May 2026

Corey J Beitler's

"Distelfink Airlines"

An Online Aviation Newsletter

Hallmark "Legends In Flight" Collection

Bombardier/Mitsubishi CRJ900LR

Hindenburg: An Illustrated History

Hobbymaster 1:72 Scale Curtiss SB2C-4E Helldiver

Ryan NYP "Spirit of St. Louis"

Lockheed Model 8 Sirius "Tingmissartoq"

The U.S. Army's Rare Gulfstream Aerospace C-20E

These 1:48 scale World War I fighter aircraft models of a SPAD S.XIII (front) and Fokker Dr.I Triplane (back) were manufactured by Hallmark Cards, Inc., as part of its "Legends In Flight" collection of die-cast model airplanes. Produced from 1999 to 2001, the series featured detailed die-cast models of famous aircraft from all eras of aviation history.

FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK

"Legends In Flight" models, "Spirit of St. Louis", "Tingmissartoq", C-20E, CRJ900LR

Greetings Everyone:

Welcome to the May edition of Distelfink Airlines! With May having arrived, it is soon time for the airshow season to begin in this region of the United States. I have already reached out to several airshows with media credential requests and have been approved to cover three events so far this year. I am expecting approvals from a few other events in the next month or two as well. I am looking forward to featuring airshows and aviation events in Distelfink Airlines throughout the summer and early fall. I also have some aviation museum visits planned over the summer months which I hope to feature in future editions of the newsletter.

The featured content for the May edition is an article about the "Legends In Flight" collection of die-cast model airplanes. This series of models was manufactured by Hallmark Cards, Inc., and planned as a product tie-in to the popular "Sky's The Limit" series of airplane Christmas ornaments, which were part of the company's Keepsake ornament collection. These models were sold in Hallmark's Gold Crown retail stores. Unfortunately, the models were a marketing and sales failure for Hallmark, and the series ran for only three years before Hallmark discontinued it. The "Legends In Flight" collection featured 14 different aircraft in 17 color schemes representing all eras of aviation history. I received most of these models in the series as Christmas and birthday presents from my grandparents. Although my model airplane collection now includes much more detailed pieces than the "Hallmark Legends In Flight" series, I kept these models for their sentimental value and have always wanted to feature them in the newsletter.

Also in this edition of the newsletter is a small article about the "Spirit of St. Louis", the famous aircraft which Charles Lindbergh flew solo from New York to Paris in May 1927 and became an overnight hero. The "Spirit of St. Louis" hangs on display in the National Air and Space Museum's flagship location in Washington, D.C. Another aircraft associated with Charles Lindbergh is also featured in the newsletter this month. The Lockheed Model 8 Sirius "Tingmissartoq" is featured in the "Aircraft of Special Interest" section. Charles Lindbergh custom-ordered this aircraft from Lockheed in 1929, and it was delivered to Lindbergh in 1930. Lindbergh and his wife, Anne Morrow Lindbergh, used this aircraft to take two long vacations in 1931 and 1933. Their long-distance journeys took them to four continents and 21 countries as they vacationed and scouted future airline routes for Pan-Am.

Finally, the "One Last Thing" section features some photos of the U.S. Army's rare Gulfstream Aerospace C-20E. This aircraft flies in support of the U.S. Army's DEVCOM C5ISR Center, which researches and conducts testing of advanced intelligence, surveillance, and communications equipment. The C-20E recently paid a visit to the Lehigh Valley International Airport in Allentown, Pennsylvania. Another aircraft visiting Lehigh Valley International Airport, a Bombardier/Mitsubishi CRJ900LR operated by Endeavor Air under Delta Connection branding, is featured in the "Aviation Sightings" section. This aircraft was operating on one of the scheduled daily flights to Lehigh Valley International Airport from the Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta, Georgia.

Thank you again for supporting my aviation photojournalism efforts and "Distelfink Airlines" this year. Please feel free to share the newsletter with whoever you wish and invite them to join the newsletter's official social media pages listed below.

Regards,

-Corey

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What's Inside:

Bombardier/Mitsubishi CRJ900LR

A Bombardier/Mitsubishi CRJ900LR operated by Endeavor Air on approach to the Lehigh Valley International Airport in Allentown, Pennsylvania, after a flight from the Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport in Atlanta, Georgia. Endeavor Air operates flights under Delta Connection branding and serves 145 destinations in the United States, Canada, Cuba, and The Bahamas.

The Bombardier CRJ900LR is a long-range variant of the CRJ900 series of twin-engine regional jets built by Canadian transportation conglomerate Bombardier. The CRJ900 series is a stretched variant of the CRJ700 series of aircraft built by the manufacturer. In 2020, Mitsubishi Aircraft Corporation purchased the CRJ program from Bombardier, which was exiting the commercial aircraft business. Mitsubishi ended production of the CRJ family but continues to provide spare parts and technical support to current operators of the aircraft.

After the successful launch of the 70-78-seat CRJ700 series in 2001, Bombardier began planning a stretched variant of the aircraft to accommodate up to 90 passengers. Initially, Bombardier considered developing an all-new aircraft, but ultimately opted for a stretched version of the CRJ700 series using plugs to extend the fuselage length. A major consideration in the decision was that the CRJ700 and a stretched variant could share a common type rating, allowing pilots to transition between them with a cross-crew qualification course. Bombardier began design work on the CRJ900 series in 1999. In addition to a length extension, the fuselage of the CRJ900 series also received strakes at the rear of the aircraft to improve stability. The wing was widened with additional leading-edge slats. The passenger cabin received numerous improvements, such as a second lavatory, an improved climate control system, and a lower floor, improving visibility from the cabin windows. Late production CRJ900 series aircraft featured passenger cabins with larger overhead storage bins and LED lighting. The first CRJ900 series aircraft entered service in 2003. A total of 487 CRJ900 series aircraft were delivered to operators by Bombardier in CRJ900, CRJ900ER, and CRJ900LR production variants. The CRJ900 series served as the design basis for the even further stretched CRJ1000, which can seat up to 104 passengers.

The CRJ900LR seats 76 to 90 passengers and is powered by two General Electric CF34-8C5 engines. The engines are managed by an FADEC (fully automatic digital engine control) system for improved efficiency and performance. In typical operations, the CRJ900LR cruises at a ceiling of 41,000 feet (12,497 m), a cruise speed of 515 miles per hour (829 km/h; 447 kn), has a range of 2,104 miles (1,828 nmi; 3,385 km), and a maximum takeoff weight (MTOW) of 84,500 pounds (38,300 kg).


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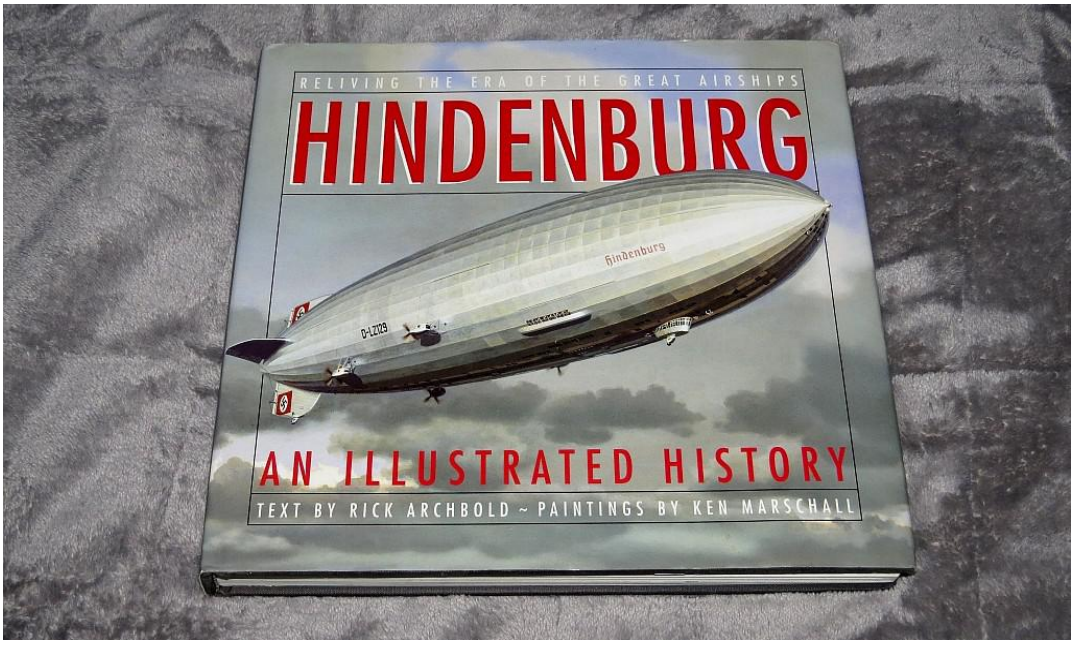
Hindenburg: An Illustrated History



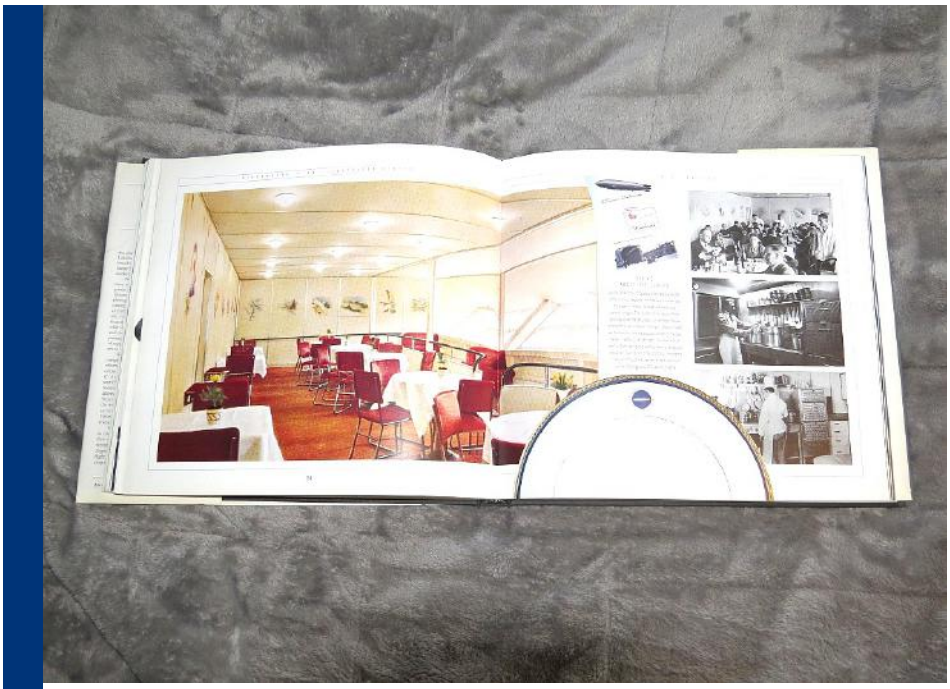
Hindenburg: An Illustrated History, written by Rick Archbold and illustrated by Ken Marschall, is a Warren Madison Press book published in 1994. The 229-page, coffee-table-style, hardcover book relives the era of the great rigid airships, focusing on the Hindenburg and its disastrous last flight in May 1937. The book has engaging text, rare photographs, and excellent paintings that bring the history of the great airships to life for readers.

The LZ 129 *Hindenburg* was a German commercial passenger-carrying rigid airship. The *Hindenburg* was the largest airship ever built, with a length of 804 feet (245 meters). The airship was designed and built by the Zeppelin Company and operated by the German Zeppelin Airline Company. The hydrogen-filled airship entered service in 1936 and flew 36 Nazi propaganda and passenger flights before it caught fire and was destroyed while attempting to land at Naval Air Station Lakehurst in New Jersey on the evening of May 6, 1937. The disaster caused the fatalities of 35 passengers and crew of the 97 people aboard, and an additional fatality on the ground. Newsreel footage of the *Hindenburg* bursting into flames and falling to the ground shattered public confidence in airship travel and ended the construction of large, rigid airships.

Hindenburg: An Illustrated History was published by Warren Madison Press in 1994. The 229-page, hardcover book was authored by Rick Archbold and features paintings by artist Ken Marschall. The book chronicles the history of the *Hindenburg*, from its construction to its disastrous final flight. Rare photographs showing the *Hindenburg's* passenger accommodations and amenities accompany the text. The engaging text written by Archbold covers not only the design and construction of the *Hindenburg* but also features firsthand accounts of crew and passenger experiences aboard the airship, including those of survivors of the disaster. Superb paintings by Marschall illustrate the *Hindenburg* in its glory and during its tragic end. This excellent book also covers the stories of other famous airships, such as the *Norge* and *Italia*, which explored the North Pole, and the *Graf Zeppelin,* arguably the most successful passenger-carrying airship of the rigid airship era. *Hindenburg: An Illustrated History* also highlights the U.S. Navy's pioneering airships *U.S.S. Akron and U.S.S. Macon*, which were designed as flying aircraft carriers capable of launching and recovering small Curtiss F9C Sparrowhawk fighter aircraft. The book also covers in photographs and text the *Hindenburg's* little-known sister ship, the *Graf Zeppelin II.*

Although out of print for several years, *Hindenburg: An Illustrated History* can be purchased in excellent and good used condition on Amazon.com, Ebay.com, Etsy.com, and other online secondhand bookstores for reasonable prices. This fantastic and well-researched book is a wonderful piece of aviation memorabilia and deserves a spot on the bookshelf of any aviation enthusiast or anyone interested in aviation history. The easy-to-read text, rare photographs, and stunning paintings bring to life an often-forgotten chapter in aviation and air travel history.

Hindenburg: An Illustrated History features stunning paintings of the Hindenburg and other airships by artist Ken Marschall. This wonderful artwork provides a wonderful backdrop to the engaging text by Rick Archbold. This painting shows the German airship Hindenburg arriving at Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, in South America.



Hindenburg: An Illustrated History also features rarely published photographs showing the common passenger spaces and accommodations on airships such as the Graf Zeppelin and the Hindenburg. These photographs provide great insight into what it was like to travel aboard these giant airships.

Hobbymaster 1:72 Scale Curtiss SB2C-4E Helldiver

This excellent, highly detailed die-cast model of a Curtiss SB2C-4E Helldiver dive bomber from World War II is part of Hobbymaster's Air Power series of die-cast model airplanes in 1:72 scale. The model replicates a Helldiver assigned to VF-84 operating off the aircraft carrier U.S.S. Bunker Hill during the Tokyo Raids in February 1945.

The Curtiss SB2C Helldiver was a dive bomber developed by the Curtiss-Wright Corporation during World War II. It was the third Curtiss-designed aircraft to serve with the U.S. Navy to adopt the "Helldiver" nickname. A key component of U.S. Navy and Marine Corps war doctrine from the Interwar period until the end of World War II was dive bombing, which involved using an aircraft to deliver a bomb on a target at a steep angle to increase accuracy. U.S. Navy dive bombing squadrons flew SB2C Helldivers against Imperial Japan beginning in 1943 until the end of the war. Changes in aircraft carrier tactics, technology, and weapons made dive bombing obsolete as the war progressed. The SB2C Helldiver was the last scout and dive bomber operated by the U.S. Navy, and also the last significant combat aircraft developed by the Curtiss-Wright Corporation.

In 1939, the U.S. Navy placed an order with Curtiss for a new scout and dive bomber designated the SB2C to replace the Douglas SBD Dauntless and SB2U Vindicator. Blaylock and his team designed a two-seat, single-engine monoplane with an internal bomb bay capable of carrying 1,000 pounds (454 kg) of bombs and folding wings to facilitate storage aboard an aircraft carrier. Due to extensive requirements from the U.S. Navy, the SB2C was developed as a multirole aircraft rather than exclusively as a dive bomber. The prototype XSB2C-1 flew for the first time in December 1940.

Even before the prototype flew for the first time, problems with the SB2C's design were apparent. Wind tunnel testing revealed the SB2C would suffer from instability and poor directional control. The instability was due to the SB2C's short fuselage, a requirement from the U.S. Navy, so that two Helldivers could fit on an Essex-class aircraft carrier elevator. After the prototype XSB2C -1 crashed during landing on a test flight, Curtiss rebuilt it with a larger tail and longer fuselage. An autopilot was also added to help counter the instability issues. The revised prototype and early production examples of the Helldiver suffered from several design and developmental problems related to propellers, engines, and structural weaknesses. During flight testing and initial fleet delivery in 1942, numerous accidents occurred.

The SB2C's carrier trials in early 1943 were a near disaster. Landing gear failures and the SB2C's tendency to bounce on landing resulted in many aircraft ending up in flight deck barricades. The U.S. Navy demanded over 880 changes and corrections be made to the SB2C before it would be accepted for operational service. Changes to the Helldiver included increased fuel capacity, self-sealing fuel tanks, and forward armament changed to two 20-millimeter (0.767 in) cannons in the wings. Unfortunately, the equipment changes demanded by the U.S. Navy made the Helldiver nearly 40% heavier during its development, further exacerbating the poor flight handling characteristics of the dive bomber.

The Helldiver's combat debut was in November 1943 when Bombing Squadron (VB) 17, assigned to the *U.S.S. Bunker Hill,* attacked the Japanese fortress at Rabaul. Initial opinions of the Helldiver in operational service were poor. The aircraft quickly gained the name the "Beast", or more offensively, "S.O.B. 2nd Class", a profane play on its official designation, due to its tricky handling characteristics and large size. Maintenance crews also disliked the SB2C Helldiver; it had a complicated electrical system, an unreliable hydraulic system, and its propeller was the source of several maintenance and production quality control issues.

The introduction of the SB2C-3 variant of the Helldiver in 1944 solved most of the aircraft's problems. This variant featured a new 1,900-horsepower Wright Cyclone R-2600-20 Twin Cyclone radial engine and four-bladed propeller, which remedied the Helldiver's chronic issue of being underpowered and significantly improved its slow-speed handling characteristics. The SB2C-3 was also the first variant of the Helldiver that could be equipped with radar. This variant was followed by the improved SB2C-4, which featured underwing racks to carry rockets or additional bombs. This variant featured increased fuel capacity, a frameless pilot canopy, the deletion of the propeller spinner, and a tailhook mounted permanently in the extended position. Introduced in 1945, the SB2C-5 entered service too late to see widespread service in World War II. The SB2C-5 was also the final production variant of the Helldiver.

SB2C-3 and SB2C-4 variants of the Helldiver served with U.S. Navy squadrons as American forces went on the offensive in the Pacific. Helldivers participated in the Marianas campaign, the battles of Leyte Gulf and Okinawa, and in raids against the Japanese home islands.

Hobbymaster has a solid reputation in the die-cast model airplane industry for making excellent models, and the Helldiver is another fine example of the manufacturer's outstanding quality. The Helldiver features a high-quality paint finish with pad-printed markings and stenciling. The model features other positive attributes such as detailed cockpits, open dive flaps, optional position landing gear, a radar pod, and air-to-ground rockets mounted on the underwing weapons pylons.

Hobbymaster's 1:72 scale Curtiss SB2C-4E Helldiver die-cast model can be displayed in several configurations thanks to the large number of moving and interchangeable parts included with the model. The Helldiver features opening or optional position cockpit canopies, opening leading-edge slats, and pilot and rear gunner figures for the cockpits. Unfortunately, some of these pieces are difficult to install on the model because of their small size.

Due to continuous efforts by Curtiss and the U.S. Navy to improve the Helldiver and intensive training for the crews that flew it, many of the dive bomber's design issues were resolved, and pilots learned to adapt to its handling difficulties. The Helldiver was faster and carried more ordnance than the SBD Dauntless it replaced, and became an integral part of carrier air groups in the final years of World War II. Approximately 30 different squadrons operated Helldivers from 13 aircraft carriers during World War II.

With the end of World War II, production contracts for thousands of Helldivers were canceled. When production ended in 1945, 7,140 Helldivers had been built. Most were built at the Curtiss plant in Columbus, Ohio. In addition to U.S. Navy variants of the Helldiver, Curtiss built 900 Helldivers as A-25 Shrikes for the U.S. Army Air Forces. The A-25s featured non-folding wings and other equipment changes. By the time the A-25s were ready in 1943, the U.S. Army Air Forces had abandoned the tactic of dive bombing, so most of the A-25s built were given to the U.S. Marine Corps, which used them in non-combat roles. Additional Helldivers were also license-built in Canada by Canadian Car & Foundry and Fairchild Aircraft Ltd. as SBWs and SBFs, respectively.

This 1:72 scale die-cast model of a Curtiss SB2C Helldiver is manufactured by Hobby Master and is part of their 1:72 scale Air Power series of ready-made, die-cast military model aircraft. This model represents an SB2C-4E Helldiver operated by VF-84 off the aircraft carrier *U.S.S. Bunker Hill* in February 1945 during the Tokyo Raids. Similar to other Hobby Master 1:72 scale die-cast models, the Helldiver features a high-quality paint finish, accurate markings, and a display stand.

One of the positive attributes of the model is the large number of interchangeable parts that are included, which allow the Helldiver to be displayed in numerous operating configurations. The model features interchangeable landing gear parts, and the Helldiver can be displayed with its landing gear extended or retracted. The model also features interchangeable cockpit canopies, so they can be displayed closed or open. The model also features opening leading-edge slats and interchangeable parts to display the bomb bay doors opened or closed. Additional parts that add detail to the model include a rear gun mount with the twin machine guns, painted pilot and rear gunner figures for the cockpit, a rotating propeller, a radar pod and a full load of air-to-ground rockets on the underwing rails.

Another excellent feature of the Helldiver is the overall quality of the model's mold. Unlike some earlier die-cast models in this scale, Hobbymaster has made positive efforts to provide improved details on their newer models. The model features detailed photo-etched parts for many smaller pieces, such as the dive flaps, radio aerial, pitot tube, and engine. The model also features excellent recessed panel lines and a high-quality paint finish.

Hobbymaster's Curtiss SB2C Helldiver in 1:72 scale is an excellent model, but it does have a few shortcomings. One of those shortcomings is that the interchangeable parts are small and can be difficult to attach to the model. On this Helldiver, installing the turtle deck for the rear canopy was challenging because the tabs were too large, which resulted in the part breaking. Fortunately, a drop of super glue fixed the issue. Another finicky part of the model is the landing gear. If the gear is not inserted correctly, it can collapse when the model is placed on a table or desk, resulting in damage to the underside of the model. On the model used for this review, the open bomb bay door parts did not fit securely and kept falling off the model.

An unusual aspect of this model is that Hobbymaster attached the perforated dive flaps as separate pieces. These perforated dive flaps are photo-etched parts, and look excellent on the model. The issue is that the upper dive flaps are glued in the extended position. These photo-etched parts are fragile because of the way they are attached to the model. The Helldiver must be handled carefully, so as not to bend or break these flaps.

Hobbymaster's 1:72 scale Curtiss SB2C Helldiver is an excellent model of the last dive bomber ordered by the U.S. Navy and the last significant aircraft built by the Curtiss-Wright Corporation. Hobbymaster has released this model in several different color schemes over the last couple of years, so die-cast model airplane collectors have plenty of choices when they want to add a Helldiver to their collection. The model has excellent detail and a surprisingly large number of interchangeable parts, allowing collectors to display the Helldiver in several operational configurations. The model looks great when displayed in a miniature diorama featuring some aftermarket accessories, such as a flight deck display base and flight deck crew figures. Hobbymaster's terrific Helldiver model is the perfect addition to any collection of die-cast World War II aircraft models. The Helldiver would also make a great gift for anyone interested in World War II aviation or naval aviation history.

Hobbymaster's 1:72 scale Curtiss SB2C-4E Helldiver die-cast model looks excellent in a miniature diorama portraying an aircraft carrier flight deck during World War II. The flight deck display base, chocks, and flight deck crew figurines are repurposed from a Corgi 1:72 scale model that included them.

Hallmark "Legends In Flight" Collection

Produced from 1999 to 2001, these die-cast aircraft models, produced by Hallmark Cards, Inc., were detailed miniature replicas of some of the most famous aircraft in aviation history.

These Grumman F-14A Tomcat models were part of the "Legends In Flight" collection of die-cast model airplanes produced by Hallmark Cards, Inc., from 1999 to 2001. Crafted in 1:118 scale, the models feature several moving parts, including opening and closing swing wings, rolling wheels, and opening cockpit canopies.

This 1:72 scale North American F-86F Sabre model was released as part of the Hallmark "Legends In Flight" collection in 2000. Advertised as die-cast models, most of the aircraft in the "Legends In Flight" collection were made of die-cast and plastic. The small advertisement in the photo was put in the boxes of some Hallmark products to promote the models and encourage people to buy them.

Hallmark Cards, Inc. is a privately held, family-owned American company founded in 1910 by Joyce Hall in Kansas City, Missouri. Often known simply as Hallmark, the company is one of the largest and oldest manufacturers of greeting cards in the United States. Initially, Hallmark began as a postcard business, but expanded to greeting cards in 1912. The company invented modern wrapping paper in 1917 when they ran out of traditional colored tissue paper used to wrap stationery and substituted fancy French envelope lining paper. Hallmark adopted its name in 1928 and began printing it on the back of every card. In 1944, the company adopted its current slogan, "When you care enough to send the very best".

Hallmark has since diversified its product lines to include gift wrap, party goods, Christmas ornaments, toys, and television programming. Hallmark Cards, Inc. also owns or holds ownership stakes in several companies, including Crayola LLC, one of the world's largest producers of crayons, markers, and colored pencils. Hallmark products are sold through its network of 3,700 Gold Crown stores, mass-market retailers such as Walmart and Kohl's, and on its Hallmark.com website. Today, one of Hallmark's most popular product lines is its Keepsake ornament collection, which features new Christmas ornaments each holiday season. These ornaments are highly sought after by collectors, and feature themes such as vehicles, film and television characters, sports athletes, wildlife, and pop culture.

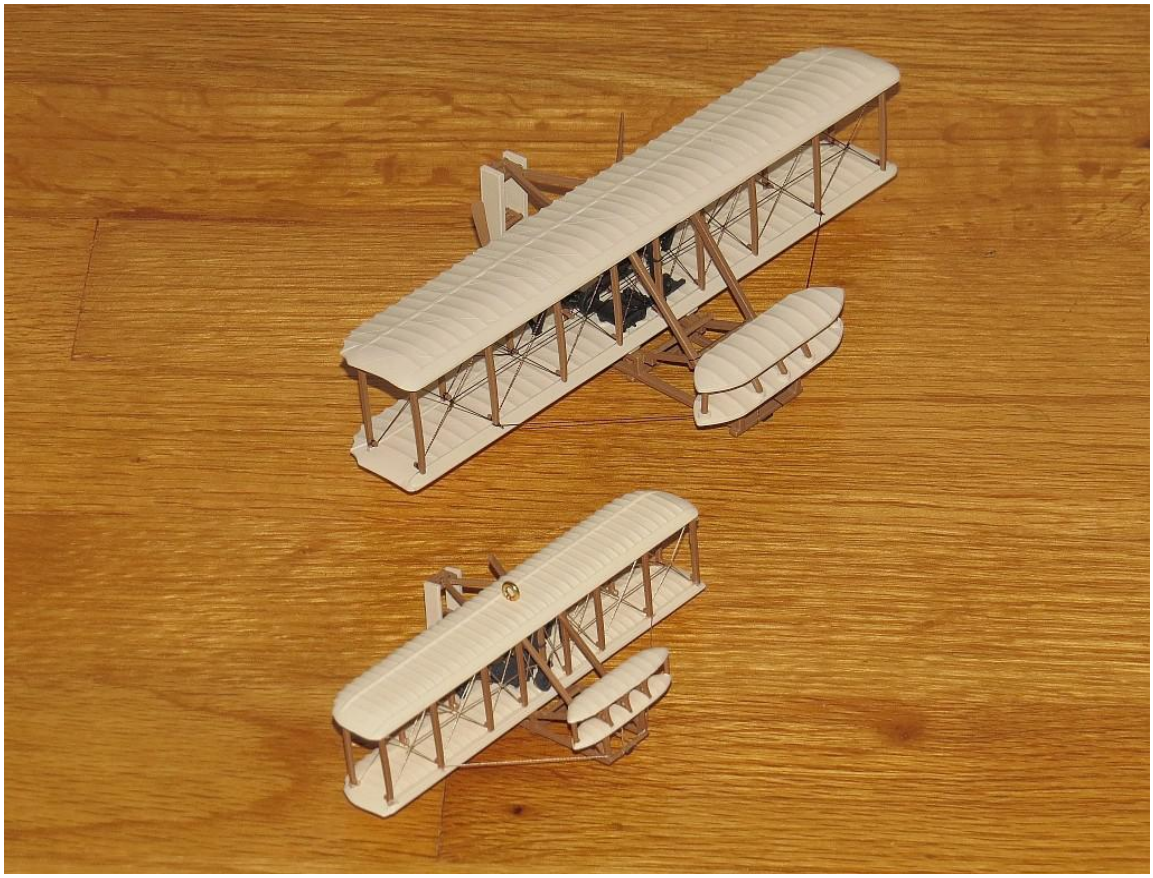
Although well known for its greeting cards, paper products, and gift wrap, Hallmark also produces a variety of collectibles and décor items sold in its Gold Crown stores. These items include mugs, dishware, jewelry, figurines, framed art, and seasonal items. Hallmark's collectible product lines are enhanced by licensors the company holds with companies such as The Hershey Company, General Motors, Ford Motor Company, The Lego Group, Mattel, and Hasbro. The company also holds product license agreements with major sports leagues such as the NBA and NFL, and media companies, such as The Walt Disney Company and Warner Bros.

In 1997, Hallmark added the "Sky's The Limit" series to its Keepsake ornament product line. The "Sky's The Limit" series of ornaments honored aircraft important to aviation history, such as the Wright Flyer and Charles Lindbergh's Ryan NYP "Spirit of St. Louis". The ornament series was an instant success for Hallmark and has proven to be one of the company's most popular, with 2026 the 29th year that a "Sky's The Limit" series airplane ornament is part of the Keepsake product lineup.

Building off the success of the "Sky's The Limit" ornaments, Hallmark announced in late 1998 the launch of the "Legends In Flight" collection. The "Legends In Flight" collection was planned as a series of die-cast aircraft models honoring famous aircraft from aviation history. Larger than the ornaments, these die-cast model aircraft were geared towards adult collectors. The initial models in the series were planned for release in October 1999, in time for the holiday shopping season. Gold Crown stores. Literature from Hallmark promoting the "Legends In Flight" collection showed five models planned for 1999, with two additional models scheduled for release in early 2000. Promotional materials published by Hallmark noted the models would feature moving parts such as rotating propellers, rolling wheels, opening cockpit canopies, and intricate details such as recessed panel lines and wire rigging.

As part of its initial offerings in the "Legends In Flight" collection, Hallmark released five models in October 1999. The five aircraft included the Wright Flyer (1:72 scale) representing the Pioneer Era of Aviation, a Fokker Dr.I Triplane (1:48 scale) and SPAD S.XIII (1:48 scale) representing World War I Aviation, a Curtiss P-40 Warhawk (1:72 scale) representing World War II Aviation, and a Grumman F-14A Tomcat (1:118 scale) representing Modern Military Aviation. Each model came in a sturdy cardboard box and included a collector's card which gave a brief history of the aircraft, as well as a certificate of authenticity. The "Legends In Flight" collection was sold exclusively at Gold Crown retail locations throughout the United States and Canada.

The model releases for the first year of the Hallmark "Legends In Flight" collection included five models. The models represented historic aircraft from the Pioneer Era of Aviation to Modern Military Aviation. The notable model from the first year of the series was the 1:72 scale replica of the Wright Flyer due to its exceptional details, such as textured wings and wire rigging.



Some of the models in the Hallmark "Legends In Flight" collection were larger replicas of aircraft from the "Sky's The Limit" Keepsake ornament series, which debuted in 1997. One of the aircraft for which this was true was the Wright Flyer, which was the first ornament in the "Sky's The Limit" series in 1997, then made as a 1:72 model in the "Legends In Flight" collection in 1999.

The models in the "Legends In Flight" collection received mixed reviews from Hallmark collectors and aviation enthusiasts when they began showing up for sale in Gold Crown stores. Positive attributes of the models were the sturdy boxes they came in, which prevented breakage during shipping and stocking on store shelves, and each model included a card highlighting a brief history of the aircraft modeled. Finally, Hallmark collectors and aviation enthusiasts noted that the "Legends In Flight" collection offered a variety of aircraft from different eras of aviation history, and the models were generally well-made and featured quality craftsmanship.

Unfortunately, the models were also met with some critical reception. One of the major mistakes made by Hallmark with the "Legends In Flight" collection was the decision to use the same-sized box for all the models in the series. Using the same-sized box for each model forced Hallmark to manufacture the models in different scales so the aircraft could fit into the boxes. As a result, the scales across the "Legends In Flight" collection ranged from 1:48 to 1:118 scale. For collectors who only buy one scale of die-cast model aircraft, the mixed scales of the collection were a huge drawback to purchasing the models. Another criticism of the box size and design was that there was no window included to see the model inside, or a picture on the box showing what the model looked like. As a result, many Gold Crown stores had to open one of each model and display them in a case or on a shelf to show customers what the models looked like.

Die-cast model aircraft collectors were also critical of the lack of detail included throughout the models. The models had limited paint detail, and cockpit details, such as pilot figures, seats, and instrument panels, were nonexistent. The lack of detailed cockpits and pilot figures was especially noticeable on the open-cockpit SPAD S.XIII and Fokker Dr.I Triplane World War I fighter aircraft models. Many of the models also featured only basic color schemes and markings, with some of those colors and markings being inaccurate.

Each Hallmark "Legends In Flight" collection model came in a solid cardboard box and was protected by plastic clamshell inserts. The models also came with an information card and a certificate of authenticity from Hallmark. On the P-40's information card, the picture shows the model in a different color scheme. This scheme may have been planned for a repainted version of the model later in the series, or it was changed before production.

Finally, the "Legends In Flight" collection received some unexpected backlash from Hallmark customers who shopped at Gold Crown stores. Hallmark was traditionally known as a family company, with related themes and values in their products. The "Legends In Flight" collection, which featured replicas of military aircraft, upset some of the Hallmark customer base. The high price point of the models from the collection, which ranged from $28 to $42 depending on the model, also deterred some prospective customers from collecting the series.

Of the models released in the "Legends In Flight" collection from 1999, the Wright Flyer, the aircraft that forever linked Orville and Wilbur Wright with aviation history, is one of the highlights. The model, manufactured in 1:72 scale, features excellent details such as a realistic engine and chain sprocket drive system, strut-mounted radiator, and the pilot's steering cradle. The model also features a simple but accurate paint scheme, realistic wings with molded textures, wire rigging, and rotating propellers. The model's small size makes it easy to display on a desk or bookshelf. Even today, over 25 years after this model debuted in the "Legends In Flight" collection, it remains one of the best die-cast Wright Flyer models ever produced.

Another excellent model from the 1999 releases in the "Legends In Flight" collection is the replica of the Curtiss P-40 Warhawk fighter from World War II. Also modeled in 1/72 scale, the P-40 Warhawk is painted to represent an aircraft flown by the American Volunteer Group (AVG) in China. Nicknamed the "Flying Tigers", the AVG pilots helped defend China against Japanese air attacks prior to the United States entering the war in 1941. The highlights of this small model of the P-40 include a colorful "Flying Tigers" paint scheme, a rotating propeller, and rolling wheels. Although the P-40 model is short on detail compared to newer offerings available of the aircraft in 1:72 scale, this P-40 is a great model to introduce someone to die-cast model aircraft collecting and remains available at reasonable prices on the secondary market.

Despite mixed reviews of the collection and slow sales in 1999, Hallmark was committed to continuing the "Legends In Flight" collection and released six models in 2000. Of those six models, five were new aircraft not released the year before, while one was a repaint of a model from the first year. The models released for the year 2000 included a Blériot XI (1:48 scale) from the Pioneer Era of Aviation, a SPAD S.XIII (1:48 scale) representing World War I Aviation, a Lockheed Model 5B Vega (1:72 scale), Curtiss R3C-2 Racer (1:48 scale), and Ryan NYP "Spirit of St. Louis" (1:72 scale) representing the Golden Age of Aviation, a Vought F4U-1D Corsair (1:72 scale) representing World War II Aviation, and a North American F-86F Sabre (1:72 scale) representing Korean War Aviation.

For the year 2000 releases, Hallmark added a new feature to two of the models. The Lockheed Model 5 Vega and the Vought F4U Corsair models came with display stands. These display stands featured a battery-powered motor that drove gears that allowed the propellers on the aircraft to turn when a button was pushed on the stand. The motor in the stands was powered by a single AAA-size battery, which was included in the box.

The model releases for the year 2000 also included the first repainted model of the series. The SPAD S.XIII, released in 1999 in the colors and markings of "Smith IV", the aircraft flown by American pilot Lt. A. Raymond Brooks, was released in the color scheme of the aircraft flown by French ace Georges Guynemer. It is unknown if the plan all along was to release a second color scheme of this model, or if Hallmark had blank molds left over from the first year and decided to use them and release the model in a second color scheme. Collectors of the series noticed that some models in the second year featured improved paint schemes and features, such as detailed engines, propellers, and wings. Other models seemed to feature the same simple paint schemes and lack of detail, especially in the cockpits, that had been a drawback of the models released in the first year of the series.

The year 2000 releases in the Hallmark "Legends In Flight" collection included seven models. Five of these models were new, while one was a repaint from the 1999 releases. The models represented historic aircraft from the Pioneer Era of Aviation to Korean War Aviation. Popular models from this group included Amelia Earhart's bright red Lockheed Model 5B Vega and the Vought F4U-1D Corsair World War II naval fighter.

For aviation enthusiasts who collected the "Legends In Flight" models, the year 2000 releases represented the best year in terms of the models offered. Some of the models released in the collection that year represent the only die-cast replicas of these aircraft available on the market. Other models represent iconic aircraft flown by some of the most important aviation pioneers in American aviation history.

Two of the most popular models in the collection were released in 2000, the Lockheed 5B Vega and the Ryan NYP "Spirit of St. Louis". The Lockheed 5B Vega was released in the color scheme of the bright red Vega owned by Amelia Earhart. Earhart nicknamed this bright red Vega "Her Little Red Bus" and used it to fly two record-breaking flights in 1932. This Vega is now on display in the National Air and Space Museum's flagship location on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. The Ryan NYP "Spirit of St. Louis" is the aircraft flown by Charles Lindbergh when he flew solo across the Atlantic between New York City and Paris in May 1927. Ironically, Lindbergh's "Spirit of St Louis" is also on display in the National Air and Space Museum flagship location on the National Mall in Washington, D.C., in the same gallery where Earhart's Vega is displayed. Hallmark did an excellent job with the replicas of both aircraft; they feature authentic paint schemes and intricate small parts, such as detailed engines, propellers, external flight instruments, and landing gear.

Another highlight of the model releases in the "Legends In Flight" collection for the year 2000 was the stunning replica of the Blériot IX from the Pioneer Era. A French aircraft, the Blériot XI, was designed by Louis Blériot and was the first heavier-than-air aircraft to successfully cross the English Channel in 1909. Hallmark's excellent model of this early airplane was manufactured in 1:48 scale and features realistic wing and fuselage textures, a detailed engine, real wire rigging, a rotating propeller, and rolling wheels. This model was one of the most impressively detailed in the collection, but suffered from poor sales due to the fact that the Blériot XI is a relatively unknown aircraft in the United States.

The 1:48 scale model of the Blériot XI (front) and 1:72 scale model of the Ryan NYP "Spirit of St. Louis" (back) are two of the favorite aircraft in the "Legends In Flight" collection among aviation enthusiasts. Both aircraft feature excellent details and quality workmanship. They also represent truly historic aircraft that to date have rarely been released as die-cast models.

The Lockheed Model 5B Vega (front) and the Vought F4U-1D Corsair (back) are two of the most popular models from the "Legends In Flight" collection. The Vega is popular due to its association with Amelia Earhart, and the Corsair because of its fame as a World War II naval fighter aircraft. Both of these 1:72 scale aircraft came with stands that motorize the propellers.

Finally, the year 2000 model lineup featured one of the two aircraft from the series that are hardest to find on the secondary market. The Vought F4U-1D Corsair, manufactured in 1:72 scale, is highly sought after by Hallmark collectors. The famous naval fighter served with distinction during World War II with the U.S. Marine Corps and U.S. Navy. Corsairs were also used by the Royal Navy and the Royal New Zealand Air Force during the war. Unlike most World War II propeller-driven fighter aircraft, the Corsair also served in the Korean War, primarily as a night fighter and strike aircraft. Some Corsairs served in the air forces and navies of other nations until the late 1960s. The "Legends In Flight" collection Corsair featured folding wings, an unusual feature in such a small scale, as well as rolling wheels and a display stand that motorized the propeller.

Unfortunately, despite interest increasing in the "Legends In Flight" collection and Hallmark producing models with improved detail and paint schemes, sales of the models continued to struggle. The collectible market also began experiencing a decline in sales that would last through most of the early 2000s. Hallmark, concerned about the profitability of the models moving forward, announced in early 2001 that the year would be the last that the "Legends In Flight" collection would be produced.

The 2001 releases in the "Legends In Flight" collection included six aircraft, five of which were new models and two of which were repainted models from previous releases. The 2001 model releases included a Fokker Dr.I Triplane (1:48 scale) representing World War I Aviation, a Gee Bee R-1 Super Sportster (1:48 scale) representing the Golden Age of Aviation, a Lockheed P-38 Lightning (1:72 scale) and North American P-51D Mustang (1:72 scale) representing World War II Aviation, and a Grumman F-14A Tomcat (1:118 scale) representing Modern Military Aviation. Similar to the year 2000 releases, two models from the 2001 releases, the Gee Bee R-1 Super Sportster and the North American P-51D Mustang, featured display stands that motorized the propellers on the models.

The year 2001 releases in the Hallmark "Legends In Flight" collection included five models. Three of these models were new, while two were repaints from the 1999 releases. The models represented historic aircraft from World War I Aviation to Modern Military Aviation. Popular models from this group included the red-and-white Gee Bee R-1 Super Sportster, the Lockheed P-38 Lightning, the North American P-51D Mustang, and the repainted Fokker Dr.I Triplane.

Similar to the 2000 releases, the 2001 releases in the "Legends In Flight" collection featured two previously released models, but in new color schemes. The F-14A Tomcat was released for a second time, this time in a scheme depicting "Blackcat", a Tomcat in a special color scheme that was flown by VX-9, a U.S. Navy test and evaluation squadron. The Fokker Dr.I Triplane was also released for a second time, this time in the striking color scheme of an aircraft flown by Lt. Hans Kirschstein, a pilot who flew with the German squadron Jasta 6 in 1918.

One of the excellent models in the 2001 releases in the "Legends In Flight" collection was the Gee Bee R-1 Super Sportster. Built as a racing aircraft by the Granville Brothers, the Gee Bee R-1 Super Sportster was exceptionally fast but incredibly difficult to fly. Flown by Jimmy Doolittle, a skilled racing pilot, the Gee Bee R-1 won the 1932 Thompson Trophy race. With its colorful paint scheme and streamlined design, the Gee Bee R-1 was one of the most famous racing aircraft of the 1930s. Hallmark's 1:48 scale model captured all the unique features of the Gee Bee's design, as well as its colorful paint scheme and racing markings. The model also featured a detailed engine front and wire rigging. This model is a favorite in the collection among Hallmark collectors and aviation enthusiasts. The Gee Bee R-1 Super Sportster model also makes an excellent display piece next to the 1:48 scale Curtiss R3C-2 Racer model released as part of the collection in 2000. Jimmy Doolittle flew the R3C-2 to victory for the U.S. Army in the 1925 Schneider Trophy race for seaplanes and flying boats.

Another model highly sought after from the "Legends In Flight" collection is the 1:72 scale North American P-51D Mustang released in 2001. Similar to the F4U Corsair model released in 2000, the P-51D Mustang commands a high price on the secondary market. The P-51 Mustang is one of the most famous fighter aircraft of World War II. Introduced in 1943, the P-51 Mustang quickly became one of the most important fighter aircraft fielded by the Allies during the later years of World War II.

Designed as a long-range fighter, the P-51 Mustang's primary role was as a bomber escort. As the war drew to a close and the Allies established air superiority over Europe and Germany, P-51s also flew ground-attack missions, hitting enemy targets of opportunity such as railroads, armored columns, and truck convoys with bombs and air-to-ground rockets. Similar to the F4U Corsair, the P-51 Mustang had a long postwar service career. The Mustang served in the Korean War as a ground-attack aircraft and in smaller air forces as a fighter aircraft into the 1970s.

Hallmark's P-51D Mustang model is decorated in the colorful paint scheme of the P-51 "Big Beautiful Doll". "Big Beautiful Doll" was flown by Lt. Col. John D. Landers during World War II. Landers was an accomplished combat pilot, scoring 14.5 aerial victories and 20 ground victories during the war. Hallmark's model of "Big Beautiful Doll" featured accurate and colorful markings, rolling wheels, and a display stand that motorized the propeller. Because of the real aircraft's well-known history and the model's attractive color scheme, "Big Beautiful Doll" sold out almost immediately at Gold Crown stores when it was released, making it one of the most successful models in the "Legends In Flight" collection in demand and sales.

Another World War II aircraft model featured in the "Legends In Flight" collection in 2001 was a 1:72 scale replica of the Lockheed P-38 Lightning. The P-38 Lightning was initially designed as a long-range, twin-engine escort fighter. Unfortunately, the early variants of the P-38 suffered engine problems at the high altitudes and cold temperatures where the European air war was fought, so the P-38 was never as effective in the bomber escort role as it could have been. Despite the setback, the P-38's long range made it ideal for operations in the Pacific theater, where combat missions often covered long distances. The P-38's twin-engine design also gave it a measure of safety flying long distances over water if one of its engines failed. In the Pacific theater, P-38s operated as long-range fighters and attack aircraft, attacking enemy ground positions and shipping.

Two of the excellent models in the Hallmark "Legends In Flight" collection are the Curtiss R3C-2 (front), released in 2000, and the Gee Bee R-1 Super Sportster (back), released in 2001. Both models are 1:48 scale and feature excellent details, including detailed engines, wire rigging, and authentic color schemes and markings.

Hallmark's Lockheed P-38 Lightning is finished in the colors of "Marge", flown by American ace Richard Bong. Bong was America's top ace during World War II and was credited with shooting down 40 Japanese aircraft during the war. Hallmark's P-38 Lightning model is an excellent small replica of Bong's aircraft. The model features rolling wheels, rotating propellers, and the famous "Marge" photo and stylized name on the nose of the P-38 Lightning.

Finally, the 2001 version of the Fokker Dr.I Triplane in the "Legends In Flight" collection, representing an aircraft from Jasta 6, is an impressive model and a favorite among collectors in the series. Molded in 1:48 scale, the Fokker Dr.I Triplane model is an excellent replica of one of World War I's most famous fighter aircraft. Compared to the first version of the Dr.I Triplane released in 1999, the 2001 version of the model has a much more realistic paint scheme, with excellent detail to the green-streaked camouflage on the fuselage. Other notable highlights of this model are the accurate tire colors, the simulated wooden propeller, and the wing skids mounted on the lower wing, a part found on the Fokker Dr.I Triplane to protect the wingtip fabric in the event of a ground loop when landing in a crosswind. In many respects, this model of the Fokker Dr.I Triplane represents what the "Legends In Flight" collection could have been had Hallmark invested more in incorporating more detail into the molds and painting them in accurate colors and markings.

During the three years that the "Legends In Flight" collection was produced, Hallmark released 17 die-cast models representing 14 different aircraft. The models featured aircraft from all eras of aviation history, providing die-cast model aircraft collectors and aviation enthusiasts with a nice variety of models. Unfortunately, poor sales meant the collection was doomed for discontinuation by Hallmark. Sales of the models in the collection were so poor that many Gold Crown stores still had many of them in stock two to three years after Hallmark discontinued them. Gold Crown stores finally cleared their remaining inventory by heavily discounting it.

The Lockheed P-38 Lightning (front) and North American P-51D Mustang (back) are two of the popular models in the "Legends In Flight" collection from the final year of the series. These famous World War II fighter aircraft were instantly recognizable by aviation enthusiasts and sold well. These models also featured improved paint details compared to earlier models in the series.

As the "Legends In Flight" collection continued, Hallmark introduced some repaints of previously released models. Hallmark issued these repaints of the SPAD S.XIII (front) and Fokker Dr.I Triplane (back) in 2000 and 2001, respectively. These repainted models had more detailed paint schemes than the previous releases. The models also featured more accurate colors for some of the parts, such as the tires and engines.

Poor business decisions by Hallmark were also a reason the collection was a sales failure for the company. The company greatly overestimated interest and expected demand for the models, and manufactured them in production numbers that surpassed customer demand. For example, most of the models had production runs of 8,000 to 25,000 units. By comparison, most models made by the die-cast model aircraft manufacturer Corgi never exceed production runs of 5,000 units. It is rumored that Hallmark lost significant amounts of money in marketing and manufacturing the "Legends In Flight" models. The company also never marketed the models directly to aviation enthusiasts and die-cast model airplane collectors, which may have increased sales. Instead, the company relied on advertising the models in its product catalogs, which were usually only browsed by Hallmark collectors.

Another failure of Hallmark's with the "Legends In Flight" collection was the manufacturing of the models in multiple scales. The different scales confused average customers who were buying the models as gifts, and also caused most die-cast model collectors to pass on purchasing them. The models were also a cross between an expensive toy and a detailed model, and lacked the intricate detail and accurate paint schemes most serious collectors expect from the models they purchase for their collections.

Today, the aircraft models from the Hallmark "Legends In Flight" collection remain available for sale on the secondary market. Although newer die-cast models of aircraft have surpassed the Legends In Flight" collection models in paint quality and intricate details, the Hallmark models serve a purpose. They make excellent choices for people starting a die-cast model airplane collection. The models are well-made, replicate well the aircraft they represent, feature a decent amount of detail, represent a variety of historic aircraft, and are inexpensive on the secondary market. They are the perfect models for a younger aviation enthusiast to display and enjoy on a desk or bookshelf in their bedroom and begin the hobby of collecting die-cast model aircraft.

Ryan NYP "Spirit of St. Louis"

One of the world's best-known aircraft, Charles Lindbergh's Ryan NYP "Spirit of St. Louis", hangs on display inside the National Air and Space Museum's flagship location on the National Mall in Washington, D.C. On May 20-21, 1927, Lindbergh flew this aircraft on the first non-stop transatlantic flight between New York City and Paris, completing the trip in 33 hours and 30 minutes, and becoming a worldwide sensation overnight.

The Ryan NYP "Spirit of St. Louis" is the custom-built, single-engine, high-wing monoplane that Charles Lindbergh flew on the first nonstop transatlantic flight on May 20-21, 1927, from Long Island, New York, to Paris, France. The flight made Lindbergh a worldwide sensation almost overnight, and the "Spirit of St. Louis" one of the world's best-known aircraft. Today, the "Spirit of St. Louis" is on permanent display at the National Air and Space Museum's flagship location on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

In 1922, after a year and a half of studying at the University of Wisconsin, Charles Lindbergh left the university to study aeronautics with the Nebraska Aircraft Corporation. He was a barnstormer until 1924, when he enrolled as a flying cadet in the U.S. Army Air Service. Earning his commission as a reservist, Lindbergh began flying as a civilian airmail pilot, flying the route between St. Louis, Missouri, and Chicago, Illinois.

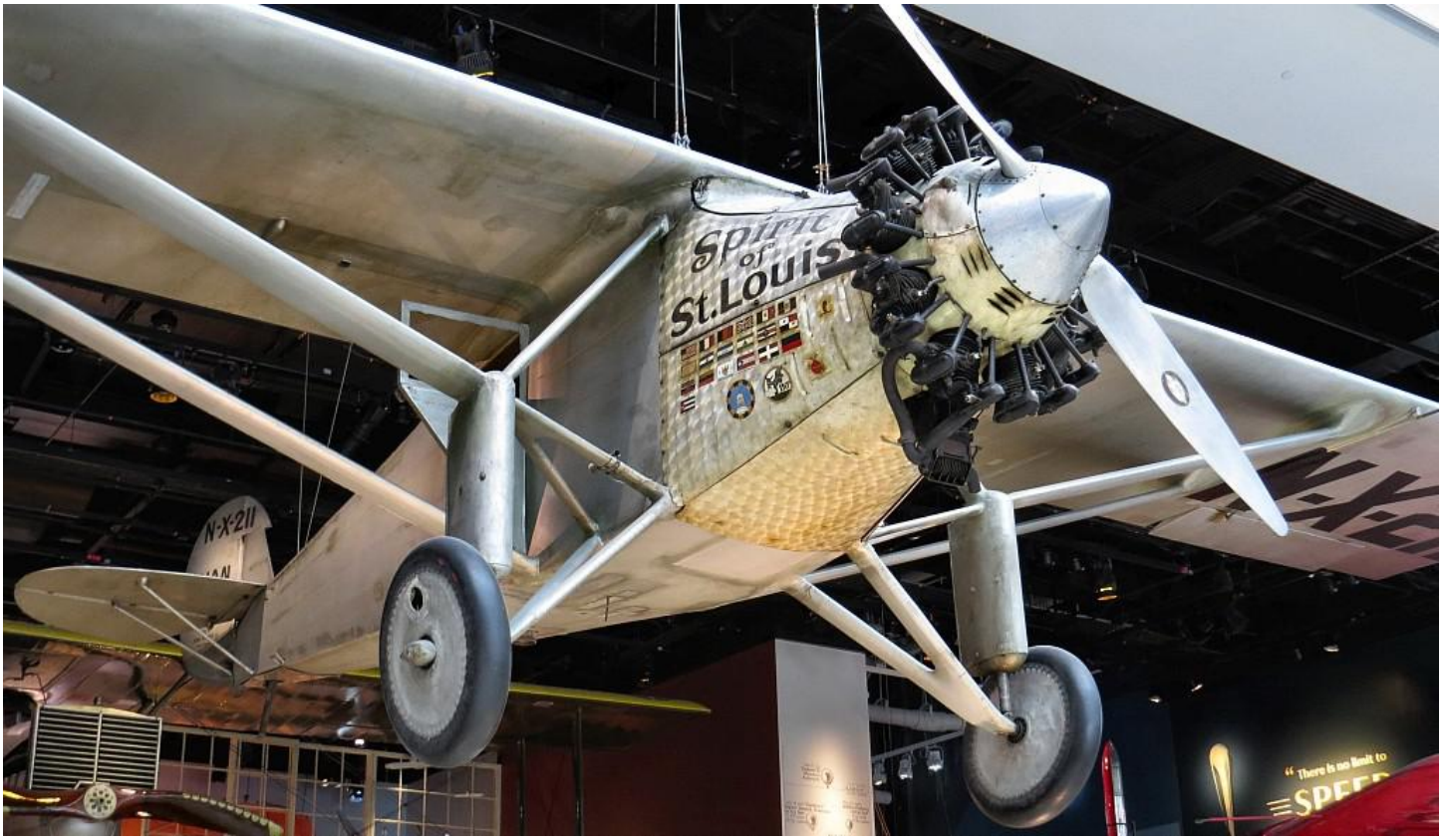
Early in 1927, Lindbergh obtained financial backing from several St. Louis businessmen to compete for the $25,000 prize offered by Raymond Orteig for the first nonstop flight between New York City and Paris. A large portion of the financial backing provided to Lindbergh was for the construction or purchase of an aircraft to make the flight. Lindbergh approached several well-known aircraft manufacturers about building an aircraft for the flight, but none were interested in the project or could build an aircraft to meet Lindbergh's deadline, which was just a few months.

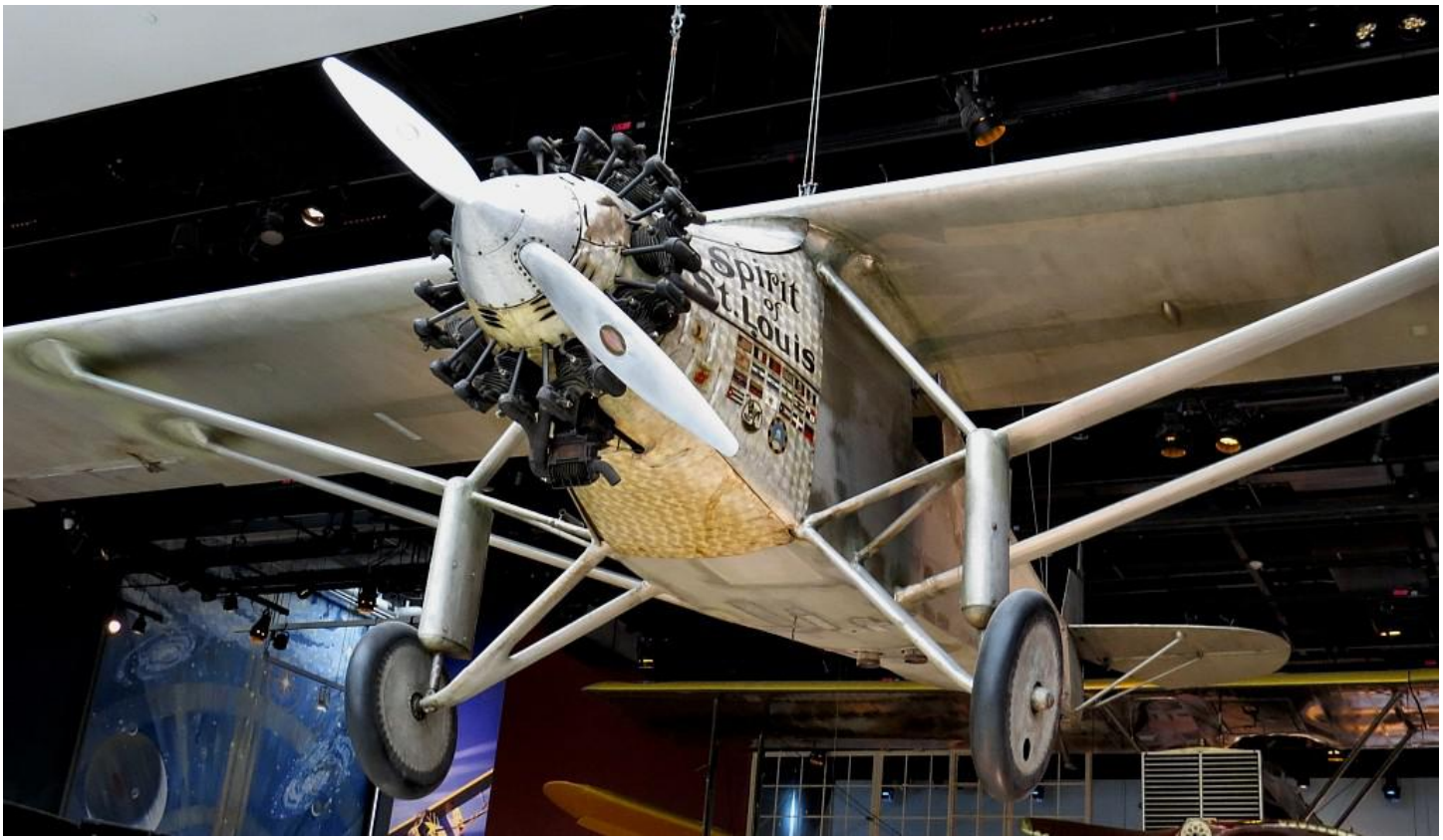
In February 1927, Lindbergh contacted B.F. "Frank" Mahoney and Claude Ryan from Ryan Airlines, which built M-1 and M-2 mailplanes for use on the airmail routes. These aircraft had good safety and reliability records. Lindbergh was also familiar with these aircraft from his experience as an airmail pilot. Lindbergh wired a message to Mahoney asking if Ryan Airlines could build him an airplane capable of flying nonstop from New York City to Paris. Claude Ryan wired back that Ryan Airlines could build Lindbergh an airplane similar to the M-1/M-2 with longer wings and that delivery would take three months. Lindbergh stated that he needed the aircraft in two months, due to competition for the prize.

B.F. Mahoney was away from the factory at the time of Lindbergh's messages, but undaunted, he wired back that he could build Lindbergh the airplane in two months. Shortly after the exchange of messages, Lindbergh toured the Ryan Airlines factory with Mahoney, the company's chief engineer, Donald B. Hall, and sales manager A.J. Edwards. After further discussion, Mahoney offered to build Charles Lindbergh the "Spirit of St. Louis" for $10,580 and promised to meet the two-month construction deadline. Lindbergh contributed $2,000 of his personal savings to the cost of the airplane, the rest coming from his financial backers.

Design of the "Spirit of St. Louis" began with one of the M-2 mailplanes built by Ryan Airlines. Certain modifications had to be made to the basic design due to the nature of the flight. The wingspan was increased by 10 feet (3.05 m), and the structural members of the fuselage and wing cellule were redesigned to accommodate the greater fuel load. Plywood was also fitted along the edge of the wings. The fuselage retained the basic shape of the M-2, except that it was lengthened 2 feet (0.61 m), with the cockpit moved further to the rear and the engine moved forward to maintain balance. This design change allowed the fuel tank to be located at the airplane's center of gravity. The oil tank was positioned between the fuel tank and the engine, acting as a firewall and to prevent the pilot from being crushed between the engine and fuel tank in the event of a crash.

The position of the large fuel tank did not permit the installation of a forward-facing windshield. To see forward, Lindbergh would have to turn slightly to the right or left and look out the side windows. To provide some forward vision, a Ryan Airlines employee installed a periscope, which Lindbergh helped design. The cockpit contained only basic flight instruments, with the main compass mounted on the floor behind Lindbergh's seat. Lindbergh read it using a mirror mounted to the ceiling. The cockpit was so small that Lindbergh could not stretch his legs. The seat was an uncomfortable wicker chair chosen by Lindbergh. The "Spirit of St. Louis" was also not equipped with a radio as a weight-saving measure and because Lindbergh felt they were unreliable.





The "Spirit of St. Louis" was powered by an air-cooled, nine-cylinder, Wright J-5C Whirlwind radial engine producing 225 horsepower. The powerplant was one of the most advanced aero engines of its day and was rated for 9,000 hours of operating time. Unusually for the time, the engine was rated to self-lubricate the valves for up to 40 hours. The engine was built at Wright Aeronautical in Paterson, New Jersey. The 24-year-old engine builder, Tom Rutledge, was disappointed being assigned to build an engine for an unknown aviator. Four days after Lindbergh's historic flight, he received a congratulatory letter from Wright management.

Lindbergh believed the "Spirit of St. Louis" needed to be fuel-efficient to have any chance at making the flight. As a result, the aircraft was one of the most aerodynamic of its time. The landing gear shock absorbers were streamlined, and the wheels covered in doped fabric. The engine cowling was also faired into the fuselage. All of the struts were faired with balsa, then covered with aluminum. The result was that the "Spirit of St. Louis" was 10 miles per hour (16 km/h) faster than a standard M-2 mailplane despite weighing twice as much.

The race to build the airplane in time to compete for the prize meant that some design considerations were made. One of these design considerations was that the tail empennage and wing control surfaces on the "Spirit of St. Louis" were not changed from the standard Ryan M-2 mailplane design. This setup meant that the "Spirit of St. Louis" was a negatively stable design that tended to randomly introduce unanticipated pitch, yaw, and bank elements into its flight characteristics. As a result, Lindbergh needed to make constant small corrections as the "Spirit of St. Louis" was flying. Later, the famous aviator stated that the constant unanticipated movements helped keep him awake during the long flight.

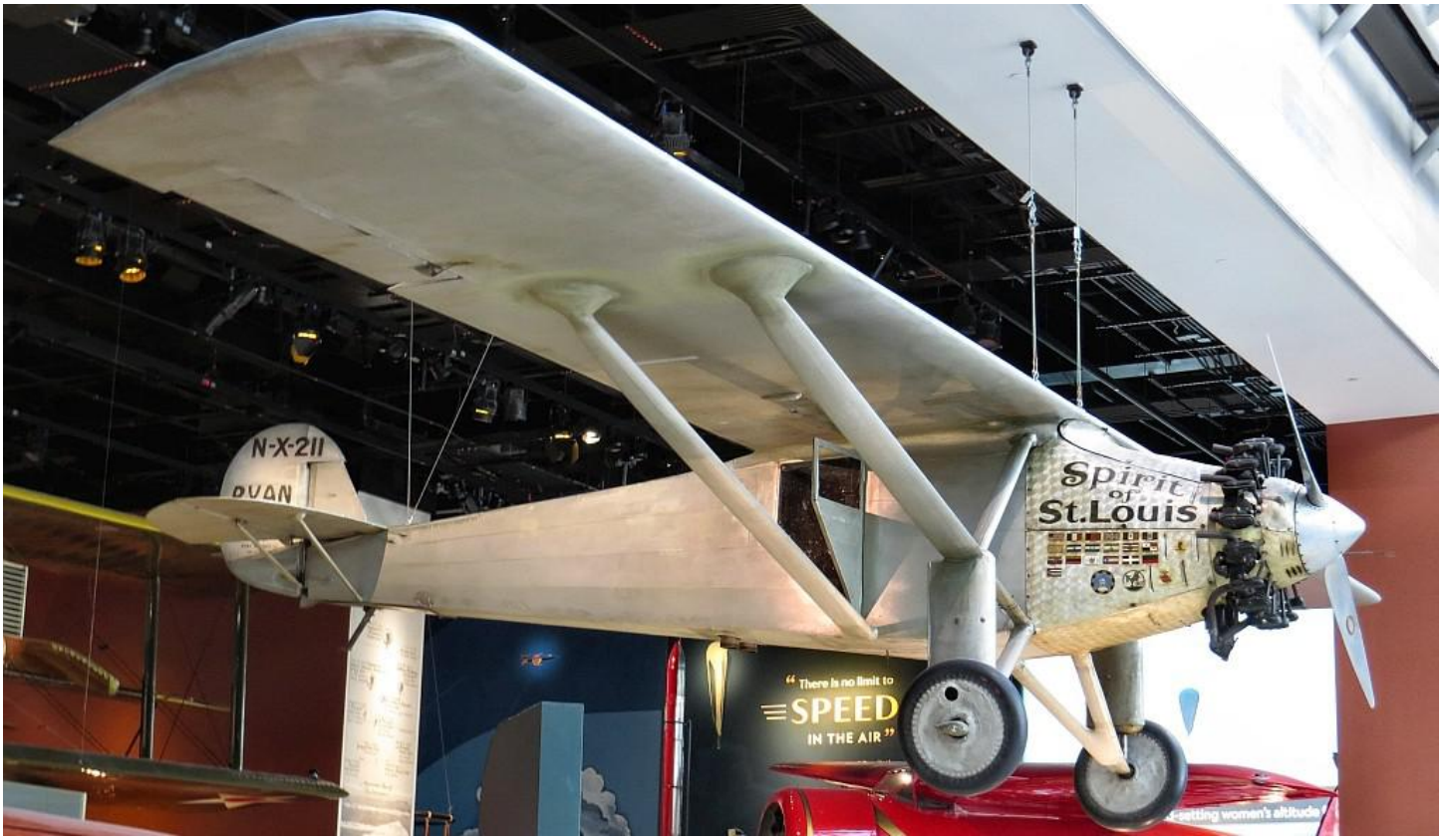
Mahoney and Hall lived up to their commitment, delivering the "Spirit of St. Louis" to Lindbergh in 60 days. The final work done on the aircraft was to paint it silver and add the registration number, N-X-211, painted in black, to the airframe. In his 1927 book *We,* Lindbergh acknowledged the hard work of the Ryan Airlines employees in helping make the historic flight a success.

After taking delivery of the "Spirit of St. Louis", Charles Lindbergh made several test flights, then finally flew the aircraft from San Diego to New York on May 10-12, making only one stop in St. Louis. The flight time of 21 hours and 40 minutes set a new transcontinental record. Upon arrival in New York, it was discovered that the spinner of the "Spirit of St. Louis" was cracked. This spinner, which had a left-facing, Indian-style swastika and the names of all the Ryan Airlines employees painted inside of it as a message of good luck, was replaced with a new one hastily made in New York.

After waiting several days for favorable weather, Lindbergh took off for Paris alone from Roosevelt Field on Long Island, New York, on the morning of May 20, 1927. For the next 33 hours and 30 minutes, Lindbergh fought exhaustion as he flew 3,610 miles (5,810 km) to Paris. He landed safely at Le Bourget Field, where he was greeted by a wildly enthusiastic crowd of over 100,000 people. The "Spirit of St. Louis" had to be moved to a hangar soon after landing and guarded to keep souvenir hunters from destroying the airplane.

Lindbergh and "The Spirit of St Louis" returned home aboard the U.S.S. Memphis on June 11. He received a hero's welcome in both New York City and Washington, D.C. From July 20 to October 23, Lindbergh took the "Spirit of St. Louis" on a tour of the United States. Then on December 13, Lindbergh flew the "Spirit of St. Louis" nonstop from Washington, D.C. to Mexico City. Lindbergh then traveled through Central America, Colombia, Venezuela, and Puerto Rico. Finally, he flew nonstop from Havana back to St. Louis. Beginning in Mexico City, flags of the countries that Lindbergh visited were painted on the cowling of the "Spirit of St. Louis".

On April 30, 1928, the "Spirit of St. Louis" made its final flight. Lindbergh flew the aircraft from St. Louis to Washington, D.C., where he presented the aircraft to the Smithsonian Institution. Today, the "Spirit of St. Louis", the airplane's original cracked propeller spinner, and other memorabilia and artifacts from Lindbergh's famous flight are on display in the *Barron Hilton Pioneers of Flight* gallery in the National Air and Space Museum's National Mall flagship location in Washington, D.C.



Lockheed Model 8 Sirius "Tingmissartoq" (1929)

The Lockheed Model 8 Sirius is a single-engine, propeller-driven, utility monoplane built by Jack Northrop and Gerald Vultee when they were engineers at Lockheed. Lockheed built the Model 8 Sirius at the request of Charles Lindbergh, who wanted a new airplane to replace his "Spirit of St. Louis". Lindbergh required that the new aircraft could fly nonstop across the United States and other long distances to scout new airline routes to China. The Model 8 Sirius was designed in 1929 and delivered to Lindbergh in April 1930. Lindbergh and his wife, Anne Morrow Lindbergh, flew the Sirius throughout the 1930s, scouting new airline routes to Asia, Europe, Africa, and South America. Today, the Lockheed Model 8 Sirius flown by the Lindberghs is on display in the National Air and Space Museum on the National Mall in Washington, D.C.

Lockheed Model 8 Sirius "Tingmissartoq"

Crew: 2 (Pilot, Co-pilot/Radio Operator)

Length: 27 ft 1 in (8.26 m)

Wingspan: 42 ft 9.25 in (13.037 m)

Height: 9 ft 3 in (2.82 m)

Wing Area: 294.1 sq ft (27.32 m^2)

Powerplant: Pratt & Whitney Wasp R-1340 air-cooled radial engine (x 1)

Fuel Capacity: 416 US Gal (1,570 L)

Range: 847 nmi (975 mi) (1,569 km)

Cruise Speed: 150 mph (240km/h; 130 kn)

Maximum Speed: 185 mph (298 km/h; 161 kn)

Empty/Gross Weights: 4,289 lb/7,099 lb (1,945 kg/3,220 kg)

Service Ceiling: 26,100 ft (8,000 m)

A Vacation Airplane For The Lindberghs

Engine

The Lockheed Model 8 Sirius, flown by Charles and Anne Morrow Lindbergh, was fitted with several different engines during its service life. Initially, the Sirius was equipped with a 450-horsepower Pratt & Whitney Wasp R-1340 radial engine. For the Lindberghs 1931 flight to China and the Far East, this engine was replaced with a 680-horsepower Wright Cyclone engine. For the Lindberghs 1933 flight from Newfoundland to Europe via Greenland, a 710-horsepower Wright Cyclone SR1820-F2 engine was installed on the Sirius. This more powerful engine gave the Sirius improved performance, especially with the large floats installed on the aircraft.

Cockpit

The Lockheed Model 8 Sirius had a spacious cockpit with tandem seating for a pilot and a co-pilot/ radio operator. The Sirius was initially built with open cockpits, but enclosed cockpits were added later for comfort and protection from the elements during long flights. The cockpit was large enough that Charles and Anne Morrow Lindbergh could wear parachutes in case they needed to bail out in an emergency. The cockpit featured modern instruments, including an earth inductor compass, an artificial horizon, and a radio. An area between the two cockpits included a storage space for maps.

Fuselage

The Lockheed Model 8 Sirius had a large fuselage, a design feature insisted on by Charles Lindbergh due to all the supplies he and his wife would have to carry on their long-distance flights. All available space in the fuselage was used to store supplies or carry fuel. The fuselage had two storage spaces for supplies, one in front of the cockpit and one behind it. The rear storage space contained emergency supplies, including a rubber boat, oars, a mast, and a sail in case the Lindberghs made a landing in a remote location and needed a way to shore. The larger, forward storage space was used to carry other supplies, such as clothing, extra food, and camping equipment. The front of the fuselage also included space for a fuel tank and the engine's oil tank.

Nickname

The Lindberghs Lockheed Model 8 Sirius was nicknamed "Tingmissartoq" during their second long-distance trip by local Inuits when the couple stopped in Angmagssalik, Greenland. "Tingmissartoq" means "one who flies like a bird" in Inuit languages.

Landing Gear

The Lockheed Model 8 Sirius was originally fitted with conventional fixed landing gear in streamlined spats. When the Lindberghs took their trip to Asia in 1931, the aircraft was retrofitted with floats manufactured by Edo, as most of the journey would take place over the Pacific, and large bodies of water for landing were much more plentiful along the route than land runways. These floats also doubled as fuel tanks, extending the aircraft's range.

Historic Flights

Charles and Anne Morrow Lindbergh flew their Lockheed Model 8 Sirius on two long-distance "vacation" flights. In 1931, the couple flew to China and the Far East via Canada, Alaska, Japan, and Siberia. Anne Morrow Lindbergh chronicled the experiences of this flight in her book *North to the Orient*. In 1933, the couple flew to Europe via Canada and Greenland to scout new airline routes for Pan-Am. They also flew to the major cities of Europe, as far east as Moscow, down to Africa, then across the South Atlantic to South America, before returning to the United States through the Caribbean. During this trip, the Lindberghs visited four continents and 21 countries, traveling over 30,000 miles(48,280 km).

Wings

The wings on the Lindberghs Lockheed Model 8 Sirius were painted bright orange for high visibility if the aircraft went down over water or a remote area, and the couple needed to be found and rescued. The wings featured large fuel tanks, which allowed the Sirius to fly long distances. During the trip to China and the Far East in 1931, one of the wings clipped a cable as the aircraft was being lowered into the Yangtze River from the deck of the British aircraft carrier *H.M.S. Hermes*. The Sirius then fell into the river, capsizing and sustaining severe damage. The damage ended the China and Far East trip for Charles and Anne Morrow Lindbergh, as the Sirius had to be shipped back to Lockheed for repairs.

The U.S. Army's Rare Gulfstream Aerospace C-20E

The Gulfstream Aerospace C-20E operated by the U.S. Army makes a rare visit to the Lehigh Valley International Airport in Allentown, Pennsylvania. This C-20E was delivered to the U.S. Army in 1987 and operated in the Operational Support Airlift (OSA) role until its retirement in 2014. The C-20E was recently refurbished, fitted with specialized electronic pods, and returned to service to support the research and testing of intelligence, surveillance, and communications equipment developed by the DEVCOM C5ISR Center.

The Gulfstream Aerospace C-20E is a military variant of the Gulfstream III (G-III) twin-engine corporate aircraft designed by Gulfstream Aerospace and operated by the U.S. Army. The U.S. military designates two different Gulfstream aircraft as the C-20. The C-20 A/B/C/D/E are based on the Gulfstream III and have largely been retired, while the C-20 F/G/H/J are based on the upgraded Gulfstream IV (G-IV). These aircraft were built and delivered in the early 1990s and remain in service. These newer C-20 variants remain in service in Operational Support Airlift (OSA) and Special Air Mission (SAM) roles with the U.S. Air Force, Navy, Army, and Marine Corps.

The Gulfstream III was designed as an improved variant of the Grumman Gulfstream II corporate aircraft. Design work started with an effort to integrate a completely new wing employing NASA supercritical airfoils and winglets. Studies considering weight, drag, fuel volume, cost, and performance indicated that most of the benefits of a new wing could be achieved through modifications to the existing wing design. As a result, the Gulfstream III retained the Gulfstream II's original wing box and structure. The redesigned wing featured a modified leading edge, a wingspan lengthened by six feet (1.8 m), and winglets measuring five feet (1.5m). Extended by two feet (61 cm) aft of the main door, the redesigned fuselage featured a new radar dome and curved cockpit windshield. The autopilot, flight instruments, and engine instruments were all updated from the Gulfstream II. The Gulfstream III entered service in 1980. As a corporate aircraft, the Gulfstream III featured seating for 19 passengers. Powered by two Rolls-Royce Spey turbofan engines, the Gulfstream III can cruise at 509 miles per hour (819 km/h), has a range of 3,650 nautical miles (4,200 mi, 6760 km), and can fly at a ceiling of 45,000 feet (14,000 m).

This C-20E was delivered in 1987 and was one of two C-20s operated by the U.S. Army in the Special Air Mission role. The C-20E featured a stretched fuselage and redesigned wing and was the last Gulfstream III built by Gulfstream Aerospace. Retired in 2014 and sent to the boneyard at the Davis-Monthan Air Force Base in Arizona for long-term storage, the C-20E was recently resurrected, refurbished, fitted with specialized electronic pods, and now operated by the U.S. Army's DEVCOM C5ISR Center. The DEVCOM C5ISR Center is the U.S. Army's primary technology and research integration center and has facilities at the Aberdeen Proving Ground in Maryland and Fort Belvoir in Virginia. The DEVCOM C5ISR Center uses the C-20E to support the research and testing of advanced intelligence, surveillance, and communications equipment.

Distelfink Airlines

Est. 2013

ABOUT DISTELFINK AIRLINES

My late grandfather, John Brey, and I at the 2007 Geneseo Airshow. This was one of the few times that we had our photo taken together at an airshow.

The story of "Distelfink Airlines" begins in the early 1990s when my late grandfather, John Brey, began building and flying remote control model aircraft in his retirement. He enjoyed the hobby and quickly amassed a large fleet of model airplanes, which filled his garage and woodworking shop. He gave a name to his fleet of aircraft, "Distelfink Airlines". For the symbol of his fleet, he chose the Pennsylvania Dutch/German hex sign featuring the "Distelfink", a colorful bird that is a symbol of good luck and happiness. This hex sign and symbol is very common on Pennsylvania Dutch/German barns in Eastern Pennsylvania and is an important part of our local culture. He had custom "Distelfink" decals made for all his airplanes and had T-shirts made with "Distelfink Airlines" printed on them. It wasn't long before curious people began asking about "Distelfink Airlines" and what it was. My grandfather told anyone who asked that "Distelfink Airlines" was a new startup airline that was going to be offering service between the Lehigh Valley International Airport and Philadelphia International Airport with more routes to come soon.

In addition to flying his model airplanes, my grandfather enjoyed attending airshows and we traveled to airshows together for almost 20 years. He also enjoyed local aviation history and was particularly fascinated by the history of the Consolidated TBY Sea Wolf, a torpedo bomber that was built locally in Allentown, Pennsylvania during World War II. He also remembered when famous aviator Amelia Earhart visited the Lehigh Valley in the early 1930s to raise funds for her failed attempt to become the first woman to fly around the world.

Established in 2013 in memory of my grandfather, "Distelfink Airlines" is an online aviation newsletter that carries on a tradition of sharing a love for aviation that my grandfather shared with me. This newsletter features photographs and writings on a variety of aviation topics. The logo that was chosen for "Distelfink Airlines" is the hex sign that my grandfather chose for his fleet of remote control model aircraft many years ago. This proud symbol of local Pennsylvania Dutch/German culture is joined by a pair of Consolidated TBY Sea Wolf torpedo bombers, the aircraft that was built locally in Allentown during World War II and is such an important part of our local aviation history. Thank you for reading "Distelfink Airlines" and sharing in the passion for aviation that my grandfather shared with me.

"Distelfink Airlines" is an online newsletter featuring the aviation photography and writings of Corey J. Beitler. Contributions from guest photographers and writers are sometimes featured and are used only with prior permission. Public domain and/or copyright free images are utilized for some articles. All text and images are copyright to the original owners and may not be reproduced or reused without permission.