

Biography of AMELIA EARHART

Amelia Earhart endures in the American consciousness as one of the world's most celebrated aviators. Amelia remains a symbol of the power and perseverance of American women, and the adventurous spirit so essential to the American persona.

Born in Atchison, Kansas on July 24, 1897, the daughter of a railroad attorney, she spent her childhood in various towns, including Atchison and Kansas City, Kansas and Des Moines, Iowa. At age 19, Amelia attended Ogontz School near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Two years later, after visiting her sister, Muriel, in Toronto, Canada, Amelia felt compelled to leave school. Taking a course in Red Cross First Aid, Amelia enlisting as a nurse's aide at Spadina Military Hospital in Toronto, Canada, tending to wounded soldiers during World War I. The following year, Amelia enrolled as a premedical student at Columbia University in New York. Shortly thereafter, Amelia's parents insisted she move to California where they were living.

Learning to fly in California, she took up aviation as a hobby, taking odd jobs to pay for her flying lessons. In 1922, with the financial help of her sister, Muriel, and her mother, Amy Otis Earhart, she purchased her first airplane, a Kinner Airster.

Following her parent's divorce, Amelia moved back east where she was employed as a social worker in Denison House, in Boston, Massachusetts. It was there she was selected to be the first female passenger on a transatlantic flight, in 1928, by her future husband, the publisher, George Palmer Putnam.

George P. Putnam -- Amelia's Husband

George had already published several writings by Charles Lindbergh, and he saw Amelia's flight as a bestselling story for his publishing house. With pilot Wilmer Stultz and mechanic Lou Gordon, Amelia flew from Newfoundland to Wales aboard the trimotor plane Friendship . Amelia's daring and courage were acclaimed around the world. Upon the flight's completion, Amelia wrote the book *20 Hours - 40 Minutes* .

In 1931, Amelia married George, but continued her aviation career under her maiden name. Amelia and George formed a successful partnership. George organized Amelia's flights and public appearances, and arranged for her to endorse a line of flight luggage and sports clothes. George also published two of her books, *The Fun of It* , and *Last Flight* .



Fashion

After a series of record-making flights, she became the first woman to make a solo transatlantic flight in 1932. That same year, Amelia developed flying clothes for the Ninety-Nines. Her first creation was a flying suit with loose trousers, a zipper top and big pockets. Vogue advertised it with a two-page photo spread. Then, she began designing her own line of clothes "for the woman who lives actively."

She dressed according to the occasion whether it was flying or an elegant affair. She was most conscious of the image she projected. Several New York garment manufacturers made an exclusive Amelia Earhart line of clothes which were marketed in 30 cities, with one exclusive store in each city, such as Macy's in New York and Marshall Field's in Chicago.

Firsts

Amelia made great strides in opening the new field of aviation to women. In 1935, Amelia became the first person to fly from Hawaii to the American mainland. By doing so, Amelia became not only the first person to solo anywhere in the Pacific, but also the first person to solo both the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Also in 1935, Amelia joined the faculty of Purdue University as a female career consultant. It was the purchase of a Lockheed Electra, through Purdue University, that enabled Amelia to fulfill her dream -- circumnavigating the globe by air.

Final Flight

In June 1937, Amelia embarked upon the first around-the-world flight at the equator. On July 2, after completing nearly two-thirds of her historic flight -- over 22,000 miles -- Amelia vanished along with her navigator Frederick Noonan. They took off from Lae, New Guinea, bound for tiny Howland Island in the vast Pacific Ocean. The distance from Lae to Howland was about equal to a transcontinental flight across the U.S. A great naval, air and land search failed to locate Amelia, Noonan, or the aircraft, and it was assumed they were lost at sea. To this day, their fate is the subject of unending speculation.

Some theorized the pair ran out of fuel looking for Howland Island, and had to ditch in the Pacific. Others thought they may have crash landed on another small island. Some speculated they were captured by the Japanese, accused of espionage, then held as bargaining chips in the event war erupted between the U.S. and Japan.

In 1939, George authored Amelia's biography, entitled *Soaring Wings* , as a tribute to his beloved wife.