

Aviation And the Panama Pacific Exposition

A. Pioneer Flights

There were three Pioneer flights in the San Francisco area that occurred as part of aviation meets or demonstrations during the time frame just before the Panama Pacific International Exposition; however none was formally associated with the fair.

The first, at Oakland, took place from 17 to 25 January 1912. Farnum Fish, a prominent pioneer aviator, flew the mail on several days during the meet, totaling about 750 pieces. The mail received a 4-bar hand cancel saying "Aeroplane Station, Oakland, Cal." In the circular portion, with "Aviation Field" in the killer bars.

The second pioneer flight occurred at Ingleside Park in San Francisco on 24 November 1912. Only 47 items were flown by pilot Harvey Crawford, cancelled by a "San Francisco, Cal. Aviation Post Office #1" double ring circular cancel.

The third set of San Francisco related pioneer flights happened a month later, from 25 to 29 December 1912 at Tanforan Race Track. Mail was flown each day of the meet, but no total of items carried is currently known. Unfortunately the pilot's name (or names) are also not recorded; one may have been Lincoln Beachey who had frequently flown pioneer mail at other aviation meets. Mail postmarked on 25 December 1912 received a double ring cancel saying "San Francisco, Cal. Aviation Postal Station". Official post office approval for this series of Tanforan flights had been requested but was not received. Since plans were in place for the aviation meet and the canceling devices were already prepared, the mail carrying flights took place anyway.

Panama Pacific promotional post cards are known from the Oakland pioneer flights. It is quite possible that similar PPIE related cards were flown on the other two. None of the three pioneer flights had any official connection with the fair, even from a commercial advertising standpoint. Yet there are three other pioneer flights that fit perfectly into a Panama Pacific postal history collection.

1) Calbraith Rodgers and the Vin Fiz Flyer

Newspaper publisher William Randolph Hearst offered a \$50,000 prize to the first person who could fly from coast to coast in 30 days or less, printing the announcement in his papers on 9 October 1910. The flight had to start in Boston or New York and finish in either San Francisco or Los Angeles, with a mandatory stop in Chicago. Hearst allowed the flight to begin on the west coast, with the same required cities.

Calbraith Rodgers was one of four entries for the prize. He began at Sheepshead Bay (Brooklyn, New York) on 17 September 1911 and arrived in Pasadena on 5 November. After leaving Pasadena, he crashed at Compton on 12 November and sustained severe head and spinal injuries, requiring almost a month's convalescence. Rodgers continued on to Long Beach, landing there on 10 December. Because the total flight time exceeded the 30 days imposed by Hearst, Rodgers did not win the prize, but was in fact the first person to fly transcontinental, although he stopped 75 times along the way which included 12 crashes. In completing the flight, Rodgers became an instant hero.

Rodgers had sponsorship on his flight from the Armour Meat Packing Company, and prominently featured the name of his other sponsor, Vin Fiz grape soda, on the wings of

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his Wright Model EX aircraft. His journey paralleled the transcontinental rail lines, and was followed by a special train carrying Rodgers' wife, mother, representatives of both Armour and Vin Fiz, mechanics, spare parts, reporters, and other assorted entourage members.

At each stop, Rodgers' wife sold 25-cent labels to help offset expenses. According to the Siegel Auction Galleries census, 4 off-cover copies and 12 used/flown examples are known to currently exist. Two of the flown copies fall within the purview of Panama Pacific postal history.



(courtesy Siegel Auction Galleries)

Postmarked Imperial Junction Cal. 4 November 1911
Oakland PPIE receiving mark [SF15-15A] on reverse ties label.
The only known cover with the Vin Fiz label, all others being cards.



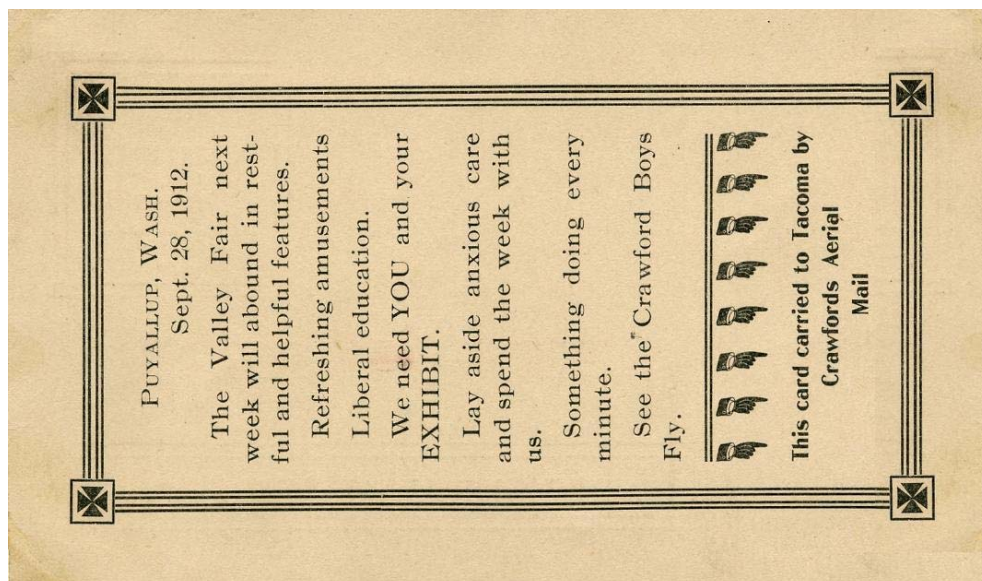
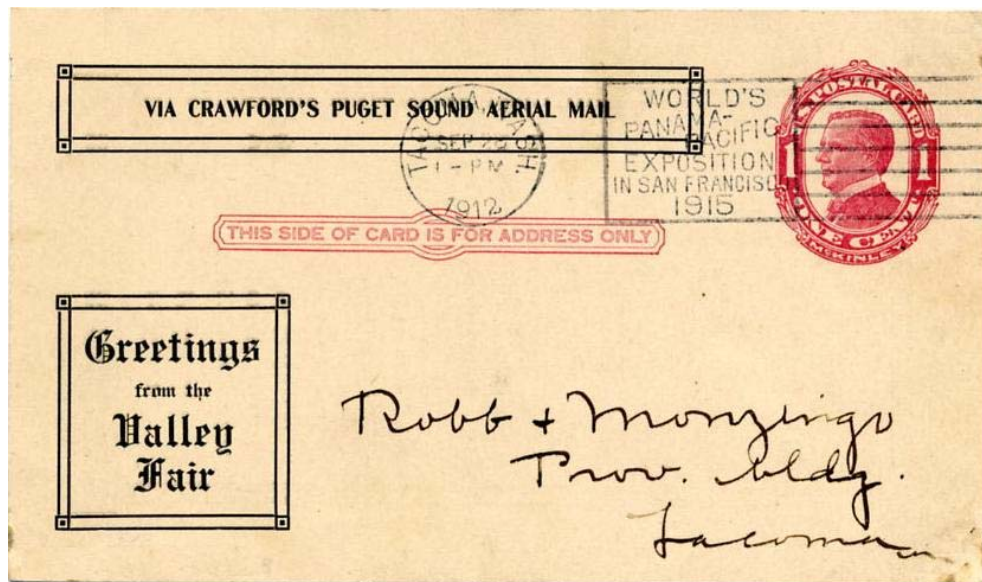
(courtesy Siegel Auction Galleries)

Postmarked Pasadena, Cal. 8 November 1911 [SF15-14]
The only known use of the label on government postal card,
plus the only known use to a foreign country (Germany)

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2) Crawford's Puget Sound Aerial Mail

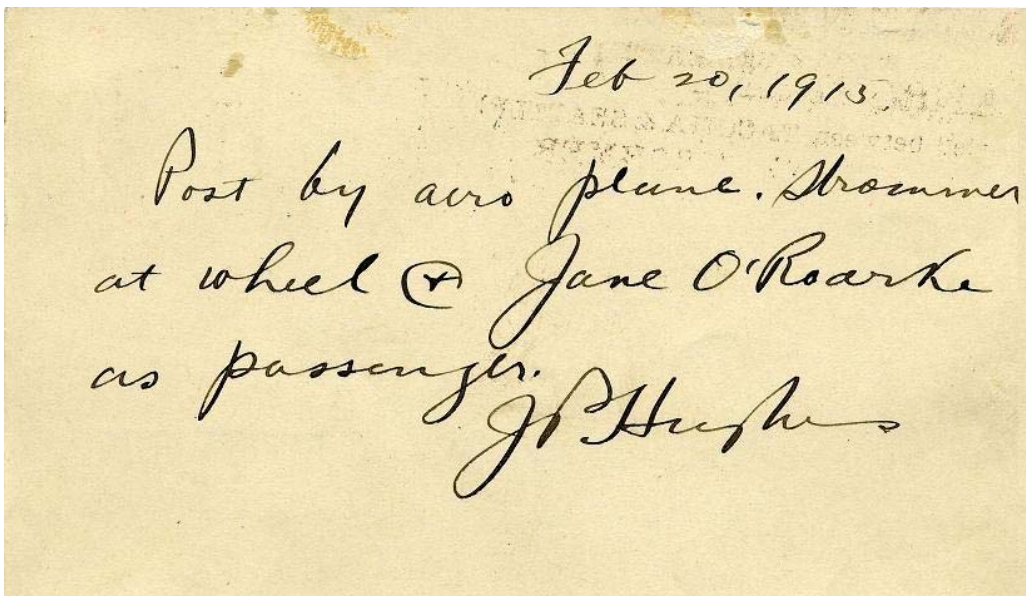
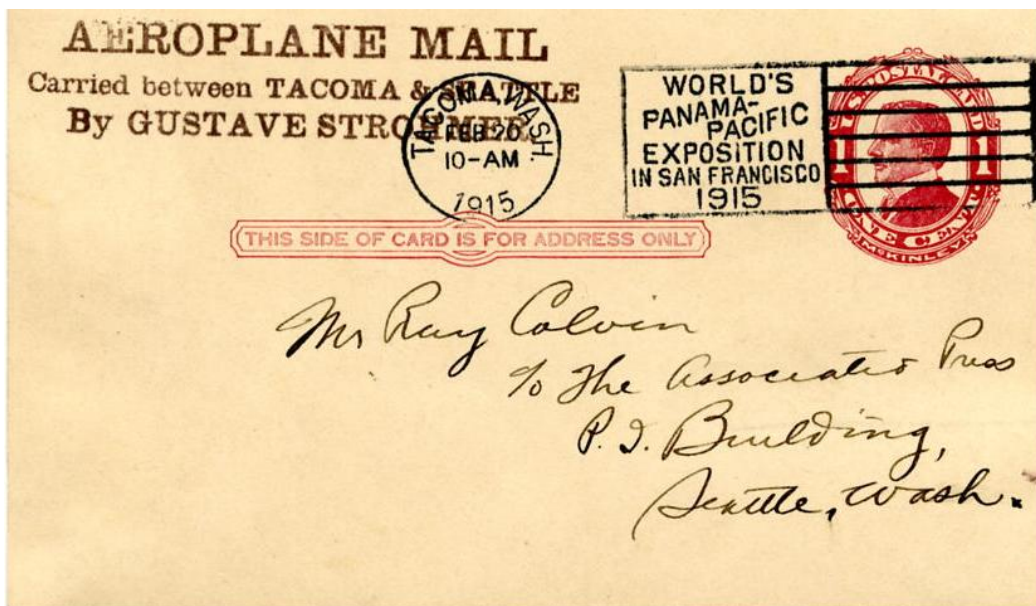
On 28 September 1912, Harvey Crawford (the same pilot that flew at Ingleside Park) flew from Puyallup to Tacoma. He carried a small quantity of pre-printed government postal cards that advertised the Valley Fair that was to begin the next day in Puyallup. The exact number of cards flown has not been determined. Each card also had a pre-printed cachet reading "Via Crawford's Puget Sound Aerial Mail". Crawford also carried leaflets advertising the fair which he dropped over Tacoma and Seattle. After Crawford landed at Tacoma, the postal cards were taken to the Tacoma post office and cancelled at 1 PM with the International machine PPIE slogan [Type SF15-19]. This pioneer flight was completely unofficial; no prior government approval had been requested. And since the cards were flown outside of government channels, entering the mail stream at Tacoma only after landing, no permission was really needed. None of the leaflets have survived, and the postal cards are extremely rare. Addressed uncanceled cards with the printed cachet and advertising do exist, but these were most probably not flown.



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3) Gustave Stromer's Aeroplane Mail

Gustave Stromer flew mail from Tacoma to Seattle in his hydroplane on 20 February 1915. Each piece has a rubber stamped cachet reading "Aeroplane Mail. Carried between Tacoma and Seattle By Gustave Strohmmer". Note that Stromer's name had been misspelled in the cachet with an extra letter 'h'. On his flight, Stromer in addition carried a passenger, Jane O'Roark, a friend of Stromer's who had taken flying lessons herself. On other sanctioned pioneer flights, the pilot was formally sworn in and designated an official mail carrier; but on this flight that honor went to Miss O'Roark. 45 pieces of mail received a 10 AM Tacoma Panama Pacific machine cancel [again, Type SF15-19]. The majority of items were postal cards, but it is known that several special delivery letters were carried. There is also a cover recorded with the Tacoma PPPE slogan cancel dated 18 February 1915 that has the proper cachet; it must have been held over for two days and made the flight.



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B. Aviation Demonstrations at the Exposition

1) Lincoln Beachey

Although Lincoln Beachey had made several pioneer flights, his presence at the PPIE was devoted solely to aerial demonstrations and stunt flying, not carrying mail. He had been hired by the Board of Directors to perform in his Taube monoplane, and Beachey put on a daily show over the bay north of the expo site when weather permitted.

Beachey had a reputation as a daredevil and was not above taking risks to please the crowds that gathered to watch his performance.

On 14 March 1915, Beachey crashed into the bay while performing his stunts – he had overstressed the wings on his aircraft. Navy divers from the battleship USS Oregon recovered the wrecked plane and his body from the bay.



Period photograph of Beachey's plane just before impacting the water.



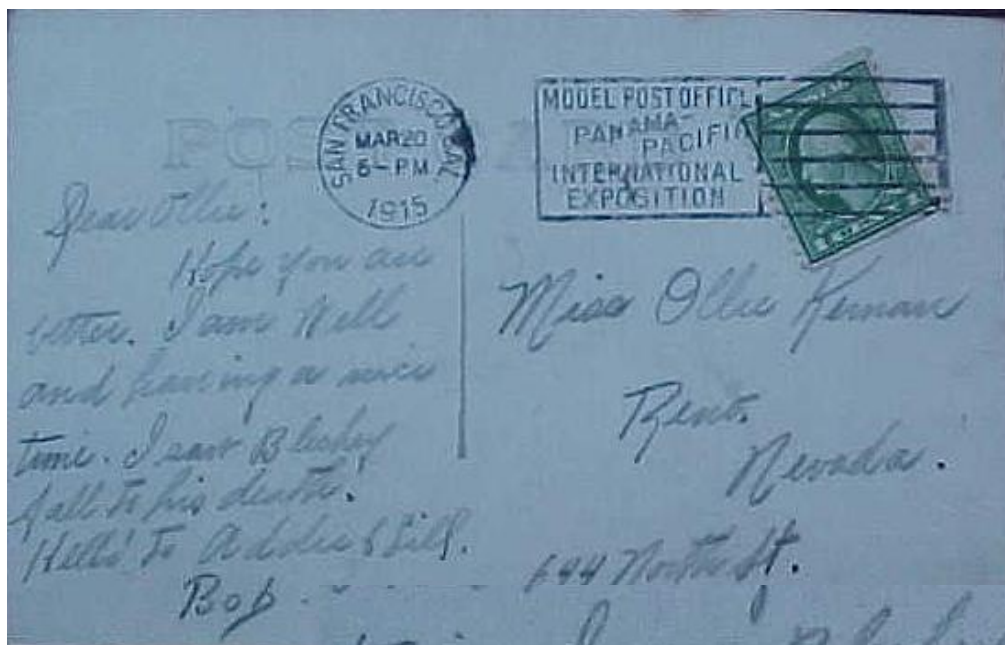
Lincoln Beachey



Diver from the Oregon preparing to descend into the bay. Real photo post card by Cardinell-Vincent.

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Another real photo Cardinell-Vincent card shows Beachey's final takeoff.



Postmarked 20 March.
"I saw Blechey {sic} fall
to his death."

time. I saw Blechey
fall to his death.
Hello to Addie & Bill.
Bob.

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2) Art Smith

Following Beachey's death, the expo's management hired Art Smith to perform. Smith piloted a biplane, and in complete contrast to Beachey, was extremely aware of his craft's capabilities and limitations. Smith had the nickname 'Bird Boy'.

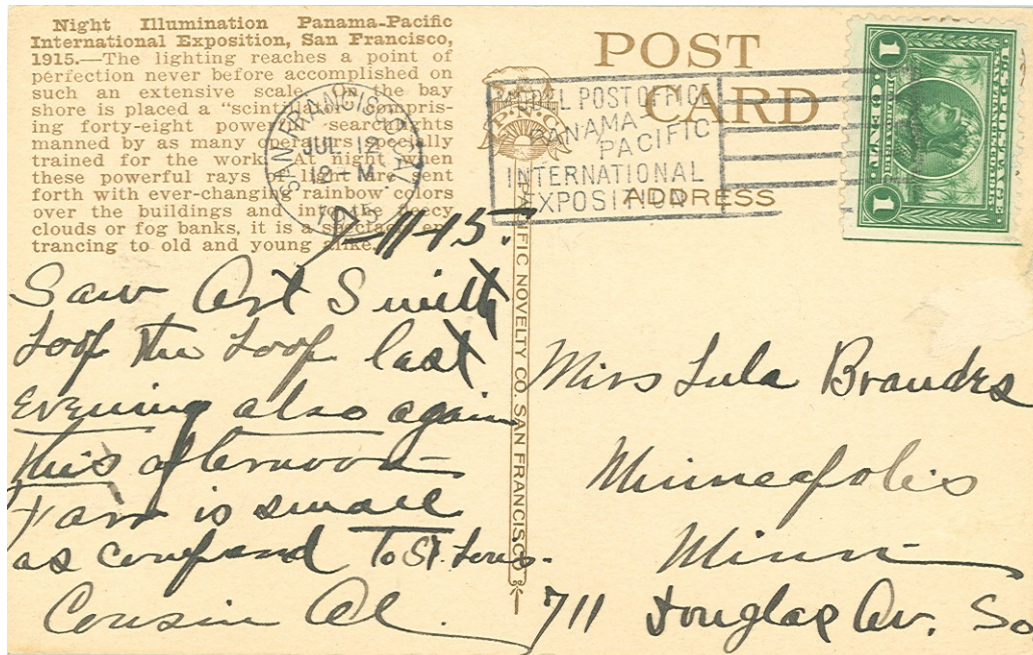


Smith also flew at night with lights attached to his wing tips. A searchlight on the Scintillator barge illuminated his plane. The searchlight would be turned out and the wing lights provided a visual record of his stunt flying.



"Art Smith and his trail across the sky"
Cardinell-Vincent time lapse photo

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"Saw Art Smith loop the loop last evening also again this afternoon."

3) Malcolm and Allan Loughead

The Loughead brothers presence at the PPIE was in total contrast to that of Beachey and Smith. They flew paying passengers in their personally designed and built, 3-seat, 80-HP Model G Hydroplane (they named the aircraft Model G "so it wouldn't sound like our first one") charging basically a dollar per minute, a hefty sum in 1915. The flight consisted of a nice level excursion over the grounds and the bay, with no 'fancy stuff'.

The two Loughead brothers earned a little over \$4000 with their aircraft in 50 days. More than 600 people were safely carried without incident.



Malcolm & Allan Loughead

With the small fortune they made at the exposition, the brothers moved to Santa Barbara and started the Loughead Aircraft Manufacturing Company in 1916. Their first project would be the F-1, the world's largest seaplane, able to carry 10 passengers. The brothers hired Jack Northrop, a 20-year-old draftsman, to work on the project. The plane successfully flew in 1918 and the brothers soon received a request to build flying boats for the Navy. After World War I, the company devoted its energies to the S-1, a single-seat biplane for civilian use. It was supposed to be inexpensive, but after spending \$30,000 developing and building it, the plane's \$2,500 asking price was too much for the typical plane-buyer. Financially strained, Loughead Aircraft closed in 1921.

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Malcolm Loughead quit the aviation industry, moved to Detroit and became successful with a hydraulic brake system he developed for cars. Tired of his name being mispronounced "Log-head", Malcolm officially changed the spelling to match its pronunciation. He called his new company the Lockheed Hydraulic Brake Company,

In 1926, Allan Loughead and Jack Northrop reunited. They secured the money to form the Lockheed Aircraft Corporation - specifically incorporating the "Lockheed" spelling to associate themselves with Malcolm's successful brake company. Using their innovative construction of a single bodied hull from their earlier creation, the S-1, they produced an incredibly successful high-speed monoplane, the Vega. With a range of one thousand miles, a cruising speed of 185 miles per hour and capacity for six people, the Vega quickly became a popular choice for many of the world's top aviators, including Amelia Earhart and Wiley Post.

498 PANAMA-PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION
LOUGHEAD HYDRO AEROPLANE
CONCESSION No. 468
Form M 21-9X \$ 10.00

This Certifies That B.C. Rounds has this day paid to the
LOUGHEAD HYDRO AEROPLANE the sum of Ten Dollars,
and for him self, his estate and those claiming under him hereby assumes
all risk of every nature and description for injury of whatever character or however
produced, in embarking, flight, or disembarking from the HYDRO AEROPLANE, and
hereby waives all claim against Allen H. Loughead, and John J. Meyer, operating
said Hydro-Aeroplane, and against the PANAMA-PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL
EXPOSITION COMPANY.

In Consideration Whereof, said B.C. Rounds has this day
been carried in said Hydro-Aeroplane in a flight from the PANAMA-PACIFIC IN-
TERNATIONAL EXPOSITION, to over San Francisco Bay

Witness Our Hands, this 29th day of November, 1915.

AMOUNT PAID

\$3.00	\$10.00	\$15.00	\$20.00	\$25.00	\$30.00
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B.C. Rounds
Allan Loughead

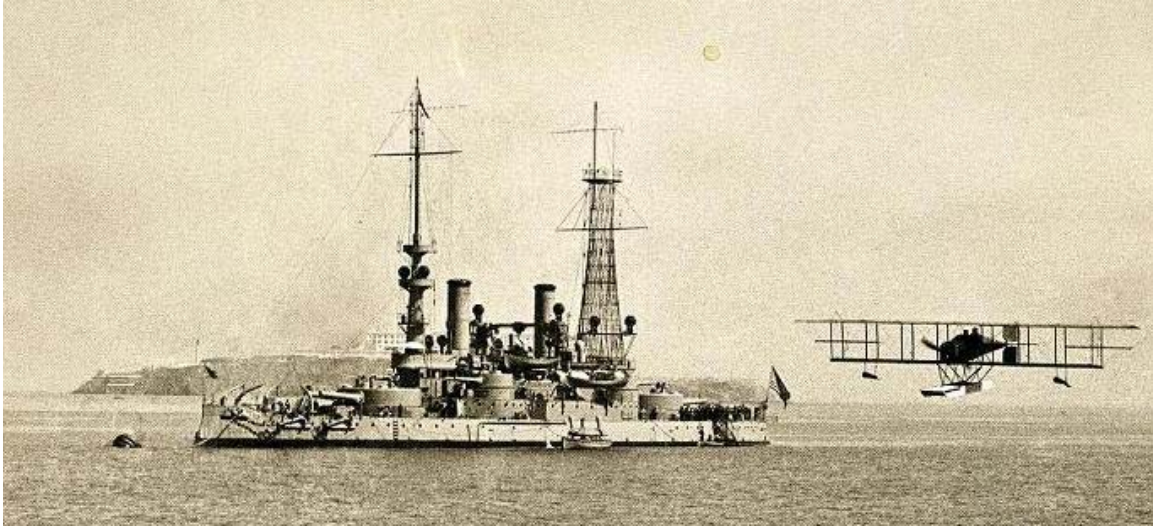
Souvenir receipt and certificate (basically a liability release) for B.C. Rounds, who flew with Allan Loughead. Both Rounds and Allan Loughead signed at the bottom.

This certifies that *B.C. Rounds* has this day paid to the LOUGHEAD HYDRO AEROPLANE the sum of *ten* Dollars, and for *him* self, *his* estate and those claiming under him hereby assumes all risk of every nature and description for injury of whatever character or however produced, in embarking, flight, or disembarking from the HYDRO AEROPLANE, and hereby waives all claim against Allan H. Loughead and John J. Meyer, operating said Hydro-Aeroplane and against the PANAMA-PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION COMPANY.

In consideration whereof, said *B.C. Rounds* has this day been carried in said Hydro-Aeroplane in a flight from the PANAMA-PACIFIC INTERNATIONAL EXPOSITION to *over San Francisco Bay*.

Witness our hands, this 29th day of *November* 1915.

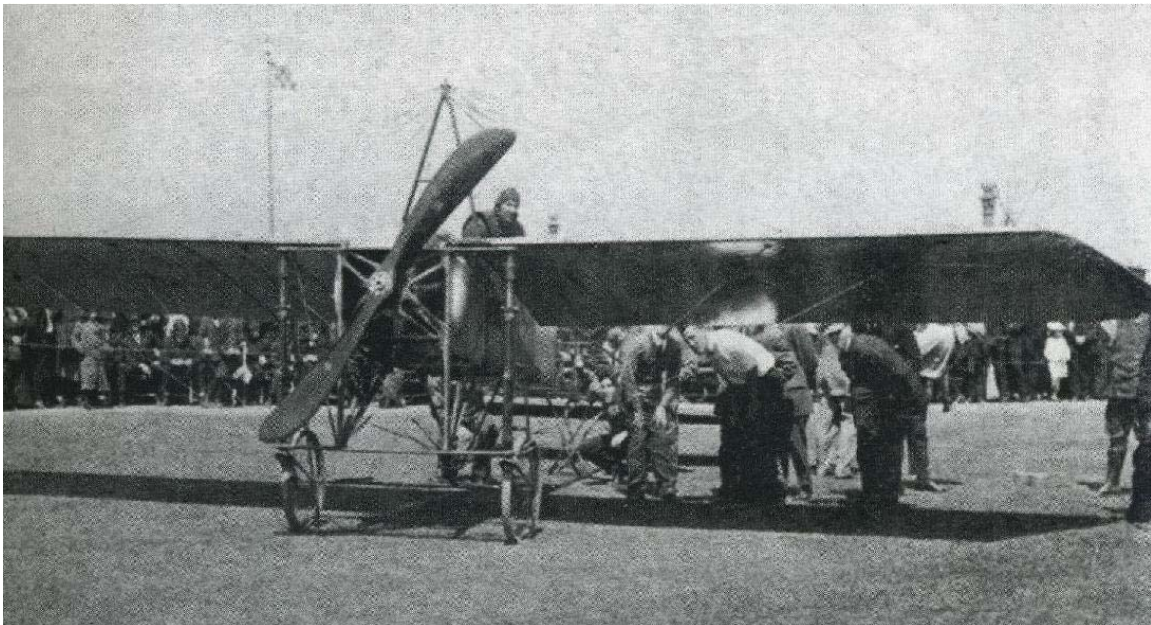
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Contemporary photo of Loughead's hydroplane over the bay, with the battleship USS Oregon at the left and Alcatraz Island in the background.

4) Charles Niles

Very little information can be located on this aviator. A single photograph taken at the expo shows Niles (head above the wing) and his Huntington monoplane. The plane had been designed for exhibition flying and stunts, but whether Niles performed regularly at the expo is not known.



Niles is not mentioned in any of the accounts and descriptions of aviation activities at the PPIE. Apparently he had neither the glamour, charisma, nor popularity of Beachey and Smith. In November 1915, Niles took his aircraft to the orient and flew demonstrations for several months in Japan, China and the Philippine Islands.