American tradition. His great-grandfather, Commodore Matthew Calbraith Perry, in the year 1854 opened the ports of Japan to the world. The Commodore's brother (Rodgers' great-uncle) was Commodore Oliver Hazard Perry, the hero of the Battle of Lake Erie and famous for the laconic dispatch "We have met the enemy and they are ours." His father, Captain C. P. Rodgers, had been killed in the early Eighties fighting the Indians in Arizona. Rodgers was a double first cousin of John Rodgers who later commanded the 1925 San Francisco-Hawaii Navy flight. This is the officer who, it will be re-

membered, landed 400 miles short of Hawaii and tossed on the sea for nine days, existing on scanty rations and sea water which he distilled. For several generations the Rodgers' family had been in either the Army or Navy, and Cal would have entered Annapolis himself if it had not been for an attack of scarlet fever in his boyhood which left him almost deaf. That same illness also affected his speech, so that he talked slowly and with an effort. Although he attended Princeton Preparatory School, Columbia University and the University of Virginia, Cal was more of an athlete than a scholar. He excelled in football and as a polo player.

Cal had shown signs of his love of speed early in life; he drove fast horses when they were the swiftest things available, he sailed racing yachts, he took up the motorcycle when that vehicle was invented, and later he became an amateur automobile racer. The airplane was his next challenge: at a hundred miles an hour it was the fastest thing yet!

Rodgers' failure to get into Annapolis was a keen disappointment. Frustrated in his ambition to become a sea fighter like his forebears, the idea of making the first transcontinental aerial flight roused his sporting blood. When the way was opened for him to enter the Hearst contest, he grabbed it.

The Wrights had faith in Rodgers; they loaned him their chief mechanic. His special train consisted of a Pullman sleeping car, a day coach and a hangar car. The first two carried four representatives of Armour & Co., Rodgers' mother, his wife, his manager, the repair crew and a chauffeur. The hangar car, the first of its kind in America, housed complete duplicate parts for his plane, the necessary tools, oil and gasoline, a truck for moving the plane bodily from place to place, and a six cylinder Palmer-Singer racing automobile which could reach the airplane quickly when necessary with supplies or with medical aid.

The party assembled on Sunday afternoon, September 17, (1911) at the race track at Sheepshead Bay near Coney Island, New York. The plane was christened with a bottle of non-fermented Vin Fiz. Rodgers, then 32, a tall figure of six feet four inches, clenching a half-smoked cigar in his teeth, climbed into the rickety maze of bamboo, wire and cloth. Perching himself on the wing just in front of the motor, wearing a leather coat, long sheepskin-lined gloves and heavy knee boots, he pulled on a pair of goggles and waved to the small assembled crowd as he took to the air.

He headed across East River for New York City, circled the high buildings, breasted the gusty air currents that rose from the canyons of lower Manhattan, and then headed west to the Jersey shore where his special train was

waiting on the Erie tracks. He was on his way to the Pacific Coast. He followed the Erie roadbed by means of "white streamers" — toilet paper perchance? — placed along the tracks for his guidance. His first stop was Middletown, New York, a flight of 104 miles which he made in 105 minutes.

That night his party celebrated their first day's success, and on the showing of that afternoon exultantly multiplied one hundred miles by two: their estimate of a fair day's flight. They were already speculating on what Rodgers should do with the \$50,000 prize money: blow it on automobiles or invest it in Government bonds? Since under the rules of the contest, the transcontinental flight had to be completed by October 10th, Rodgers had handicapped himself by six days by not getting away until September 17th. He and the other contestants thought they had plenty of time, even allowing for delays, because, in comparison, the automobile had done it in 15 days, and trains made it regularly in five. In any event, he reasoned, if he could average 200 miles a day, it should take him only slightly over two weeks to reach the Coast.

The next morning altered the optimistic calculations of the night before. In starting from Middletown's race track, his machine snagged a treetop and pitched head first into a back yard, landing on a chicken coop and killing six chickens. This was one of the worst of many falls which Rodgers was to sustain, and it left him stunned and bleeding from a deep cut in his left temple. The attending physician advised him to remain in bed for 24 hours. Five minutes after the doctor departed, however, Rodgers was out in the chicken yard working over the remains of his badly smashed-up plane.

After three hectic days, he resumed his flight and began averaging about a hundred miles a day. Sometimes bad weather held him up, but most of the delays were due to accidents. At Red House, New York, he came down to change a spark plug, and in taking off, ran into a barbed wire fence. Repair of the engine and propellers caused a two day delay and necessitated practically rebuilding the plane. He next made a forced landing at Warren, Ohio, because one of his mechanics had forgotten to put oil in the tank and in volplaning down, he broke a skid in negotiating a concealed ditch. Rodgers' persistence earned him the name "the iron man." Another sterling quality which made him a great pilot was his coolness under trying conditions. Once he came through a particularly rough landing puffing away on a cigar. He smoked almost continuously, often lighting one cigar from another, even while in flight.

"Model Ex," like the other early planes,

was a wide-open contraption of bamboo, cloth and wire, with two wooden pusher propellers activated by bicycle chains running from a single 40 H.P. engine. The landing gear consisted of four bicycle-type wheels set at the rear of the landing skids. When flying, Rodgers sat on a flimsy seat on the lower wing, with only his heavy clothing and goggles to protect him from the elements.

Widespread publicity over his flight drew great crowds as Rodgers made relatively slow progress across the country. Each evening the townspeople swarmed about the ship and hailed the good-natured pilot. "Nothing can stop you now, Cal," "Lots of luck, Cal." and other messages greeted him from whitewashed rocks below as he pressed on to his goal. In Indiana, as he flew over a funeral cortege, the pallbearers put down the coffin, took off their hats and waved.

One of Rodgers' greatest hazards was people's curiosity. At Scranton, he caught a woman screwing a loose nut off the engine with her fingers. She explained that she wanted it for a souvenir, that there were so many that one nut, more or less, wouldn't make any difference. After explaining that it might make the difference between this world and the next for him, Rodgers turned back to the machine, only to find another souvenir hunter — a man this time — trying to chisel a valve off the engine.

It took Rodgers three weeks to make Chicago. He had covered 1,199 miles in 22 hours of actual flying time. On leaving Chicago the maze of railroad tracks made it difficult to spot his special train as well as the tracks he was to follow. Two days later he passed Dwight, Illinois, thereby breaking the world's record for attempts at cross country flight. He had surpassed the previous record of 1,272 miles held by Harry N. Atwood, another flier in the contest. He had already practically rebuilt his plane three times. He had failed to meet the deadline of October 10th, but he determined to keep going.

Two days later the birdman was in Kansas City—half way across the continent by air—where he gave an exhibition of fancy turns, spirals and glides. A mechanic, in describing one of his steep banks, remarked: "A man has about three times to do that stunt, and then they lay him away in a box. Rodgers is usually the most careful fellow in the world, but he's done that twice now, and he'd better stop it."

Rodgers' train and plane stayed together quite satisfactorily. From Kansas City he chose a roundabout route, going far south into Texas and then following the Southern Pacific tracks. The official log of the trip began to read like the day-book of an automobile repair shop. For instance, the entry under date line Mc-

Alister read: "Leaking oil tank and cracked cylinder kept Rodgers from continuing his flight this day." Again, four days later: "Rodgers nearly met death while in the air about 3,500 feet. Crystallized piston and intake valves nearly made a wreck. The aviator shut off his engine, volplaned two miles and made a perfect landing in the only pasture within forty miles."

On October 22nd he reached San Antonio, where his friends on the special train adopted a jackrabbit as a mascot. But they soon decided to abandon it, for a wreck at Spofford and broken skids at Sanderson convinced the crew that the rabbit was bad luck. However, his run to Sanderson was one of his best: 174 miles in 140 minutes. On leaving Sanderson, he encountered high-speed winds which forced him to cross the Rio Grande three times. Before he left Texas, he had another wreck near Fort Hancock where the pump connection sheared off, freezing the motor. Rodgers' fall this time was broken by the mesquite; otherwise the entire plane would have been smashed again. Both skids were destroyed as it was.

At Deming, New Mexico, the flyer was forced down with a broken magneto spring. He checked the propeller chains and decided that, although eleven of the rollers were missing, he would not stop to make this very necessary repair. The condition of the engine was getting more desperate, but that did not daunt Rodgers. In fact, the farther west he pushed and the worse his engine behaved, the more daring and resourceful he became. The climax came at Imperial Junction, California. He was speeding over the Colorado Desert above the Salton Sea at an elevation of 4,000 feet, when suddenly, without warning, the No. 1 cylinder of his motor blew out, tearing out the crank case and bending the shaft. This catastrophe completely wrecked the engine and filled his right arm with flying splinters of steel. A false move with his crippled arm, the one he used to control the plane's warping lever, would have tilted the plane over sideways and sent Rodgers hurtling down, 4,000 feet to certain death. The plane made two terrifying lunges downward before he could control it; then with great skill he put it in a graceful glide, six miles in all, to land only a short distance from the station at Imperial Junction. The hole in the engine block from the blown-out cylinder was so large that a man could put his head into it.

Before crossing into California, Rodgers stopped in Tucson to shake hands with Robert G. Fowler of Los Angeles. Fowler had been one of the early favorites in the Hearst contest, choosing to fly from west to east following the northern route of the Southern Pacific Railroad. He had figured that on this course he would avoid the long desert stretches and stay nearer to populated areas. It seems that Fowler reached

a point 15 miles from the summit of the Sierras before his motor failed, forcing him to glide back to Emigrant Gap. Fowler made two more attempts to climb over the Sierras, and then decided to try the southern route. Incidentally, he never finished the race.

Ordinary caution would have made Rodgers hold up at Imperial Junction, for he not only lacked adequate parts for the extensive repairs required, but his chief mechanic had been called away by the illness of his wife. Rodgers insisted, however, on pushing on immediately, for he was now only 178 miles from Pasadena, the official destination. He had made a commitment with D. M. Linnard, famous hotel owner of the Crown City, to arrive at 3:00 o'clock the next afternoon. Linnard, sensing the great publicity value, arranged to have Rodgers land at Tournament Park, home of the famous Tournament of Roses and spectacular chariot races, and later to become the scene of the first New Year's Day football game. For his appearance Linnard guaranteed the aviator \$1,000 plus 75% of all gate receipts above 1,000 people. One newspaper reported that Linnard even agreed to throw in a bonus of \$1,500 more if Rodgers would land on the roof of his Maryland Hotel!

The pressure being on for Rodgers to be on his way from Imperial Junction, he took stock of his resources. The old Model B Wright engine that had won him his first success at Chicago was still in the hangar car. Working by lantern light, the crew used this motor and two cylinders cannibalized from his discarded engine in re-building the Vin Fizz engine. He took off the next day for Pasadena, but his next obstacle was narrow San Gorgonia Pass with its treacherous high-velocity desert winds. Six miles east of Banning, bad luck struck again: a vertical strut broke, the radiator began to leak hot water and the magneto plugs worked loose. Rodgers, by this time expert in crises, secured one of the vital levers with his knees, and holding the broken strut together with his right hand, staggered through the pass and volplaned into an alfalfa field in Banning.

Meanwhile, Pasadena had made preparations for Cal's arrival. The Pacific Electric had plastered the community with bills and placards announcing his appearance. One newspaper confidently predicted: "It is safe to say there will be an immense crowd in attendance from Los Angeles." Anticipation had been built up by the promise that "exactly one hour before Rodgers' arrival, all whistles will be blown to let people know just when the momentous event will occur."

The prices for entrance to Tournament Park, measured by today's standards, were moderate:
Adults—25c High School Children—10c
Runabouts—\$1.00

Larger Autos—\$2.00

(Estimated room for 1,000 autos—cars with tops down must park in front).

Linnard publicly announced that "since bringing Mr. Rodgers here has necessitated a heavy expense and a great deal of trouble, it is expected that everyone will go inside the grounds rather than attempt to view the exhibition flights from the outside."

A disappointed crowd of 5,000 people gathered at Tournament Park that Saturday afternoon had to get what consolation they could from the announcement by the management that "everybody who paid will be let in free tomorrow." The next day an estimated 10,000 were on hand at Tournament Park, with another 5,000 onlookers outside the fence. A white sheet spread out on the field served as a landing marker. Meanwhile, the scientists in the observatory at Mt. Wilson had been alerted to watch for Rodgers through their telescopes. Suddenly a white flash came from the mountain top, signalling that the flyer was sighted, followed by a triumphant roar from the spectators.

He landed in typical fashion: just as he swept over the crowd, the plane tilted forward suddenly, and the pilot seemed to lose control. In fact, two of those who had ridden Rodgers' train all the way from New York turned their heads—they thought he was gone. Swooping down from 1,500 feet almost to the ground, he pulled out at the last moment into a graceful spiral. Within twenty-five feet of the white sheet, the little plane sputtered to a halt.

As barriers were pushed down and thousands swept out on the field, the crowd went mad: Rodgers had crossed the continent in a flying machine! The Pasadena Star described his triumph in this unrestrained fashion: "He made a voyage as notable in history as that of Cortez or any of the great names connected with the history of the Pacific Coast." Those on hand to greet Rodgers included Roy Knabenshue, the first person to fly a dirigible balloon in this country, and Mrs. Hoxsey, mother of Arch Hoxsey, who had been killed at the Second Dominguez Meet.

Rodgers registered that Sunday night (November 5, 1911) at the Maryland Hotel: "C. P. Rodgers, New York to Pasadena by Air." It was almost five months to the day he had learned to fly!

There followed a period of hero-worship; the demand for the personal appearance of Cal Rodgers in his plane and on the speaker's platform was great. Among other meetings, he addressed the students at Throop Polytechnic Institute—known to us today as California Institute of Technology—where Sunsetter Du Bridge's predecessor, President Dr. James A. B. Scherer, tried to engage Rodgers as an in-

structor in aeronautics. Rodgers also visited Occidental College where Sunsetter Bill Henry, then president of the student body, introduced our hero to the cheering students. Perhaps some of you present tonight may recall these exciting days. I know that Earle Jardine, whom many of you know, was present in knee pants that Sunday afternoon.

An inventory of the hangar car at the end of the long journey showed a pile of junk—the wreckage of four flying machines. Indeed, the only parts of the Model EX Special in which the flyer left New York still in use at Pasadena were the vertical rudder and the drip pan. Every other part had been replaced more than once. Next time you are in Washington, D.C., you can see the Vin Fiz in an honored spot at the Smithsonian Institution.

The flight was a financial disappointment to Rodgers. As we have seen, he did not qualify for the Hearst prize. But he was paid off by Armour & Co. at \$5.00 a mile from New York to Fort Worth, and from Fort Worth to Pasadena at \$4.00 a mile plus all the purses he could arrange for on the side. He took in about \$40,000 in prize money all told, but his machine had cost \$5,000 and the repairs another \$17,000. In addition there was a daily royalty fee of \$100 which he paid the Wright Brothers for use of the Model EX. His net return, therefore, was small.

Of the possibilities of transcontinental aviation, Rodgers made this starry-eyed prophecy: "Thirty days is too short a time in which to attempt a flight from coast to coast at this stage of the aeroplane's development. The machine is too much in its infancy for such a feat to be accomplished now. But I expect to see the time when we shall be carrying passengers in flying machines from New York to the Pacific Coast in three days. That is an average of more than 100 miles an hour, and cannot be done until some way is devised to box in the passengers, as the wind tears one awfully at such speeds as that. Even with my goggles, the wind creeps in and tears at my eyes."

At a banquet at the Maryland Hotel, while smoking his ever-present cigars, Rodgers made another prediction along the same lines which was received with great applause by the local Chamber of Commerce: "The day is not far distant when it will be possible to take an aerial liner in New York and make San Francisco, via Pasadena, in three days. Aeroplanes will be equipped with two motors of 100 horsepower each and capable of propelling a craft 100 miles an hour. The trip will be made with two stops, Chicago and Pasadena."

Perhaps the frustrations of Rodgers' flight were summed up in his reply to the question of what he planned to do next: "I'm ready for the simple life. All I want now is a \$20.00 a

month bungalow near Los Angeles and a Chink that can cook." He had lost 18 pounds.

Although the transcontinental flight ended officially at Pasadena, Rodgers was anxious to continue on to the sea. He wanted, as he said, "to dip the wings of the Vin Fiz in the blue waters of the Pacific and thus bring together the two greatest oceans on earth by means of the ethereal trail which I have blazed." San Diego, Long Beach and Santa Barbara began bidding against each other for the pilot to end his flight in their cities. Long Beach finally agreed to pay him \$1,500 if he would complete his ocean to ocean journey there. The next Sunday afternoon, accompanied by a special passenger train from Pasadena, the pilot took off from Tournament Park for Long Beach. Within ten minutes of his goal, while over Compton, he experienced the most serious crash of the entire two months. He was buried to his hips in the earth, and was removed from the Vin Fiz for dead. Richard ("Dick") A. Millar, known to many of us and an enthusiastic admirer of our hero, then a small lad, had been waiting on the shore at Long Beach and, hearing of the accident, pedaled his bicycle up to Compton to see the wrecked plane. Rodgers was taken to Pasadena by ambulance, and messages came to the hospital from all over the country. Wilbur and Orville Wright wired from Dayton: "Our sincere sympathy and best wishes for a speedy recovery. Your general performance was so extraordinary as to be almost incredible, even to those who fully understand its difficulties."

A month of hospitalization delayed the pilot's arrival at Long Beach until December 10, 1911, where a wing of the frail plane was actually dipped in the edge of the salt water before a crowd of 50,000 assembled on the beach and pier. Rodgers was still on crutches from his last fall.

The completion of this transcontinental flight meant a great deal to everyone interested in aviation. There on the sand at Long Beach, fifty years ago, standing beside his travel-scarred plane, Rodgers made these prophetic remarks:

"I am proud to have blazed the way to the Pacific Coast by the air route, as proud as those hardy pioneers who made the wagon trail, and the men who later linked both sides of the continent by rail, for this new epoch in aviation means the advancement of my chosen work, pointing out as it does what an air route of travel will mean to the next generation."

Rodgers' trip broke all aviation records. His flight comprised a total of 4,251 miles with 30 stops en route. The elapsed time was 49 days, with 13½ days lost in making repairs to the plane or engine, and 11 on account of weather. His actual time in the air added up

to only 3 days, 10 hours, 4 minutes. Two more statistics: our hero met with 11 accidents and his plane was wrecked 9 times.

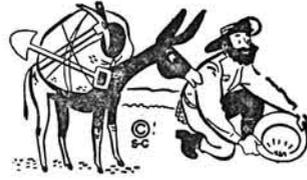
Rodgers' next challenge was to fly the Atlantic Ocean for the prize of \$100,000 offered by the Aero Club of France. Unfortunately, time was running out for him. A bare five months later, on April 3, 1912, while making an exhibition flight at Long Beach, within sight of the spot where he had completed his Coast-to-Coast trip, Rodgers' plane crashed in the breakers. He had been flying near the Pike at an altitude of 400 feet. He made a spectacular dip over the Hotel Virginia and as he neared the Bathhouse, he pulled frantically at the controls to avoid a flock of seagulls. Spectators could see him tugging at the lever without success, and were terrified when the frail craft plummeted into the surf. Rodgers' body was doubled under the Vin Fiz, his neck was broken. He died almost instantly. His death marked the 127th airplane fatality in the history of aviation; he was the twenty-second American to lose his life.

At his funeral in Pasadena, the same American flag which had been draped over his shoulders upon his triumphant arrival just five months earlier was placed on the casket. Pasadena school children sprinkled flowers at the impressive services. In tribute, the Pasadena Daily News said that the dead hero had "enrolled his name on the pages of history by the accomplishment of a deed that few would dare to emulate."

So we come to the end of the trail. This pioneer flier was labelled by the press "as daring an aviator as ever ascended the skies." Rodgers' flight was one of the extraordinary accomplishments in the annals of aviation. Undertaken at a time when the airplane was little more than an experiment, his feat possibly gave more impetus to the art of flying and revealed more of the potentialities of heavier-than-air craft than any other single experience prior to the First World War.

From the vantage point of a half-century later, we may smile at the astonishing flying feats of Calbraith Perry Rodgers and his contemporaries. We may even find amusing the intense enthusiasm and emotions their exploits aroused in those who witnessed them. As we smile, however, let us remember that those events were an exciting show, even more important, they were a real contribution to aviation. Nor have we seen the ultimate, even in these days of super-sonic planes. The achievements of our own age, fantastic as they may seem to us, are but steps on the path to even greater achievements in the future. The X-15 of 1960, with the incredible speed of over 2,000 miles per hour, is just another step along the way from the Rodgers' Model EX. Who

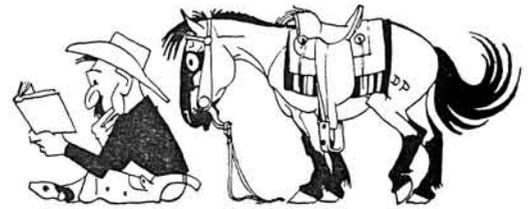
knows but that today's X-15 will be viewed by future generations with sentiments closely akin to those with which the aviators of today regard Rodgers' rudimentary Model EX.



Mineral Search!!!

Claude Lovestedt of Minden, Nev., has been granted \$27,500 to explore for gold and silver in Alpine County in California. Sens. Alan Bible and Howard W. Cannon (both D-Nev.) announced the grant . . . The loan, from the office of Minerals Exploration, will finance prospecting in the Red Gap claims in Alpine County.

Ed Note: We are actually paying out money to find gold and silver to give to our enemies.



DOWN THE WESTERN BOOK TRAIL . . .

Hot off the Rutgers University Press is Los Angeles, Corral member Dr. M. R. Harrington's "THE IROQUOIS TRAIL", a story of American Indian life in Colonial times.

A valuable book for adults with ethnological interests as well as a tale of high adventure for the young, it is backed by the authoritative accuracy reflective of Dr. Harrington's reputation as one of the nation's leading archeologists and ethnologists. Recently retired from the Southwest Museum, he has lived and studied with some forty Indian tribes, a familiarity readily apparent in the authenticity of his writings.

Illustrated by fellow Los Angeles Corral member Don Perceval, "The Iroquois Trail" includes interesting and informative coverage of clothing, weapons, household articles, ornaments, hunting, cooking, traveling and worship among the tribes of the Five Nations. All told, it's an excellent addition to any bookshelf

(Continued on page 11)

Imperial Junction As I Knew It

By MRS. CLAIRE HOBGOOD

My husband and I had returned from the South where we both were telegraphers on the Southern Railroad, when I caught pneumonia. We were visiting an aunt of mine at the time and we expected to leave in a week as my husband was to go to Imperial Junction and work the second trick. He left and I was to follow when I could. After a couple of months I was told I could go. It was in July. I arrived in the middle of the desert, thermometer registering 102 in the shade of the Depot.

All I saw was the depot and two weather beaten houses — one for the signal men and the other for the Section boss — His men lived in box cars.

Above the depot were four rooms — The agents wife had two — we had one and the third trick operator and his wife had the other. We ate in the Co. car which was on one side of the depot. That lasted for a couple of weeks. I would sit outside on the station platform; I did not seem to mind the heat, I wanted to regain my strength and only rest would do it. We were waiting for the S.P. to bring our "Homes" to us, where were used box cars. When they arrived they were put on a spur near the depot, so we had our choice of four or five cars, still on wheels. Each car had four windows on each side and two doors opposite each other in the middle of the car — a few steps led up to the door in front, none in the back.

No stores of any kind; we had to send away for everything, either to Los Angeles or the Valley. The first thing my husband did was to send to L.A. for enough green burlap to "paper" our cars. We bought mission furniture, a table, two chairs and a couch we used for a bed. That was our living room, one half the car. In the other end was the kitchen. I had a three burner gasoline stove and a portable oven, a small table, two straight chairs and a rocker — also an ice box and we had two coal oil lamps— That was my home for some time — later we got a rug for the "living room."

In due time my husband built a small porch on the front of the car where I would lie on a cot and watch the trains go past on the main line, which were several a day — The train men would wave and I back to them. Later when the freight trains would stop for some time the men would come over and talk to me and bring me fruit. After a few months my husband built two small rooms on the back of the car, one for storage and the other for shower — The

Company furnished the water, ice, coal oil and gasoline. He also built steps leading to "Chick Sale" in the back. We sent to L.A. for our staple food — the Valley for fruits and vegetables.

At this time one train ran from the junction to the towns in the Valley, Brawley, Imperial, El Centro and Calexico — Holtville was not on the railroad. It was thru the kindness of these men that really saved our lives, they would bring our mail from Brawley and many little things that mean a lot to people living as we did. This train made a round trip each day and they always had something for me. Many times the planters of the valley would give the trainmen flats of fruits and they always brought me some, and unless you were in this place as I, would not know how delicious fresh things tasted. Time passed and I was feeling good and wanted to do something to help the "town." A few more people had come in, living in tents, they would not stay long as no business. A few "dry" farmers were a few miles away trying to make a living so I thought a Post Office would help.

I wrote to Washington asking if I could have a Post Office in our town and the answer was "yes" if the people wanted one. I took the examination and passed and received my seal, signed Frank Hitchcock, Post Master General, the 7th day of November, 1910. I called the Post Office Hobgood after me. At one time this small town had four names, besides the P.O. the Railroad was Imperial Junction, Niland the Townsite and Ols Beach the voting precinct. So the first Post Office was in a box car, I used one of the windows for giving and receiving mail. My husband had built boxes, small cubby holes for letters inside. The mail pouches were brought to me from the depot. As time went on the Post Office grew. I would "pouch" for the Valley. Then I later handled all registered mail for the Valley. I also had the long distance phone in my car and sold newspapers and magazines. It was while I was in my box car that Mr. Rodgers made his wonderful flight from the East Coast to the West. He came down in the sand on the other side of the R.R. We all ran out to see him land in his "box plane." I have a picture of his plane. Of course L.A. wanted to speak to him but he could not hear for hours. His wife and party followed in a special car. About 1912 people started to come. We heard that a canal would be thru soon, as all we needed was water, the soil was so rich, everything

or anything would grow. I just threw seeds out my back door and the water from the shower would water them enough for me to have tomatoes and cantelopes.

About this time we built a four room house. Lumber cost \$100.00, and to build it the same. We rented the rooms for \$1.00 a nite and they were always full. Each room held a bed, wash-bowl, pitcher and washstand, nothing on the floors. My husband still had his job at the station so I was a very busy person.

Sometimes the main line passenger trains would have to stop for several hours and the passengers would get off and walk past our "homes" and we would hear them make all kinds of nasty remarks; so a few times I'd invite them in and they were really surprised and many times I've fed them too. A few are still my friends. To me the desert is very beautiful, the sunrises and sunsets are the prettiest of anywhere in the world.

On moonlight nites at midnight one can read a paper. The stars are brilliant and seem very close to the earth, but when the nites are dark you will never find any place as black as the desert. We next bought material for a house and one room as large as the "hotel" and moved the P.O. — Then I bought regular boxes that people could rent. In part we had a store, sold a few canned goods trying to see if it would pay. We got it all on consignment but I still lived in my car. One day a dog rode up on the Valley Train and came to my car. He was full grown and part bull dog. He would not leave and was my bodyguard for a long time. We would take walks across the desert or down the tracks and he would always tell me when someone was coming. When with me he would not let anyone come near me except my husband; away from me he was everyone's friend. Once I thought he would be killed, when the Company put in the telephone he bit the man. It seemed he was sent to protect me when I needed him most. The first year we were at Imperial Junction the valley farmers raised hogs and did a big business. The next year many died of cholera and cleaned the farmers out. Then they planted cantelopes and made money. On the strength of the water coming into our town, we took up a half section of land and put up another house, costing a few dollars more. I then moved from the box car and lived on the homestead which was a mile from the station. We also put up several nice buildings, a large store, concrete, where I moved the P.O. again and added more boxes as the town was growing fast. The Development Co. put in curbs and built a large hotel on the townsite but it burned before finished. We turned the old P.O. building into an ice factory and had four more buildings up when word was passed

around that no water was coming thru. — All the water that was used came from the R.R. tank and that water was brought in, in tank cars. Young folk were coming in and we had a nice life. But as all things must end, we lost everything overnight. The Agent took over my P.O. and I left Imperial Junction in 1914, I have never been back, but was told the farms are lovely now that the water is there. No one even thought of going to see the Salton Sea in those days, which was very near.

The Iroquois Trail . . .

(Continued from page 9)

at just \$1.95 for paper-back, \$5.00 for cloth-bound. It's also a reminder that this new book is a follow-up to his classic "The Indians of New Jersey," illustrated by the fine line drawings of the late Los Angeles Corral Member Clarence Ellsworth.

George Koenig



THE LAME CAPTAIN, THE LIFE AND ADVENTURES OF PEGLEG SMITH, by Sardis W. Templeton. Los Angeles, Westernlore Press, 1965, 12 mo., 239 p., illus., red cloth, printed wrapper, \$7.50.

Although we have heard about Pegleg from his contact with the lives of other mountain men, or about the leg cut off by himself, and about the finding of curious lumps of black gold (especially the "finding" by Harry-Oliver, we have hardly had a "life."

Templeton has for many years kept up with the actual life of Thomas Long Smith, or Pegleg. He was born on October 10, 1801, son of Christopher and Nancy Smith. He was both older and younger than some of his other three brothers and five sisters. He was in school until he reached sixteen, then ran off to Nashville and from there to Natchez, where he served as a "broadhorn" on the Mississippi. There he was lashed by knives. Here he crossed the river and lived with the Osage villages until he was healed. From there he went on trapping and trading for pelts and perhaps for exchange with the Indians, for boot-leg liquor.

Near St. Joseph he fell in with Antoine Roubidoux. With him, Smith and others had a long trading and trapping expedition in 1822-23, met with pirates, and reached St. Louis where he was already considered a "hard case."

In 1823 he left with a party for Ashley under Clyman. There was more or less fighting

along the Missouri with the Arikara and the Blackfeet. Tom Smith went on to the Green River for beaver, then left about a dozen of Ashley's men for St. Louis. From there he set out for the Mexican country.

During 1824 to 1826 Smith was hunting, trapping, or enjoying Taos or Santa Fe, partly in northern Utah and later down the Gila and over the Colorado. He had acquired a good reputation from the Utes and the Ute, Walkara. There had been a battle with the Snakes and Tom had begged off because his horse was blind, "but the chief brought up a white charger for him. Deciding that if he must, he would fight his best, he picked up his rifle. The white stallion was in full agreement. When the whooping Utes rode out to charge the foe, the stallion bolted ahead, and was soon leading, despite its rider's effort to moderate the pace. When he came in range, Tom leveled his gun, and shot the Snake chief, then snatched a battle-axe from the falling leader, his clairion voice rising above the war-whoops of the Utes as his steed raced on. It was all too much for the Snakes; they fled."

But in 1827 Smith earned the name of "Pegleg." There in the Rockies ". . . the Indians about sundown attacked Smith and Cockerell, wounding Smith in the calf of the leg with a poisoned arrow. They bandaged the leg to prevent circulation, made a rude saw out of a hack knife, and next morning at sunup began amputation of the leg, Smith helping to tie up the arteries with deer sinews, and Cockerell did the work and at sundown finished the job." This account by the Cockerell family seems about the best on the operation to me, but there are other versions in this book.

During the 1830's Pegleg had established with St. Vrain and Bent to "sell" horses from California, gotten from Beckwourth and Walkara. By 1840 Pegleg was a leader and well known horse thief. In the San Joaquin and the lower parts of Southern California he carried out his last and greatest horse raid. The horses were taken through Utah and sold there and from the Fort Hall route and by the Oregon migrants.

Here Smith established himself in the Bear River Valley and sold horses, mules and cattle to immigrants, who needed the animals. Good relations were established with Smith and Brigham Young, but the rush of gold took him to Hangtown, or Placerville, and thence to San Francisco. From there he seems to have carried on a Robin-Hood-like horse-thievery, but he is also reported to have found "black nuggets" in the '29's in the country from Warner's ranch to the Colorado. He died in October 15, 1866, and was buried at Laurel Hill Cemetery at Colma, near San Francisco.

Templeton's book has given us the only good and complete life of Pegleg. More to him! Of course the "Bibliography" could have been arranged better and the "Index" should have been a good bit longer, but the body of the book is well worth its price. C. N. Rudkin



G. P. H., AN INFORMAL RECORD OF GEORGE P. HAMMOND AND HIS ERA IN THE BANCROFT LIBRARY. Berkeley, Calif.: The Friends of the Bancroft Library: 1965: XIV, 119 p., 12 pl.: red cloth.

This, the thirteenth keepsake issued to "Friends," is also this very great and "informal record" of the retirement of Dr. Hammond, who will go to Spain next year to teach at the University of Madrid under a Fullbright Grant. In this are such well known writers and his work as can be included. Here are parts of the "record" to be read. Here Dale Morgan, Agapito Rey, Charles Camp and Warren Howell, the bookseller, tell us the real work of George P. Hammond. An introduction by O. Cort Majors and articles by Robert Becker, Robert Burke and Susanna Dakin (who also made the formal presentation to Dr. Hammond), give us, and also to the readers, the truth of what Dr. Hammond has meant to us. We have also in the book the "Wagner Award, by J. S. Holliday, the "Serra Award," by France V. Scholes, and the reply by Dr. Hammond.

Francis Farquhar has furnished his "George P. Hammond's Publications." This is in itself an extremely valuable bibliography. And Dr. Hammond's first appearance in print is still as interesting as when he wrote it, "Impressions of Spain in 1923."

There are a dozen illustrations, a "Portfolio of Hammond Acquisitions in the Bancroft Library." Although the plates are beautiful and indeed useful, still the best and most valuable are two pencil drawings of Dr. Hammond by Peter Van Valkenburgh dated 1940 and 1950 and the 1964 photograph of Dr. Hammond by Marjorie Farquhar.

The beautiful book, designed and printed by the Kennedys, is a lovely thing.

Number 37 of the June, 1965 "Bancroftiana" (but received August 5th), includes an acknowledgement by Dr. Hammond as retiring Director, which discusses his last twenty years of his General Library and the help of the administration, the staff, and "The Friends." Westerners will recognize the many things that Dr. Hammond has done for us, and perhaps most especially the "Quivire Society Publications" and the "Coronado Cuarto Centennial Publications."