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A Post in the R.A.F. Capt. O. C. Bartlett, 209 Squadron, 209 Squadron, was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his part in the attack on the Luftwaffe base at Berlin on the night of 24/25 December 1944. He was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross for his part in the attack on the Luftwaffe base at Berlin on the night of 24/25 December 1944.

*Capt. O. C. Bartlett 209 Squadron R.A.F.*

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Cover Photo: This water-color rendering by artist Robert Carlin, depicts the 21 April 1918 engagement by Captain Oliver C. "Boots" LeBoutillier's squadron and the "Bloody Red Baron" of Germany. Boots was an eyewitness to this event and maintained that it was Capt. Roy Brown, who brought the Baron down, as opposed to the now-accepted theory that it was infantry ground fire that brought an end to von Richthofen's reign of terror. (Photo: CAHS archives)

## **Your article in Balloons to Ballistics**

The Colorado Aviation Historical Society is soliciting articles that relate to Colorado and aviation from interested contributors. We're looking for submissions that speak to any subject that you would like to see in print (i.e. aeronautical memorabilia, airports, aviators, aviation businesses, astronauts, etc.). If you have something to offer please forward it at your earliest convenience.

Articles should be submitted in a Times New Roman (12 font) format, and have an unjustified right edge. Please do not insert photos into the article, but add them each as an additional jpg. attachment and include a caption for each.

Submit your article(s) or questions to:  
aviator\_b@outlook.com

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## From the President of CAHS

Keith Shaddox



As we are near the end of 2024, I want to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a safe, joyful New Year.

We are continuing our efforts to refresh the Hall of Fame room. The walls have been repainted and we are waiting for the installation of the new floor in a cost-sharing arrangement with the museum. When that is completed, we will move the display cabinets into new locations within the room and install brighter lighting. We will then dedicate a significant amount of wall space for the display of the 60 plaques of Hall of Fame Laureates which includes the last set just received. Jamie and Rocky DeVency have graciously provided the first 60 plaques for the room, and they are beautiful.

When I think back on the past year, I am proud of some of our accomplishments and new beginnings. With the guidance of Brian Richardson, we brought back to life the Colorado Air Classic at the Longmont Airshow. What a lot of fun. Aircraft were displayed, judged and awards given out by your society.

We entered an agreement with the museum's restoration department to completely refurbish the DC 8 model. This is really going to be cool. Because the board made the decision to part ways with our Eaglerock and receive a donation for the OX5 engine we are in better financial shape than we have been in years. We have also received wonderful gifts from donors. I am thankful to our donors and the good wisdom of the board. Finally, who can forget the amazing Hall of Fame banquet in October. How many generals did we have in that room?

Speaking of Generals, John Barry is retiring as CEO of Wings Over the Rockies Air and Space Museum. Colorado Aviation Historical Society exists as a separate organization inside of the museum. John Barry went out of his way to smooth bumps that occasionally happen in such an arrangement. I am happy to say that we have had a great working relationship with John. Thank you for being a part of our circle. From those of us who served we wish you blue skies and tail winds, sir.

I think that there is much to look forward to in 2024. Can't wait to see that DC8!

## Mystery Quiz Summer 2024

In each issue of the Journal we will present a photograph from the Society archives and challenge you, the reader, to provide information about the subject. Anyone who responds with the correct answer will be mentioned in the following issue, and the first person to answer will win a CAHS commemorative challenge coin. Send your response to [aviator\\_b@outlook.com](mailto:aviator_b@outlook.com) at your earliest convenience to ensure your submittal is included in the next Journal. Please make certain to include a mailing address where you'd like to receive the coin.

The challenge for this issue: Identify the make and model of this pre-World War II airliner.



Originally ordered by United Air Lines to replace its DC-3 fleet, the Douglas DC-4E made its first flight on 7 June 1938. Unfortunately, the project didn't pan out and Douglas was unable to find interest on the American market. This one-of-a-kind, experimental airliner was finally sold to Japan Air Lines in 1939.

The aircraft was eventually disassembled and studied by the Imperial Japanese Air Force to assist them in their heavy bomber projects. To obscure the truth about its disappearance from airline service, the Japanese Press released a story that it had crashed in Tokyo Bay, and nothing was recovered.

This photo is believed to have been taken on the ramp at Stapleton Airport sometime in late 1938 or early 1939. If you are one of the respondents who claimed that it is a Lockheed Constellation, you're in good company. Mr. Chuck Stout, former curator at Wings Over the Rockies Air and Space Museum, is the only respondent to answer this quiz correctly.

## Big Glory's Adventure That Nobody Remembers

By Brian Richardson

Before the first airplane took to wing in the skies above Colorado in 1910 there was a considerable amount of aeronautical activity in our rarified air.

With the introduction of ballooning to Denver by the likes of Madam Agnes Lake of the famous Lake's Hippo-Olympiad and Mammoth Circus, travelling aeronauts and their aerial ascension devices had been thrilling curious crowds at state fairs and amusement parks throughout the state since 1871.

Some were serious aeronauts, dedicated to promoting and advancing the science of manned flight, while many others were simply promoting themselves and lining their pockets.

One of the more interesting stories from those early years occurred in 1902. On Sunday, August 31st, reportedly the largest balloon ever constructed, launched into a clear afternoon sky from its roost at Elitch Gardens Amusement Park. Dubbed "Big Glory" by the Denver Post newspaper, principal sponsor and promotor of the craft, the stated purpose of this endeavor was somewhat scientific in nature, but, primarily, it was an attempt to wrest the world's distance and time balloon sailing record. At this time, this distinction was held by the Frenchman Count Henry De La Vaulx.

Suspended beneath an envelope made of vulcanized silk capable of containing up to 140,000 cubic feet of hydrogen gas, was a gondola equipped with numerous scientific instruments and appointed for a crew of three. Selected for this risky adventure were recognized aeronauts T.S. Baldwin and Percy Hudson, serving as co-captains, and C.S. Sherman, a member of the newspaper's art staff.

The plan was to launch from Denver and take advantage of the prevailing westerly winds on an

eastbound course. It was hoped that they might be able to reach New York City, a distance of about 1,730 miles, in under fifty-two hours and forty-nine minutes. The record at that time was 1,156 miles in thirty-five hours and forty-five minutes. Besides the obvious benefit of favorable winds, it was also believed that starting out from the Mile-Hi City and moving eastward would eliminate the time and effort required to reach altitude as the terrain would constantly be descending below them if they simply maintained their original ballast and altitude of a few hundred feet after takeoff.

When released from its earthly tethers around 5:30 p.m., the massive balloon lifted gently into the Colorado skies, progressing steadily eastward as it continued to climb. However, after travelling only a few miles eastward from the launch site, ground observers noticed the balloon shifted course and began heading in a southwesterly direction. Onboard, the intrepid crew members were perplexed and, with each passing moment that the front range drew nearer, they grew increasingly more concerned.



Thomas Scott Baldwin, perhaps America's premier aeronaut at the turn of the nineteenth century, leant his talent to the Big Glory project. There's virtually no mention of his involvement with the 1902 Big Glory project on the internet or in many popular reference books focused on this topic. CAHS researchers are presently waiting for possible files concerning this historic event, from the National Archives. (Photo Credit: Wikipedia)

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### “Big Glory’s Adventure” from page 4

Somewhere near Castle Rock, the aeronauts began to lighten their load in order to gain lift for the continuing trek west towards the mountains. With the balloon’s payload drastically reduced, it rapidly ascended to an altitude of about 28,000 feet, where it encountered cyclonic winds. Throughout the remainder of that day and night, the three men held on for dear life while their craft was dashed about, crossing and recrossing Pikes Peak as if caught in the swirling vortex of a flushed toilet.

Due to freezing temperatures at their altitude, the balloon’s gas release valve froze shut and they were unable to attempt a controlled descent. Salvation for the crew came shortly before dawn on Monday when the fearless Percy Hudson, managed to climb the rigging and, with nearly frozen hands, freed the valve. The huge lifting body descended to a forested slope about thirty miles north of Florence, Colorado. With her envelope torn to shreds and crew ejected from the gondola during a terribly rough landing, Big Glory’s record-breaking attempt was at an end. The Frenchman’s record was secure for a little while longer.

Physically and emotionally exhausted, Baldwin, Hudson and Sherman were lucky to be alive. Interestingly, when they went to sip some water from the only canteen they hadn’t ejected, it was frozen solid. Rescuers reached all three later in the day and conveyed them and the remains of Big Glory to Florence by horse-drawn wagon.

Baldwin would capture later fame and glory through his exploits in rigid airships and airplanes, passing in 1923 at the age of sixty-eight. Hudson and Sherman, though, simply seem to fade into obscurity after this event.

There is little information about this tremendous adventure available without serious newspaper archival research. If any of our readers has some information pertaining to Big Glory or Percy Hudson and C.S. Sherman, please pass it along to the author at [aviator\\_b@outlook.com](mailto:aviator_b@outlook.com)



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# Colorful Colorado Characters

## Oliver "Boots" LeBoutillier

By Brian Richardson

"Boots" LeBoutillier was a remarkable gentleman and he spent much of what was a storied aviation career right here in Colorado. Born Oliver Colin LeBoutillier in 1897, "Boots", as he was known by all who called him friend, made his first solo flight in a Wright Model B Flyer at Mineola, New York, in July 1916 after only four hours of dual instruction.

Boots knew that he wanted to fly at nineteen and he needed a little adventure in his life. He travelled to Canada and enlisted in the Royal Naval Air Service. He was immediately sent to England to complete his flight training and it wasn't long before he was in combat over France as a fighter pilot, where he was credited with shooting down ten enemy aircraft. On April 21, 1918, he was flying above the Somme River Valley and witnessed Manfred von Richtofen, the infamous Red Baron, being shot down. When the war ended, Boots left the Royal Air Force with the rank of Captain and returned to the United States.



LeBoutillier was a pilot and technical consultant for 18 flying movies. This photo of the cast of "The Eagle and the Hawk", includes (from left) Cary Grant, Oliver LeBoutillier, Frederick March and Kenneth Howell (Photo: CAHS Archives)

Throughout the 1920's and 30's, LeBoutillier followed the income streams available to aviators of the time wherever he could find them. He flew as a skywriter on

the east coast, barnstormed across the Midwest, flew charters, and ended up out in Hollywood as a movie stunt pilot. He was credited in eighteen motion pictures, including "Wings" and "The Hawk and the Eagle".

Looking for something more permanent, he accepted employment with the Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA – the forerunner of today's FAA) in 1937. He served as the manager for Colorado and Wyoming, until his retirement from aviation in 1949. When Boots retired from flying, he had over 19,000 hours logged and just about every pilot rating then available.

During his time in Colorado, Boots carried out what would become a legendary rescue of a downed airman; perhaps the most dramatic in this state's aviation history.



Oliver LeBoutillier in the 1920s (Photo: Wikipedia)

In the late fall of 1948 pilot William "Bill" Harrison of Granby, was dead-heading on the return leg of a charter flight to Rock Springs, Wyoming, in his Luscombe 8A. Enroute, he encountered blizzard conditions and, forced to descend down through blinding snows, crash landed on a plateau at the 9,000 foot level of Mount Diamond, near the Colorado-Utah-Wyoming border. Only slightly injured, he located an abandoned sheep herders hut nearby and took shelter from the freezing temperatures, uncertain when or if rescuers would be able to find him.

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## “LeBoutillier” from page 6

The Civil Air Patrol (CAP) was alerted and Boots, then a search and rescue pilot with the Craig, Colorado Squadron, along with his observer, Jim Eskridge, joined in the effort, flying a piper Cub. On the third day of operations Boots and Eskridge spotted Harrison’s plane on the mountain and Harrison waved at them as they circled. Familiar with the treacherous conditions in that area, Boots knew that the snow would be deep and probably unable to support the weight of the Cub, even though it was on skis. Figuring that it would take too long for ground teams to reach the site and effect a rescue, he hatched a clever plan.

Flying to Vernal, Utah, the closest airport to the crash site, Boots set about lashing a toboggan to each ski. Leaving Eskridge behind to make room for Harrison, he headed back to Mount Diamond. Upon relocating the site, he dragged the area several times. There was no assurance, even if he landed safely, that he’d be able to take-off again through the deep drifts carrying his passenger. He landed on the plateau, coming to a complete stop in a distance of less than thirty yards, very near the downed airman.

Suffering from extreme exposure, Boots found Harrison semiconscious and unable to walk on his own. He half-carried, half-dragged Harrison to the Cub, secured him in the back seat and wrapped him in blankets. For the next two hours, Boots taxied the Cub back and forth in order to pack the melting snow into a usable runway, extending from one edge of the plateau to the other. When he was satisfied with the results, he said a quick prayer and gunned the engine. Straining at that altitude, the little J-3 sailed past the plateau’s ledge in an attempt to reach flying speed. Boots nursed the Cub along on the edge of a stall, then milked it for all it was worth, skimming over the pine tops in a semi-stalled condition while diving into the canyon below. Boots flew Harrison to Vernal, where he was transported to Grand Junction, then to Denver for proper medical attention. Unfortunately, Harrison had both legs amputated below the knees due to frostbite.

Harrison persevered and was able to regain his FAA medical certificate with the use of prosthetic legs. He joined the CAP and was instrumental in finding crash survivors some years later on the Collegiate Range,

guiding ground rescue teams to their location. He wrote LeBoutillier a letter saying “you saved my life in an air rescue flight, and now I have helped save the lives of others in a similar predicament. Thanks to you, I have been able to pay my debt.”

Oddly enough, it would be twenty-eight years before Boots was recognized for this heroic endeavor. In what can only be explained as your normal governmental SNAFU (Situation Normal All Fowled Up), CAP officials failed to communicate with one another and the event was lost to time. Thanks to Harrison himself, this injustice was eventually rectified and LeBoutillier was issued the CAP Silver Medal of Valor in 1976.



Oliver LeBoutillier was inducted into the Colorado Aviation Hall of Fame in 1978 (Photo: CAHS Archives)

Although he quit flying professionally, Boots remained an active proponent of aviation education for the remainder of his life, addressing cadets at the United States Air Force Academy on a regular basis, and promoting careers in aviation at every opportunity. There’s no telling how many impressionable minds that he reached with his inspirational message of aviation prosperity and professionalism.

After retiring from aviation, Boots went on to create a successful pharmaceutical business. He flew west on Thursday, May 12th, 1983 at his home in Las Vegas, Nevada. Collin Oliver “Boots” LeBoutillier was inducted into the Colorado Aviation Hall of Fame (CAHoF) in 1978. His legacy lives on as yet another colorful Colorado aviation character.

## Colorado Aviation Museum Updates

**Emily Warner Field Aviation Museum** 1023 CR 610, Granby, CO 80446. 970-725-6009 Emily Warner Field Aviation Museum | Grand County History or email shanna@grandcountyhistory.org

The Emily Warner Field Aviation Museum opened in July 2015. Located in a room of the former Rocky Mountain Airways airline terminal of Granby/Grand County Airport, the museum's displays, photographs and artifacts tell the fascinating story of flying in Grand County. Admission is free. Open Fridays and Saturdays during the summer months (May 31 thru August 31) from 11am to 2pm, the museum is closed in winter.

**The National Museum of World War II Aviation** 775 Aviation Way, Colorado Springs, CO 80916. 719 637-7559

Opened to the public in 2012, the National Museum of World War II Aviation documents the role that military aviation in the emergence of our nation as a world power. The museum tells the story of the tremendous technological advancements in aviation during the war and the contributions and sacrifices of the men and women who won the air war. Open Wednesday through Sunday, 10am to 5pm, with free parking, there is a fee for admission. This visit is well worth the price of admission. Visitors to the museum may either self-guide or elect to join of their guided tours for a small additional fee.

**Pueblo Wiesbrod Aircraft Museum** 31001 Magnuson Ave., Pueblo, CO 81001 719-948-9219

Pueblo Weisbrod Aircraft Museum is conveniently located at Pueblo Memorial Airport, which was once one of the largest heavy- bomber training bases during World War II, the Pueblo Weisbrod Aircraft Museum (PWAM) is a must-see attraction. Visit Colorado's largest aeronautical collection spanning over a hundred years of history. Two hangars and outdoor exhibit areas comprise over 85,000 square feet of display area . Exhibits include military aircraft, ground vehicles,

missiles, and the Southern Colorado Space Museum. Open Monday through Saturday, 10am to 4pm, and Sundays 1pm to 4pm, with free parking, there is a fee for admission. This is definitely a must visit destination.

**Vintage Aero Flying Museum** Home of the Lafayette Flying Foundation 7507 County Road39, Ft. Lupton, CO 80621 303-668-8044

We are called the Lafayette Foundation in honor of the men who served in the LaFayette Escadrille and the LaFayette Flying Corps during WWI. At the final reunion of the Lafayette Flying Corps, organized by Dr. James J. Parks in 1983, the surviving members of the LaFayette Flying Corps, headed by Reginald Sinclair, asked Jim and his son, Andy, to "carry on the Corps" after they were gone, passing the charter onto the Parks'. In their honor, the name of the museum was changed to the Lafayette Foundation. Today, Andy Parks, as the President and Executive Director of the Vintage Aero Flying Museum, home of the LaFayette Foundation, continues the work of his grandfather, and Father, to preserve the history and memory of these men and of the men and women who have served their countries via aviation in both peace time and war time, for the benefit of future generations to come. Open every other Saturday by appointment. Call for reservations. Check out the video of VAFM's new Camel reproduction at Vintage Aero Flying Museum – Home Facebook



Replica Fokker D VII biplane at the Vintage Aero Flying Museum (Photo: Steve Kelly)

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**Wings Over the Rockies Air and Space Museum**

7711 East Academy Blvd., Denver, CO 80230 303-360 5360 Wings Over the Rockies (wingsmuseum.org)

Wings Over the Rockies Air & Space Museum, Colorado’s premier aviation museum, is located in Hangar 1 of the former Lowry Air Force Base in eastern Denver, Colorado. The museum is dedicated to displaying iconic aircraft, space vehicles, artifacts, military uniforms and much more. At this museum you’ll transport yourself to a different time and place through the many exhibits, immersive events and realistic flight simulators. Open 10am to 5pm, Monday through Saturday, and 12pm to 5pm Sundays. Free parking with an admission fee. Definitely a full-day venue, especially if you are bringing the kids; there’s truly so much to see and do for every member of the family.

**Wings Over the Rockies Air and Space Museum:**

**Exploration of Flight** 13005 Wings Way, Englewood, CO 80112 info@wingsmuseum.org 303-360-5360 ext. 160 Exploration of Flight is a 15-acre campus set on one of the busiest general aviation airports in the nation. Through aviation-focused events, programming and exhibits, Exploration of Flight (EoF) offers an immersive, educational experience for those fascinated by flight to those already in the industry. Their fleet of aircraft actually fly, and rides are available to special interest groups such as the EAA’s Young Eagles program. This facility is more of an aerospace education facility as opposed to your usual museum of mothballed and glass-encased artifacts. EoF hosts frequent fly-in events of special interest aircraft and groups that are available to the general public. Visit their website frequently for important updates.

And if you’re ever in the Nampa, Idaho area...

**Spirit of Flight Museum** 205 North Pilatus Lane, Nampa, ID 83687 208-546-5001

Previously based in Erie, Colorado, and managed by former CAHS President Gordon Page, along with his incredible family, this tremendous museum spread its wings to Idaho, a few years back. The Spirit of Flight (SoF) Foundation’s world-class collection blends general and military aviation to inspire the wonders of flight for all age of visitors.

Many one-of-a-kind aircraft and unique flight artifacts and memorabilia have been acquired to honor the men and women who have contributed to aviation history and to also educate the general public on the efforts to build and fly aircraft.

The museum’s mission is to acquire, restore, preserve and display aviation history to honor all American veterans, to educate the general public of the significance of aviation, and to inspire future generations to become involved in aviation and/or aviation history. In addition, the Spirit of Flight Foundation produces aviation-themed film and television projects to support its mission. Call ahead for hours and to book a tour at 208-546-4882, and let them know that you are a member of the Colorado Aviation Historical Society.

If you have visited one or more of these museums and would like to relate your experience(s) to fellow CAHS members, please send that information to aviator\_b@outlook.com We’ll do our best to include any feedback in future Museum Update columns.



## CAHS Challenge Coins are still available

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# Colorado's Christmas Cross

By Brian Richardson

Christmas is the most festive time of year for most Coloradans. Many long-standing traditions like family dinners, tree decorating, and religious services have formed fond memories of special Christmas celebrations throughout the years. Sadly, for one reason or another, not all traditions have survived the march of time. One special tradition lost to time and aviation progress is the Denver Post's Flying Christmas Cross, which lasted only 29 years.

The first Christmas flight was on December 24, 1929. It was an unseasonably warm winter day for Denver, with temperatures reaching a day-time high of 55 degrees Fahrenheit. At approximately 7:25 pm, pilot Ray Wilson (CAHoF 1970) was at the controls of a Curtiss cabin-class monoplane, droning steadily along over the City of Arvada as thousands of holiday revelers were attending the open-air Christmas festival below.

The aircraft used for all of the Christmas Cross missions up through the mid-1930s was a Curtiss Robin J1\*, owned and operated by the Curtiss-Humphrey Flying School. Powered by a five-cylinder Wright J-6-5, 165-hp. air-cooled, radial engine, this high-wing, four-place beauty could cruise at a very respectable 95 to 100 mph.

Attached securely to the underside of the Robin's fuselage and wings was a rigid framework of struts, racks, and bracing wires, affixed to which were neon light tubes, creatively fashioned into the shape of a holy cross, measuring 20 x 30 feet. With electrical power applied to stimulate the gas, this bright red religious symbol of peace was observed from miles around, optimally when the pilot cruised at an altitude of 2,000 feet above the ground.

The flight originated from and would end back at the Curtiss-Humphries Flying Field at 26th Avenue and

Oneida Street, the only airport in the region that was lighted for nighttime operations at that time. The route that night had Wilson circling over Denver, then Arvada, Englewood, and Aurora. Back then, from the air there were large black gaps separating the towns after dark.

During the depression years Denverites were extremely enthusiastic about the Christmas Cross flights, often shining flashlights or spotlights up towards the airplane.

Wilson, who flew every Christmas Cross mission between 1929 and 1941, later recalled that the weather didn't always cooperate, but he never missed a trip because of it. Sometimes he would have to take-off and land on ice or in snow. Once, the ice on the wing struts built up as thick as a man's arm. He had to land carrying extra power, but he made it okay.



Monarch Airlines Chief Pilot, Everett Aden and Director of Operations Ray Wilson, in the cockpit of a DC-3 they flew the Christmas Cross mission with in 1946. (Photo credit: CAHS archive)

Wilson relocated to Oklahoma in 1942, where he trained more than 10,000 pilots for the Army Air Corps. Other airmen continued the tradition until his return after the war, when he founded Monarch Airlines, which eventually transformed into Frontier Airlines.

Everett Aden (CAHoF 1983), who retired as the senior pilot with Frontier and its predecessor, Monarch Air Lines, after 35 years of flying the line, piloted the Christmas Cross missions between 1946 and 1958.

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### “Christmas Cross” from page 10

During these years, the missions were flown from the airline’s hub at Stapleton Airport using a Douglas DC-3. Of course, it stands to reason that with the use of a much larger aircraft, the Christmas Cross could increase in size, too.

By 1959 the writing was on the wall for the Christmas Cross. Airlines were upgrading their fleets with faster and larger jet-age equipment that didn’t easily facilitate attaching external loads, such as a giant neon light. As well, according to a poll conducted by the Denver Post, seventy-seven percent of households queried had not seen the cross on Christmas eve. Progress finally brought an end to this once inspirational Christmas tradition.

*(Editor’s Note: CAHS nor History Colorado has a picture of the Christmas Cross in its archive. I’ve reached out to the National Archives, but we’re still waiting. If and when a picture becomes available, we’ll print it in a future issue of the journal.)*

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## Mystery Quiz Winter 2025

In each issue of the Journal, we will present a photograph from the Society archives and challenge you, the reader, to provide information about the subject. Anyone who responds with the correct answer will be mentioned in the following issue, and the first person to answer will win a CAHS commemorative challenge coin. Send your response to [aviator\\_b@outlook.com](mailto:aviator_b@outlook.com) at your earliest convenience to ensure your submission included in the next Journal. Please make certain to include a mailing address where you’d like to receive the coin.

The challenge for this issue: Identify the make and model of this World War II-era airliner in a photo taken on the ramp at Pueblo Airport.



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