

# San Francisco Bay Area Post Card Club

May 2008

Next Meeting: Saturday, May 24, 12 to 3 pm

Volume XXIII, No. 5

Fort Mason Center, Room C-260

Laguna Street at Marina Boulevard, San Francisco

*Meetings are usually held the fourth Saturday of every month except December.*

*Visitors and dealers are always welcome.*

**IN  
THIS  
ISSUE**

- GREAT WHITE FLEET IN CALIFORNIA
- READING WOMEN
- FIRST OFFICIAL U.S. AIRMAIL FLIGHT
- NATIONAL POST CARD WEEK

**PROGRAM NOTES:** A. C. Pillsbury created a series of more than one hundred real photo postcards illustrating the 1907-1909 'round the world cruise of the Great White Fleet of the U.S. Navy and its visit to San Francisco. Focusing on the West Coast leg of their odyssey, he included many close-up views of the officers and men at work and at play. While other publishers also issued series of cards for this event, none came close to Pillsbury in the quality, quantity and variety of views. In his presentation Ed Herny will not only display many Pillsbury images, but will also analyze the photographer's methods and motivations for creating them. [See cover card below.]

**SHOW & TELL:** Collector's choice; three card, two minute time limit.

**PARKING:** It can be difficult. Take public transit or come early and park in the pay lot inside the gates; in the free lot above Fort Mason, enter from Bay Street; or along Marina Green. Hall Manager Ed Clausen advises that we'll be sharing spaces with a baby fair, a ballet school and an SFAI art exhibit.

## COVER CARD



BAKERS & MASCOT ON MINNESOTA, PILLSBURY PICTURE CO. NO. 701.

THOSE ARE LOAVES OF BREAD, NOT LIFE PRESERVERS, THAT THE CREWMEN ARE HOLDING



**TREASURER/HALL MANAGER REPORT**

As of May 3, 2008 ..... \$5,654.62  
—ED CLAUSEN, TREASURER

**WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBER**

Darlene Gruber, she collects Easter, cats, Chicago, Arts & Crafts Movement, RPPCs, plus anything else that may pique her interest; she welcomes approvals.

**AND FROM OUR NEW MEMBER**

Thank you for the nice note. First, I would like to compliment the club on its excellent web site—informative AND easy to use. Plus, making my dues payment via PayPal was a special option.

I found your site while browsing the Internet looking for postcard clubs. I belong to a PC club in Denver and thought it would be nice to have access to other club newsletters and information. Being a collector, I know there is SO much to learn.

I used to have an antiques shop and would occasionally sell some PCs, not knowing anything in particular about them. I recently did an estate auction for a friend, with boxes and boxes of cards, and while researching them I got hooked. I now collect various topics for my personal collection and attend local postcard shows. I sell cards on eBay—those for the estate sale and some personal ones that are duplicates or I just don't want. My profit helps to defray the cost of what I buy for my personal collection.

I'm a relatively new collector, but I believe I have a fair collection already. If I come across a topic that I believe would interest club collectors, I'll contact you to see if you're interested in an article. [All postcard subjects are welcome! —ED.]

I look forward to learning more about California. Right now I've been concentrating on Chicago, the Midwest and Colorado. But I'm wanting to learn about other US locales, and I'm sure your newsletters will help.

Thank you!

*Darlene Gruber*

**ROSTER CORRECTIONS AND COMMENTS**

**Please mark your copy**

Several members have specific wants for purposes other than their own collections, among them: Staff Buckley is gathering cards published by E. H. Mitchell, his grandfather, for an SF museum. Peter Linenthal and Abigail Johnston are working on a book on Potrero Hill.

**POSTCARD CALENDAR**

May 25, Sunday, **Healdsburg**, Antique Faire, Healdsburg Plaza Park, 8am-4pm\*

**May 31-Jun 1, Saturday-Sunday, Glendale, Vintage Paper Fair, 1401 N. Verdugo Road, 10am-6 and 4pm. Sunday free admission+**

July 6, Sunday, **Healdsburg**, Antique fair, Plaza Park, Free! 8am-4pm\*

**Aug. 9-10, Saturday-Sunday, San Francisco, Vintage Paper Fair, Hall of Flowers, 9th Avenue & Lincoln Way, Golden Gate Park.\*+**

Aug. 16-17, Saturday-Sunday, **San Rafael**, Antique Fair, Civic Center, 10am-5pm\*

**Aug. 23-24, Saturday-Sunday, Sacramento, Capitol Postcard and Paper Show, 6151 H Street, 10am-5 and 4pm\*+**

Aug. 31, Sunday, **Healdsburg**, Antique fair, Plaza park, Free! 8am-4pm\*

**Sept. 13, Saturday, Santa Cruz, Central Coast Postcard Show, 611 Ocean Street, 10am-5pm\***

Bolded entries are produced by SFBAPCC members.

\*Ken Prag will be there; let him know what to bring: 415 586-9386, kprag(at)planetaria.net + R&N will have cards and supplies

April Program:

## John Freeman on California Embraces the Great White Fleet

The title card for John's computer slide presentation was from the large series of postcards published by Allen Fanjoy of Ocean Park and printed in Belgium. Horizontals and verticals, all with



ornate floral decor on a greenish background, the cards show vignettes of the battleships and many of the support vessels that comprised what was to become known as the Great White Fleet.

“How did the people in California react to an invasion by the Atlantic Fleet?” John began. “They embraced it!” was his answer to his own question.

After the Civil War, he explained, the US Navy was in bad shape. Teddy Roosevelt was Secretary of the Navy in the 1890s, and he worked to rebuild it. By 1898 we had six battleships and went head to head with the Spanish fleet and defeated it. There was a greater push for improving the Navy after our military took Cuba and the Philippine Islands. When Roosevelt assumed the presidency, our Navy grew tremendously.

The notion of sending the Atlantic Fleet around the Americas and on to circle the globe was billed as both a good will endeavor and a display of American naval power—TR's big stick—, and it had various political motives. Chief among those, was to show the Japanese—the victors in the 1904 Russo-Japanese War, for which Roosevelt had brokered the peace and was awarded the Nobel

Peace Prize—that the US would rule the waves, at least in the Pacific.

The Fleet was assembled and left Hampton Roads, Virginia in December of 1907, circled South America, and spent a month at target practice in Magdalena Bay, Mexico.

Fighting Bob Evans was the Admiral and the man of the hour. He was also very unhealthy. He became so ill that in Mexico his flagship took him to San Diego. Was it rheumatism or gout? John suspects the latter. From San Diego he was taken surreptitiously to San Luis Obispo for the curative mud baths. He was very underweight. In his absence, Admiral Thomas was running things for him (see the cover card on the current club roster), but Evans was determined to lead the ships in through



the Golden Gate as a final triumph for his career. Rejoining his ship, he brought the fleet to anchor in the bay, participated in the grand parade the following day and again relinquished his command, retiring at the mandatory age of 62.

Until a newspaperman dreamed up the name Great White Fleet, it was called Teddy's Fleet, and many postcards were published with bears and Teddy bears, including a number of striking poster style designs. Girls were a frequent addition to postcard images, and popular with the sailors.

*Sunset Magazine* had a cover featuring the GWF, *Colliers*, too, by naval artist Rutendahl who sailed with the Fleet.

On April 10, 1908 the ships reached San Diego where 40,000 people covered the hillsides to watch the arrival. There were receptions, parades, barbecues, inter-fleet baseball and boxing contests,



BRITTON &amp; REY T BACK



KIMBALL BRIGGS CO., SF



BRITTON &amp; REY T, ALSO BLANK BACK

grand balls and auto tours. Then on to Los Angeles where the fleet was broken into four squadrons which harbored and were fêted at Santa Monica, Redondo, Long Beach and San Pedro. Santa Barbara was next. The town had been decorated for the arrival. [Santa Barbara historian Sey Kinsell tells of the ships arriving in the bay, circled by hills covered with townspeople. On command, all ships dropped anchor, and the raucous clang of the chains was echoed by an uproar from the crowd. —ED.]

At Monterey, where the town had been decorated, the officers stayed at the Hotel Del Monte on the 17 Mile Drive. Balls were held, and the



A FLOWERFUL WELCOME TO THE FLEET, EX A: JOHN FREEMAN

governor visited. Half the Fleet sailed to Santa Cruz, and its new casino, where the parties continued with band concerts and two balls. The *Connecticut*, the Admiral's flagship, steamed back to Monterey to pick up Admiral Evans for the trip to San Francisco.

San Francisco was ready for the fleet. There was a huge welcome. A postcard showed Telegraph Hill and the huge Welcome sign atop it that was lighted at night. The *Chronicle* put out a special issue on May 3. The city knew well how to promote itself. A leather postcard bearing a childlike design, stained green and with a large white ship, showed the celebratory spirit of the town that was



FILLMORE STREET DECORATIONS, EX A: RANDY VON LISKI



A PILLSBURY DRAMATIC VIEW OF THE APPROACHING SHIPS, SEPIA TONED WITH HIS TRADEMARK FRAMING

still recovering from the devastation of two years before. Other postcards showed the city's proposed decorations, the "Welcome to Our Fleet" in flowers by the Conservatory and Fillmore Street heavily decorated. Another card showed the mock turrets that lined Fillmore Street; the Louvre restaurant pictured TR and Adm. Evans on a card. The decorated Hibernia Bank appeared on postcards, and MJB(randenstein) coffee had a vignette of the Admiral on one of its cards. Evans appeared on another postcard that had a tiny hole in it along with instructions to look through it at the light, permitting you to see your finger bones or



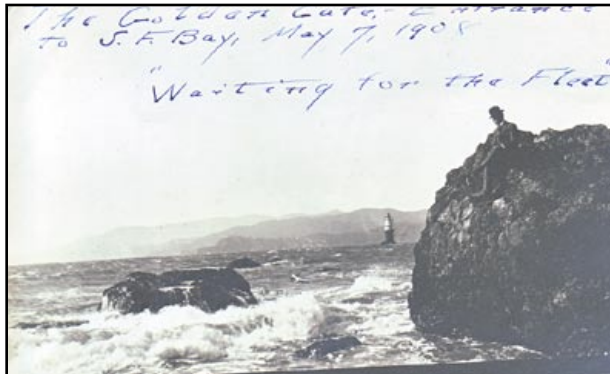
UNIDENTIFIED RP, HAND DATED JUNE 8: "...A CARD OF THE PARADE. THEY ARE AS THICK AS THE GRASS." GWF???

examine eggs.

The first person to see the fleet at San Francisco was the lightkeeper's daughter at Point Bonita,

who saluted the Admiral and flagship by running the flag up and down three times.

"Where are you going to see the Fleet?" was the big issue of the day. Trains brought people from all over the West. Real photos showed crowds at Land's End, even on rocks in the



AWAITING THE FLEET, EX A: MARK ADAMS

bay. Boats lined the entry way. More RPs showed throngs along the shore and atop Fort Point. The battery at Fort Point shot off cannons which were replied to from across the Gate at Fort Baker for



GREAT NAVAL PARADE, MAY 8, 1908, H. H. STRATTON



I. SCHEFF VIEW WITH ATTACHED "WELCOME" BOOKLET



IDORA PARK, OAKLAND WELCOMED FLEET CREWMEN IN UNIFORM WITH FREE ENTRY ON MAY 11, EX A: ED CLAUSEN

a full 21 volley salute.

A “mystery” photo card showed men atop a concrete structure with three tiny windows and a clear view of the bay. Where was it? John showed us—on a postcard of the Fairmont Hotel and its bastion at the corner of Powell and California.

In San Francisco Bay the Pacific Fleet “married” the Atlantic Fleet and went to harbor after circling Angel Island. The ships fired their cannons; the battleships were lit from 8 to 10 every night and from 8 to 8:30 their searchlights were on. The ships anchored off Mission Rock, and the crews came ashore at Piers 2 and 4 by launch. The next day there was a grand parade up Market Street and along Van Ness Avenue. A postcard showed Admiral Evans and Mayor Taylor in a carriage by the Donahue Monument. The Admiral appeared to be very ill. One card by H. H. Stratton, the Chattanooga publisher of East Coast GWF cards, showed the Great Naval Parade on Van Ness. People went out in launches to visit the ships, and the Shore Patrol was established to keep Navy men from embarrassing the US.

We saw a card of the GWF décor and photo props at The Chutes, and another of the *Connecticut* at anchor with its name spelled out in lights. Local groups and neighboring towns all had events and special days for the Fleet.

In conclusion, John told that the voyage of the Fleet had a great effect within the borders of the



AMATEUR NIGHT TIME RP OF SHIPS AT ANCHOR, SAN FRANCISCO BAY

US. It raised a spirit of enthusiastic patriotism. What would have been a difficult municipal improvement bond issue in San Francisco before the Fleet’s visit, passed easily in May with 80% approval.

Cards used in John’s presentation were from his archive and the collections of Mark Adams, Jack Hudson, Darlene Thorne and Randy von Liski. Unless otherwise noted, all cards shown here are from the Editor’s boxes.

—NOTES TAKEN BY LEW BAER

[California’s interest in the Fleet continued for months after its visit to our shores as evidenced by this card with printed advertisement for a 1909 program with Admiral Evans in Los Angeles. He was on a speaking tour campaigning for more battleships and improvements to the Navy which were opposed under the new Taft administration.

—ED.]



This space may be used for correspondence

**SIMPSON AUDITORIUM**  
L. E. BEHYMER, Manager  
**MONDAY NIGHT, APRIL 26**  
REAR ADMIRAL  
**ROBLEY D. EVANS**  
Will tell his own Graphic Story  
**“FROM HAMPTON ROADS TO  
SAN FRANCISCO BAY”**

FRIDAY NIGHT, APRIL 30  
**“THE SPANISH-AMERICAN WAR”**

Seat Sale at Bartlett Music Co.  
Prices, 50c, 75c, \$1.00, \$1.50

# Postcards in Literature and Memoirs

culled by KATHRYN AYRES

“I was free to read any book in the house, but what comes first to memory is my deciphering of the old postcards that lay in heaps at the top of the attic steps. Most had been mailed from foreign capitals before the Great War and showed vistas of Rome and Paris, Berlin and London. On the writing side, there were messages in the spidery but legible penmanship of those days. As I read them, I thought I could hear the ghostly utterances of the travelers, Uncle Elmer’s long-departed kin.”

*Paula Fox, BORROWED FINERY*  
(2001)

“Just opposite was a stationer’s which sold comic postcards ... the metal stands for the cards rattled and strained and turned like a windmill. I noticed a card with a bottle of Guinness on it, and a fat woman in a snorkel floating face down. The legend read ‘Bottoms Up!’ I was looking at another of a man in hospital saying to a surgeon, ‘But I said circumcision, doctor,’ when my aunt came out.”

*Graham Greene* (in the voice of Henry Pulling),  
*TRAVELS WITH MY AUNT* (1969)

“I remember Jeeves saying on one occasion ... that hell hath no fury like a woman scorned.... I had never scorned a woman myself, but Pongo Twistleton once scorned an aunt of his, flatly refusing to meet her son Gerald at Paddington and give him lunch and see him off to school at Waterloo, and he never heard the end of it. Letters were written, he tells me, which had to be seen to be believed. Also two very strong telegrams and a bitter picture post card with a view of the Little Chilbury War Memorial on it.”

*P.G. Wodehouse* (in the voice of Bertie Wooster),  
*RIGHT HO, JEEVES* (1934)



“They bathed in the surf and climbed foothills and danced, they saw a polo game and the making of motion-pictures, they sent one hundred and seventeen souvenir post-cards to Gopher Prairie, and once, on a dune by a foggy sea when she was walking alone, Carol found an artist, and he looked up at her and said, “Too damned wet to paint; sit down and talk,” and so for ten minutes she lived in a romantic novel.”

*Sinclair Lewis, MAIN STREET* (1920)

“Mr. Fay, five houses up, pretended that we were selling something. He almost closed the door on us, very grumpily, until he seemed to recognize us. This was somewhat unsettling, but we pulled ourselves together and let him choose a post-card of an open taxicab rolling decorously through Golden Gate Park between banks of bright pink flowers, with two ladies carrying

open parasols to match. Mr. Fay said that all women in San Francisco were equally beautiful and stylish. We were sure he was right, because he was from Boston.”

*M.F.K. Fisher* (writing about her childhood in Whittier, California, circa 1915),

*TO BEGIN AGAIN* (published posthumously, 1992)

“They say it’s two thousand miles where we’re goin’. How far ya think that is, Tom? I seen it on a map, big mountains like on a post card, an’ we’re goin’ right through ’em. How long ya s’pose it’ll take to go that far, Tommy?”

*John Steinbeck* (in the voice of Ma Joad),  
*THE GRAPES OF WRATH* (1939)

“The third Mrs. Crain died of what they used to call consumption, somewhere in Europe; there is, somewhere in the library, a collection of post-





THE HAUNTING OF HILL HOUSE (1959)

cards sent to the two little girls left behind in Hill House from their father and their stepmother traveling from one health resort to another. The little girls were left here with their governess until their stepmother's death."

*Shirley Jackson*, (voice of Doctor Montague),

"[Cornelius] Vanderbilt sent me a series of picture postcards showing Hitler making a speech. The face was obscenely comic—a bad imitation of me, with its absurd mustache, unruly, stringy hair and disgusting, thin little mouth. I could not take Hitler seriously. Each postcard showed a different posture of him: one with his hands clawlike, haranguing the crowds, another with one arm up and the other down, like a cricketer about to bowl, and another with hands clenched in front of him as though lifting an imaginary dumbbell. The salute with the hand thrown back over the shoulder, the palm upward, made me want to put a tray of dirty dishes on it. 'This is a nut!' I thought. But when Einstein and Thomas Mann were forced to leave Germany, this face of Hitler was no longer comic but sinister."

*Charles Chaplin*, MY AUTOBIOGRAPHY (1964)

"Of course there is an end of hate as there is an end of love. After six months I realized that I had not thought of Sarah all one day and that I had been happy. It couldn't have been quite the end of hate because at once I went into a stationer's to buy a picture postcard and write a jubilant message on

it that might—who knows?—cause a momentary pain, but by the time I had written her address I had lost the desire to hurt and dropped the card into the road."

*Graham Greene* (voice of Maurice Bendrix)

THE END OF THE AFFAIR (1951)

"'Want to see some postcards?' Congo pulled a package wrapped in newspaper out of his pocket. 'Look these are Naples; everybody there wants to come to New York.... That's an Arab dancing girl. Nom d'une vache they got slippery bellybut-tons....'"

*John Dos Passos*, MANHATTAN TRANSFER (1925)

"My father was a gentle, easy-going person, a salad of racial genes: a Swiss citizen, of mixed French and Austrian descent, with a dash of the Danube in his veins. I am going to pass around in a minute some lovely, glossy-blue picture-postcards."

*Vladimir Nabokov* (voice of Humbert Humbert)

LOLITA (1955)

"Is it because my friend is shy with everyone except strangers that these strangers, and merest acquaintances, seem to us our truest friends? I think yes. Also, the scrapbooks we keep of thank-you's on White House stationery, time-to-time communications from California and Borneo, the knife grinder's penny post cards, make us feel connected to eventful worlds beyond the kitchen with its view of a sky that stops."

*Truman Capote*,

A CHRISTMAS MEMORY (1958)

"[W]e knew exactly what the elegant Palace



Hotel would look like, from our old postcards, and felt immediately at home in its airy grandeur.”

*M.F.K. Fisher, TO BE BEGIN AGAIN*  
(1992)

“It was a postcard of the Christmas variety: white, pious, silent and of the dream....”

*William Saroyan*

*HOW PLEASANT TO HAVE PASSED  
THROUGH BUFFALO* (1936)

“Papa had a special present for Francie. It was a postcard with a church on it. Powdered isinglass was pasted on the roof and it glistened more brightly than real snow. The church window panes were made of tiny squares of shiny orange paper. The magic in this card was that when Francie held it up, light streamed through the paper panes and threw golden shadows on the glistening snow. It was a



beautiful thing.”

*Betty Smith, A TREE GROWS IN BROOKLYN* (1943)

“Stars sparkled, snow whirled inside my head; the last thing I remembered was the peaceful voice of the Lord telling me something I must do. And the next day I did it. I went with Sook to the post office and bought a penny postcard. That same postcard exists today. It was found in my father’s safety deposit box when he died last year. Here is what I had written him: *Hello pop hope you are well I am and I am lurning to pedel my plain so fast I will soon be in the sky so keep your eyes open and yes I love you Buddy.*”

*Truman Capote*

(whose childhood nickname was  
“Buddy”)

*ONE CHRISTMAS* (1983)

## MORE MEMBER MAIL

Hélas...

Good Day to you. I am still at the hospital and, I find that I will by death at this hospital. One of this day in the next 6 months. Doctors and nurses, the secret is only the day of this event.

I find that the politique of the primaries is a little boring. I still find that Mme. Clinton is Great. I cannot find any great images at M. Obama. Hélas, for M. McCain is Glory was in the Navy, not at senat.

Hope you like this lot of postcards, all in French, Ha-Ha-Ha.

I sold all my collection at a very low price, but the memory of years past is good medecine for me.

Great hope for you.

This is the last leter I will send you. Best to you and the fans of post-cards.

*G. D., Etat du Québec Libre*

This morning I went down to the memorial event at Lotta’s Fountain for the 102nd anniversary of the ‘06 quake. It was a small crowd this year; we all fit on the sidewalk around the fountain. This year there were handouts with the lyrics to “San Francisco” for us to sing at the end of the ceremony. When I got home, I noticed that the sheet was “Compliments of the San Francisco Bay Area Post Card Club”! Good job!

There was only one survivor there this year, the fellow that works at Andronico’s on Funston and Irving out by the park. He’s 105. I remember when it seemed there were still dozens of quake survivors.

*Mike Jacobsen*

Glad PPIE day went well, and as for the likes of us being “the hope for the future of postcards,” here’s my thought: we should be sending them, not just collecting them.

*Abby Johnston*

# The Great Air Mail Race—Who Was First?

BY FRANK STERNAD

When did it become so important to be first? In my experience, the hint was a radio commercial urging, “Be the first kid on your block to own a Captain Midnight Secret Compartment Ring.” I figured that envious status would be easy since I lived on a rather sparsely populated street in a suburban area, and I quickly mailed in my 25 cents along with the mandatory label from an Ovaltine jar. When the ring finally arrived along with a certificate that I was a bonafide member of the Captain’s secret air squadron, I took my precious possession to school to show off to my classmates. During a spelling lesson, it was promptly confiscated by my second grade teacher, Mrs. Bauer, and I sadly witnessed it tossed into one of her desk drawers. Yes, just like Ralphie’s teacher in *THE CHRISTMAS STORY*. I was crushed, never saw that ring again, and never fully recovered until a thoughtful friend found a replacement for me on eBay a few years ago.

Anyway, this thing about being first is obviously a powerful human trait, with organized sports representing the most publicized manifestation nowadays. In past centuries, however, after mastering the seas and discovering new lands, the challenge of conquering manned flight by heavier-than-air craft presented competitive men with another finish line to cross ahead of the pack. When Wilbur

and Orville Wright first proved it could be done in 1903, a whole new book was opened for first-place records relating to powered flight, and daredevil mechanics the world over looked to the skies.

One challenge would be to carry the first Air Mail. The Lincoln Beachey plaque on Marina Green displays the statement that the aerobatic flyer “made the world’s first air mail delivery during an air show in Portland, Oregon in 1905.” The

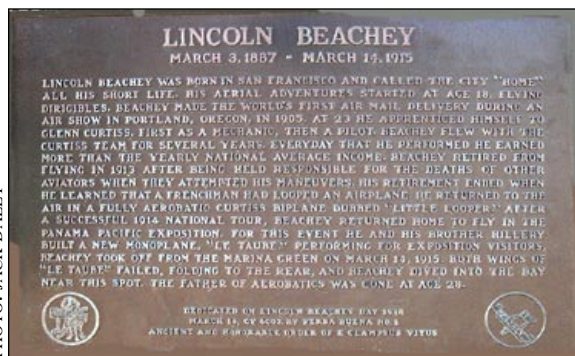
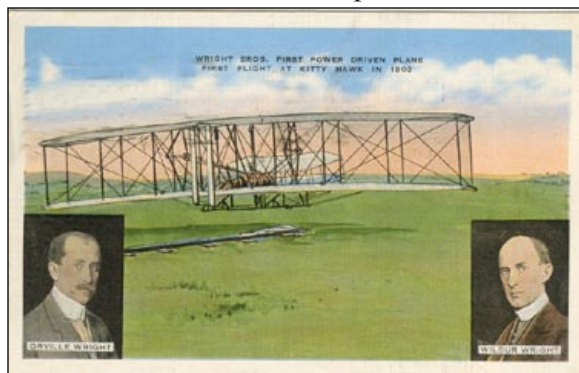


PHOTO: JACK DALEY

details are that on September 19, 1905 Beachey took off in the Baldwin airship *Gelatine* (a motorized balloon) from the grounds of the Lewis and Clark Centennial Exposition in Portland carrying a letter addressed to the commandant of the Fort Vancouver Barracks. Despite headwinds, Beachey reached the post in 40 minutes. He not only had completed the first aerial crossing of the Columbia River but also set a new airship endurance record, and had perhaps been the first to deliver a letter by airship. His claim for first powered air delivery of mail may be technically correct, but the exhibition flight wasn’t sanctioned by any U.S. government postal authority, and therefore didn’t qualify as official Air Mail.

Six years later, on September 23, 1911, Earle Ovington took off from Garden City, NY in his Bleriot Queen monoplane with 640 letters and 1,280 postcards in a mail bag tucked between his legs, and headed for Mineola a few miles away.



WRIGHT BROTHERS FLYER OVER KILL DEVIL HILL NEAR KITTAY HAWK, NC IN 1903

At one point while still airborne he tossed the bag overboard to waiting postal officials. The dropped bag landed on target but broke on impact and the mail was widely scattered. When the letters and cards were eventually retrieved they were sent on their way via regular postal channels. For this feat Ovington was awarded the title of “Air Mail Pilot No. 1.” Even though he didn’t land the plane to deliver the mail, Ovington’s flight must be credited as the first air mail flight sanctioned by the Post Office Department in Washington, D.C.; but flights authorized by local U.S. postmasters preceded his fly-over.

Adding to the controversy is a cryptic statement lurking on a 1960s chrome published by Harold Warp’s Pioneer Village in Minden, Nebraska. Warp claimed that visitors to his museum would



see the “Very First Plane Ever to Fly Air Mail.” But no details about such a plane can be found on the Village’s website today. Perhaps they changed their mind during the past forty years about the “firstness” of their aircraft.

Meanwhile, in Sonoma County, California a successful automobile racing driver from Santa Rosa turned his interest to aviation. Frederick Joseph Wiseman assembled a small group of mechanics and sponsors to build an aircraft in 1909. Wiseman and fellow driver, Jean W. Peters, pooled their recent prize money, and convinced local butcher Ben Noonan to put up the remainder of the required funds. The group also included mechanic Julian Pierre, Ralph A. Belden, and Donald C. Prentiss,



FRED WISEMAN (LEFT) AND JEAN PETERS WITH THEIR FIRST AIRPLANE

secretary and promoter of the organization.

Construction began on the *first* Wiseman biplane in October 1909 in San Francisco. The framing was based on elements of Wright, Curtiss, and Farman designs—three of the most successful manufacturers of the day. The Wiseman-Peters flyer incorporated a single elevator forward and a three-piece I-shaped kite or elevator-rudder combination in the rear. Simple hinged ailerons were attached to both the upper and lower wings. Weighing 670 pounds, the craft was originally fitted with an engine reworked by Wiseman to generate 50 horsepower and a five gallon gas tank that was good for about twenty air miles of flight. The motor and propeller were mounted behind the pilot, known as a “pusher” design, and control of the plane in the air was achieved by the masterful coordination of hands and feet, and shoulders leaning against control bars on either side of the pilot—a kind of maneuvering popularly known as “flying by the seat of your pants.” Preliminary test flights were



WISEMAN-PETERS NO.1 AIRBORNE

made in April of 1910 on the Grant Laughlin ranch near today's Sonoma County Airport, making it the first practical aircraft built in Northern California. Several public exhibition flights of limited success followed, but the airplane was eventually deemed underpowered and the original engine was replaced by an 80 horsepower Hall-Scott V-8. On July 24th Peters made three successful flights of two to three miles each, sputtering 50 feet above a crowd of 2000 people at Petaluma's Kenilworth Park.

In May 1910, as the first Wiseman airplane began to be tested and exhibited, the group started construction of a *second* airplane in Petaluma at the Camm & Hedges planing mill. The Wiseman-Peters II was a "knock down" machine—built in sections so that it could be taken apart, shipped via railroad or steamer and reassembled. Wiseman and Peters would make all their significant exhibition flights using this second aircraft. The most visible difference in comparison to the first machine was the double-layer elevator in front, and a single-layer elevator in the rear with split vertical rudder. Contour of the wings achieved a more effective airfoil, and the ailerons were longer and more flexible.

In November 1910, both Wiseman airplanes were shipped to Reno, Nevada. The first airplane was purportedly taken there to be sold to "Nevada people," but it is unclear if it actually changed hands at that time. Attempts to fly the second airplane were only marginally successful in the high altitude trials, but these attempts were the first for any heavier-than-air craft in Nevada. With modifications, Wiseman fared much better with the second airplane the following year when he entered competition in an endurance meet in mid-January 1911 at Tanforan Park near San Bruno, taking second place overall in the novice class. He won the distance event, made the longest sustained flight (just over 6 minutes), and accumulated the most total time in the air—49 minutes, 43 seconds. The performance gave Wiseman national recognition.



WISEMAN-PETERS NO. 2 AT SELFRIDGE FIELD  
(TANFORAN PARK) IN JANUARY 1911

Fred Wiseman made the most significant flight of his career a month later in February 1911 at the age of 33. Friends in Santa Rosa proposed that he should fly his plane to a hero's welcome in his hometown, and he agreed, having no idea that he and his machine were headed into history. His cargo included a package of groceries, several copies of the latest Santa Rosa *Press Democrat*, and three stamped letters written in the city of his departure, Petaluma. Two of the letters were from civic leader George McNear to prominent Santa Rosans, and a third, the most important, was penned by Petaluma postmaster, John Emmett Olmsted, remarking on the significance of the event:

Kenilworth Park, Petaluma, Cal.

February 17, 1911

H. L. Tripp, Postmaster, Santa Rosa, Cal.

Dear Sir and Friend:

Petaluma sends, via air route, congratulations and felicitations upon the successful mastery of the air by a Sonoma county boy in an airplane conceived by Sonoma county brains and erected by Sonoma county workmen. Speed the day when the United States mail between our sister cities, of which this letter is the pioneer, may all leave by the air route with speed and safety.

J. E. Olmsted, Postmaster

Wiseman's flight was delayed for several days because of stormy weather and wet ground, but on Friday, February 17, at 12:30 p.m., he raised his 44

foot long craft off the ground at Kenilworth Park and flew north. About 4.5 miles out he developed magneto trouble and the airplane was forced down in the Denman Flat area, barely missing a windmill. When the wheels touched the ground they dug deep into the mud created by recent rains and the airplane was brought to an abrupt halt, breaking one of the two wooden landing skids positioned on each side of the pilot between pairs of bicycle wheels. With good foresight Wiseman had a chase car following him, and the ground crew, headed by Noonan, removed the airplane from the mud, repaired the gummy magneto and other minor problems, and readied the machine for takeoff. By this time, stiff winds had come up and the team decided to delay completion of the flight until the next day.

With the ground still soft the following morning, canvas and planks were spread out on the ground to form a makeshift runway. By 9:05 Wiseman was in the air once again. He traveled another 14 miles toward his destination in 12 minutes at an average speed of 70 mph. Flying 100 to 200 feet above the farmlands, Wiseman “delivered” as many of the newspapers from the air as he had time for; but about a mile short of his goal, the fairgrounds in Santa Rosa, he was forced down again into a cow pasture at the Enz Dairy near the Petaluma Road

when a loose brace wire caught in his propeller and stopped the engine. Because he had landed so close to his terminus, the people of Santa Rosa nonetheless celebrated his arrival and conveyed him by automobile into town.

**The historic significance of the flight relates to Wiseman’s mail delivery. Messages had been carried by pigeons, balloons, and other aircraft, but**

**Wiseman’s February 17-18, 1911 flight from Petaluma to Santa Rosa was the first that carried mail sanctioned by a U.S. postal authority—in this case the Petaluma post office—and at the same time was made available to the local public.**

Wiseman continued to make exhibition flights with the second airplane during the rest of 1911, such as in Snohomish, Washington on May 7. In early 1912 the Wiseman-Peters II was acquired by Weldon B. Cooke, a pilot who had been making a name for himself in recent months flying another airplane, a Maupin-Lanteri Black Diamond. Cooke entered the Wiseman airplane in a meet in Oakland, February 17-24, 1912, but the engine suffered a broken crankshaft during the competition and Cooke won no major prizes. He later installed a new 6-cylinder Roberts engine and made significant modifications to the airframe. Cooke continued flying until his death in a Colorado crash (not in the Wiseman plane) on September 16, 1914. His brother, Robert L. Cooke, took possession of the

Wiseman aircraft and kept it in storage at his home in Oakland until 1933 when he loaned it to the Oakland Port Authority for display at the Oakland Airport.

In 1948 the dilapidated machine was given to the National Air Museum and transported to Washington, DC for storage. Finally restored by the National Air and Space Museum 1983-1985, the second

Wiseman airplane was designated the “Wiseman-Cooke Aircraft” because both individuals were intimately associated with its history. One thing that delayed restoration was the propeller—there was none on the plane when NAM curator and historian Paul E. Garber interviewed Wiseman and took possession of the craft during 1947-48. The original wooden prop, made by Horace Camm at



RESTORED WISEMAN-COOKE AIRPLANE  
AT THE NATIONAL POSTAL MUSEUM

his Petaluma mill, had pieces knocked out of the tips during Wiseman's forced landing on February 18, 1911. Somehow, the discarded yet storied propeller was sheltered in Sonoma County barns and other places until 1983 when Stanley Tate, a retired county employee living in Santa Rosa, deeded the vital part to the Smithsonian. Today, the Wiseman-Cooke hangs in the air above visitors at the National Postal Museum in Washington.

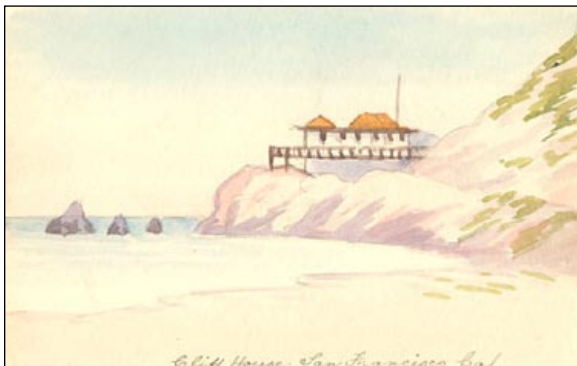
And what became of Fred Wiseman? He completely abandoned aeroplanes in 1912 after nurturing the obsession for three exciting years. Flying

exhibitions were becoming increasingly inhabited by reckless barnstormers who too often died in pursuit of glory, and Wiseman commented years later that he "simply didn't see any future in it." In 1913 he took a job with Standard Oil in the East Bay as an automotive engineer and stayed there until he retired in 1938. Wiseman died in 1961 at his Berkeley home at age 83, having witnessed exactly a half-century of progress in aeronautics since establishing his own benchmark in aviation and postal history, flying a "kite with a motor."

*P.S.* AUTHOR, AUTHOR! Alan Calavano's Arcadia "Postcard History," ROCHESTER, on his home town in Minnesota, is in bookstores now. Alan cited [www.postcard.org](http://www.postcard.org), the SFBAPCC website, and its links pages in the book's introduction. Rochester has changed greatly in the past century. Many of the places depicted no longer exist or are significantly different. "Still, Rochester retains its small town welcomeness."

MICHELLE AND HAL'S wedding postcard was created by their friends at [www.design.des-troy.com](http://www.design.des-troy.com). Inquire there about a card for YOU.

DAVID COOK from Georgia sent in a scan of a hand painted card of the Cliff House in a tropical style.



Being a club member has apparently given David new categories to collect. ... John Freeman was cited by Carl Nolte in a May 6 *Chronicle* article on the Great White Fleet, as a post earthquake San Francisco historian.

NATIONAL POST CARD WEEK has been celebrated the first full week of May for 25 years. Two NPCW cards from club members have been seen for 2008.



Hal's card was designed by Rick Geary and promotes the Wichita Club show on its back — October 18 and 19. ... Our card is a product of Janet's artistry. Either card is available for exchange or for a continental size SASE. —ED.

**SAN FRANCISCO BAY AREA POST CARD CLUB**  
**APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP**

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**2008 MEETINGS**

May 24  
June 28  
July 26  
August 30  
September 20  
October 25  
November 22

**NEWSLETTERS DATING FROM MARCH 2003 ARE ARCHIVED IN COLOR AT [WWW.POSTCARD.ORG](http://WWW.POSTCARD.ORG)**