



201 TOURIST CENTER DRIVE, PO BOX 368, HAVELOCK, NC 28532

AVIATION CONNECTIONS: NEWSLETTER

Winter 2024

WWW.ECAVIATIONHERITAGE.COM

Eastern Carolina Aviation Heritage Foundation

February 2024

15th Annual Gala



AN AVIATOR'S Journey
to Eastern North Carolina



2024 ECAHF Gala
Friday, February 23, 2024 at 5:30 pm
Havelock Tourist & Event Center
201 Tourist Center Dr.

With Special Guest Col Mikel Huber

Join us as pilot Col Mikel Huber shares his experiences from the Naval Academy to USMC Cherry Point and onward to the Commercial Aviation Industry.

Proceeds from the event benefit Eastern Carolina Aviation Heritage Foundation in our efforts to inspire youth to pursue new and exciting career pathways through STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math) education.

Individual Tickets: \$60.00
Tax Included
Sponsorships Available

Doors Open: 5:30 pm
Dress: Business Casual

For more information, visit:
www.ecaviationheritage.com
e-mail: events@havelockevents.com
or call 252-444-4348

WCTI abc 12 FOX EASTERN CAROLINA  **CAROLINA EAST HEALTH SYSTEM**





THE SOLUTIONS COMPANY
Celebrating 20 years ★ Est. 2004



EASTERN CAROLINA AVIATION HERITAGE
FOUNDATION IS PLEASED TO PRESENT THE 2024

Aces Honor Roll

IN MEMORY

All Fallen Aviators
Col James K. Clark, USAF (WWII)
Col Jack Trabucco, USAF
LtCol James McGarvey, USMC, MIA
LtCol Daniel "Dano" Seifert, USMC

Capt Jim Casti, USMC
Capt Edward J. Cieszko, USMC
MGySgt Albert "Sandy" Sandoval, USMC
MSgt Vince Morgan, USMC
Andrew Hazlett, Seaman 1st Class, USN

IN HONOR

MajGen Tom Braaten, USMC (Ret)
MajGen Lancer Sullivan, USMC (Ret)
Col Brendan Burks, USMC
CAPT Randy Berti, USN

Col Jimmie Green, USMC (Ret)
LtCol Bill Franchi, USMC (Ret)
Capt Timothy Clark, USAF (Ret)
MGySgt Richard Hazlett, USMC (Ret)

Thank you for your service!

*Tom & Susan
Braaten*



*Richard & Wanda
Hazlett*



2024 ECAHF Gala Sponsors

Anonymous "In Honor of Fallen Aviators"
Attollo
Bob and Carol Mattocks
Cieszko Construction Company
Coastal Carolina Health Care
Coastal Carolina Regional Airport
Craven 100 Alliance (C1A)
Craven Community College
Dunn, Pittman, Skinner & Ashton, PLLC
Edward Jones of Havelock - Mike Sprague
First Command Financial Services
Federal Managers Association (FMA)
George & Karla Liner

Havelock Chamber of Commerce
Havelock/Cherry Point Rotary Club
Hazen and Sawyer
Jack & Mary Beth Fennell
Knight/Blickensderfer Family
Morgan's Tavern and Grill
N.C. State Engineering
Practical Aeronautics
Robinson Family Dental
Strategic Government Affairs
Tandemloc
Timothy Clark
Trent Cadillac Buick GMC
Ward and Smith, P.A.

Now Accepting Applications

Eastern NC Summer Elementary School Engineering Camp



WITH SUPPORT FROM
The City of Havelock
Fleet Readiness Center East

ANNOUNCE THE 2024 EASTERN NORTH CAROLINA SUMMER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL ENGINEERING CAMP

Havelock Tourist & Event Center
July 22-26, 2024

Rising 4th, 5th and 6th graders

The Eastern Carolina Aviation Heritage Foundation will offer an exciting, aviation-themed weeklong summer day camp this July for elementary school students (rising fourth, fifth and sixth-graders) at the Havelock Tourist & Event Center.

The camp will provide students a fun and positive glimpse into various fields of engineering by using hands-on, creative investigations and real-world building activities. Throughout the week, students will work to design solutions to real world issues. They will be led by local elementary school teachers and engineering staff from the Fleet Readiness Center East. Students will be given the challenge to individually design and build various devices related to aviation and engineering. Students will learn engineering fundamentals by exploring various experiments related to aviation and safety.

The camp is from 8:30am – 12:00noon Monday through Friday and a snack is provided. No lunch is provided.

Cost for the camp is \$125 per student. Scholarships may be available for students with demonstrated financial need. Send no money until the selection process is complete and your child has received notification of acceptance.

If you are interested in sponsoring a camper, please contact Pam Holder at pholder@havelocknc.us.

The application process opens **February 1, 2024** and closes on **April 5, 2024**. To apply, go to www.ecaviationheritage.com and follow the link to “2024 Elementary Summer Camp” or use the QR Code at the top.

For more information, contact Pam Holder at (252) 444-4348 or email pholder@havelocknc.us.

Eastern NC Summer Middle and High School Engineering Camps at Craven Community College – Havelock Campus

Middle School Summer Aviation Camp: July 8-12, 2024
Middle School Summer Engineering Camp: July 15-19, 2024
High School 3D Printing Workshop: July 22-23, 2024
High School 3D Modeling Workshop: July 29-30, 2024



FOR MORE INFORMATION CALL 252-444-0739

Scan the QR Code

Board of Directors

MajGen Thomas A. Braaten, USMC (Ret)

Chairman

Mary Beth Fennell

Vice-Chair

Raymond E. Dunn, Jr.

Dunn, Pittman, Skinner & Ashton, PLLC

William L. Lewis

Havelock Mayor

Brenda K. Wilson

Havelock Commissioner

Chris McGee

Havelock City Manager

Col Jimmie Green, USMC (Ret)

Marine Corps Pilot

Col John Langdon, USMC (Ret)

Retired US Marine/Navy Seat

Rhonda Murray

MCAS Cherry Point

(Ex-Officio)

Adam Persky

Business Representative

Guy Nelson

At-Large Member

LtCol Barry Fetzer, USMC (Ret)

Historian

Timothy Clark

At-Large Member

Mark Meno

Fleet Readiness Center East

(Ex-Officio)

MGySgt Richard Hazlett, USMC (Ret)

Aviation Curator

Dr. Bill Fortney

NC State University



In August 1918 (WWI) a total of 300 women joined the Marine Corps Reserves and were called Marinettes.

31 October 1942 Secretary of the Navy authorized the Marine Corps to create a Women's Reserve.

On February 13, 1943 the Marine Corps Women's Reserve was activated.

At 12:06 pm on 26 March 1943, the first eighteen Women Marines arrived at Cherry Point. Their duties varied from clerk, motor transportation, air traffic control, aerial gunnery instructors to Overall & Repair (O&R now FRC-E) repairing aircraft and their components.

It was not until 1948 that women were able to become a permanent part of the Marine Corps. Today, women serve in all military occupations to include combat arms.

Assisted by SSgt Mendez, MALS 14 USMC



Please Join ECAHF Each Year

ECAHF needs your support to share the story of the advancement of military aircraft and those who have made it possible in eastern North Carolina. Your membership helps to provide resources to encourage students to acquire science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) skills through interactive exhibits and programs.

Together, our joint forces will recognize our neighbors' roles in advancing military aviation since 1942 when MCAS-Cherry Point was commissioned. In addition, your membership will help influence a new generation of aviation enthusiasts and skilled workers for the future. Be a part of this challenging and exciting mission.

Annual Membership

- Co-Pilot (Student Membership) \$25.00
- Pilot (Single Membership) \$35.00
- Squadron (Family Membership) \$50.00
- Wing (Business/Group Membership) \$250.00

Name: _____

Address: _____

City/State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone: _____

Email: _____

Payment Method: Cash Check Credit Card

Please call with credit card payment.

Visa or MasterCard Only

252-444-4348



Havelock Tourist & Event Center

201 Tourist Center Drive

PO Box 368

Havelock, NC 28532

Visit us online:

<https://ecaviationheritage.com/>

Email us at:

events@havelocknc.us



Charles Lindbergh visits Fort Bragg, NC on his Guggenheim Tour-1927

ECAHF Newsletter Winter 2024 Edition

By Barry R. Fetzner ECAHF Historian

One thing, of many things, enjoyable about being an amateur historian (in my case, there is a strong emphasis on the word “amateur”), is the thrill of the hunt, the searching for facts, the sleuthing for evidence, and finally, if I’m persistent and lucky enough, the discovery of truth and reality. This is a story of such a search for that reality, a search that is still not finished, and may never be. There are still many questions and answers to find. But I will keep trying as long as I can.

At my age, I don’t plan too far ahead because there’s not that much “far” left ahead of me. Most of my “far” is well behind me at this point. But, given that new discoveries may come in my searching and my sleuthing for the reality of my brother-in-law’s mystery, I will write about what I found again in a future edition of this ECAHF Newsletter as long as I’m graced with the ability to do so.

For many years, each time I visited my brother-in-law, Colonel Francis Eli Wishart, Jr., United States Army (retired) at his home in Columbia, SC, I admired a cut-off wooden propeller with a deep mahogany and polished patina, placed in a position of honor on the mantel of the fireplace in his library. I was intrigued by this prop, obviously a very early one, and questioned why it would be in the possession of a former infantry officer.

Querying my brother-in-law about this prop, he said it was his father’s, also a US Army officer and a veteran of both WWI and WWII. Francis Eli Wishart, Sr. served as an infantryman and then as an artillery officer in two World Wars. And during his many years of devoted service, he somehow came to own this propeller that his son, my brother-in-law, now lovingly displayed in his own home.



Francis Eli Wishart, Sr. (Left circa 1918 & Right circa 1945 as a Brevet BG). Wishart Family Photos.

Why would an infantryman and artillery officer have an old US Army Air Corps wooden prop? How might Colonel Francis Eli Wishart, Sr. have acquired this historic item?

Well, like many of us in the same, self-imposed dilemma regarding retrieving historical facts from our parents and relatives, my brother-in-law did not know the answer to these questions. Why? Like many of us who fail to ask historical details of our relatives (including me), he never asked.

Fast forward 20 years later, that wooden prop still in its position of honor on my brother-in-law's mantel. Eli and his wife, my wife's identical twin sister, are preparing to downsize and move. In a kind gesture and knowing of my interest in history and aviation, Eli offers me the prop. And, even more amazing, in going through papers in his file cabinet, Eli shows me the below, long-forgotten, 30-year-old newspaper clipping in his files from the Robesonian, the local paper in Lumberton, NC, where Eli grew up and a town in which his father was well known, small town that it was—and is even today.



Photograph of a front-page article from the August 8, 1993 edition of the Robesonian.

Photo is titled "Colonel Eli Wishart of Lumberton at Fort Bragg with famous aviator Charles Lindbergh."

Note crowd behind this photo of the Spirit of St. Louis, circa 1927. Attributed to photographer Horace Barnes.

Colonel Francis Eli Wishart, Sr., was not an aviator. However, his service, alone, in two world wars makes him a great subject for this series of ECAHF newsletter stories. During his WWII service, he even participated in the operation to liberate "Hitler's Lair", the *Eagles Nest* in

Berchtesgaden, where he brought home a war “trophy” of a silver metal aircraft model he found there.



Unidentified aircraft model liberated from Hitler’s “Eagles Nest” in 1945 by Colonel Francis Eli Wishart, Sr. The model looks more like a British Spitfire than any German aircraft with which I have been able to compare it. But if it is a Spitfire, why would it be in Hitler’s Lair? Perhaps a reader with better aircraft recognition skills than I might be able to identify it. Wishart Family Photo.

And Colonel Francis Eli Wishart, Sr. spawned a fellow US Army infantryman, his son and my brother-in-law Francis Eli Wishart, Jr., a Vietnam Veteran (with plenty of his own stories to tell), a Green Beret Special Forces officer (+ Airborne and Ranger), US Army Reserve Colonel (retired), and South Carolina Adjutant General and Commanding General of the SC State Guard. Eli, while the SC State Guard CG, was the officiating officer at my retirement from US Marines.

But it could be argued that his unlikely meeting with Charles Lindbergh, the “Lone Eagle” in 1927 and the possible connection of that wooden prop he kept for so many years to that visit, are what truly makes Colonel Francis Eli Wishart, Sr. an interesting subject for this column and our ECAHF newsletter.

So, while the topic of this column could be about Colonel Wishart, Sr.’s devoted service during two World Wars or his son, Eli’s, service during Vietnam and their father-son exploits as “ground pounders” in combat in the US Army, it is not. This column could be about Charles Lindbergh as one of history’s greatest aviators. There has been plenty written about Lindbergh and there’s more to be written too. But this column is not primarily about Charles Lindbergh either.

This column's focus is about Colonel Francis Eli Wishart Sr.'s date with destiny and his meeting of Charles Lindbergh in 1927 during Lindbergh's cross-country "Guggenheim Tour" celebration of one of aviation's greatest feats: the "Lone Eagle's" solo crossing of the Atlantic in May, 1927.



The Wishart Propellor. Fetzer Family photograph.

But more on Lindbergh's Guggenheim Tour later. First let's look at the above prop that is now in my custody thanks to my brother-in-law, Eli's, generosity. We don't know where it came from. Why would an artillery officer have something like this in his possession? Why would Eli's father possess and retain this old prop all those years, keeping it on his desk, and leaving it to his son unless it held some special significance?

The prop is not dated, but there is some evidence of its age from its design and from the stamped engravings on it and the age of the clock inserted into the hub. The no-longer-operating clock (in taking it apart I found a broken main spring) is a Westclox "Ben Hur" model made by the Western Clock Company, La Salle, Ill., patent dates 1918 and 1925, but historical Western Clock Company documents indicate this nickel-plated, "Ben Hur" model was introduced in 1927. From the design of the prop, it is likely the prop precedes the age of the clock. But how can we know the prop is older than 1927?

By the way, that 1927 "Ben Hur" introduction date mentioned above is interesting, because that's the same year Lindbergh made his iconic solo flight across the Atlantic. A little more on that famous flight later.

According to the website www.woodenpropeller.com/Propeller_Identification.html, "Older 'historic' props are usually eight feet or longer in length (associated with slower RPM of early aircraft engines) while modern wooden propellers are only six to eight feet in length. Early wooden propellers also typically have eight bolt holes and use darker woods such as mahogany or walnut.

"By contrast, modern propellers tend to have just six bolt holes and are made of lighter wood like ash or birch. The positive identification of wooden aircraft propellers can be frustrating, time consuming, and often very difficult.

"Positive identification of usage is made by correlation with a drawing number (also called design number, series number, etc.) that was stamped on the propeller at the time of manufacture. There were literally thousands of different models and designs even as early as WWI, and many newer designs were added after that.

“It is convenient to try to categorize wooden props into one of two categories, ‘Early’ and ‘Modern’. Early propellers are those designed and manufactured for aircraft engines prior to the advent of metal propellers. This generally encompasses a time frame that included WWI and earlier. All later propellers are classified as Modern. Shortly after the War, engine technology and propeller technology rapidly accelerated, and wooden propellers were quickly replaced by metal propellers operating at higher RPM’s. Modern propellers seem to far outnumber early propellers by almost 10 to 1.”

We can’t know exactly how long Colonel Wishart, Sr.’s cut down prop originally was, although from the remaining three and half feet of it, it could easily have been eight feet long (or longer). And it is a dark mahogany and has eight bolt holes (as opposed to the more modern six bolt holes).

But perhaps most interesting is the stamped information on the prop. The designation numbers engraved around the hub are: NO 13706 DIA 8-4 X2488 S.C. 30030. I have not been able to determine the type engine this prop was designed for from this designation number, one way to determine the prop’s age. But there is also an engraving of a four bladed symbol on the left of the hub with the letters USAAS, likely the abbreviation for the US Army Air Service.

Let’s look at the USAAS for just a moment and its role at the dawn of military aviation. From the US Department of Defense: “By 1907, the Army Signal Corps was preparing itself for flight—although it wasn’t yet sure by what means. It created an Aeronautical Division that consisted of three first lieutenants willing to work in the budding field of aviation.

“Two years later, on Aug. 2, 1909, the military began its grand aviation adventure when the Wright brothers delivered their first plane to the Signal Corps. The Army paid \$30,000 for the aircraft, a Wright A Flyer. It was given the name Signal Corps No. 1, but was generally just known as the Wright Military Flyer.”

From Wikipedia: “The Aviation Section, Signal Corps, was the aerial warfare service of the United States from 1914 to 1918, and a direct statutory ancestor of the United States Air Force. It absorbed and replaced the Aeronautical Division, Signal Corps, and conducted the activities of Army aviation until its statutory responsibilities were suspended by President Woodrow Wilson in 1918. The Aviation Section organized the first squadrons of the aviation arm and conducted the first military operations by United States aviation on foreign soil.

“The Aviation Section, Signal Corps was created by the 63rd Congress (Public Law 143) on 18 July 1914 after earlier legislation to make the aviation service independent from the Signal Corps died in committee. From July 1914 until May 1918, the aviation section of the Signal Corps was familiarly known by the title of its administrative headquarters component at the time, seen variously as the Aeronautical Division, Air Division, Division of Military Aeronautics, and others. For historic convenience, however, the air arm is most commonly referred to by its official designation, the Aviation Section, Signal Corps (ASSC), and is the designation recognized by the United States Air Force as its predecessor for this period.

“The United States Army Air Service (USAAS) (also known as the ‘Air Service’, ‘US Air Service’ and before its legislative establishment in 1920, the ‘Air Service, United States Army’) was the aerial warfare service component of the United States Army between 1918 and 1926.

It was established as an independent but temporary branch of the US War Department during World War I by two executive orders of President Woodrow Wilson: on May 24, 1918, replacing the Aviation Section, Signal Corps as the nation's air force; and March 19, 1919, establishing a military Director of Air Service to control all aviation activities. Its life was extended for another year in July 1919, during which time Congress passed the legislation necessary to make it a permanent establishment. The National Defense Act of 1920 assigned the Air Service the status of 'combatant arm of the line' of the United States Army with a major general in command."

So, based on the stamped engraving "USAAS" on Colonel Wishart, Sr.'s prop, its age can probably be bracketed between 1918 and 1926. Further research is needed, that research possibly determining the engine type from the designation number stamped on the prop (and therefore the aircraft model on which the prop was used).

So, while this column is mostly about Colonel Wishart, Sr.'s meeting with Lindbergh, we must leave Colonel Wishart, Sr. for a moment and recap Lindbergh's early training and his flight across the Atlantic to ultimately get to Lindbergh's subsequent 48 state Guggenheim Tour celebrating his famous solo flight. It was the Guggenheim Tour that led to Colonel Wishart, Sr.'s chance meeting with Lindbergh.

According to the Minnesota Historical Society, "Lindbergh stated in his book *The Spirit of St. Louis*: 'Air Service pilots' wings were like a silver passport to the realm of flight. With them went the right to fly all military airplanes.' With that knowledge, he enrolled in the Army's flight school, which gave him the training he needed to pursue a career in aviation.



Second Lieutenant Charles A. Lindbergh. Source: Minnesota Historical Society Collections.

"On March 14, 1925, Lindbergh graduated, finishing first in his class". Lindbergh was commissioned as a second lieutenant in the US Army Reserves.

The fact that Lindbergh was a commissioned US Army officer and pilot relates, potentially, to both the photograph of him with Colonel Wishart, Sr. and to the mystery wooden prop. But before that, a quick recap of Lindbergh's flight across the Atlantic.

According to the National Park Service's document [American Aviation Heritage](http://www.nps.history.com/publications/nhl/theme-studies/aviation.pdf) found at <http://www.nps.history.com/publications/nhl/theme-studies/aviation.pdf>, "Charles Lindbergh's solo nonstop transatlantic flight from New York to Paris in 1927 provided a huge boost to the popularization of aviation. As the most dramatic stimulus to the American public's air-mindedness during the early history of powered flight, Lindbergh's flight sparked "a celebration unlike anything ever witnessed in American public life."¹ (This celebration culminated in the Guggenheim Tour to be discussed below.)

"In 1919, Raymond Orteig, a New York hotel owner, had offered \$25,000 to the first aviator to fly nonstop from New York to Paris. Eight years later, the prize money was still unclaimed. Lindbergh, a former barnstormer and Army Air Service pilot, was a chief pilot with the Robertson Aircraft Corporation in St. Louis, Missouri. He persuaded nine St. Louis businessmen to share the \$10,580 cost of a custom-built airplane so he could pursue the prize. He chose an M-2 strut-based, single-engine monoplane built by the Ryan Flying Company, which he named the Spirit of St. Louis.

"On May 20, 1927, Lindbergh taxied his aircraft down the rainy runway at Roosevelt Field in Mineola, New York. Using a magnetic compass to navigate, the 25-year-old aviator—dubbed the 'Flying Kid' and the 'Flying Fool' by a skeptical press corps—charted a 3,610-mile course over the Atlantic Ocean. Thirty-three and a half hours after leaving New York, Lindbergh made aviation history when he landed at Le Bourget field near Paris.

"Back in New York, Lindbergh received a hero's welcome from four million people. Other cities celebrated as well. President Calvin Coolidge awarded Lindbergh the first-ever Distinguished Flying Cross and the US Congress presented him with the Congressional Medal of Honor. His flight became 'the turning point...[as] the United States took its place as the leader in world aviation for the first time since the Wright brothers.'"²

Now on to the Guggenheim Tour. Only two months after returning to the US from Paris following Lindbergh's solo, nonstop flight across the Atlantic, according to <http://www.charleslindbergh.com/history/log.asp>, "The tour of the United States, started at Mitchel Field, Long Island, New York, July 20, 1927, and ended back at Mitchel Field on October 23, 1927. It was sponsored by the 'Daniel Guggenheim Fund for the Promotion of Aeronautics'. The excessive time spent in flying between many of the cities visited on his tour was caused by requests from other cities whose inhabitants wished to see the Spirit of St. Louis circle overhead.

¹ Joseph J. Corn, *The Winged Gospel: America's Romance with Aviation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 17; quote, R. G. Grant, *Flight: 100 Years of Aviation* (New York: DK Publishing, 2002), 120.

² R. G. Grant, *Flight: 100 Years of Aviation* (New York: Dorling Kindersley Publishing, 2002), 120. Grant also writes that Lindbergh's popularity "has never been adequately explained." Although the flight was a considerable feat, two other pilots beat Lindbergh's flight in both speed and distance only two weeks later

“Also, extra time was usually allowed for the possibility of encountering head winds and having to detour weather areas enroute. On several occasions, long ‘*exploration*’ detours (emphasis added) were made over interesting portions of the country. The tour, outlined in the below map, consumed 260 hours and 45 minutes of flying time, and covered about 22,000 miles. Eighty-two stops were made. Extremely well-planned and scripted, the Spirit of St. Louis arrived late only once (at Portland, Maine, because of fog).”



The Guggenheim Tour Route. Note Lindbergh's flight in the circle right over the Sandhills of NC.

Courtesy of www.charleslindebergh.com/history

I attempted to determine whether there was any official record of Lindbergh visiting Fort Bragg during the Guggenheim Tour (again, it was likely Pope Field where the photograph of Lindbergh and Colonel Wishart, Sr. was taken, not Fort Bragg), Pope Field which was...and is still today...a part of the Fort Bragg (now Fort Liberty) “complex”. I reviewed the Spirit of St. Louis flight logs available at <http://www.charleslindebergh.com/history/log.asp>. Nothing in the flight logs indicate a Pope Field (or Fort Bragg) landing. I did on-line research and researched several biographies of Lindbergh as well. No mention anywhere of Lindbergh landing at Pope Field or Fort Bragg.

But it is evident from the photographic evidence that Lindbergh DID make an unscheduled landing, most likely during his Guggenheim Tour, and most likely at Pope Field, five months after his solo flight across the Atlantic. It was possibly one of those ‘exploration detours’ mentioned above that led to the meeting between Lindbergh and Colonel Wishart, Sr., despite the “extremely well-planned and scripted” itinerary of his nationwide tour.

From the NC Department of Natural and Cultural Resources (NCDCCR.gov): “(During the Guggenheim Tour) on October 14, 1927, Charles Lindbergh landed at Lindley Field in

Greensboro, NC to celebrate its opening. He flew via Gaffney, SC, over Salisbury, Lexington, and landed at Greensboro and then Winston-Salem, NC according to his official itinerary.

“Greensboro businessmen in the 1920s touted their city as the site for a major airport, their city being the mid-point between northern cities and those in the Deep South. Leaders from Greensboro, High Point and Winston-Salem worked to establish an air field on property purchased by Guilford County and Greensboro in 1927. Drawing visitors to the opening ceremony for Lindley Field was national hero Charles Lindbergh in his famous airplane, Spirit of St. Louis.

“As a result of his tour, interest in the uses of air flight, particularly the use of air mail, exploded. Lindbergh’s Greensboro visit, one of only two in North Carolina during the tour, highlighted the potential prominence of the city as an aviation center.”

This route over NC as depicted in the above map and near the tail end of his Guggenheim Tour, would have taken him well within the distance necessary for a quick “drop-in” visit of Pope Field to get a military and Army Airfield “fix” (Lindbergh was a reserve US Army officer and pilot after all), an unplanned visit not listed on his tightly-scripted official itinerary.

So, let’s try to tie up some of the loose ends of this detective story and go back to Colonel Wishart, Sr. and his unlikely visit with a national hero in October, 1927. Colonel Wishart, Sr. was, based his son’s memories of his dad’s service, likely visiting Fort Bragg as an artillery officer on October 14, 1927.

Historical note: The US Army’s Field Artillery Board was transferred to Fort Bragg on February 1, 1922. Camp Bragg was renamed Fort Bragg, to signify becoming a permanent Army post, on September 30, 1922.

Here’s a recap of communication between my brother-in-law, Eli, and me regarding the photo of Lindbergh and his dad together:

Barry to Eli: “In doing research on your dad and his visit with Lindbergh at Fort Bragg, was your dad the Commanding Officer of Fort Bragg in 1927? If not, why would he have met with Lindbergh instead of the base CO or some other high-ranking brass or political muckity-muck, per the attached photo? Any ideas?”

Eli to Barry: “He was not the CO at Fort Bragg. But he was the military aide to the NC Governor at the time and CO of the National Guard in Lumberton, NC. Maybe he was representing Governor Angus McLean (NC Governor 1925-1929) in greeting Lindbergh. But exactly why he was photographed with Lindbergh is one of those many things that didn't interest me until it was too late to ask.”

Sometimes, as Occam's Razor suggests, the simplest explanation is the best one. Occam’s Razor, put simply (as quoted from Wikipedia), states: “The simplest solution is almost always the best. It's a problem-solving principle arguing that simplicity is better than complexity. Named after 14th-century logician and theologian William of Ockham, this theory has been helping many great thinkers (and by the way, I don’t claim to be one of these ‘great thinkers’) for centuries.”

Now, back to Colonel Wishart Sr.'s historic, wooden prop displayed lovingly in his home for years and most likely dating from 1918-1926 with the 1927 Ben-Hur Westclox mounted in the hub. Could this prop have come from Lindbergh himself?

If you look closely at the picture of Colonel Wishart, Sr. in the photo of him standing to Lindbergh's left in front of the Spirit of St. Louis, Colonel Wishart, Sr. appears to be holding something behind his back. Could it be, embarrassed by a gift from the world's most famous man, he's hiding it from the photographer? Could it be that the wooden prop was a gift from Lindbergh, as any good and thoughtful military officer might do, making a presentation to the dignitary who was greeting him, the man welcoming him back to his roots as a US Army aviator and to United States Army Air Field Pope Field?

Could it be that the simplest explanation for how my brother-in-law's father—an artillery officer with no connection to early Army aviation—came by this prop is that Lindbergh, on his cross-country victory tour (the Gugenheim Tour) after his historic flight across the Atlantic, presented this prop to Colonel Wishart, Sr. during his visit to Pope Field/Fort Bragg?

I am obviously human and hope that what we have in this prop is a historic item that Lindbergh touched. But historically-minded humans, must be careful to not "wish" something that "may be" into something that "is". We must be wary of hoping for something to be true, hoping for it so much, that we color the facts (and color them *way* outside the lines) to agree with our hopes.

This is, again, a part of what makes history so interesting. Surmising and guessing—educated guessing—provides leads to new facts. It is possible the prop I now possess came from Lindbergh. But would Occam's Razor, instead, suggest the simplest explanation is that a US Army aviator friend gave the prop to Colonel Wishart, Sr. and that it had nothing to do with Lindbergh?



Charles Lindbergh, "the Flying Kid", in front of his Ryan NYP Spirit of St. Louis in St. Louis, Missouri.

Photo credit: National Air and Space Museum

We can't and never will know everything about this little mystery. Much is lost to the "dustbin of history". But we can, with patience and grit, persevere in our relentless quest to discover the truth. What we do know is that Colonel Francis Eli Wishart, Sr, met the most famous man in the world in 1927 at (likely) Pope Field. We know Colonel Wishart, Sr. was given this prop by somebody. But who? We know two Army officers—Wishart and Lindbergh—met together in an unlikely (especially for Colonel Wishart, Sr.) meeting in an atmosphere of joy and celebration over a risky and improbable (for the time) world-record feat of aviation. We know it was then, and still is today, appropriate to recognize important events, one military man to another, with memorable presentation gifts. And we know Lindbergh would, as an Army aviator, have access to used and no longer serviceable wooden props. These facts are really not disputable and they're worth something in sleuthing this mystery.

But just the thought of the possibility of this prop's association with Lindbergh and my brother-in-law's dad's part in it? And the knowledge of two Colonel Wishart's, both the senior and the junior's, selfless and devoted roles together in defending our nation all the long way from WWI through Lindbergh's feat and into the 21st Century? Priceless!



Join us in protecting and promoting eastern NC's aviation history and heritage and encouraging our youth's interests in aviation and in studying science, technology, engineering and math subjects in school.

<https://ecaviationheritage.com/>