



## BACKGROUND

### History Highlights from National Air Tour Stops

During its seven-year run, the National Air Tours landed in 114 cities across the United States and Canada. Each of these stops had a unique story — whether it was the dedication of a municipal airport or a child who saw an airplane for the first time.

The National Air Tour 2003 is based on a route that was planned for 1932, but was never flown due to the economic hardships of the Great Depression. Many of the stops planned for 1932 were cities where previous Air Tours had landed. The following are highlights from the history of these earlier National Air Tour stops that also are stops on this year's historic flight re-creation.

#### Dearborn, Mich., 1925-1931

- ✎ Dearborn was the starting and finishing point for each National Air Tour. Henry and Edsel Ford were routinely present at each Tour's departure and arrival. Other notable guests including inventor Thomas Edison and President Herbert Hoover celebrated the return of the 1929 National Air Tour.
- ✎ On Monday, Sept. 28, 1925, Edsel Ford, president of Ford Motor Company, stood next to the runway to flag-off the first National Air Tour for the Edsel B. Ford Reliability Trophy. The 1925 Tour returned to a muddy landing strip at Ford Airport and a crowd of thousands. Henry Ford personally shook hands with each of the pilots and said, "I am more encouraged that I can say by the successful results of this first tour and it only strengthens my faith and belief in the possibilities of commercial aviation." The muddy completion of the 1925 Tour may have been what prompted the Ford Motor Company to install America's first concrete runway.

#### Kalamazoo, Mich., 1926, 1927, 1929-1931

- ✎ Kalamazoo's \$100,000 municipal airport was dedicated by Mayor George K. Taylor in connection with the arrival of the 1926 National Air Tour. Local committeemen who helped organize the stop, rallied nearby manufacturers to make the Tour's arrival a holiday so employees could have the day off to be a part of the airport dedication.
- ✎ Once the 1926 Tour pilots arrived, they were treated to a luncheon and overnight accommodations at the Aviation Inn.
- ✎ In 1930, the Tour landed at Lindbergh Field. Cars were charged a 25-cent parking fee. That evening, pilots ate a dinner hosted by the Chamber of Commerce at the Airport Tavern. The following morning, spectators viewed an "air parade" after the pilots departed.
- ✎ In 1931, the National Air Tour stop became a much larger celebration. Before the Tour's arrival, spectators witnessed autogiro demonstrations as well as a parachute jump by "Tex" Russell from 3,000 feet. A "New Ideas in Aviation" themed banquet was held at the Columbia Hotel in the evening — the same hotel where the pilots enjoyed their stay.

### **Chicago, Ill., 1925, 1926, 1928-1930**

- ✧ Maywood Air Mail Field was the site of the 1925 National Air Tour's arrival.
- ✧ In 1928, Otto Y. Schnering, president of the Curtiss Candy Company, sponsored a Waco Ten to be the Baby Ruth airplane. It was powered by a Wright Whirlwind engine and painted with the candy's name in big letters along its sides. Just before landing at each Tour stop, Pilot John P. Wood of Wausau, Wis., and his passenger would drop Baby Ruth candy bars tied to small parachutes to the crowds below. Wood proceeded to win National Air Tour that year.
- ✧ Monarch Coffee, a product of Chicago-based Reid, Murdoch & Co., sponsored a white, gold and blue Buhl Airster for the 1928 Tour. The company also provided a beautiful two-thermos coffee set for each ship on the Tour.
- ✧ In 1929, the National Air Tour's 26-airplane arrival marked the completion of the \$3 million Curtiss-Reynolds Airport at Glenview. According to newspaper reports, the Curtiss-Reynolds Airport's grand opening drew a crowd of more than 35,000 people causing traffic congestion for miles around.

### **Milwaukee, Wis., 1926, 1928 and 1929**

- ✧ The arrival of the National Air Tour at Hamilton Field in 1926 was rolled into the city's annual Court of Neptune pageant. The pageant included a fly-over and stunts by Tour pilots, a motorboat and hydroplane competition, Chippewa Indian dance demonstrations and of course, a bathing review. Following the review, Father Neptune and his court disappeared back into the harbor until they were summoned the following year for the next Court of Neptune pageant.
- ✧ In 1928 the National Air Tour arrived at Cudahy Airport. The pilots were taken by car for a parade on Wisconsin Ave. and then to Hotel Plankinton for dinner and overnight accommodations. To mark the occasion, Schuster's Twelfth Street Store painted a giant airport marker on their roof to show Tour pilots the way to the airport.
- ✧ Pilots landed at Milwaukee County Airport for the 1929 Tour. Once they arrived, they were taken by automobile to Hotel Plankinton. Newspaper articles noted that Mr. and Mrs. Carl Schory of the Hamilton Aero Manufacturing Company accompanied the tour. The company made propellers and Mr. Schory was participating to make sure "the planes were getting the most from their 'props.'" Today, the company is most notable for producing Hamilton Standard propellers.

### **Wausau, Wis., 1928-1930**

- ✧ Local newspapers reported in 1928 that practically every citizen from the city came out to Alexander Airport to witness the Tour's arrival. John P. Wood, a native of the city, was on that Tour and in the lead.
- ✧ The 128th Infantry Band played as John P. Wood guided the way into Wausau from St. Paul. When all the pilots had landed, they were treated to a luncheon, along with 480 people at the airport hangar. Hotel Wausau catered the luncheon affair.

- ✧ John P. Wood won the Tour that year in a Waco Ten biplane named the “Waco of Wausau.” His ship was sponsored by Baby Ruth candy and carried the name of the famous sweet on the side of the aircraft. Just before arrival, Wood and his passenger would drop Baby Ruth candy bars attached to miniature parachutes for the crowd below to enjoy.
- ✧ Upon arrival, Wood received a very warm welcome and said, “I am highly pleased over this grand reception for myself and the other pilots in the Tour. Wausau surely has the right kind of spirit and is the best town I have ever been in. Coming home has never meant more to me in my life that it does right now.”
- ✧ In August 1929, just one month before the National Air Tour, John P. Wood died in an air race in California. The pilots on the ‘29 Tour prepared to present a bronze tablet in memory of John P. Wood to Alexander Airport. They had planned to present it upon arrival, however a weather delay at the Tour stop forced organizers to postpone the presentation for two weeks.
- ✧ In 1930, the Tour made its first overnight stop in Wausau. They were hosted by Hotel Wausau. Speed Pilot Frank Hawks was the feature of that year’s news reports.

#### **Minneapolis/St. Paul, Minn., 1926, 1928 and 1929**

- ✧ Upon arrival of the 1926 Tour, William Stout, president of Stout Metal Airplane Company, a division of Ford Motor Company, declared that within months of the Tour, “We expect to establish air lines between the Twin Cities and Detroit in direct flight over Lake Michigan.” William Stout had lived in St. Paul as a student at the University of Minnesota and a reporter for the St. Paul newspaper.
- ✧ Tour organizers and representatives from 11 Northwest and Canadian states convened that evening in 1926 at the St. Paul Hotel to establish a definite commercial aviation policy for the region. That same year St. Paul citizens voted for a new, \$300,000 airport.
- ✧ Officially landing at the St. Paul Municipal Airport, the 24 pilots on the 1928 Tour taxied their airplanes up to a reserved space where an automobile with the corresponding airplane number whisked them away to a parade in the city. Following the parade, the pilots stayed at the St. Paul Hotel. The entire third floor had been reserved exclusively for the Tour.

#### **Des Moines, Iowa, 1925, 1926 and 1929**

- ✧ Des Moines citizens were a bit embarrassed by the 1925 National Air Tour visit. Many of the larger airplanes on the Tour choose to completely bypass the stop due to the short, unimproved airstrip.
- ✧ In 1926, local boosters who remembered being passed up by larger airplanes on the 1925 Tour, built an airstrip large enough to accommodate the biggest Tri-motors. It was complete with electric lights and an administration building — a big Army tent.
- ✧ Amelia Earhart, aviatrix most famous for being the first woman to cross the Atlantic by air, was scheduled to make a visit to the 1929 National Air Tour as it landed at the Des Moines Municipal Airport. Unfortunately, due to her busy schedule and an extended meeting with Transcontinental Air Transport, she was unable to fulfill her obligation.

- ✎ Johnny Livingston of Waterloo, Iowa, flying a Waco CSO with a Wright J6-7 motor, led the 1929 Tour as it landed in Des Moines. Livingston kept his lead that year to win the Tour.
- ✎ Pilots stayed at Hotel Savery in downtown Des Moines during the 1928 and '29 Tours.

### **Kansas City, Mo., 1925, 1926, 1930 and 1931**

- ✎ On their way down to Kansas City on the 1925 Tour, pilots ran into a wild lightening storm. From the air, they observed lightening strike a barn below and set it ablaze. Shortly after witnessing this terrifying event, the pilots sought shelter landing in the nearest pastures they could find. Once they did arrive however, the pilots were treated to a warm dinner at Hotel Baltimore.
- ✎ In 1926, the Tour landed at Richards Field. Just before the arrival, the Rotary Club's airplane class for boys gathered in a circle and launched their gliders for a designated target. The three boys who reached the target were treated to an airplane ride from pilot Ben Gregory.
- ✎ May Haizlip, one of three women pilots on the 1929 Tour, was from Kansas City. She piloted an American Eagle.
- ✎ For the 1930 Tour, pilots landed at Fairfax Airport and ate dinner in the dining room of the new terminal building.

### **Wichita, Kan., 1926-1930**

- ✎ Immediately after arriving at the Wichita Municipal Airport in 1926, pilots enjoyed a luncheon at the Stearman company hangar. The arrival was broadcast on WLW radio in Cincinnati and KFK radio in Wichita.
- ✎ Before the 1927 National Air Tour arrived, the president of the local Kiwanis Club stated, "I presume all our members will be in church on Sunday morning. But if there are any who do not go to church, they are expected to be at the municipal airport to welcome the National Air Tour fliers. Several of the pilots are members of Kiwanis."
- ✎ In 1927, newspaper reports touted the landing of Frank Hawk's airplane — a Ryan Brougham monoplane. It was described as a replica of the one Charles Lindbergh flew across the Atlantic earlier that year. Upon arrival, Frank Hawks and the other pilots enjoyed lunch at the new Travel Air factory where the Eagle bathing beauty contestants presented the "air tourists" with roses.
- ✎ Wichita-based Stearman Aircraft Company entered a biplane piloted by Deed Levy for the 1928 Tour. J.H. Turner led the entertainment committee for the Wichita Tour stop that year. The men were invited over to Turner's cabin for an "evening smoker." Women celebrated separately with a dinner at the Innes Tea room. Mrs. Victor H. Roos proposed a challenge for Wichita to become the airplane capital of the world.
- ✎ Nancy Hopkins had to land just 100 miles short of Wichita during the 1930 Tour. Her motor went out, however she landed safely. She fixed it herself in under 30 minutes and was back in the air.

### **Tulsa, Okla., 1927 and 1928**

- ✧ In 1927 the pilots landed at McIntyre Field and were taken by automobile to the Mayo Hotel. Tulsa citizens were assigned to show the pilots around the city. That evening, a banquet was held in honor of the pilots on the roof of the hotel.
- ✧ During the 1927 banquet, pilots heard various speeches with the theme, “commercial aviation has arrived as a sound business proposition.” According to the Tulsa Daily World from July 10, 1929, “C. S. Avery spoke in place of P.J. Hurley. Avery astonished Tulsans who have heard him speak on other occasions, by barely mentioning his favorite topics of ‘roads and more roads.’ Instead of roads he spoke of the great future of commercial aviation and said that a new epoch — an epoch of aerial transportation — had arrived from Oklahoma.” Avery went on to predict that Tulsa would have a municipal airport within one year — he was right!
- ✧ The arrival of the 1928 National Air Tour coincided with the Fourth of July, the dedication of Tulsa’s Municipal Airport and the establishment of airmail service for the city. The airmail service included a new airplane, a Pitcairn Mailwing, which was formally christened “Miss Tulsa.”
- ✧ In 1928, the Tulsa Chamber of Commerce and the Barnsdall Corporation entered a Stinson-Detroiter piloted by Eddie Stinson himself. Upon arrival, Tour pilots enjoyed lunches from the Junior Chamber of Commerce and the Rotary Club. Tulsa Citizens held a barbeque at Barnsdalia Park that evening to celebrate the Fourth of July.

### **Fort Worth, Texas, 1928**

- ✧ According to newspaper reports, Fort Worth rolled out the “red carpet” for the National Air Tour’s arrival at Munny Field in 1928. Plans for the reception included a dinner at the Fort Worth Club organized by the Texas Coal and Oil Company and a chicken supper the following evening at Shady Oaks at Lake Worth. Special arrangements were made to entertain the 12 women on the tour, including pilot Phoebe Omlie.
- ✧ Two Texas-based companies sponsored airplanes on the 1928 Tour. The Texas Pacific Coal and Oil Company sponsored a Ryan monoplane piloted by Al Henley, and the Texas Company sponsored a Ford Tri-motor 4AT piloted by Frank Hawks.

### **Shreveport, La., 1931**

- ✧ The arrival of the National Air Tour in 1931 marked the dedication of the \$300,000 Shreveport Airport. Mayor J.B. Palmer addressed the crowds, followed by air races and a balloon bursting competition in which pilots burst balloons launched by passengers. Dinner was provided by the Chamber of Commerce on the roof of the Washington-Youree Hotel.

### **Memphis, Tenn., 1927 and 1931**

- ✧ Armstrong Field was the site of the 1927 National Air Tour’s arrival. The Memphis Aero Club arranged evening meals and entertainment. Of particular note, pilot and aircraft manufacturer Eddie Stinson visited with his father for the first time in three-and-a-half years during the stop.

- ✧ Similar to newspaper reports in Wichita, Frank Hawks who piloted a Ryan Brougham, was noted for flying a ship that looked remarkably like the same airplane Charles Lindbergh had just used weeks earlier to cross the Atlantic. Prior to the start of the 1927 tour, Frank Hawks had been to the send-off celebration for Lindbergh in New York.
- ✧ Phoebe Omlie, who was the only woman pilot to fly on the 1928 Tour, was from Memphis. She flew a Monocoupe, the smallest airplane on the Tour that year.

### **Birmingham, Ala., 1931**

- ✧ The 1931 National Air Tourists were treated to lunch in the Birmingham Municipal Airport dining room. Following their luncheon and an afternoon of flying, the Chamber of Commerce and the city of Birmingham hosted an informal dinner at the Birmingham Press Club on the roof of the Bankhead Hotel.
- ✧ Newspaper headlines from *The Birmingham News* touted the arrival of the Champion Spark Plug Company's Pitcairn Autogiro flown by Lon Yancey and Jimmie Doolittle flying one of the Tour's advance ships sponsored by Shell Oil Co. — a Lockheed Vega 5A.

### **Atlanta, Ga., 1929**

- ✧ In 1929, coinciding with the arrival of the National Air Tour at Candler Field, the Atlanta Biltmore Hotel was selected as the only official National Aeronautics Association hotel in the city. This meant special accommodations for pilots and morning airport condition and weather reports.
- ✧ Atlanta citizens anticipated the arrival of the largest ship on the tour — the Curtis Condor reportedly weighing nine-tons. It was piloted by Atlanta native, Lieutenant William J. Crosswell. He was a graduate of Georgia Tech and a test pilot for the Curtiss Airplane and Motor Company.

### **Greenville, S.C., 1929**

- ✧ Newspapers reported that a crowd of more than 20,000 people came out to witness the National Air Tour land at the Municipal Airport. While the streets were flooded with traffic, congestion was kept to a minimum.
- ✧ The city celebrated the Tour's arrival with an informal dinner and dance at the Poinsett Hotel. It included musical entertainment from the Greenville Quartet, Miss Ardelle Haynes dancing to the tune of "The Breakaway," and Misses Mildred Cook and Alice Gleason singing "Whoopee" and "That's You, Baby."

### **Winston-Salem, N.C., 1929**

- ✧ The Tour landed at Miller Municipal Airport and arrived from Richmond in time for lunch at the Hotel Robert E. Lee. It departed the same day at about 3 p.m. for Greenville.
- ✧ Three airplanes did not make the trip from Richmond. The huge Curtis Condor suffered motor trouble and was forced to return to Richmond shortly after departure. Pilot May Hazlip, flying an American Eagle, was still expected by the time the rest of the Tour left Winston-Salem. Pilot Earl Rowland suffered appendicitis and was also forced to return to Richmond.

### **Richmond, Va., 1929**

- ✎ The 1929 National Air Tour arrived at Byrd Airport. The stop was hosted by the Richmond Hotel Men's Association and included a ham dinner and entertainment at the Loew's, National and Colonial theaters.
- ✎ In preparation for the Tour's arrival, the Byrd airport cut the grass on the runway, laid white lines to mark the edges of the airstrip and poured concrete in front of the Pitcairn hangar. According to newspaper reports, the pilots on the Tour claimed the Byrd Airport was one of the best.
- ✎ Mrs. Keith Miller cracked a wheel on her Fairchild KR-34 upon landing at the airport. Pitcairn mechanics repaired the wheel that evening and she was able to maintain the schedule with the rest of the Tour pilots the following morning.

### **Pittsburgh, Pa., 1927 and 1931**

- ✎ The National Air Tour landed at Rodgers Field in 1927 and Butler Airport in 1931. Several of the pilots on the 1927 Tour were sponsored by local clubs including the Mercater Club and the Harvard Club of Western Pennsylvania. A committee of the Pittsburgh Association of Credit hosted a dinner at the Nixon Hotel for Tour pilot Frank Hawks and his wife. Other pilots ate an informal dinner at Hotel Schenley and enjoyed a theater party at Duquesne Garden.

### **Dayton, Ohio, 1927**

- ✎ In 1927, National Air Tour pilots were greeted by one special gentleman who, in essence, helped make all Air Tours or any aviation related activity possible — Orville Wright. Orville came out to McCook Field and was personally introduced to each pilot on the Tour by referee Ray Collins. A dinner followed their arrival at the Miami Hotel. More than 300 people attended the dinner including Mayor A.C. McDonald and Congressman Roy G. Fitzgerald.

###

For additional information about the National Air Tour 2003, visit [www.NationalAirTour.org](http://www.NationalAirTour.org) or contact Suzanne Fedoruk at 612-861-7807, [sfedoruk@mn.rr.com](mailto:sfedoruk@mn.rr.com).