



George Palmer Putnam collection of Amelia Earhart papers

Timeline of the life of Amelia Mary Earhart

Compiled by Sammie Morris, 2004

1897-1908

Amelia Mary Earhart was born in Atchison, Kansas on July 24, 1897 (11:30 pm) to parents Amy Otis and Edwin Stanton Earhart. She was named after her two grandmothers, Amelia Otis and Mary Earhart. Amelia's father worked as a lawyer settling claims for various railroads. Two and a half years later, Amelia's younger sister, Muriel, was born. Amelia and Muriel lived primarily with their maternal grandparents, Judge Alfred Otis and Amelia Otis in Atchison, Kansas, during the school years. During the summers, the girls stayed with their parents in Kansas City. While in Atchison, the girls attended the private College Preparatory School. Meanwhile, Edwin was offered a job in Des Moines, Iowa, and he and Amy moved there to look for a suitable home for the family. The girls remained with their grandparents during this time.

1908

In 1908, Amelia and Muriel joined their parents in Des Moines, Iowa. Edwin Earhart took a job with the Rock Island Railroad. Amelia saw an airplane for the first time at the Iowa State Fair. In 1909, Edwin was promoted at his claims job in Des Moines.

1910-1912

Around this time, Amelia's father, Edwin Earhart, began to drink heavily. Amelia's beloved grandmother, Amelia Harres Otis, died in 1911. Amelia was particularly affected by the death, as she had been her grandmother's favorite and namesake. Edwin Earhart lost his job and entered a sanatorium for a month to try and dry out. The move to Des Moines, combined with her grandmother's death and her father's drunkenness, took its toll on the family and these were troubling, chaotic years for Amelia and her sister Muriel.

1913

Amelia and her family moved to St. Paul, Minnesota. Amelia entered Central High School and played on the basketball team. Her favorite subjects were Latin and mathematics.

1914

Edwin Earhart was offered a job in Springfield, Missouri, and the Earhart family moved again. Upon arriving in Springfield, however, Edwin discovered that he did not have a job after all—the man he was to replace had decided not to retire. This was too much for Amelia's mother, Amy, and she and the girls left Edwin to stay with friends in Chicago. Edwin moved back to Kansas to look for work, and eventually opened his own law office. In Chicago, Amelia entered Hyde Park High School, excelling in math and science.

1915

Amelia graduated from Hyde Park High School in Chicago in June 1915. She, along with her mother and sister, moved back to Kansas City to join Edwin there. Edwin had temporarily stopped drinking.

1916-1917

Amelia entered college in October 1916, attending the Ogontz School near Philadelphia, while her sister Muriel went to St. Margaret's College in Toronto, Canada. Amelia had originally intended to go to Bryn Mawr, then Vassar, but she filed too late to attend Vassar that year. While at the Ogontz School, Amelia played hockey, studied French and German, and continued to excel in her classes, though she alienated some of her fellow students when she spoke out strongly against the secret sororities there. She was voted Vice President of her class, Secretary to a local Red Cross Chapter, and Secretary and Treasurer of Christian Endeavor while at Ogontz. Amelia spent the summer of 1917 with friends at Camp Gray near Lake Michigan, then returned to Ogontz for the fall semester. Entering her senior term she began planning for graduation, was elected vice-president of her class, and composed the class motto: "Honor is the foundation of Courage." In December, while visiting her sister Muriel in Toronto over Christmas, Amelia was very affected by the sight of four wounded soldiers walking on crutches together down the street.

1918

After a brief return to the Ogontz School, Amelia decided not to stay and graduate, but to move to Toronto and join in the war effort. She became a Voluntary Aid Detachment nurse at the Spadina Military Convalescent Hospital in Toronto, caring for wounded World War I soldiers. Many of the patients at the hospital where Amelia worked were British and French pilots, and Amelia and Muriel began spending time at a local airfield watching the pilots in the Royal Flying Corps train. The war ended with the Armistice in November 1918.

1919

Amelia returned to the United States to live with her mother and sister in Northampton, Massachusetts. She took an all-girls auto repair class in the spring of 1919, and then spent the summer at Lake George. In the fall, she enrolled as a pre-med student at Columbia University in New York.

1920-1921

Amelia left Columbia University in the summer of 1920 at her parents' urging, and joined Edwin and Amy in Los Angeles in an effort to try and help them keep their marriage intact. In December, Amelia attended her first air meet, at Daugherty Field in Long Beach. She took her

first ride in an airplane with Frank Hawks (December 1920). Amelia met pilot Neta Snook and asked her to provide flying lessons. She also met her future fiancé Sam Chapman, who was living as a boarder in her parents' home. On January 3, 1921, Amelia started taking flying lessons with Neta Snook. In July, Amelia purchased her first airplane, a secondhand yellow Kinner Airster she called "The Canary." She worked in a photography studio and as a filing clerk at the Los Angeles Telephone Company to help pay for her plane and flying lessons. She began cutting her waist-length hair, inches at a time, so her mother wouldn't notice. That same year, she submitted four poems to Poetry magazine, under the alias Emil Harte. On December 15, 1921, Amelia took and passed her trials for a National Aeronautic Association license. Two days later, she participated in exhibition flying at the Pacific Coast Ladies Derby at the Sierra Airdrome in Pasadena.

1922

In the summer of 1922, Amelia was pictured in the Los Angeles Examiner with her Kinner airplane, and in the article she was quoted as saying she wanted to fly across the continent in the following year. She set her first aviation record, an unofficial women's altitude record of 14,000 feet, at Rogers Field under the auspices of the Aero Club of Southern California (October 22).

1923

Amelia appeared as one of the attractions at an Air Rodeo at Glendale Airport (March). She was granted her airline pilot's license by the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale (May 16). She became engaged to Sam Chapman at about this time, and began working in a photography studio. When the studio met with financial troubles, Amelia was forced to give up the job, but she decided to set up her own photographic business for a short time, and began taking her camera with her everywhere. She sold her first Kinner airplane.

1924

Amelia bought her second Kinner airplane, which she shortly thereafter sold to buy a Kissel roadster car she called the "Yellow Peril." In June, she drove with her mother from California to Massachusetts, stopping along the way to visit Yosemite and Yellowstone parks. Amelia and her mother settled in Massachusetts with Muriel. Amelia's parents divorced. Amelia underwent a sinus operation to alleviate her chronic sinus headaches. She then returned to Columbia University in September 1924.

1925

In May 1925, Amelia left Columbia and returned to the Boston area. For a few weeks she taught English to foreign students at a Harvard University summer extension program. From June to October, she worked as a companion in a hospital for mental diseases, but she found the work too confining and the pay insufficient.

1926

Amelia began working part-time as a social worker at Denison House, Boston's oldest settlement house. There, she taught English to Syrian and Chinese children and their parents.

1927

Amelia became a full-time resident staff member at Denison House in the autumn of 1927, and was also elected Secretary to the Board of Directors. She joined the Boston Chapter of the National Aeronautic Association. She also invested in a project to build an airport and market Kinner airplanes, becoming a director of the company that shortly afterward built Dennison Airport on the Quincy Shore Reservation Boulevard. Amelia began appearing in the newspapers occasionally, promoting aviation and advocating women pilots. She wrote to fellow pilot Ruth Nichols about forming an organization for women fliers.

1928

In April 1928, Amelia received a phone call while working at Denison House. The caller, Captain Hilton H. Railey, asked Amelia if she would like to be the first woman to fly across the Atlantic. After checking his references, Amelia enthusiastically agreed to the adventure, though she kept this information secret from her family and friends in order to prevent a competitive race across the Atlantic with other pilots. She met George Putnam, who, along with Hilton Railey was representing the sponsors of the flight. The idea for the flight was formulated by Amy Guest, who had purchased the plane and originally planned to complete the flight herself. Guest later financed the mission. On June 17-18, 1928, Amelia Earhart became the first woman to fly across the Atlantic Ocean (as a passenger). The flight was from Trepassy Bay, Newfoundland, to Burry Port, Wales on a whirlwind-powered Fokker F7 airplane named the Friendship. The plane had been fitted with pontoons and was piloted by Wilmer (Bill) Stultz, with Louis "Slim" Gordon serving as mechanic. Richard E. Byrd served as technical consultant for the flight. After the Friendship flight, Amelia shopped at Selfridge's in London and danced with the Prince of Wales. She met Lady Mary Heath and bought her Avro Avian airplane. On her return voyage to New York aboard the S.S. President Roosevelt, Amelia met Captain Harry Manning, who instructed her in navigation. Upon return to New York, the Friendship crew was honored with a parade to City Hall, where New York Mayor Jimmy Walker gave Amelia a medal and key to the city. Similar celebrations followed the fliers in Boston, Medford, and Chicago. Amelia later wrote her first book, *20 Hrs. 40 Min.*, about her experience aboard the Friendship. She went on to complete the first solo round-trip transcontinental flight by a woman across the United States (September-October 15, 1928), and began a series of lecture tours organized by George Putnam to publicize her new book. Amelia announced publicly that she had ended her engagement to Sam Chapman (November 23). She was appointed Aviation Editor for *Cosmopolitan* magazine, and began writing several aviation articles a year for the publication.

1929

Amelia acquired a single engine Lockheed Vega airplane. She competed in the Women's Air Derby race from Santa Monica to Cleveland (also called the "Powder-Puff Derby"), the first cross-country race for women, finishing in third place. She was appointed Assistant to the General Traffic Manager at Transcontinental Air Transport (now TWA) with special responsibility for promoting aviation to women travelers (July 1). Amelia helped organize The Ninety-Nines, Inc., the first women pilots' organization (November 2), and later became the organization's first president in 1931. George Palmer Putnam and Dorothy Putnam divorced in December 1929.

1930

In addition to her position at Transcontinental Air Transport, Amelia accepted a public relations job with Pennsylvania Railroad. Along with Eugene Vidal and Paul Collins, Amelia formed the

New York, Philadelphia, and Washington Airway Corporation, an airline that offered hourly round-trip service between the cities, in the spring of 1930. Amelia set the women's world flying speed record of 181.18 mph (July). She became vice president of Ludington Lines, a commercial airline that had its inaugural flight on September 1, 1930. Her father, Edwin Earhart, fell very ill and Amelia went to visit him in September. He died of stomach cancer later that month. Amelia acquired her transport pilot's license in October. She accepted George Putnam's proposal of marriage, and in November she and George attained a marriage license in Noank, Connecticut. She became the first woman to fly an autogiro in the United States on December 14, 1930.

1931

Amelia was named the first president of The Ninety-Nines, the first women pilots' organization (1931-1933). She married George Palmer Putnam at his mother's home in Noank, Connecticut (February 7). She was elected Vice-President of the National Aeronautical Association in 1931. Amelia acquired an autogiro and set an altitude record of 18,451 feet at Willow Grove, Pennsylvania in a whirlwind-powered Pitcairn (April 8). On May 22, Amelia bought the Pitcairn autogiro, but a few weeks later sold it to the Beech-Nut Packing Company, who promptly loaned it back to her for flying it with their logo prominently attached to its side. She completed her first solo transcontinental flight in an autogiro as a flying ambassador for the Beech-Nut Packing Company, becoming the first person to make a transcontinental flight across the United States in an autogiro (May 29-June 22). During the flight, she crashed the autogiro in June in Abilene, Texas and was later reprimanded in writing by the Department of Commerce.

1932

Amelia wrote her second book, *The Fun of It*. In May, despite a failed altimeter, dense fog, and a fire from her exhaust manifold, Amelia became the first woman (and second person) to fly solo across the Atlantic Ocean. She had flown from Harbor Grace, Newfoundland to Londonderry, Ireland in her single engine Lockheed Vega (May 20-21, exactly five years after Lindbergh made his solo flight across the Atlantic). With this flight, Amelia became the first person to cross the Atlantic twice by air nonstop, setting a record for the fastest Atlantic crossing (13 hours and 30-40 minutes) and the longest distance flown by a woman. Paramount News flew Amelia to London, where she stayed at the American Embassy with Ambassador Andrew Mellon and his family. She was awarded the Certificate of Honorary Membership of the British Guild of Airpilots and Navigators, only the second non-British pilot to receive the honor. She visited with the Prince of Wales and Lady Astor, and met George Bernard Shaw. Amelia then went to Paris, where she was presented the Cross of the Legion of Honor. There, she attended the Air Races and laid wreaths at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier and the monument to the Lafayette Escadrille. From Paris, Amelia and George went to Rome for private meetings with Mussolini and the Pope. They then traveled back to Paris, then on to Brussels for lunch with the Belgian King and Queen, followed by the presentation to Amelia of the Cross of the Chevalier of the Order of Leopold. On June 15, the couple sailed back to the United States on the *Ile de France*. On June 21, Amelia and George were guests of honor at the White House with President and Mrs. Herbert Hoover. The National Broadcasting Company relayed the event across the nation. President Hoover presented Amelia with the National Geographic Society's prestigious gold medal (June 21). She was the first woman to ever receive this award. On July 29, Congress awarded Amelia the Distinguished Flying Cross. Again, Amelia was the first woman to receive the award. She also received honorary membership in the National Aeronautic Association. Amelia won the Harmon Trophy as America's Outstanding Airwoman for 1932, and was awarded the Cross of Knight of the Legion of Honor by the French government. The same year,

Amelia set the women's record for the fastest non-stop transcontinental flight (Los Angeles, California to Newark, New Jersey) in 19 hours and 5 minutes (August 24-25, 1932). Amelia sold her plane to the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia to be placed on permanent exhibition in their aviation room. That same year, she christened the Hudson Motor Cars new automobile line, the Essex Terraplane.

1933

Amelia visited the White House as a guest of Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt. She participated in the National Air Races and in July she broke her own North American transcontinental record with a flying time of 17 hours, 7 minutes, 30 seconds from Los Angeles to Newark. Amelia won the Harmon Trophy for America's Outstanding Airwoman for the second year. She resigned as Vice-President of the National Aeronautic Association.

1934

Amelia launched a fashion house to manufacture and market clothing designed by her. Her first shop opened in Macy's in New York. It was initially a success, but by the end of the year the venture was shut down. In November, the Earhart/Putnam home in Rye caught fire and many of Earhart's earliest papers burned, including poems she wrote in her schooldays. Amelia won the Harmon Trophy for America's Outstanding Airwoman for the third year in a row.

1935

Amelia became the first person to fly solo across the Pacific Ocean from Honolulu, Hawaii to Oakland, California (January 11-12). This was also the first flight in which a civilian aircraft carried a two-way radio. Later that year, she became the first person to fly solo from Los Angeles, California to Mexico City, Mexico by official invitation from the Mexican Government (April 19-20) and became the first person to fly solo from Mexico City to Newark, New Jersey (May 8). She was the first woman to compete in the National Air Races in Cleveland, Ohio, joining the race at the last minute with Paul Mantz. Earhart testified before the U.S. Senate regarding plans to place aviation under control of the Interstate Commerce Commission. She was named America's Outstanding Airwoman by the Harmon Trophy committee, and announced that she'd accepted an appointment at Purdue University as a consultant in the department for the study of careers for women. Amelia continued her stint at Purdue, serving as part-time career counselor for women and an advisor in aeronautics, until her disappearance in 1937. While at Purdue, she resided in Duhme Hall, the south unit of Windsor Halls. She was the featured speaker at Purdue's conference on Women's Work and Opportunities in December 1935.

1936

Amelia and Albert Einstein spoke at the opening of the New York Museum of Science and Industry. Amelia testified before a Senate sub-committee on air safety, campaigned for the 1936 Democratic Party, and was honored by women geographers that same year. In July, Amelia acquired a Lockheed Electra 10E airplane that she called her "Flying Laboratory." The plane was financed by Purdue University. With her new airplane, Amelia began seriously planning for a flight around the world at the equator.

1937

In early 1937, to help finance Amelia's world flight, George Putnam arranged for Gimbels in New York to sell letter covers that Amelia would carry with her, and, along the route, mail back to collectors. Ten thousand of the covers sold. Amelia began her round-the-world flight at the equator in Oakland, California and set a new record for fastest east to west (Oakland to Honolulu) travel in 15 hours and 47 minutes (March 17-18). After landing, the plane was moved to Luke Field near Pearl Harbor, where it was refueled. On takeoff from Luke Field for Howland Island, Amelia ground looped the plane and badly damaged it (March 20). The airplane was repaired at the Lockheed plant in California and a second round-the-world attempt started, this time departing from Miami, Florida and traveling from west to east (June 1). After completing 22,000 miles of the flight, Amelia and her navigator Fred Noonan departed from Lae, New Guinea, and disappeared somewhere en route to tiny Howland Island, losing radio contact with the U.S. Coast Guard cutter Itasca on July 2, 1937. President Roosevelt authorized a massive search for the fliers, but the search was abandoned on July 18. George Putnam continued to finance his own search for Amelia and Noonan until October 1937.

1939

Amelia Earhart was declared legally dead in Superior Court in Los Angeles, CA (January 5).

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