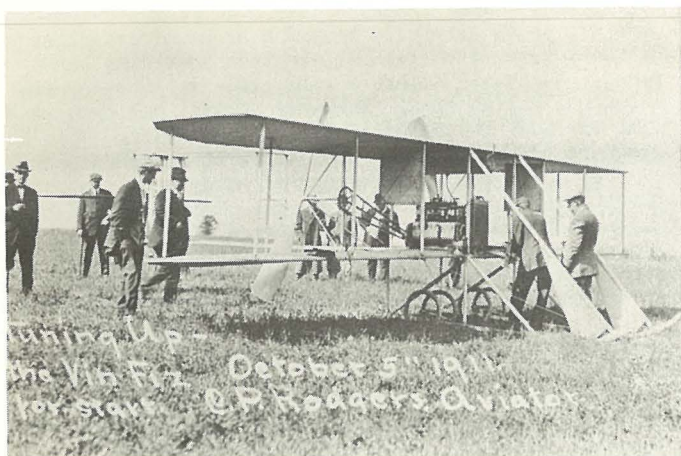
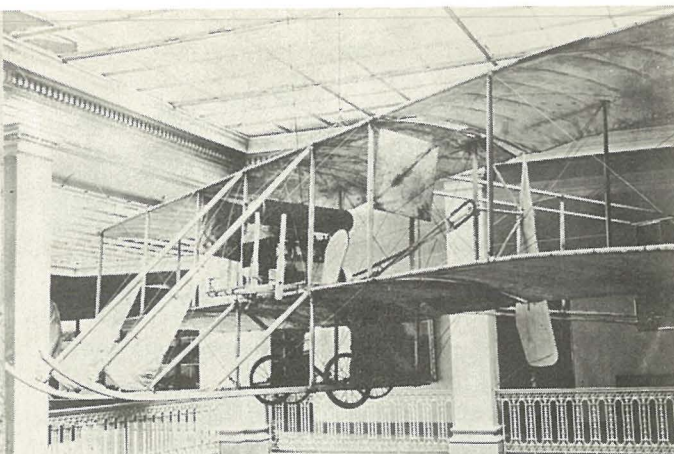




On the negative - "Tuning up the VIN FIZ, October 5th, 1911, for start. C.P. Rodgers, Aviator."
(Photo from Huntington, Ind. Chamber of Commerce forwarded to William N. Fleming for J-AAHS)



The VIN FIZ as it hung in the Carnegie Museum, Pittsburgh from March 1917 to April 1934. It was sent to the Smithsonian Institution then, and has been rebuilt. (Photo- Carnegie Museum)

TRANSCONTINENTAL U.S.A., 1911

by George H. Tweney

His name was Calbraith Perry Rodgers, the year was 1911, and Hearst had just offered \$50,000.00 in prize money for the first man to fly across the continental United States within one continuous 30-day period. To a man like Cal Rodgers, this was a challenge and an opportunity not to be missed. Racing cars had given him his original taste for speed, and he had soloed in one day and learned to fly at the Wright Brothers School of Aviation in less time than any student before him. Orville Wright had called him a "natural born flyer."

In fact, Orville Wright had been so impressed with Cal's skill in the air that he had offered him the opportunity to fly one of the Wright machines at the big Air Meet in Chicago in the summer of 1911. Spending 27 out of a possible 31 hours in the air, Cal had emerged as endurance champion of the Meet, and \$11,285 in prize money -- enough to buy his own flying machine.

This was all the incentive Cal needed. Preparations got under way immediately for the big attempt to cross the continent. But, apart from the airplane, how to finance the stunt itself? It would take a lot of money. Even if he won Mr. Hearst's prize money -- which he confidently expected to do -- he would be lucky if he broke even at the end of the run. Then his cousin, John Rodgers, ⁽¹⁾ provided the ready answer. The Armour Corporation of Chicago was about to market a new soft drink, "Vin Fiz." Why not convince them of the advertising value of his flight? It took very little convincing indeed. Thus was born the name of the airplane, the VIN FIZ, and there was provided a total budget of \$100,000.00 for the trip -- even to his own private train to follow him cross-country, and carry all the spare parts, his mechanic, wife, crew, first aid equipment, etc. It was, all in all, quite an expedition.

Cal moved fast. He ordered an airplane from Orville Wright, a specially-built version of the 1910

Model R. His was to be called the Model EX, and to the best of our knowledge today, it was one of only two EX's built. It was 24 feet long, stood 6 feet 10 inches high, and had the wing span increased to 32 feet compared to the Model R's original 26 feet 6 inches. Other statistics briefly were:

Wing area	180 square feet
Control area	14 square feet
Empty weight	585 pounds
Gross weight	760 pounds
Engine	4 Cyl., 30 H.P.
Maximum speed	55 miles per hour

Control was obtained with the customary two control levers, one operating the elevator and the other the wing-warp and rudder. The landing gear consisted of two sets of two wheels mounted in a side-by-side arrangement with rubber shock cord; two skids projected forward sufficiently to prevent nose-overs. The airplane was designed for high performance, long cruise, and built to take exhibition-type flying. She was a trim looking ship for her day, even if the pilot did sit in a bucket seat, completely exposed to the elements.

Sunday, September 17, 1911, dawned clear in Sheepshead Bay, New York. This was the day to start! Cal hoped to get away from the Long Island race track by 2:30 in the afternoon. But thousands of people had heard of the proposed trip. Armour's advertising department had done its job well. It was 4:30 p.m. before Charlie Taylor and his other mechanic turned the two propellers into action, and Cal went bouncing down the track into the air. 104 miles and 105 minutes later, he slid easily to a landing at Middletown, New York, having picked up his white-roofed train in the landscape below without difficulty. Cal, his wife and crew were jubilant. "Chicago in four days," he said, and he could already feel the Hearst money jingling in his pockets.

But it was not to be that easy. The next morning

⁽¹⁾ U.S. Naval Aviator No. 2

he crashed on takeoff in Hancock, New York. The engine had to be rebuilt. In Scranton, Pa., he got lost. One sickening crash followed another — Salamanca, New York, then Huntington, Indiana, then high winds for four days alone at Hammond, Indiana. He didn't arrive in Chicago until October 9th. He had only nine days left in which to cover 2500 miles in order to win the Hearst prize. Orville Wright had told him the airplane that could cross the country in 30 days hadn't yet been built. Perhaps he was right.

But Cal was not one to give in easily. Reaching the Pacific now became a crusade. He gritted his long, black cigar and determined to show the world it could be done, and that he and his Wright EX were just the ones that could do it.

It would be repetitious and boring to list the disheartening succession of crashes and mishaps. A tremendous storm in Kansas City wrecked the airplane. In Arizona he had been so anxious to get started, he forgot to refuel and came down in the desert. Going into Imperial Junction, California, a huge bald eagle attacked the airplane and almost forced it to the ground by a series of powerful dives, then disdainfully wheeled away into the blue after disposing of its man-made adversary. The engine blew a cylinder head and a jagged, hot piece of metal seared into Cal's arm. With blood and hot oil spewed over him, he lurched to a landing just 178 miles from his Pacific goal.

On November 5th, he finally made it into Pasadena, after 49 days and 4,231 miles. Mr. Hearst had long since put his money to other uses, but Cal Rodgers had accomplished what he set out to do.

The airplane had crashed a total of nine times, barring innumerable small incidents. It had been patched, repaired, rebuilt, replaced, until the fabric and wood that arrived in Pasadena were hardly what had left New York weeks before. The only original parts of the airplane to go the entire route were the vertical rudder and the engine drip pan. Everything else had been completely replaced at one time or another along the way.

Financially he hadn't done so well on the trip itself. He pocketed about \$23,000.00 from the Armour support, but his personal expenses on the trip had been \$22,000.00. However, for months after his arrival in California, Cal was a popular figure and sold tourists sight-seeing rides in his airplane at fabulous fees, sometimes as much as \$50.00 each.

In the end, this activity was to prove his nemesis. On April 2, 1912, Cal was test-hopping his airplane over Long Beach in preparation for taking some important business men on a hop. The California sunshine was bright, the ocean air brisk. Cal was jubilant, and

dove his craft gleefully toward a crowd of seagulls. He wheeled to dive again -- and then something happened. Some said he hit a gull; others that they saw a control malfunction. Whatever it was, Cal plunged into the foam at the edge of the sandy beach. When the rescuers reached him, he was dead with a broken neck.

For some reason, Cal Rodgers' hardy transcontinental flight has been all but forgotten. The newspaper headlines of his day were as fleeting as the day's news. And yet, in this age of normal, matter-of-fact, non-stop, coast-to-coast flights, his pioneering effort was an important first step. It showed that transcontinental flight was by no means impossible. Cal Rodgers was truly one of aviation's great pioneers, and perhaps on this Golden Anniversary of his feat, due recognition will be given to its significance. The City of Long Beach will erect a monument to his memory on the spot where he fell.

5c SOLD EVERYWHERE

5c

REFRESHING-INVIGORATING

The Ideal Grape Drink

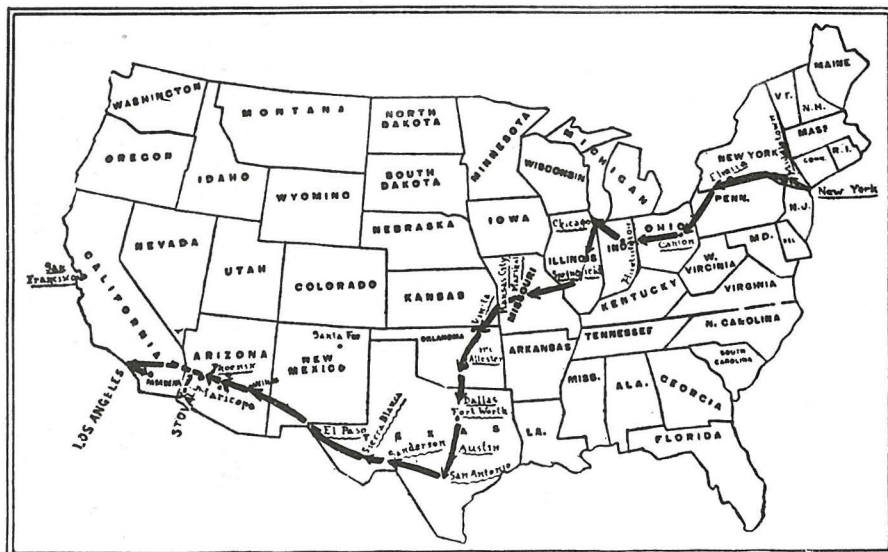
REGISTERED TRADE MARK

VIN FIZ

Greetings from the Sky

Rodgers in the Vin-Fiz Flyer
from New York to Los Angeles—for
the Hearst \$50,000 ocean to ocean flight

Above - a reproduction of one of the small advertising cards supplied by Armour for its VIN FIZ sales campaign and which were tossed out of the airplane by Rodgers over the heads of a crowd of people whenever they gathered to see him land or take off.



At left - a map published in the CYCLE AND AUTOMOBILE TRADE JOURNAL of Dec. 1, 1911 following Rodgers' flight. The accompanying article summarized the flight, pointing out that he had made several flights of over 200 miles. The longest was made on 14 October, when he flew from Kansas City to Vanita, Okla., a distance of 250 miles.

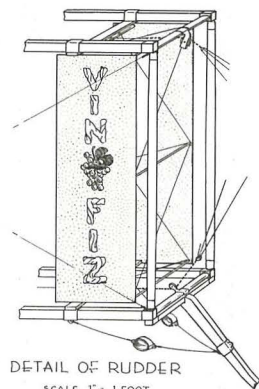
THE VIN FIZ

FIRST TRANSCONTINENTAL AEROPLANE

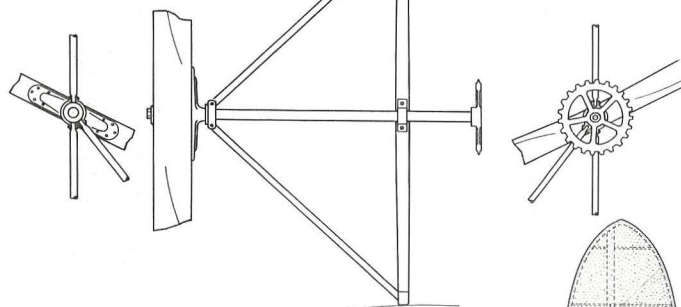
1911
WRIGHT BROTHERS - TYPE EX
EXHIBITED IN THE - NATIONAL AIR MUSEUM

SCALE - $\frac{3}{8}$ " = 1 FOOT

ACC. NO. NAM 299
CAT. NO. 1934-60



DETAIL OF RUDDER
SCALE 1" = 1 FOOT

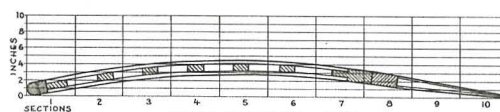


DETAILS OF PROPELLER BRACKET

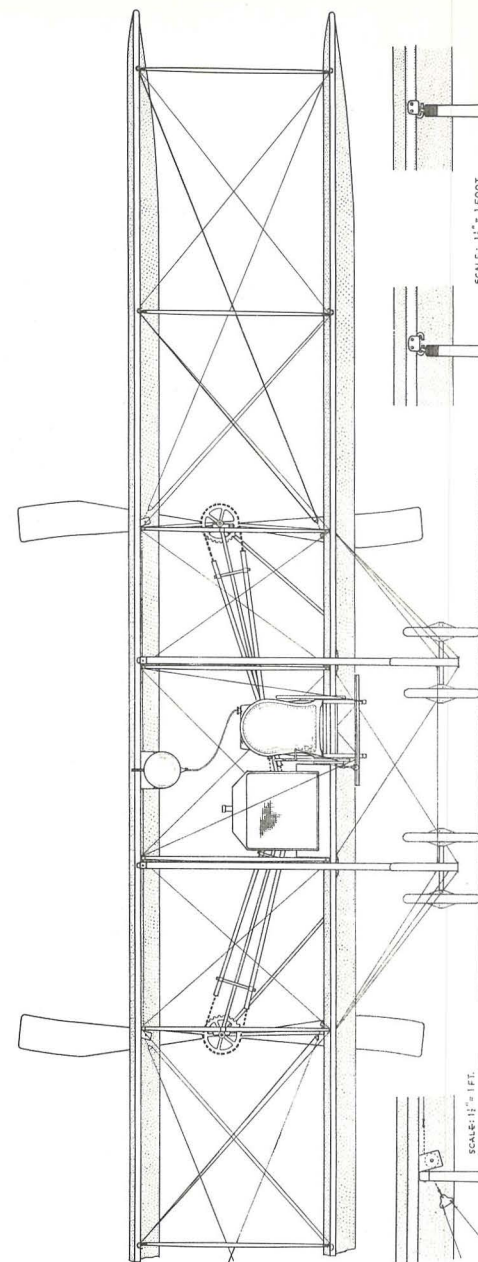
SCALE: 1 1/2" = 1 FOOT

PRINCIPAL DIMENSIONS

SPAN	31' 6 1/2"
LENGTH	21' 5"
CHORD	60"
GAP	45 1/2"
PROPELLERS (Diam.)	8' 4"

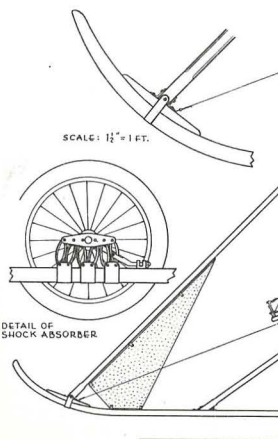


CROSS SECTION OF AIRFOIL
SCALE: 1 1/2" = 1 FOOT



SCALE: 1 1/2" = 1 FOOT

SCALE: 1 1/2" = 1 FOOT



DETAIL OF SHOCK ABSORBER

SCALE: 1 1/2" = 1 FT.



SKID CONNECTIONS TO MAIN SPARS
SCALE: 2" = 1 FOOT

NATIONAL AIR MUSEUM

Drawn by - H.E. MacEWEN
Dec. 19, 1960