

PEMBERTON-TOBIN-SCOTT

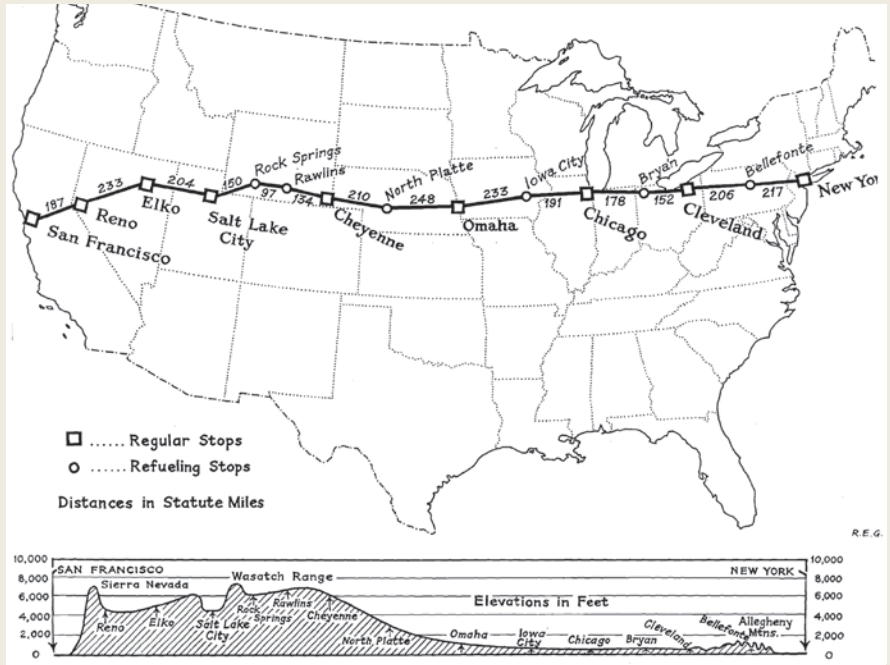
Transcontinental air-mail re-enactment

"I don't know how they did it day after day," says Addison Pemberton after the conclusion of a re-enactment of the transcontinental air-mail flights pioneered in the 1920s. Addison was recalling the difficulties encountered in the previous week as he and three friends flew across the country on a more leisurely pace than the schedule imposed on the early air-mail pilots. "To have done that on a regular schedule in all types of weather with the equipment they had was remarkable," he tells us in an interview after the flight.

The 2008 flight, which included three airplanes, flew across the country from Republic Field on New York's Long Island to the San Francisco Bay area. The trip, an "official" route of the U.S. Post Office Department (700 pieces of mail were carried by the flight of three), took place over an eight-day stretch, including a four-day weather delay in Rochelle, Illinois. It took 28 flying hours to cross the continent. A special educational display was planned for each of the 15 original air-mail stops during the flight re-enactment, which commemorates the 90th anniversary of air-mail service.

Pemberton flew his newly restored 1928 Boeing Model 40 (for more on the Boeing, see the article starting on page 13). Accompanying the Boeing were Larry Tobin, flying his 1927 Stearman C3B, and Ben Scott, flying his 1930 Stearman 4E.

Tobin, who retired from a career as a pilot for TWA, flew his last trip with a 767 from New York to San Francisco. Repeating it with his restored Stearman was a real



Then and now: 1928—Grant Donaldson (pilot) standing on the wheel of 5339, shaking the hand of Bill Boeing. 2008—Addison Pemberton (pilot) standing on 5339 shaking the hand of Bill Boeing Jr., with Boeing CEO Scott Carlson.



Two of the three commercial biplanes that made the transcontinental air-mail re-enactment flight: Larry Tobin's Stearman C3B and Addison Pemberton's Boeing 40C. Photo by George Perks from Ben Scott's Stearman 4E.

treat. Scott flew the same airplane his father, William Keith Scott, had taken delivery of when it was new in 1930. Now splendidly restored after having been away from the family for decades, the 4E is, like the other three biplanes, a design originally intended for commercial air-mail service.

Thanks to sponsorship of Bill Boeing Jr., The Boeing Company, and Jeppesen, the three modern pilots started off from New York's Republic Field on September 10, with stops in Bellefonte, Pennsylvania, and ending the day in Cleveland. Then it was off to Bryan, Ohio, and Lansing, Illinois. The next overnight stop was to be Iowa City, Iowa, but a stalled warm front filled with moist air put a kink in that plan, and the trio descended into Rochelle, Illinois, for what would wind up being a three-night stay, with a departure as the weather began to break on September 15.

Ducking out under the cloud deck, a hundred miles to the west the skies cleared up and it was on to Iowa City and Grand Island, Nebraska, for an overnight stop. With clear skies and the Rockies ahead, the gang departed at dawn on the 16th, headed for North

Platte, Nebraska.

Then it was on to the only state with three stops—Wyoming. Stops were made in Cheyenne and Rawlins, and an overnight stop was made in Rock Springs. The next day, September 17, the three biplanes were in the heart of the Rockies and on to the Sierras, with stops in Salt Lake City, Utah, and Elko, Nevada, before stopping for the night in Reno. On the last day, it was over the mountaintops; a nice downhill run to Hayward, California; an air-mail salute as the biplanes disgorged their cargo of special air mail; and then a tour of the San Francisco Bay area. Hosted by VAA Chapter 29, the pilots had a great time before Tobin and Addison headed home with their mail planes, while Scott returned to Reno. Unfortunately, Tobin's Stearman had an engine failure over inhospitable terrain (both he and Addison believe it was due to heavy carb icing). A forced landing in a very small field resulted in extensive damage to the Stearman but, thankfully, not a scratch to the pilot.

George Perks flew with the trio and created a beautiful photo blog of the adventure. You can view it at www.AirSpaceMag.com.

Upcoming Major Fly-Ins

U.S. Sport Aviation Expo

Sebring Regional Airport (SEF), Sebring, FL
January 22-25, 2009
www.Sport-Aviation-Expo.com

Aero Friedrichshafen

Messe Friedrichshafen, Friedrichshafen, Germany
April 2-5, 2009
www.Aero-Friedrichshafen.com/html/en

Sun 'n Fun Fly-In

Lakeland Linder Regional Airport (LAL), Lakeland, FL
April 21-26, 2009
www.Sun-N-Fun.org

Virginia Regional Festival of Flight

Suffolk Executive Airport (SFQ), Suffolk, VA
May 30-31, 2009
www.VirginiaFlyIn.org

Golden West Regional Fly-In

Yuba County Airport (MYV), Marysville, CA
June 12-14, 2009
www.GoldenWestFlyIn.org

Rocky Mountain Regional Fly-In

Front Range Airport (FTG), Watkins, CO
TBD
www.RMRFI.org

Arlington Fly-In

Arlington Municipal Airport (AWO), Arlington, WA
July 8-12, 2009
www.NWEAA.org

EAA AirVenture Oshkosh

Wittman Regional Airport (OSH), Oshkosh, WI
July 27-August 2, 2009
www.AirVenture.org

Mid-Eastern Regional Fly-In

Grimes Field Airport (I74), Urbana, OH
September 12-13, 2009
www.MERFI.info

Southeast Regional Fly-In

Middleton Field Airport (GZH), Evergreen, AL
October 23-25, 2009
www.SERFI.org

Copperstate Regional Fly-In

Casa Grande Municipal Airport (CGZ), Casa Grande, AZ
October 22-25, 2009
www.Copperstate.org

For details on EAA chapter fly-ins and other local aviation events, visit www.EAA.org/events.