

Soaring into Los Angeles:  
The 1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Meet

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For ten days in January 1910, an estimated 226,000 spectators converged on Dominguez Field in Los Angeles to witness the United States inaugural aviation meet.<sup>1</sup> Over the course of the ten days, the public and the world observed brand-new technology and watched leading aviators perform unimaginable feats at the 1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Meet. Following the success of the world's first aviation meet in Reims, France in 1909, Los Angeles' boosters sought to bring such excitement to the Southland promoting aviation and Los Angeles in kind. Complete with a course of a mile and a half in length, the 1910 event promised to deliver to Los Angeles multiple firsts in aviation. Climbing into the heavens above Los Angeles, pilots Glenn Curtiss, Louis Paulhan and Roy Knabenshue appealed to the imagination.<sup>2</sup> The daring Frenchman, Paulhan, unexpectedly took to the sky amidst the performance of two dirigible balloons. Emerging from a gully, he circled the grandstands, shot out into the distance and proceeded to land his plane center field.<sup>3</sup> Paulhan later demonstrated precise control maneuvering his plane only a few feet above the heads of spectators as he continually ascended and descended. Landing a mere 100 feet outside of the tent assigned to house his plane, the spectacle came to an end as, "men shouted themselves hoarse, while women applauded and waved handkerchiefs."<sup>4</sup> Elated by the fervor he created, Paulhan then pranced gayly to his tent. Not to be outdone, Knabenshue, zipping through the sky, approached the main stage area unaware of the latent impact that the proceeding would affect. Above the field, "with an officer of the U.S. Signal Corps aboard, he maneuvered over the aviation field much as it might be worthwhile to do in an actual theater of war."<sup>5</sup> With targets demarcated below on the field, Knabenshue

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<sup>1</sup> Mario Congreve, "1910 Los Angeles International Air Meet Documentary," 1910 Air Meet, <http://www.1910airmeet.com> (Jan 26, 2020).

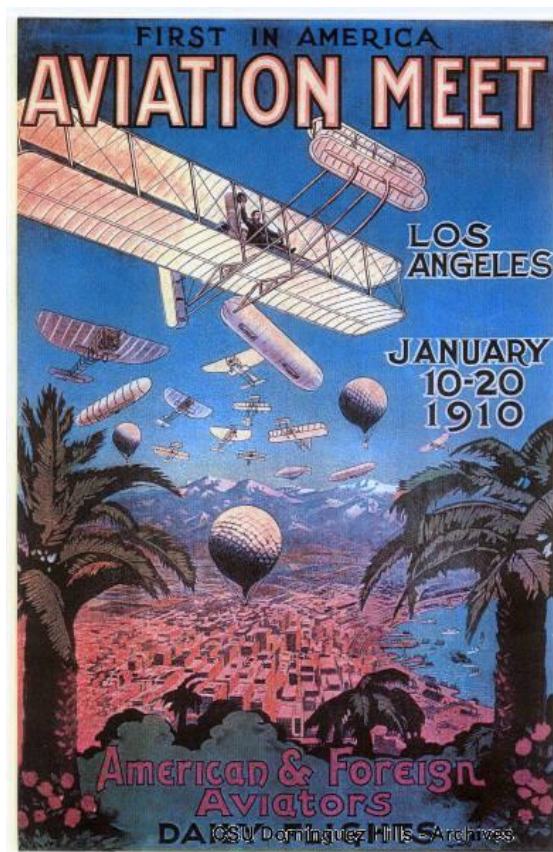
<sup>2</sup> "Air Conquers All at Los Angeles: Features of the Meet in which Records were Established," *The New York Times*, Jan 23, 1910, 1.

<sup>3</sup> "Frenchman Arouses Enthusiasm of Crowd by Graceful Flights." *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan 11, 1910.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> "Air Conquers All," 1.

proceeded to drop sandbags down below. Knabenshue's demonstration showcased to the world the possibilities for the airplane in a military capacity.



*Large color poster of the 1910 Air Meet. Courtesy of CSUDH<sup>6</sup>*

With each day, the 1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Meet brought new records set, technologies unveiled and daring displays of bravery and danger. For instance, Pilot Charles Willard, in an attempt to complete the official sky course, experienced complete motor failure in his Curtiss No. 1 airplane forcing him to land prematurely. Despite the mechanical trouble, Willard had managed to fly for a full minute and twenty-three seconds setting a new record for

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<sup>6</sup> *Large color poster*, 1910, Photograph, laam\_85, 1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Meet Research Collection, California State University, Dominguez Hills Gerth Archives and Special Collections.

longest flight in an airplane.<sup>7</sup> In another record attempt, famed American pilot Glenn Curtiss took to the sky in an effort to best previous records set in Reims, France. Rising to a height of twenty feet in 500 yards of flight, Curtiss's propeller broke forcing him to stop his engine. As crowds looked on with fear, Curtiss "sailed gracefully to the ground when the propeller ceased to revolve."<sup>8</sup> Such daring heroics and displays of apt control over these early airplanes delighted the imagination converting the audience into believers in the possibility of flight. As word spread of the event, those associated with the 1910 Los Angeles International Air Meet garnered a sense of celebrity as their daring feats and brilliant ingenuity built upon earlier displays of aviation to propel flight through its infancy and into something beyond mere spectacle.

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1. <sup>7</sup> "Frenchman Arouses Enthusiasm of Crowd by Graceful Flights." *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan 11, 1910,

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

**Introduction:**

The 1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Meet, inaugurated Los Angeles's inextricable link with the budding aviation industry. Focusing on key historical moments and the art of advertising used to sell the then fledgling idea of flight to the public, this project posits that those pioneering aviators who matured following the 1910 Air Meet, not only helped to create the aviation industry, but also inspired the future of flight by presenting aviation to the Los Angeles public. This thesis tells the history of the airplane during its crucial formative years detailing the story of Los Angeles' boosterism and the role said boosters played in the ultimate stabilization of the airplane into a functional, reliable, and lucrative technology and industry.

Through an in-depth analysis of aviation's crucial formative years, the thesis looks at how aviation came into contact with the city of Los Angeles and its boosters. Following the story of those early pilots present at Dominguez Hills who saw the airplane as a tool for sport and those boosters who took the airplanes interpretive flexibility in other directions, Los Angeles' unique blend of capital, media, celebrity, and space will be shown to have critically lent itself to supporting aviation's growth. Links to other industries will also be explored critically asking how aviation both differed and benefited from the region's oil and other industries. LA's boosters helped to manufacture the idea of aviation both funding and promoting airplanes, while early aviators or more simply put pilots, utilized prize money and sought out boosters to fund projects aiding the expansion of aviation into the consciousness of Los Angeles' identity both defining and selling the merits of the airplane through spectacle.

Focusing on the pilots who utilized booster's funds and competitions to fuel their pursuit of air records and airplane projects, the thesis engages with the use of technological spectacle as a tool to promote aviation and growth in Los Angeles to answer several crucial questions. By

using a range of textual and visual sources this paper asks: What made LA the location of the 1910 meet? Who were the event's boosters and what role did they play? Who were the aviators who participated in the event? What was the public's reception of aviation in 1910? and lastly, where did different groups view the future of aviation to be? The answers to these questions include, but are not limited to, analysis of text, film, ephemera and photography. I intend to answer who these pilots and boosters were, why they came to and were present in Los Angeles respectively, and how they laid the foundation for the future of aviation as they helped to build and promote what we now know as the aviation industry in the city of Los Angeles.

The research presented in this project adds to the rich collection of historical analysis and recording that exists on the subject of flight. Extensive archival research has and continues to be done on the 1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Meet at California State University, Dominguez Hills (CSDH) with a documentary on the event in the works.<sup>9</sup> This thesis utilizes CSDH's extensive collection to draw historical conclusions as to the impact of the 1910 meet. In addition, the research conducted for this thesis expands upon the work of Peter Westwick, whose book *Blue Sky Metropolis: The Aerospace Century in Southern California* brings together much of the history of aviation in Southern California to explore and trace the link that exists in Southern California beginning with the 1910 Air Meet on through to Space X's current operation in the city of Hawthorne.<sup>10</sup> A marked difference between Westwick's project and this thesis emerges in the approach and scope of the research project as this thesis hones in on Los Angeles and the 1910 meet specifically seeking to explore in detail the epicenter of the connective history that inextricably links Los Angeles to the aviation industry.

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<sup>9</sup> "1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Research Collection." CSUDH Gerth Archives and Special Collections. <https://cdm16855.contentdm.oclc.org/digital/collection/p16855coll1/id/1139/rec/8> (Jan 26, 2020).

<sup>10</sup> *Blue Sky Metropolis Wings: Aviation Takes Flight in Early Los Angeles*. Peter Jones. Los Angeles: PBS, 2019.

The larger significance of my proposed project is to engage with how an idea, industry, and culture can be manufactured through boosterism and sold to the public. In Los Angeles, aviation did not have a long-established historical legacy as did agriculture. At the turn of the century, LA boasted citrus groves and beautiful weather. Additionally, through the late 19th century, LA sought to remedy its geographic isolation from the rest of the nation connecting the Southland via railroad lines as boosters funded multiple efforts to grow Los Angeles.<sup>11</sup> Rooted in these civically minded efforts, Los Angeles' boosters and public sought to host the 1910 International Air Meet. This decision helped to make Los Angeles a center of U.S. aviation as a hub for innovation and manufacturing, as well as propelled efforts to shape LA into a sprawling metropolis. Consequences of the impact of Los Angeles based aviation, emerge in the narrative of the public's embrace of the culture of aviation. This is a culture that is based on technological progress, spectacle, speed and suggests humanity's limitless possibilities. What will be shown to have occurred is the onset of a new chapter for Los Angeles. This chapter will be shown to be characterized as a period of optimistic hope and promise both inspired and informed by aviation.

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<sup>11</sup> William A Bullough; Mary Ann Irwin; Richard J Ors; Richard B Rice, *The Elusive Eden: A New History of California, Fourth Edition*. Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press Inc, 2012, 298.



### **Los Angeles circa 1910:**

At the turn of the 20th century, Los Angeles was in the midst of massive and rapid growth as the fledgling metropolis sought to carve out its own distinct identity separate from other west coast centers, namely San Francisco. At the time, “cultural development remained more imitative than innovative,” prompting those in Los Angeles to seek out and develop a distinct cultural identity.<sup>12</sup> Unlike in San Francisco, large scale agribusiness and a growing oil and burgeoning film industry made up the identity of Los Angeles. With mile after mile of orchards and films dissemination of LA’s superb climate, the region quickly garnered a utopian reputation. Capitalizing on LA’s Spanish heritage in an attempt to increase tourism, “boosters organized annual celebrations, including the Ramona Pageant in Hemet, The Old Spanish Days Fiesta in Santa Barbara, and the Ride of Los Rancheros Visitadores (Visiting Ranchers) through Ventura.”<sup>13</sup> By 1909, LA was keen to introduce larger scale events that spoke toward the city’s future rather than past. One-way Los Angeles accomplished this task stemmed from establishing a regional identity through aviation. Those aviators, mostly men and few pioneering women, who came to LA following the 1910 meet established Los Angeles as home to a bustling aviation industry. These early aviators soaked up the utopian thought present in LA to dream of a world connected through the sky prompting them to realize their visions. From the early 20th century, the LA basin quickly grew into the foremost region for aviation development as a conscious awareness of aviation took root and the subsequent aviation era took flight. Not only shaping airplanes, the aviation industry shaped the economy of the LA basin as well as fueled the growth of Los Angeles into the sprawling metropolis we now know today. Contributing to the region’s economy, labor, urban development, education and social zeitgeist, the aviation industry’s

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<sup>12</sup> *Elusive Eden*, 343.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

successful integration into Southern California resulted from the unique combination of cultural interest in air travel, local boosterism, fair weather, and the unique makeup of Los Angeles' diverse populous ranging from celebrity to craftspeople. Despite early enthusiasm for aeronautic innovation, the early days of aviation faced numerous obstacles. For the pilots, aviation functioned as an unstable industry as funding, supplies, safety concerns and government policies and regulations continuously fluctuated. Inspired by those who dreamed of reaching for the stars, Los Angeles' booming aviation industry rose to prominence in part a result of early pilots as these early aviators helped write the aviation industry into existence, while at the same time inadvertently creating Los Angeles' largest economic industry.

### **Flight takes to Los Angeles:**

Before the grand spectacle that would become the United States inaugural air meet could commence, immense funding and support for such an endeavor had to first be secured and established. In Los Angeles, there was a deep-rooted environment of aviators and businessmen that fostered interest in aviation. Thus, “the 1910 air meet did not generate interest in aviation out of thin air, so to speak.”<sup>14</sup> Aeronautics had existed for quite some time before the turn of the 20th century, namely in the form of dirigibles. These lighter than air machines were thought to be the future of flight. Moreover, “balloons and dirigibles had a long history in Southern California.”<sup>15</sup> Notably, millionaire Thaddeus Lowe, who amassed his fortune opening several ice-making plants and founding Citizen’s Bank of Los Angeles, moved to Pasadena in 1887 after he “led the Union Army Balloon Corps in the Civil War.”<sup>16</sup> Lowe had been attempting to successfully complete a transatlantic balloon flight when the Civil War broke out. Giving up on these attempts, Lowe was appointed Chief Aeronaut of the Union Army Balloon Corps where Lowe’s knowledge of balloons, hydrogen gas and skill in producing said gas made him a leading American balloonist. Lowe’s move to Pasadena brought a conscious awareness of flight to the Los Angeles area. Following Lowe’s move, the aforementioned aviator “Roy Knabenshue then made Pasadena a center for balloon and dirigible flights after the turn of the century,” and became a key supporter behind the 1910 air meet.<sup>17</sup> However, these factors alone were not enough to bring the meet to Los Angeles. Rather, a multiplicity of factors needed to combine in order to build sufficient interest in such an event so as to not only attract pilots and a large paying crowd, but also garner the support of LA’s boosters.

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<sup>14</sup> Peter J. Westwick, *Blue Sky Metropolis: The Aerospace Century in Southern California*. University of California Press and the Huntington Library, 2012, 16.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Westwick, *Blue Sky Metropolis*, 16.



*Early exhibition flying at Reims, France. Smithsonian Institute<sup>18</sup>*

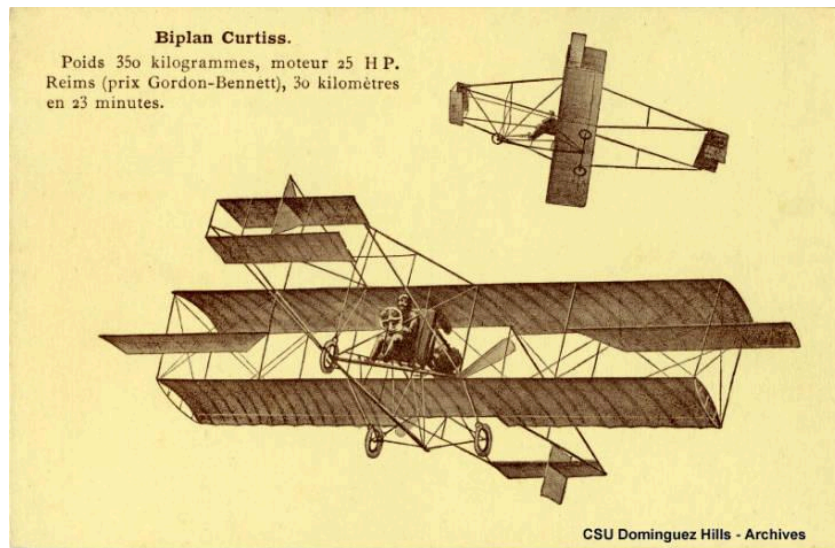
In 1909 the world's first aviation meet took place in Reims, France. This was just six years after Orville and Wilbur Wright made history by piloting the first powered airplane 20 feet above a beach in North Carolina. Word of the historic flight spread slowly. To those that heard word of the accomplishment, “airplane flight was miraculous, inhuman, occult, or more commonly a miracle.”<sup>19</sup> This “miracle” resonated with the European aviation scene as the Wrights embarked upon a tour through Europe as the newly planned Reims meet grew closer. Reims was meant to be the first of yearly international aviation meets. The event set the precedent for what an aviation meet would be. In addition to monetary prizes, the winning aviator would be allowed to determine the location of the next event. Such an opportunity opened up the possibility for a non-French event to occur. At the Reims event, American Pilot Glenn Curtiss represented the United States in a Curtiss No. 2 aircraft dubbed the Reims Racer.

<sup>18</sup> *Early Exhibition flying at Reims*, 1909, Photograph, Smithsonian Institute, <https://airandspace.si.edu/multimedia-gallery/5843hjpg>.

<sup>19</sup> Joseph J. Corn, *The Winged Gospel*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1983. 4.

Curtiss competed and won the speed race piloting his biplane to a staggering 80 km/h.<sup>20</sup>

Following the 1909 Reims meet, the question was not will there be another meet, but rather where will the next spectacle of flight occur. Victory at Reims granted Curtiss the right to select the location of the following air meet. This decision combined with the desires of American pilots, such as Knabenshue, and aviation boosters to not only realize the 1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Meet, but also helped influence the course of aviation.



*Postcard of Biplane Curtiss from 1910 Air Meet. CSUDH<sup>21</sup>*

<sup>20</sup> Congreve, "1910 Air Meet Documentary."

<sup>21</sup> *Postcard of Biplane*, 1909-1910, Postcard, laam\_76, 1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Meet Research Collection, California State University, Dominguez Hills Gerth Archives and Special Collections.

## The Boosters

In Los Angeles, a network of untapped boosters existed that was primed for the spectacular awe and wonder that witnessing flight afforded. These boosters and the boosterism that they practiced emerged as the act of promoting ("boosting") the city of Los Angeles, with the goal of improving public perception of the city and attracting both tourists and migrants alike. With America's westward expansion, boosterism became part of city development as civic leaders and owners of real estate made promises of growth, with the hope of attracting residents and inflating land prices. LA's boosters aimed to modernize LA in turn promoting increased migration and tourism. Previous booster events centered around the city's past. However, with modern large-scale projects in the works, a desire to look to the future emerged. To boosters, few spectacles were more forward thinking than aviation.

With the prospect of an air meet floating, it was up to boosters and aviation enthusiasts to raise funds for the second international air meet. Roy Knabenshue knew how daunting a task this would be and contacted Dick Ferris, a Los Angeles athletic promoter and balloon enthusiast. Ferris set out to gain the support of the local business community. Critically, Dick Ferris "got support from Harry Chandler's *Los Angeles Times* and William Randolph Hearst's *Los Angeles Examiner*, financial backing from the Los Angeles Merchants and Manufacturers association, and a \$50,000 pledge from Henry H. Huntington."<sup>22</sup> Ferris knew how to sell walking into the *Examiner* office introducing himself as the representative of Roy Knabenshue among other St. Louis aviators. The basis of Ferris's pitch sought to sell the idea of an air meet to the business class on tourism. Such an event would bring all sorts of visitors to LA. In addition, the meet would function as a proving ground for various designs and ideas to come into contact and draw off one another. At the time Los Angeles was looking for stimulus. This needed to be something

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<sup>22</sup>Westwick, *Blue Sky Metropolis*, 16.

that would draw not only the nation's attention to Southern California, but the world's too. Reflecting this desire, "the merchants and manufacturing associations wanted to give a boost to LA."<sup>23</sup> Ferris held the answer with an international event that would provide this desired stimulus for Los Angeles' economy and aviation. A promoter by trade, Ferris would later serve as the general manager of the meet.<sup>24</sup> It was in part his vision to capitalize and capture the early fervor surrounding aviation in such a grand fashion. As booster support was being secured, the question remained of where to hold the United States' first international air meet.

Production of the 1910 meet was not the region's first massive undertaking, but rather the next forward-thinking project in the progression of Los Angeles' growth. With large oil, agricultural and an emerging film industry, Los Angeles and its residents were no strangers to supporting economic growth in the region. Said support for economic growth, was resultant of the region's civic boosterism, by newspaper publishers, real-estate developers, and Hollywood moguls. The motivation for such boosterism stemmed from a "culture of expansive imagination and entrepreneurship."<sup>25</sup> Moreover, boosters had a financial stake in the growth of LA. In 1909, LA had completed two massive building projects annexing San Pedro to be a port and completing an aqueduct to supply the city with water. Judson Grenier notes that at the time, the overarching feeling was optimism fueled by the notion that, "if we can do that, we can do anything."<sup>26</sup> Thus, LA boosters were fervently set on producing an air meet which would exceed expectations and promote LA as an innovative, forward thinking metropolis. After the Wright's flight at Kitty Hawk, the gates were now open as the success of the airplane spread across the globe as those who were air-minded, meaning those who avidly followed and promoted aviation,

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<sup>23</sup>Congreve, "1910 Air Meet Documentary."

<sup>24</sup> Mark J. Denger, "California Aviation History Dominguez International Air Meet." The California State Military Museum, <http://www.militarymuseum.org/Dominguez.html> (Jan 26, 2020).

<sup>25</sup>Westwick, *Blue Sky Metropolis*, 3.

<sup>26</sup>Congreve, "1910 Air Meet Documentary."

set forth to improve, innovate, and capitalize on the aviation industry.<sup>27</sup> Los Angeles' boosters “invested much energy into bringing the first air show in the United States to the south, and there it served to jumpstart an aviation sector.”<sup>28</sup> It is through these boosters that the question of why Los Angeles and the impact of boosterism can be quantified and analyzed.

One of the first people and boosters to show interests and see the potential for economic opportunity in aviation was daily newspaper mogul William Randolph Hearst. Owner of the *Los Angeles Examiner*, a daily newspaper, Hearst published advertisements within the paper for the upcoming 1910 aviation meet. The *Examiner* was one of LA's four daily newspapers. Hearst founded the paper in 1903 as a pro-union answer to the *Los Angeles Times*. The paper also served as an attempt to promote Hearst's presidential bid to be the Democratic party candidate and build off of the success of his other paper, the *San Francisco Examiner*. Selling for two cents, a vast majority of the paper was dedicated to covering and promoting the meet. Traveling down from San Francisco to witness the 1910 meet, Hearst “arranged for a hot-air balloon to be tethered on the grounds during the meet. On the balloon's side were the words “It's all in the *Examiner*.”<sup>29</sup> The advertisement functioned on two levels. First, the placement of the copy on a balloon signaled Hearst's support for innovation and keen interest in seeing Los Angeles not only welcome, but also embrace the ideals of air-mindedness. Secondly, the stunt spoke the plain truth as the events that unfolded at Dominguez Hills were in fact documented and dispersed in the *Examiner*. For those not in attendance, the *Examiner* made known the spectacle of flight and fueled the engine that would become Los Angeles's love affair with flight.

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<sup>27</sup> Corn, *The Winged Gospel*, 1.

<sup>28</sup> Westwick, *Blue Sky Metropolis*, 7.

<sup>29</sup> “1910 Los Angeles International Air Meet Documentary Project.” 1910 Air Meet. <http://www.1910airmeet.com/project.html> (Jan 26, 2020).





*Front Page of the LA Herald January 10, 1910. Library of Congress*

On the first day of the event on January 10, 1910, the effects of boosterism can be plainly seen as the front page of Hearst's morning paper read, "World-Famous Aviators Begin Aerial Contest Today."<sup>30</sup> Such placement signaled the importance of the event to the public of Los Angeles. On the page were images from test flights showcasing a plane soaring over the Dominguez Hills field, while another capitalized on the celebrity of Curtiss with a close up of the record setting aviator behind the wheel of his airplane.<sup>31</sup> Moving further down the page, the panel entitled Aviation Week Information supplies readers with details pertaining to the ten day event. Tickets for the grandstand were advertised as 50 cents a seat, with box seats being available at a charge of \$30 for the 10 days. In addition to the coverage and promotion of the event, two lines under the index section note Barney Oldfield's breaking of the five mile world auto record.<sup>32</sup> The implication of this juxtaposition suggests the shift in public interest towards aviation supplanting land speed records for those garnered among the clouds. The spectacle of

<sup>30</sup> *Los Angeles herald. [microfilm reel]* (Los Angeles [Calif.]), 10 Jan. 1910. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress.

<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042462/1910-01-10/ed-1/seq-1/>

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *Los Angeles herald. [microfilm reel]*.

aviation adopts the role of the new kid on the block cliché with the allure of progress and danger. The layout of Hearst's paper utilizes the imagery of the event in a calculated effort to sell papers and market the paper as synonymous with aviation. As a reader, the future looked to be in the sky and the *Examiner* was along for the ride detailing every moment.

Los Angeles boosters, such as William Hearst, willingly supported the infancy of flight in Los Angeles with a sense of security and confidence established in the years leading up to 1910. Rather than be skeptical to the point of active resistance, the aforementioned harbor and aqueduct projects bolstered confidence among LA's boosters. Based upon the success of these endeavors, boosters, such as Hearst, felt that any investment in aviation would surely pay dividends. Such confidence coupled with the United States' desire to promote aviation at this early stage sealed the deal for an aviation meet to occur. Looking further back in time, promotion of the aviation event in the papers began hitting the front page as early as the preceding month. Every aspect of the event made the news from judges being announced, one of which was the Mr. Bishop president of the Aero Club of America, to member of the U.S. Signal Corps Lieutenant Paul Beck's arrival in Los Angeles to observe the event.<sup>33</sup> These reports presented in the paper provide a sense of the immense interest in the meet leading up to the January 10 start date. Under the guidance of Hearst, the 1910 meet gained an important ally and advertising medium in the daily paper. Though Hearst and other boosters may have been laying the course for aviation in LA, the fervent and anticipation drummed up for aviation's Los Angeles debut spread more so out of the sheer awe and wonder that witnessing the miracle of flight provided.

Further instrumental in the production of the air meet was the Dominguez family's boosterism. The air meet attracted hundreds of thousands of spectators.<sup>34</sup> Such high attendance

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<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

<sup>34</sup> Westwick, *Blue Sky Metropolis*. 16.

not only spoke volumes for how eager Los Angeles residents were to witness aviation, for Los Angeles' population in 1910 was only 320,000, but also presented the problem of where to accommodate such crowds.<sup>35</sup> This local populous was supplemented with troves of tourists flocking to LA for the event. In order to accommodate such a crowd, a suitable site had to be secured. Landowner and member of the Dominguez family Gregorio Del Amo Gonzalez believed in the progress hosting the meet represented. The Dominguez family traced their roots back to Spanish California receiving 75,000 acres of land via a land grant from the Spanish crown. This acreage was later reduced to 25,000 acres following the U.S's annexation of California. With land aplenty and a desire to further promote the family's standing in LA, Gonzalez worked with meet promoter Dick Ferris to get the Dominguez Hills site, on his land, selected.

On December 23, the meet's location was set. The hosting commission dubbed the selected site at Dominguez Hills "Aviation Park", and in part selected the site "for the meet because of its suitability for flying conditions and its proximity to the railroad."<sup>36</sup> Proximity to rail lines served to address an overlooked problem that faced the previous 1909 Reims event. In Reims, France, "spectators had to walk some three miles from the train to the airfield."<sup>37</sup> At Dominguez Junction, the nearby Pacific Electric railcar station, a 200-foot-long platform was erected to service spectators and accommodate a railcar every two minutes. In anticipation of the crowds, workers had erected a grandstand capable of seating 26,000 people. Additionally, organizers pitched large tents for the storage and maintenance of airplanes. With the location and the stage set to inaugurate Los Angeles' relationship with aviation, the task of luring daring, innovative, and skilled pilots remained. Though the thrill and glory garnered by achieving flight

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Denger, "California Aviation History Dominguez International Air Meet."

<sup>37</sup> Denger, "California Aviation History Dominguez International Air Meet."

spoke to all aviators, the potential promise of money, supplied by boosters, played a critical role in luring early aviators to Los Angeles.

As a result of boosters, the 1910 Los Angeles International Air Meet boasted substantial prize money prompting pilots not only to attempt flight, but more importantly develop aeronautical machines capable of accomplishing those arbitrary feats set by boosters and the event's executive committee. One must recall that at such an early stage of American aviation, airplanes and dirigibles were neither commonplace nor reliable. As Grenier notes, "although 43 flying machines were officially entered, only 16 showed up, and not all of them flew."<sup>38</sup> The advertised prize amounted to a grand total of \$70,000 (Approx. \$2 million today). The majority of the prize money was reserved for specific aeronautical feats, "such as a \$10,000 prize for a non-stop balloon flight to the Atlantic coast, which went unawarded."<sup>39</sup> Other booster supplied prizes existed for breaking major world records, many of which were also left unclaimed following the ten day exhibition. However, the combination of these lofty awards attracted some of the most skilled and daring pilots from around the world. For those pilots in attendance, the show "promised great rewards, but also grave danger, sometimes separated by only a moment."<sup>40</sup> Throughout those ten days in January 1910, Los Angeles served as the epicenter of aviation for not just the United States, but the world.

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<sup>38</sup> "1910 Los Angeles International Air Meet Documentary Project."

<sup>39</sup> Ibid.

<sup>40</sup> Westwick, *Blue Sky Metropolis*, 18.

## The Pilots:

To fully grasp what made the 1910 meet both possible and a success, one must turn to the role that the pilots played in not only bringing the event to LA and securing booster funding, but also in promoting and disseminating an awareness of aviation. By 1910, most Americans had never witnessed flight in person and public knowledge of aviation was limited. Up until 1910, “aviators and aeronauts had been classified, for want of professional status, along with contortionists, dog trainers, organ grinders, and wire walkers.”<sup>41</sup> This perception would soon change due in part to the success and rise of aviation meets. Furthermore, those pilots present at the 1910 meet were pioneers developing and manufacturing airplanes through personal and privately granted funds. The issue of funding is paramount to these early pilots as the 1910 meet predates the era of government and commercial contracts that have come to fuel the aviation industry today. In part motivated by the need for cash, pilots became linked with boosters in a symbiotic relationship as both groups came to benefit one another. The 1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Meet played a dramatic role in not only elevating early aviators to celebrity status, but also greatly influenced those who would later mature to prominence in the aviation industry.<sup>42</sup>

Capitalizing on the novelty of aviation at the beginning of the twentieth century, pilots such as Glenn Curtiss, Louis Paulhan, Roy Knabashue and others marketed flight as spectacle when they signed on to participate in the 1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Meet. Like most spectacles, there was keen public interest and demand to witness and follow the achievements of aviation. Namely, these achievements were speed, distance and elevation records all of which would be challenged at the Dominguez meet. Such demand for record

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<sup>41</sup> J. Wesley Neal, “Americans First International Meet”, *The Historical Society of Southern California Quarterly*, Vol. 43, No. 4 (December, 1961), 403.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

breaking flights put the pilots in a position to commodify not only the spectacle of their flights, but themselves. By the time of the 1910 meet, pilots were beginning to be considered akin to celebrities or influencers garnering a significant public following. Such a following drew the eyes of boosters, as businessmen sought to utilize aviation as a promotional tool. This is precisely in part what booster William Hearst aimed to achieve through his sponsorship of the meet. However, the novelty of flight alone did not capture the attention of Americans. Rather, a key contributing factor to aviation's and pilot's rise must be credited to the spectacle associated with such feats. Additionally, when speaking of these pilots there emerges some distinct differences in their approach and motivations toward aviation. Simply put, there are both showmen and businessmen. At the 1910 meet both these types of pilots came together to produce a historic event, despite differing aims. Pilots followed different paths and of those present at Dominguez Hills, no contrast is quite as apparent than the contrast between Louis Paulhan and Glenn Curtiss.



*Official Program 1910 Air Meet. Courtesy of CSUDH<sup>43</sup>*

Of the celebrity pilots present at the meet, few were as famed as aviator Glenn Curtiss. Moreover, Curtiss emerges as a pilot whose life and actions circumvent the stereotypical aviator. The first pilot to take off at the 1910 meet, Curtiss opened up the LA skies. On one occasion, Curtiss maneuvered the airplane's throttle "filling the air with a roar" that delighted the crowds as he flew low above the stands.<sup>44</sup> Though Curtiss did attempt daring feats, one should not mistake the man as being a haphazard risk taker. At the 1910 meet Curtiss was "America's leading representative at Dominguez."<sup>45</sup> At thirty-two, Curtiss was already famous for both constructing airplane motors and performing miraculous aerial feats. He was at the time known primarily as equal parts pilot and businessman, but this would soon change as Curtiss moved

<sup>43</sup> *Official Program*, 1910, 8.5x11, Program, laam\_3, 1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Meet Research Collection, California State University, Dominguez Hills Gerth Archives and Special Collections.

<sup>44</sup> Neal, "Americans First International Meet," 385.

<sup>45</sup> *Ibid.*, 381.

further toward favoring business. Contrary to what one may call to mind when picturing a daring pilot, Curtiss was a “clean-cut, slender, sober-faced country boy with a modest, well-trimmed moustache.”<sup>46</sup> His appearance more closely resembled a scientist or professor than a daring aviator. Coming off of winning both the Gordon Bennett Cup and the Prix de la Vitesse in Reims, France the previous year, Curtiss garnered immense public attention. To the excitement of the throngs of fans present at Dominguez Hills, Curtiss brought “a precise copy of the Golden Flyer, the racing plane which he had designed and built himself and in which he had set the world marks at Reims.”<sup>47</sup> In contrast to Louis Paulhan, Curtiss was a deliberate, calculated performer shunning spectacular feats for the sake of pure showmanship.<sup>48</sup> Curtiss was not one to cater to the crowds giving into cheers for more. As one witness described, Curtiss’s flying was “as sensational as a busy man leaving home in his auto for the office.”<sup>49</sup> Unique from the majority of aviators, Curtiss was strictly business in his flying. In spite of his numerous aerial achievements, his primary motivation was intent upon but one thing: selling airplanes.<sup>50</sup>

Curtiss saw the meet as a means to grow his business. Participation in the Reims and LA meets garnered not only fame, but more importantly helped Curtiss gain financial support for further development of airplanes and airplane technologies. Going into the 1910 meet, “Curtiss's inventive genius, administrative ability, and technical skill were waiting for the financial backing which his feats at Los Angeles brought him.”<sup>51</sup> One of Curtiss’s aims in LA was to demonstrate and establish the superiority of the biplane. Following the Dominguez meet, Curtiss further organized his manufacturing efforts to produce airplanes on a stable and regular basis.<sup>52</sup> Curtiss

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<sup>46</sup> Neal, “Americans First International Meet,” 381.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 381.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> “Representative of France Wins Prize of First Day at Aviation Field,” *LA Times*, January 11, 1910.

<sup>50</sup> Neal, “Americans First International Meet,” 381.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 403.

<sup>52</sup> Neal, “Americans First International Meet,” 403.



would go on to form the Curtiss Aeroplane Company later that year experiencing immense growth brought on from military contracts and again further growth as a result of World War I several years later.

In contrast to Curtiss, Louis Paulhan was a true showman not only playing to the imagination the crowds, but also utilizing his personality to gain favor with those who could fund his achievements. Paulhan was a small man distinguishable by his slight gallic moustache. Born in southern France, Paulhan's interest in flight can be traced to model airplane designing. A tightrope walker, he exhibited poise when confronted with danger and heights. By 1909 Paulhan had taught himself how to fly an airplane and was granted the tenth pilot's license in France. When he arrived in Los Angeles, Paulhan was already famous as a pilot having his manager Edmund Cleary arrange for Paulhan to appear at Dominguez Hills for a fee of \$50,000.<sup>53</sup> Unlike Curtiss, Paulhan flew not in his own airplane, but one constructed by Farman Aviation Works, a French company that operated from 1908-1936. Paulhan was a gifted pilot and though he was mechanically skilled, did not share Curtiss ambition to manufacture airplanes. During the sixteen-mile endurance race, Paulhan showed his ability to push the airplane to its limits losing by a mere five seconds to Curtiss while carrying extra passengers who greatly weighed down his plane. While attending a banquet as part of the LA meet, Paulhan "delighted California-philés... [saying] Ah, Southern California! It is beautiful. Today as I gazed down upon the beauties of your landscape, I thought I was flying over my native France. Nowhere in the world have I seen such a wonder of climate in the wintertime."<sup>54</sup> Paulhan knew how to appeal to his hosts. Furthermore, a marked difference between the Frenchman and Curtiss's flying can be seen as "one editor compared his [Paulhan's] performance with the discovery of the North Pole."<sup>55</sup> It was

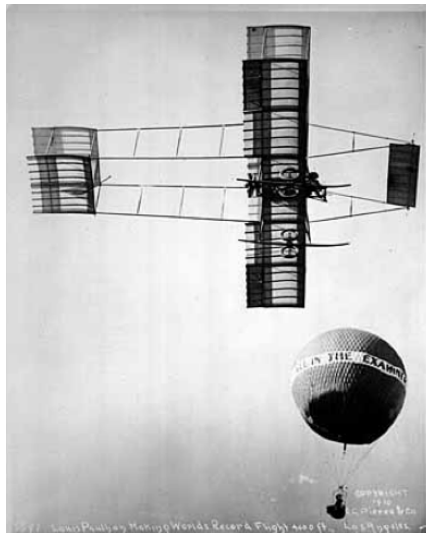
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<sup>53</sup> Denger, "Dominguez International Air Meet."

<sup>54</sup> *LA Times*, January 13, 1910.

<sup>55</sup> Neal, "Americans First International Meet," 390.

both daring and impactful. For the Frenchman, the goal at Dominguez Hills was to entertain and reach new heights.



*Louis Paulhan during a record-breaking flight to 4,600 feet in 1910. The balloon in the background advertised the Los Angeles Examiner. Courtesy of Pierce Collection of Photographs, The Huntington Library*<sup>56</sup>

By most accounts, the hero of the 1910 show was Louis Paulhan. Paulhan played the role of aviator perfectly as “the Frenchman, whether knowingly or not, played beautifully into the promotional goals of the airshow organizers” to boost the city of Los Angeles<sup>57</sup> Paulhan solely sought to sell himself to the crowds and boosters whereas Curtiss aimed to sell airplanes. With his guaranteed appearance fee, the Frenchman aimed to deliver a performance. At times his performative desires came in conflict with the meet’s logistics. As one SF Chronicle subheading read, “Frenchman Hard to Handle,” referencing Paulhan’s sometimes disregard for both rules and regulations.<sup>58</sup> Paulhan’s showmanship extended below the air as he bragged that California

<sup>56</sup> *Louis Paulhan making world record flight 4600 ft., Los Angeles*, 1910, 25x20 cm, photCL Pierce 06298, Photograph, C.C. Pierce Collection of Photographs at The Huntington Library, <https://hdl.huntington.org/digital/collection/p15150coll2/id/7608/rec/12>.

<sup>57</sup> Roger D. Launius and Jessie L. Embry, “The 1910 Los Angeles Airshow: The Beginnings of Air Awareness in the West,” *The Historical Society of Southern California* Vol. 77 (1995), 330.

<sup>58</sup> “Frenchman Arouses Enthusiasm of Crowd by Graceful Flights.” *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan 11, 1910.

was a “terrestrial paradise” appealing to the aims of those boosters who funded the exhibition.<sup>59</sup> Moreover, his wife also emphasized the boosteristic undercurrent present throughout the event, declaring upon arrival in LA that, “You live in a modern Eden,” as she spoke of crossing the “interminable desert of the American Southwest,” and later declared, “What a great country this is—how vast! And what a blessing it is to be in California now!”<sup>60</sup> Paulhan’s approach to the event serviced the boosteristic undercurrent as his goals and the goals of the meets coordinating committee aligned. Throughout the course of the meet, Paulhan rightly emerged a shameless promotor for not only aviation, but also Los Angeles.

From the start of the 1910 meet, the difference between the studied performance of Curtiss and the delightful antics of the Frenchman could plainly be discerned. On the first day of the meet, Paulhan, without planning took flight following Curtiss’s first flight of the ten-day exhibition soaring his machine above the bleachers. Upon seeing meet’s promoter Dick Ferris plodding across the field, “Paulhan dove his machine at the unsuspecting promoter, forcing him into a run.”<sup>61</sup> As the crowd cheered, Paulhan “smiled, waved his arms and skirted the earth.”<sup>62</sup> The Frenchman, as he was often referred to, demonstrated superior skill prompting one spectator to summarize the performance stating that the Frenchman “did everything with his biplane but make it sit up and bark.”<sup>63</sup> Such antics were characteristic of Paulhan’s style.

The Farman plane Paulhan piloted was a remarkable airplane.<sup>64</sup> The airplane’s fuel tank, with a four hundred ninety pound capacity, was the world's largest.<sup>65</sup> This plane along with three

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<sup>59</sup> Launius and Embry, “The 1910 Los Angeles Airshow,” 330.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Neal, “Americans First International Meet,” 386.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid.

<sup>64</sup> Henri Farman was an influential airplane manufacturer in France who, along with his brother Maurice, established Farman Aviation Works in 1908. As an aircraft designer he is credited in developing ailerons to solve the enormously difficult and dangerous problems of lateral control. From early on, Farman saw the potential of commercial aviation converting airplane designs to be suitable for passenger flight.

<sup>65</sup> Neal, “Americans First International Meet,” 386.

others brought to LA by Paulhan were the only non-American built airplanes at the event. Despite this, Curtiss's plane was not one to overlook. His airplane was powered by a "Curtiss engine, an eight cylinder, sixty horsepower, reciprocating, water-cooled model with magneto ignition and four-by-four bore and stroke."<sup>66</sup> Additionally, the Curtiss engine was designed to operate at an optimum rate of one thousand revolutions per minute.<sup>67</sup> This gave Curtiss more power than any of the competition. However, the awe of the Farman airplane coupled with the Frenchman's daring performances resulted in his popular dominance at Dominguez Hills illustrated in one headline which stated that "Paulhan's Work Overshadows That of All Competitors at Los Angeles."<sup>68</sup>



*Paulhan's Farman Biplane. Courtesy of CSUDH<sup>69</sup>*

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<sup>66</sup> Ibid.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid., 383.

<sup>68</sup> "Frenchman Arouses Enthusiasm of Crowd by Graceful Flights." *San Francisco Chronicle*, Jan 11, 1910.

<sup>69</sup> *Paulhan's Farman Biplane*, 1910, 8x10, Photograph, laamp\_14, 1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Meet Research Collection, California State University, Dominguez Hills Gerth Archives and Special Collections.

The production of the 1910 Air meet was a collaborative effort amongst pilots, though, a sense of competition and rivalry existed throughout the meet that at times grew highly contentious. This contention existed both between pilots and increasingly between nations. For the pilots, most rivalries centered around aviation achievements. Pilots wanted to be the first and fastest chasing records for speed, distance and altitude. Illustrative of the competitive nature of the pilots, pilot Charles Hamilton threw his machine into a wild, skidding, uncontrolled loop. Out of view for the majority of the crowd, “the effect of the act was lost on all but a few of the spectators who were able to scurry to an unobstructed view.”<sup>70</sup> In the midst of this feat, the Frenchman came up with a spectacle which topped them all, literally as well as figuratively. Paulhan took to the sky traveling twenty-one miles rising higher and higher.<sup>71</sup> Both Curtiss and Hamilton were in the air at this time circling the stands, but they may as well have landed for all the attention was on the Frenchman's five-minute descent back to the field. At Dominguez Hills, records were up for grabs with the added bonus of a large crowd to witness the pilot's achievements.

Following the Reims meet in 1909, Curtiss, Paulhan and others were eager to participate in another major exhibition. Exhibitions provided a unique opportunity for pilots who aimed to capitalize on the media attention such events garnered. Air meets offered the chance to grow in notoriety, showcase innovation, and most importantly compete for records earning coveted prize money. Fellow pilot and 1910 meet participant Roy Knabenshue, had promoted and managed many smaller scale events in which he appeared as performer. Utilizing his past experience, Knabenshue aided the effort to gather aviators to further discuss the possibility of capitalizing

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<sup>70</sup> Neal, “Americans First International Meet,” 389.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

upon the growing public interest in aviation.<sup>72</sup> In this manner, pilots were aligned in their desire to develop and participate in aviation meets.

United, these pilots not only attracted larger crowds than on their own, but also could provide far greater amounts of aerial entertainment while also circumventing the need to end a showcase prematurely due to mechanical issues. Airplanes were still extremely temperamental machines not yet reliably capable of the prolonged continuous use that an air meet demanded. Having multiple airplanes available gave boosters a greater sense of security when fronting the money for air meets. Should one plane fail, another could simply take off. Additionally, boosters introduced rules intended to ensure spectators expectations were met. The newly introduced rules specified the right to issue “forfeitures and disqualifications for failure, on the part of the aviators, to keep some activity going at all times.”<sup>73</sup> Such a constant level of spectacle would have been nearly impossible for a single pilot to uphold. To boosters this “was a simple matter of blending emotion and economics.”<sup>74</sup> At the 1910 meet, the crowd paid for excitement. Should the crowd feel cheated of spectacle, it would be the boosters footing the bill. Thus, it was important that the relationship between pilots and boosters remained more than amicable for the pilots were prepared to provide the excitement boosters desired should the prize be worthwhile.

Despite unity in some aspects of aviation, contention existed in others. By 1909, Europeans had outpaced Americans achieving varying degrees of success offering prizes for airplane achievements. The gap primarily stemmed from the encouragement offered from several European governments fostering the development of airplanes. Louis Paulhan, already known as one of the most colorful aviators, was a benefactor of such governmental support.<sup>75</sup> Curtiss, who

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<sup>72</sup> Neal, “Americans First International Meet,” 370.

<sup>73</sup> Neal, “Americans First International Meet,” 371.

<sup>74</sup> Ibid.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid.

was well aware of the goings on in Europe, hoped to mimic the European climate in the U.S. Such was the intent of having military officers not only attend, but also experience being in an airplane. The hope was that those military personnel would allocate funding to grow the aviation industry and also purchase airplanes in mass. Despite international tensions beginning to show their head, the desire to grow and promote aviation was enough to unite pilots for the time being. However, these sentiments were not shared by all.

When looking at the list of pilots from the 1910 meet, one notable high-flying duo did not grace Los Angeles with their presence. The Wright brothers refused to participate in the meet following a legal battle primarily with famed pilot Glenn Curtiss. Their dispute revolved around a patent infringement claim brought against Curtiss by the Wrights. The Wright Brothers “had sued Curtiss as early as September 30, 1909, in an effort to preclude his making or selling airplanes in violation of their patent rights.”<sup>76</sup> The brothers insisted that a stabilizing device called the aileron had been used and installed in Curtiss aircraft. The suit was filed in an attempt to halt Curtiss from building and selling airplanes which were in direct competition with the Wrights. Notably, “upon hearing of the California meet, in which Glenn Curtiss and his team of exhibitioners were scheduled to take part in, they [the Wright brothers] sought to prevent the event from taking place.”<sup>77</sup> The claim also sought to target Paulhan. Paulhan had “just set foot in America when Cleary [his manager] was handed a summons directing Paulhan to appear before the United States Court of Appeals on the first of February.”<sup>78</sup> Moreover, the lawsuit aimed to prevent Curtiss from participating in any air meet in the event that the brothers could not cancel the forthcoming 1910 event altogether.

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<sup>76</sup> “International Aviation Meet” *Scientific American*, Vol. 103, (Nov 5, 1910), 2.

<sup>77</sup> Denger, “Dominguez International Air Meet.”

<sup>78</sup> Neal, “Americans First International Meet,” 380.

Such action almost shut down the meet before it occurred. On January 8, two days before the meet's January 10 start date, "a Federal Court granted an order suspending, pending final action, the temporary injunction obtained by the Wright brothers."<sup>79</sup> The judge's order provided a lifeline for the upcoming meet giving Curtiss the ability to fly in Los Angeles.<sup>80</sup> The meet could have suffered a hefty blow should America's most accomplished pilot be barred from competition. It had been the intent of the Wright brothers to protect their commercial interests against competition. At the time, Curtiss and his aviation company posed a direct threat to the Wright's own airplane manufacturing and sales business. To add to this, the Wrights feared that by allowing European aviators to enter into the U.S., those foreign manufactures could gain a foothold in the fledgling American aviation market. The Wrights sought "a monopoly on the airplane business."<sup>81</sup> Surprisingly, where others saw the potential benefits of an international air meet, the Wrights saw it as a threat, rather than a boost, to the aviation industry. Thus, the Wrights set out to thwart the entire endeavor for a Los Angeles meet. Fortunately, they were just one of a minority voice whose influence fell against deaf ears as LA's boosters pressed ahead.

In 1910 there were few opportunities for pilots to make a living and sustain their aviation efforts. The prospect of an international air meet emerged as a fundamental means for the procurement of sponsorships, promotion of aviation, and further development of the airplane. By both helping to spearhead the production of and participation in aviation meets, pilots strategically placed themselves in a position to commodify both flight and themselves. Though the goals of pilots such as Glenn Curtiss and Louis Paulhan may have differed, the course by which to achieve their ambitions aligned when it came to the 1910 Los Angeles International

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<sup>79</sup> Denger, "Dominguez International Air Meet."

<sup>80</sup> The court order merely suspended the case. This did not mean the case against Curtiss was nullified. See <https://airandspace.si.edu/exhibitions/wright-brothers/online/age/1910/lawsuits.cfm> for more information on this and other Wright Brother's patent cases.

<sup>81</sup> Nocera, Joe, "Greed and the Wright Brothers," *New York Times*, April 18, 2014, <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/04/19/opinion/nocera-greed-and-the-wright-brothers.html>.



Aviation Meet. The success of the meet set a precedent for future events definitively establishing the use of aviation meets as a worthwhile investment for both boosters and pilots. While boosters utilized meets to convey their cities progress and drum up tourism, pilots took to the air to claim cash prizes and further establish the superiority of the airplane as the future of flight. Throughout the rest of 1910, “the sky seemed to blossom with pilots and airplanes, not only at county fairs, but at major flying meets across the country.”<sup>82</sup> Following the 1910 meet, a sustainable means for pilots to make a living had emerged and, for the time being, attracted the support of boosters, but even more so enthralled the public to adopt a fervent interest in almost all things aviation. These actions helped result in the establishment of the public’s air-mindedness.



*Aviators Walking Down Track, 1910 (Paulhan Center). Courtesy of CSUDH<sup>83</sup>*

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<sup>82</sup> Van Vleck, Jenifer. *Empire of the Air: Aviation and the American Ascendancy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013. 13.

<sup>83</sup> *Aviator Walking Down Track, 1910*, Slide, laams\_95, 1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Meet Research Collection, California State University, Dominguez Hills Gerth Archives and Special Collections.

### **The Public:**

Over the course of the ten-day aviation meet, the support and enthusiasm for aviation expressed by the public surpassed the expectations of boosters and pilots as flight quickly insinuated itself into the vocabulary of Los Angeles' citizens. Names that were once known by only a few, such as Paulhan's, garnered a celebrity following. Both boosters and pilots believed that the public would express enthusiasm and attend the aviation event, based off of the success of the 1909 Reims meet, but they underestimated the extent to which the public would attend the 1910 meet. The Los Angeles public not only attended the 1910 air meet in droves, but also emerged as active supporters of flight taking to heart all which aviation promised to bring, namely a future where air travel would become a daily occurrence. Boosters produced the 1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Meet as a catalyst to achieve lofty goals set forth by both boosters and pilots. The public supported these goals believing that bringing flight to Los Angeles would grow the economy and that a future where flight was possible would progress American culture to become the most forward-thinking nation.

The goals of both boosters and pilots, though different, relied heavily on the successful mobilization of the Los Angeles public to not only become interested in aviation, but become active supporters of both the sport of aviation feats and the business of producing reliable, and commercially viable airplanes. Such support can be characterized as being "air-minded," meaning that "they [the public] avidly followed and promoted aeronautics."<sup>84</sup> Focusing on Los Angeles' youth, primarily students at both the high school and university level, and the middle class, specifically small business owners and white collar professionals, the reception of the 1910 aviation meet can be seen to have been a welcome addition to the Southland's promotional

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<sup>84</sup> Corn, *The Winged Gospel*, 1.



ticketing committee had ready for distribution some 416,000 tickets ranging in price from fifty cents for grandstand space, to one dollar for box seats. One dollar bought the privilege of parking and viewing the event from the comfort of one's automobile.<sup>86</sup> In Los Angeles, spectators “clambered aboard Huntington's streetcars, which left the city for the field every two minutes.”<sup>87</sup> On average, an estimated 20,000 spectators packed the grandstands each day.<sup>88</sup> Marketing was Critical to achieving these attendance numbers. Through masterful use of marketing campaigns, the 1910 air meet's executive committee, in an effort to draw out-of-towners, arranged for each day of the event to honor a different city with "San Diego Day," "San Francisco Day," and so on...<sup>89</sup> The promotional campaign tapped into civic pride prompting both Angelenos and out of towners to turn out in force to not only showcase civic pride, but also to signal their enthusiastic adoption of air-mindedness.

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<sup>86</sup> Corn, *The Winged Gospel*, 31.

<sup>87</sup> “1910 Los Angeles International Air Meet Documentary Project.”

<sup>88</sup> Ibid.

<sup>89</sup> Ibid



*LA Times Drawing. Courtesy of CSUDH<sup>90</sup>*

Spectators were both dazzled and thrown into a frenzy at the continuous display of aviation presented at Dominguez Hills. Alongside their account of the event, The *LA Times* published a drawing meant to convey the experience of being at the airfield. Such imagery conveyed the thrill and excitement of the festivities. The drawing features both airplanes and a dirigible soaring above a packed grandstand. Paulhan's Farman airplane occupies the majority of the sky signaling the dominance of the airplane at the event. The drawing makes it clear, through the positioning of the airplane over the dirigible, that it is the airplane and not other lighter than air machines that primarily captured the imagination. Moreover, the drawing highlights the crowd in their smartly dressed coats and hats. Such outfits are indicative of clothing reserved for social outings. The image aligns with the reality of the event as "prominent among the spectators

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<sup>90</sup> *LA Times Drawing*, January 16, 1910, Newspaper, laam\_20, 1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Meet Research Collection, California State University, Dominguez Hills Gerth Archives and Special Collections.

on the first day were handsomely dressed Los Angeles ladies and gentlemen who were intent on proving Southern California's social correctness to eastern visitors.”<sup>91</sup> The aviation meet was considered by many as a place to be and be seen. For those in the crowd, such a significant occasion warranted clothing to match the occasion. Despite separate seating arrangements, social barriers at the aviation park were somewhat forgotten as “the capitalist talked to the laborer, the society girl to the stranger... as the whole crowd was caught up in the magic of the epoch-making event.”<sup>92</sup> Furthermore, the crowd depicted in the drawing appears mesmerized by the swift overhead flying of the airplane. Spectator’s heads are both tilted back, and binoculars are in use to view the overhead display. Whether consciously or not, the, upon first glance, simple drawing conveys a great deal about the event and the crowd. Capturing the speed and height of the airplane while also conveying the crowd's reaction, the image seems to suggest that such an awe inspired reaction is precisely how one should react. Through the drawing, a message of progress is conveyed as the crowd physically looks up towards the future.

A robust souvenir industry accompanied the crowds and airplanes at the event aiming to capitalize on the immense turn out and interest in aviation by the public. Enterprising entrepreneurs and cities concocted a plethora of aviation themed products and paraphernalia to sell during the ten-day exhibition. Set up in a one-half-mile-long lane that bordered the road up to Dominguez Hill, “concessionaires, described as people who charged “ten cents for a five-cent coffee, featured everything from human roulette wheels to sun glasses.”<sup>93</sup> For those running these stalls, the aviation meet represented an opportunity to capitalize on the excitement surrounding flight. One huckster was particularly ingenious warning spectators as the day began of “the dangers involved in watching the airships without eye protection.” As the day progressed, the

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<sup>91</sup> Neal, “Americans First International Meet,” 382.

<sup>92</sup> *Ibid.*, 388.

<sup>93</sup> *Ibid.*, 383.

man “modified his approach to suggest that the naked eye could not last half a day, unprotected.”<sup>94</sup> Even the nearby town of Monrovia sought to capitalize on the crowds distributing, to spectators, “several thousand free oranges tagged with tiny ‘Monrovia’ pennants.”<sup>95</sup> Aviation inspired sales pitches extended beyond the airfield into downtown as even the Hamburger Department Store published an optimistic advertisement which stated, “When we all fly we won’t need a chiropodist any more, but under present conditions you’d best see our expert on the Second Floor.”<sup>96</sup> Such an advertisement spoke to the perceived promise that many believed flight would achieve: the promise of a future where flight would be a daily affair.

Of the Los Angeles public, small business owners and professionals, such as bankers, lawyers, and realtors were keen supporters of the event and its “boosteristic” goals. Many people in these groups believed that through actively supporting aviation the future could be brought to Los Angeles accelerating the region’s growth to more quickly keep pace with other more developed cities such as New York and San Francisco whose economies far outpaced that of LA’s. There existed a symbolic force that the technology of the airplane had on the imagination.<sup>97</sup> Some thought that if flight could be achieved then it was only a matter of time for anything else to be possible. One man so enamored by the spectacle of flight “strapped two wings to his arms and flapped around excitedly proclaiming, ‘I think I am on the right track... I intend to add small gas bags to the machine... and in a short time will be able to fly.’”<sup>98</sup> To the Los Angeles public, “airplane flight was miraculous, inhuman, occult, or more commonly a miracle.”<sup>99</sup> The

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<sup>94</sup> Neal, “Americans First International Meet,” 382.

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., 393.

<sup>96</sup> Ibid., 386.

<sup>97</sup> Corn, *The Winged Gospel*, VIII.

<sup>98</sup> Neal, “Americans First International Meet,” 379.

<sup>99</sup> Corn, *The Winged Gospel*, 4.

technology of the airplane both represented a way to promote the attractiveness of Los Angeles and leave an imprint on the public's imagination.

As the aviation meet progressed, the public's interest in the airplane grew with newspaper, souvenir and literature sales increasing. However, to a public who had yet to witness flight, the language associated with flight had yet to be learned and in some cases be defined. There emerged a new social group characterized as "the aviation loving public." To this aviation loving public, comprised mainly of white-collar professionals, each "first or record [achieved at Dominguez Hills] confirmed the seemingly 'miraculousness' of flight and inspired greater awe and wonder."<sup>100</sup> However, the public's terminology as well as its physical knowledge of the airplane was limited. Consider the experience of Professor Twining, a Los Angeles Polytechnic High instructor. He entered the meet with an experimental machine aimed to further define and disseminate airplane knowledge such as engineering, physics and vernacular associated with airplanes. Twining stated in an interview, "that four or five books on aviation were the most any one library could boast."<sup>101</sup> This was an indicative signal of the public's lacking knowledge of airplanes going into the 1910 meet. Newspapers proceeded to publish an article over Twining's signature defining the correct pronunciation for the unfamiliar but now popular words "aeroplane" and "aviation."<sup>102</sup> This work acted as a public service educating the masses and informing Angelenos air-mindedness.

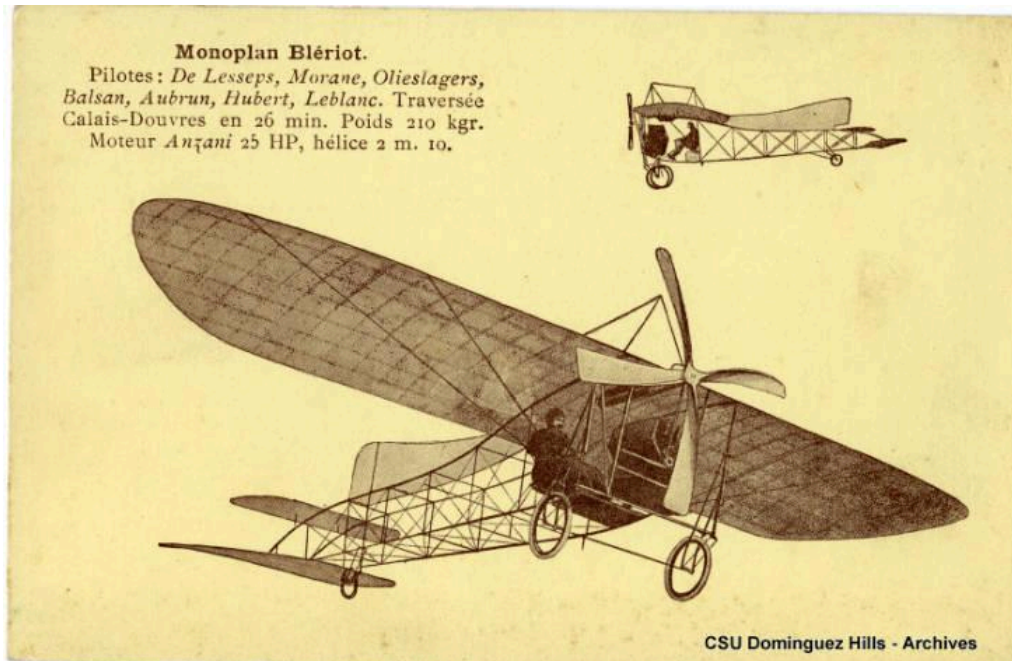
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<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>101</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, January 7, 1910.

<sup>102</sup> Neal, "Americans First International Meet," 374.





*Monoplane Bleriot Postcard. Courtesy of CSUDH<sup>103</sup>*

Throughout the event, postcards were published to spread the knowledge of the airplanes themselves highlighting individual airplane's specifications and pilots. These served as both souvenirs and educational tools. Postcards, purchased individually or in a book, were part of the ephemera sold to the public at the aviation meet. Sold for fifteen cents when purchased in a book, the souvenir postcards featured both the airplane and its corresponding pilot. Each card commemorated those airplanes that flew in the 1910 meet as well as served to promote the celebrity of the pilots. Functioning as a pseudo trading card, one could collect all the pilots and planes to complete a series or simply covet those aviators whose celebrity status was on the rise. Further, the nature of the medium of the postcard is significant as a social platform. While the cards served to disseminate the knowledge of pilots and airplanes to those who purchased them, the cards also had a latent effect. When utilized for their manufactured purchase, the postcards could be sent around the country carrying with them both word and photographic documentation

<sup>103</sup> *Monoplane Bleriot*, 1910, Postcard, laam\_75, 1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Meet Research Collection, California State University, Dominguez Hills Gerth Archives and Special Collections.

of the spectacle of flight. While business owners and white-collar professionals purchased and disseminated knowledge about the achievements of flight at Dominguez Hills through postcards and other ephemera, the regions youth rapidly took to adopting and promoting an awareness of flight through the lens of education.

The capturing of both high school and university students' imagination was fundamental to the success of aviation's debut in Los Angeles. Twining's interest in aviation "was probably responsible for his students' request for a two-day vacation during Aviation Week."<sup>104</sup> Such a request was multifaceted as students desired to both witness the mesmerizing spectacle of flight while also hoping to educate themselves on and to draw inspiration from what they believed to be the technology of the future. In the nearby city of Long Beach, "the Board of Education recommended that pupils be dismissed from school and encouraged to attend the meet, in the interest of education."<sup>105</sup> Likewise, The University of Southern California declared that all departments would be closed following the meet's inaugural day.<sup>106</sup> The Los Angeles School Board officials "arranged a holiday, with full pay, for all teachers for the coming Friday," and granted the aforementioned Mr. Twining leave for the entirety of aviation week.<sup>107</sup> Moreover, the schools in the aviation meet's daily featured city or district were closed, allowing for the youth of that area to journey to Dominguez Hills to personally witness the historic achievement of flight. In eliminating the barrier of school for youth, the organizers of the meet sought to inspire the next generation to adopt an air-minded sensibility. Without the support and the capturing of youth's imagination, the dream of an aviation future, perhaps, lay in question.

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<sup>104</sup> Neal, "Americans First International Meet," 374.

<sup>105</sup> Ibid.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 387.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

The airplane's appeal to small business owners, white collar professionals and both high school and university students alike also stemmed in a large part from the dangers associated with this early period of flight. The reality at the time was that newspapers routinely reported on airplane crashes and fatalities and the public fully expected such accidents to occur at the LA aviation meet. For many spectators, it was these dramatic scenarios that they explicitly wanted to see. In this manner, the 1910 meet delivered as crashes aplenty occurred at Dominguez Field. Crashes went hand in hand with stories of airplanes. In the January 1, 1910 issue of the *LA Herald* just below the copy promoting the upcoming air meet, the paper read, "Aeroplane Falls."<sup>108</sup> The report casually spoke of a Baeder flight in France that crashed during an attempt to win the Michelin Cup.<sup>109</sup> Fortunately, no lives were lost, but such a mention speaks to the frequency of and interest in such events. Aviators and spectators full heartedly embraced the notion that being air-minded meant risking life and ruin in pursuit of fame and progress. The aviation minded public also embraced the fact that the promise of innovation that flight represented came with the potential for tragedy. Illustrative of the dangers of flight following the 1910 air meet, "early aviation photograph albums abound with heartbreaking photos of hearty, confident young men at airplane controls, followed by scenes of twisted wreckages where they met their death."<sup>110</sup> Despite this, demand for aviation continued to grow as for many in the public the achievements outweighed the risks. With the 1910 meet, a vast portion of the public had now experienced aviation and could not get enough. One 1910 cartoon showed a little girl with Los Angeles written across her skirt joyfully playing with airplanes and another little girl with Denver on her skirt pouting because she only had a car and horse around her. The cartoon's

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<sup>108</sup> *Los Angeles herald*. [microfilm reel] (Los Angeles [Calif.]), 01 Jan. 1910. *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*. Lib. of Congress.  
<<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042462/1910-01-01/ed-1/seq-5/>>

<sup>109</sup> The Michelin Cup refers to a number of competitions sponsored by the French tire manufacturer Michelin for long distance flights made in airplanes.

<sup>110</sup> Westwick, *Blue Sky Metropolis*, 18.

caption sums up the public's desire for airplanes at the time as it reads, “she won't be happy till she gets it!”<sup>111</sup>

Though many writers would denounce the carnage present with aerial conquests, such outcry did not diminish enthusiasm for airplanes.<sup>112</sup> Early pilots risked life and limb each time they sat behind the controls of their airplanes. For some spectators, this danger was precisely what drew them to aviation. Details of air mishaps were a hit feature of daily press stories. One newspaper published a note which mentioned that ambulance and emergency equipment would be on the grounds at all times in anticipation. Inclusion of such dramatization resulted in boxes of newspapers selling like hotcakes, as papers made their way to patrons as far away as San Francisco and the Midwest.<sup>113</sup> This is not to overlook those who sought to mitigate aviation's risks at every possible juncture for fear of inspiring a revulsion to aviation. However, the airplane was unique as increasingly “Americans expressed revulsion at the introduction of new weapons such as machine guns, tanks, poison gas, and submarines—but not at airplanes.”<sup>114</sup> The sense of thrill associated with soaring through the heavens appealed to the adventurous, forward-thinking can-do spirit that encapsulated the minds of many prominent Los Angeles figures as well as common idealists. Further fueling the LA public's adoption and romance with flight, was the sense that Los Angeles was “a region self-consciously forward looking, happily unburdened by history.”<sup>115</sup> Put another way, “aviation's sheer physical danger and uncertain commercial prospects attracted the same sort of people who helped populate the American west; risk takers and entrepreneurs, individuals attracted by the romance of the enterprise and not afraid of death or ruin.”<sup>116</sup> Such courage, as some might label it, was contagious overcoming the destructive

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<sup>111</sup> Neal, “Americans First International Meet,” 387.

<sup>112</sup> Corn, *The Winged Gospel*, 11.

<sup>113</sup> Neal, “Americans First International Meet,” 373.

<sup>114</sup> Corn, *The Winged Gospel*, 11.

<sup>115</sup> Westwick, *Blue Sky Metropolis*, 16.

<sup>116</sup> Westwick, *Blue Sky Metropolis*, 18.

potential of the airplane and infecting LA's white collar professionals and students with the belief that a new dawn was on the horizon.

The meet was viewed by many in Los Angeles' white collar and working class as having the effect of serving to definitively put the city of Los Angeles on the map. Since the late nineteenth century, LA had sought to grow into a thriving metropolis. Through his actions, Paulhan won permanent friends among local businessmen when he reportedly said that "airships would make Southern California a terrestrial paradise"<sup>117</sup> Such rhetoric seemed to resonate far more than past boosteristic campaigns. Previous advertising campaigns aimed to illicit migrants through promises of agriculture, though these campaigns more often than not "seemed alien to many perspective migrants and not very conducive to permanent settlement."<sup>118</sup> By the time of the 1910 meet, efforts to grow Los Angeles had gained momentum and left waiting an eager middle class intent on capitalizing on the region's growth. With the introduction of the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1887 among other civic projects, the 1910 meet built upon past promotional campaigns to put in place the infrastructure needed to host an event of such a grand scale and to help grow Los Angeles.

The *Los Angeles Herald* reported that with hotels being booked daily by those descending upon LA for aviation festivities, "Los Angeles will be put to a severe test to take care of the immense crowds..."<sup>119</sup> Such an influx was viewed by some locals as an economic opportunity and by others as a vacation. Many businesses shut down due to both customers attending the meet and the desires of both owners and employees to attend themselves. One Covina butcher wired his Los Angeles based supplier, "Don't want any more meat. Covina

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<sup>117</sup> Neal, "Americans First International Meet," 387.

<sup>118</sup> Neal, "Americans First International Meet," 301.

<sup>119</sup> *Los Angeles herald*. [microfilm reel].

inhabitants have all gone to the Aviation Meet.”<sup>120</sup> As a result of the aviation meet, the city was both turned on and off. The event had the “effect of shutting down the city for two weeks. You had businesses closing, schools letting out, women's groups coming in mass. Anybody who could walk, and some who couldn't, made it to the meet.”<sup>121</sup> However, those businesses that catered toward tourism and crowds remained open and eager to capitalize on the immense draw the Dominguez meet produced.

Los Angeles businessmen showed originality linking their advertising campaigns to the air meet. As a result of the meet, the public was made aware of flight and exposed to a new vernacular which existed above the ground. Los Angeles’ real estate salesmen openly began to encourage prospective buyers to own a home in the Mount Washington neighborhood, an area of Los Angeles just seven miles north of downtown known for its steep streets and hills, tapping into the aviation experience claiming owning a home atop one of the neighborhood’s hills came with a view that was like soaring in a balloon.<sup>122</sup> Such a message just a year earlier may not have elicited the same excitement. Not until Angelenos had witnessed flight could these ads resonate. Further utilizing aviation language, one department store “claimed to soar above them all in the quality of bust forms, self-reducing corsets, and silk suspenders.”<sup>123</sup> Advertisements featured aeroplane radiator caps for the gentleman's automobile and field glasses to study the “air monarchs at close range.”<sup>124</sup> Much of Los Angeles evoked aviation with Newspaper copy promoting women's blouses “suitable for Aviation Week” running alongside the printed promise that the Woman's Aviation Club would sponsor a “Ladies' Day” at the meet.<sup>125</sup> Even comic strips were not immune to aviation's influence catching the spirit of the time. The current comic strip

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<sup>120</sup> Neal, “Americans First International Meet,” 388.

<sup>121</sup> “1910 Los Angeles International Air Meet Documentary Project.”

<sup>122</sup> Neal, “Americans First International Meet,” 373.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.

<sup>125</sup> *Los Angeles Times*, January 8, 1910.

favorite, “Little Nemo,” floated across the daily funny page in his giant dirigible.<sup>126</sup> Resultant of the 1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Meet, aviation had become insinuated into the popular culture of Los Angeles. The airplane had descended upon Los Angeles and the region was intent on capitalizing on its ascent into the consciousness and imagination of Angelenos.

For Los Angeles’ public, the 1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Meet became an integral part of life not only during the exhibition, but well after as aviation cemented itself into the permanent consciousness of the region's popular culture. At the time, Los Angeles lacked a unique identity. The region primarily relied upon oil and agriculture for the film industry had yet to fully blossom. The airplane and the future it represented soared into Los Angeles intent on putting the city concretely on the map. Should it have been any other city, perhaps the perception of the superiority or success of other industries may have overshadowed the air meet curtailing its integration into daily life. The openness of LA’s culture with its desire to seek out an identity unique from other urban centers proved a winning combination for the 1910 meet. In the characteristic glowing language of the time, a newspaper declared, “there is a fascination about watching the flight of one of these strange things that can't be set in cold words and black type. It is almost like the sensations of a dream.”<sup>127</sup> That the Los Angeles public witnessed flight firsthand affected Angelenos into believing in a future of flight. By witnessing the airplane, individuals drew their own conclusions and formed their own visions for what the airplane would achieve. For some this manifested in the dream to own their own airplane utilizing it as a car, while others saw a future where airplanes would be integrated into the city becoming as common as riding a streetcar. A result of this firsthand experience, Los Angeles more than any other U.S. city at the time emerged at the forefront of aviation. The total fascination with flight that can be

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<sup>126</sup> Ibid.

<sup>127</sup> Neal, “Americans First International Meet,” 331.

characterized as air-mindedness owes much of its impetus to the 1910 meet and its integration into the lives of the LA public. Whether selling a drink that promised to make you feel like you were soaring in an airplane or drawing inspiration from the 1910 event to influence one's course of study at university, the 1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Meet accomplished far more than it had promised. Ingrained in the imagination of Los Angeles' young and old, the public, namely businessmen and white-collar professionals, emerged active supporters of aviation aware of its achievements and keen to its future potential.



**Conclusion:**

The 1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Meet marked the inauguration of Los Angeles's inextricable link with the aviation industry as through the combined force of boosters, pilots and the public, Los Angeles not only hosted a successful aviation meet, but also helped to define future aviation meets with regard to how these three key groups would interact moving forward. Aviation emerged at a time when Los Angeles sought out a unique identity with the backing of boosters. Out of this need to carve out a distinct identity and the support that the Southland's boosters supplied, Los Angeles eagerly hosted the nation's inaugural air meet. Along with booster support for the production of the meet came prize money that attracted pilots who sought to fund their personal pursuits of achievements and in some cases grow their businesses. This relationship between boosters and pilots set the precedent for how achievements in aviation would be both funded and accomplished. New speed, distance, and altitude accomplishments continually inspired the public as businessmen emerged as avid fans of said feats while students enthralled by airplanes were influenced by the future aviation represented. Through the combination of the boosters, pilots and public, the 1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Meet laid the foundation for the future of airplane flight in the United States as numerous other air meets built off of the LA meet's model combining their own boosters, pilots and public in an attempt to replicate the 1910 meet's positive effects.

Following the success of the United States' first aviation meet, support for aviation gained momentum as the annals of air-mindedness spread through the air. Early adopters of the air-minded dogma consisted of pilots, boosters and members of the public who served as preachers traveling and promoting a future in flight. The 1910 meet inspired new pilots who developed into the barnstormers of the 1920's whose reach, was widespread building airplanes

out of family barns to thrill passengers for a fee or perform in circuses and exhibitions held throughout the country. In the years prior to the 1910 Dominguez Hills meet, “flying almost exclusively served as a form of entertainment.”<sup>128</sup> Barnstormers built off the meet taking their planes on tour establishing and participating in aerial exhibitions intent on delighting the imagination and filling their pocketbooks. With each showcase of flight, Americans were further enthralled by the miracle and achievements of aviation. Through subsequent exhibitions, “fliers [pilots] convinced Americans that flight was a reality and something beyond mere spectacle, as all resistance to printed stories about flying machines disappeared.”<sup>129</sup> One passenger described his first flight as “waiting for the miraculous moment—historical for him who has not experienced it. Suddenly something happens to those whirling wheels— they slacken their speed, yet the vehicle advances more rapidly. It’s a moment of a miracle.”<sup>130</sup> Such trips aboard airplanes served as a surefire way of converting skeptics to accept the thrill, promise and merits of aviation. Moreover, these novel rides served as attractions acting as a critical source of income for pilots who hoped to pursue booster sponsored endeavors. These flights allowed aviators to not only maintain, but also outfit their airplanes in preparation of pursuing the ever-growing amounts of prizes being offered to reach new milestones in flight following the 1910 meet.

As a result of the numerous records broken at the 1910 meet, the race to achieve the next great milestone emerged. Pilots rushed to gain support from boosters and build an audience to attempt heroic aviation firsts. By 1911, numerous aerial records existed and were challenged monthly. One of the most significant of these proposed aviation tasks was the successful crossing of the United States by airplane. Sponsored by William Hearst, a prize of \$50,000 was promised

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<sup>128</sup> M. Houston Johnson V, *Taking Flight: The Foundations of American Commercial Aviation, 1918–1938*. College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2019, 3.

<sup>129</sup> Corn, *The Winged Gospel*, 9.

<sup>130</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

to the first pilot to accomplish the feat. This achievement, one of the more spectacular, would be attempted by Calbraith P. Rodgers in 1911. The flight saw him travel in an airplane from New York to California. Naturally, Los Angeles played a significant role in this accomplishment as a fitting final destination for such an accomplishment. Rodgers had the makings of a star as “a husky six-foot-four college football star, he never flew without an unlit cigar clenched between his teeth as he sat, bare headed, in a seat on the lower wing of his airplane.”<sup>131</sup> On November 5<sup>th</sup>, forty-nine days after he left New York, Rodgers landed in Pasadena “to a ‘hearty and tumultuous’ 20,000 people who according to the newspaper, simply went mad with excitement.”<sup>132</sup> The allure of such achievements lent themselves to publication both spreading aviation news and increasing newspaper sales. As coverage of these events increased, “a new branch of journalism, specializing in aeronautics, grew out of public fascination with airplanes.”<sup>133</sup> The event not only utilized Los Angeles’ quintessential boosterism, but also capitalized and built on from the burgeoning interest in aviation that was established at the 1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Meet.

Through analysis of the origins, production and impact of the 1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Meet, Los Angeles’ unique blend of capital, media, celebrity, and space is shown to have critically lent itself to aviation’s growth by not only supporting, but also establishing the model for future aviation meets and booster campaigns. The culture of boosterism present in Los Angeles existed long before the 1910 meet, but through the production of the meet met newfound success aligning itself with the airplane and pilots whose accomplishments dazzled the public. To this day boosters and boosterism persist in Los Angeles as companies with LA regional offices such as Virgin Galactic, SpaceX and Northrop Grumman

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<sup>131</sup> Corn, *The Winged Gospel*, 10.

<sup>132</sup> Ibid.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid., 9.

continue to sponsor contests and prizes with the intent to fuel innovation and drum up excitement in the same vein as those boosters in 1910 did. In this way, the processes that emerged from the 1910 meet continue to impact and govern the modern aviation industry. The 1910 meet took a novel idea and capitalized on it transforming aviation meets into a tool for civic boosterism and airplane development. For 10 days, Los Angeles was the leading center for aviation and more specifically airplanes. Boasting boosters and a newly air-minded public, pilots flocked to Los Angeles following the 1910 meet setting the stage for the region's astronomical rise into aviation significance as the meet minted Los Angeles' identity as an aviation paradise.

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