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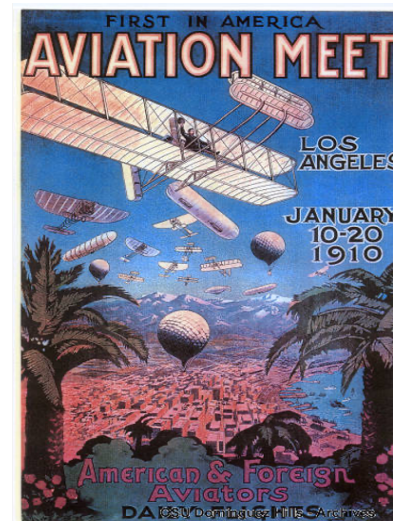
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Abstract

The 1910 Los Angeles International Aviation Meet, inaugurated Los Angeles's inextricable link with the aviation industry. Focusing on key historical actors and art of advertising used to sell the idea of flight to the public, this project posits that the 1910 Air Meet, not only helped to shape aviation, but also inspired the future of flight. This thesis tells the history of the airplane detailing the story of Los Angeles' boosterism and the role said boosters played in the ultimate stabilization of airplane into a functional, reliable, and lucrative technology and industry.

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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. 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. 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. 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 horse, while women applauded and waved handkerchiefs." 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." With targets demarcated below on the field, Knabenshue 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

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 longest flight in an airplane. 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." 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

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.

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." 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 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." 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. 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." 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." 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, set forth to improve, innovate, and capitalize on the aviation industry. 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." 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." 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 see-

ing 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.



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." 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. 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. 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 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. Rath-

er 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. 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. Such high attendance 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. 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." 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." 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 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." 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." 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." Throughout those ten days in January 1910, Los Angeles served as the epicenter of aviation for not just the United States, but the world.

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.

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 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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About the Author

Austin Janisch is a graduating senior with a degree in both Art and History with a distinction in the major for the completion of his senior honors thesis project. Passionate about cultivating his creativity through his art practice, Austin seeks to blend history and art to bring the contemporary period in conversation with the past and through analysis highlight those continuities that are parallel with and can inform the present. After graduating from the University of California, Santa Barbara, Austin will be pursuing his master's in Modern and Contemporary Art: Critical and Curatorial Studies at Columbia University. Aside from his academic interest, Austin is an accomplished marathoner and ultramarathoner training to complete in a 100-mile race.