

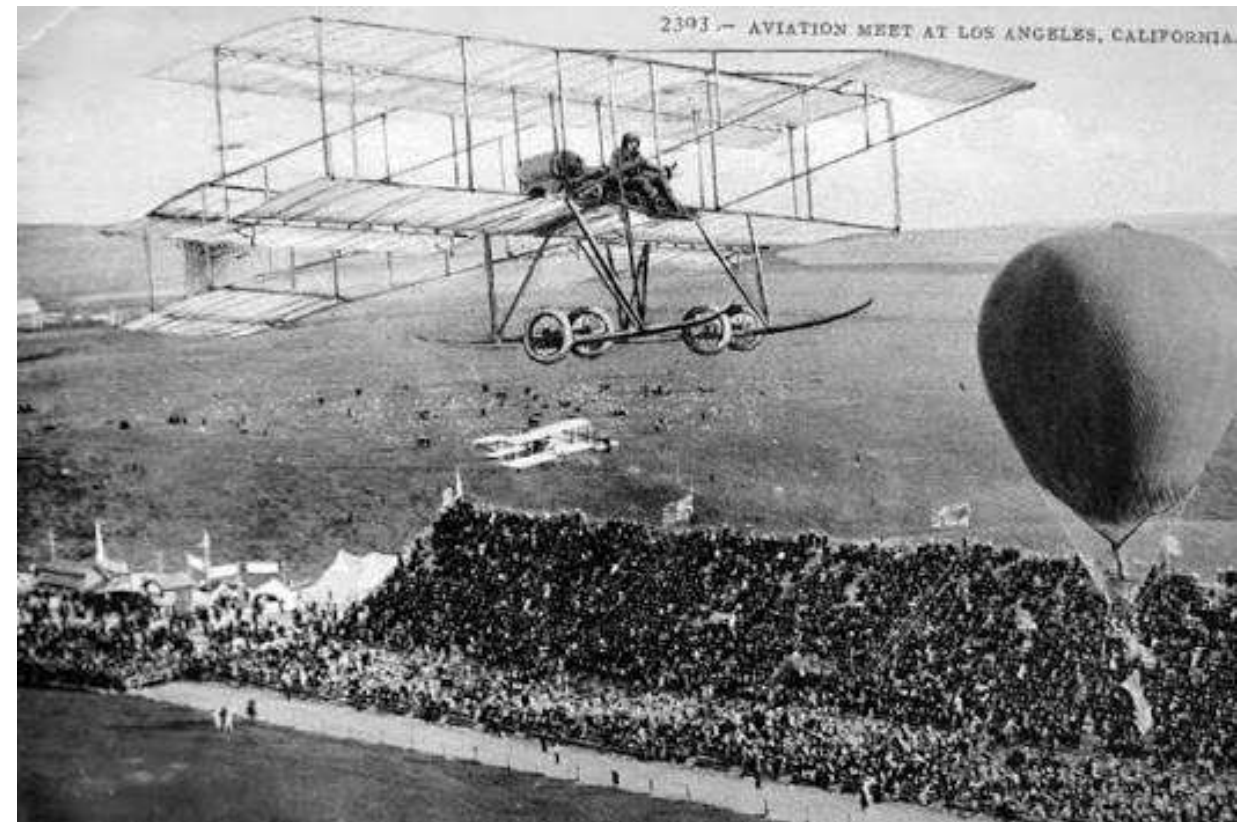
KSOP Air Racing Seminar-

Early Air Racing History- beginnings – 1930s

Aug. 15, 2026



The U.S. Start- The LA Air Meets- 254,000 spectators



LA Air Meet Highlights



The French star aviator soared to an incredible height of 4,164 feet, shattering previous world marks.



Endurance Flight: Paulhan completed a 45-mile cross-country flight lasting 1 hour and 49 minutes.



Pioneer Competitors: American aviation icon Glenn Curtiss and local pilot Charles Willard also thrilled the massive crowds with competitive speed and distance runs. [[1](#), [2](#), [3](#)]

Prize Winners

- Frenchman Louis Paulhan dominated the Dominguez meet, winning \$19,000 in prize money with the following accomplishments:
- New flight endurance record; carrying a passenger almost 110 miles (177 kilometers) in his [Farman III](#) biplane in 1 hour, 49 minutes.
- New altitude mark of approximately 4,164 feet (1,269 m).
- He also performed several aerial feats during the week, and carried U.S. Army 1st Lieutenant [Paul W. Beck](#) aloft on January 19 for one of the first tests of aerial bomb-dropping.
- Glenn Curtiss set a new air speed record of approximately 55 miles per hour (89 kilometers per hour), and took home the prize for the best quick start. In all, he won approximately \$6,500.

- LA Air Meet select Prizes
- \$10,000.00 for "the machine which, carrying two or more persons, breaks all worlds records for duration, altitude, distance and speed."
- \$7,500.00 for "the machine making the best general average in all events."
- \$5,000.00 for setting a new height record.
- \$5,000.00 for setting a new endurance record.
- \$500.00 for "the circuit of least diameter."
- \$500.00 for the shortest take-off time.
- \$500.00 for the shortest take-off distance.
- \$500.00 for the "greatest ability during flight (general average)."
- \$500.00 for the longest glide with the motor shut off.
- \$500.00 for the "best general average in landing at a given point."

The Pulitzer Races 1920 - 1925



1920 November 25 Long Island, New York – Mitchel Field



1921 November 3–5 Omaha, Nebraska, Omaha Field



1922 October 12–14 Detroit, Michigan Selfridge Field



1923 October 4–6 St. Louis, Missouri – St. Louis Flying Field



1924 October 2–4 Dayton, Ohio – Wilbur Wright Field



1925 October 10–12 Long Island, New York – Mitchel Field



Pulitzer Trophy

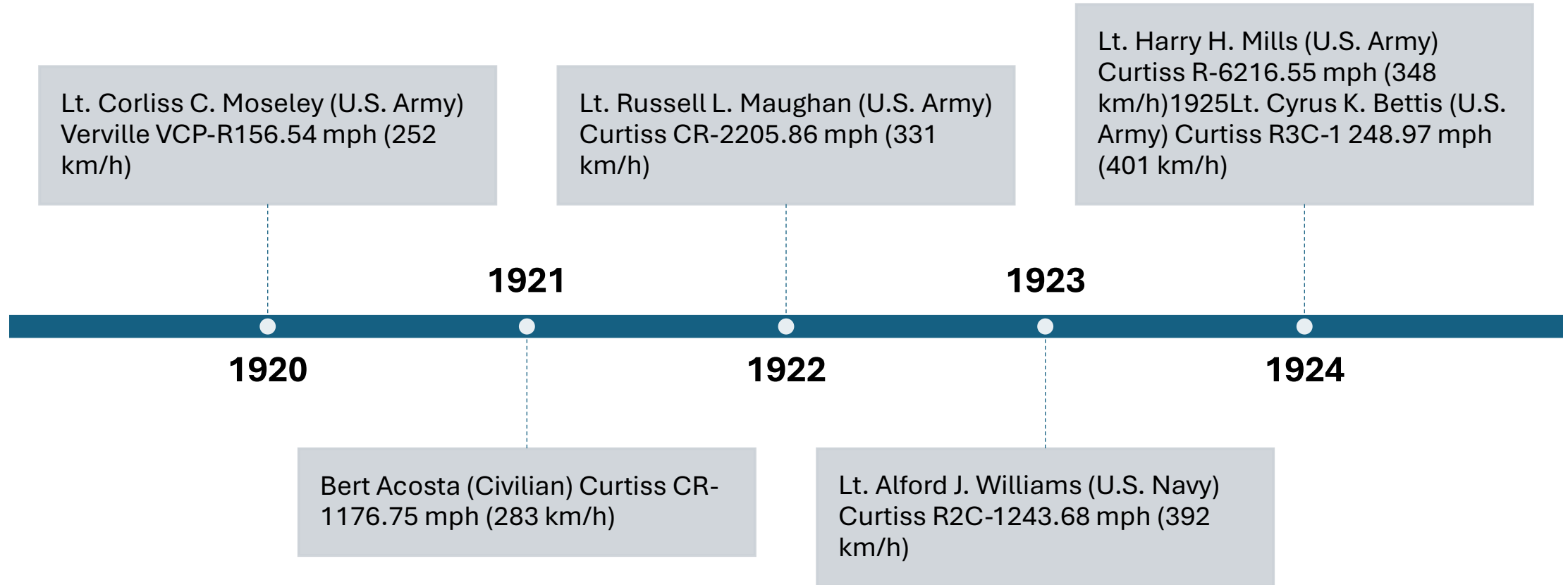
1925 First National Air Races

The Final Pulitzer race
was the first National
Air Race

It was here that the
Thompson and
Bendix Trophies were
launched

Focus shifted from
military aircraft to
civilian when the
military stopped
competing.

Pulitzer Race Highlights





Curtiss R2C-1 Racer mid-1920's (248.97 mph). D-12 Engine 507 HP



1925 Schneider Trophy seaplane races – Jimmy Doolittle



Bendix and Thompson Trophies- Land planes

Thompson 1930- Short Pylon Racing



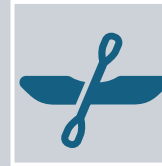
Bendix 1931- Long Cross Country Racing



Thompson Race Rules



Aircraft taking part had to be seaworthy, having to float for six hours and travel about 550 yards on water.



Twice during the flight they had to land on or "come in contact" with the water (which allowed contestants to carry out a fast bouncing maneuver). If the pontoons took on water, the flight had to continue with the added weight.



Each competition was to be held in and managed by the country currently holding the trophy.



If a country won three consecutive races, as the British finally did, they would retain the trophy permanently and the winning pilot would receive 75,000 French francs for each of the first three wins.



NATIONAL AIR RACES

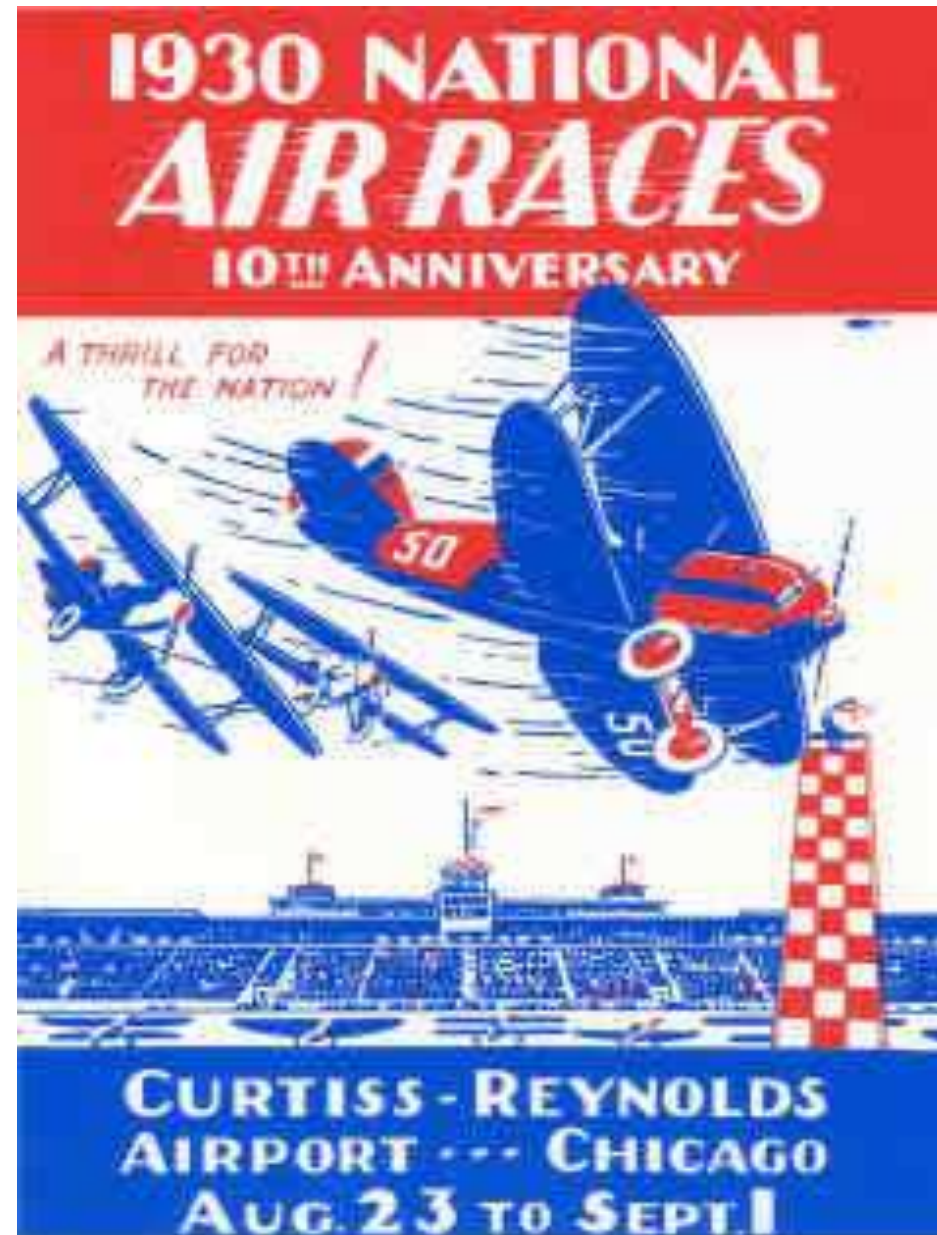
AUG. 27 *to* SEPT. 5
— CLEVELAND —

HIGHER SPEEDS • GREATER THRILLS
GIGANTIC NIGHT SPECTACLE
Seat Prices Greatly Reduced
FREE AUTO PARKING

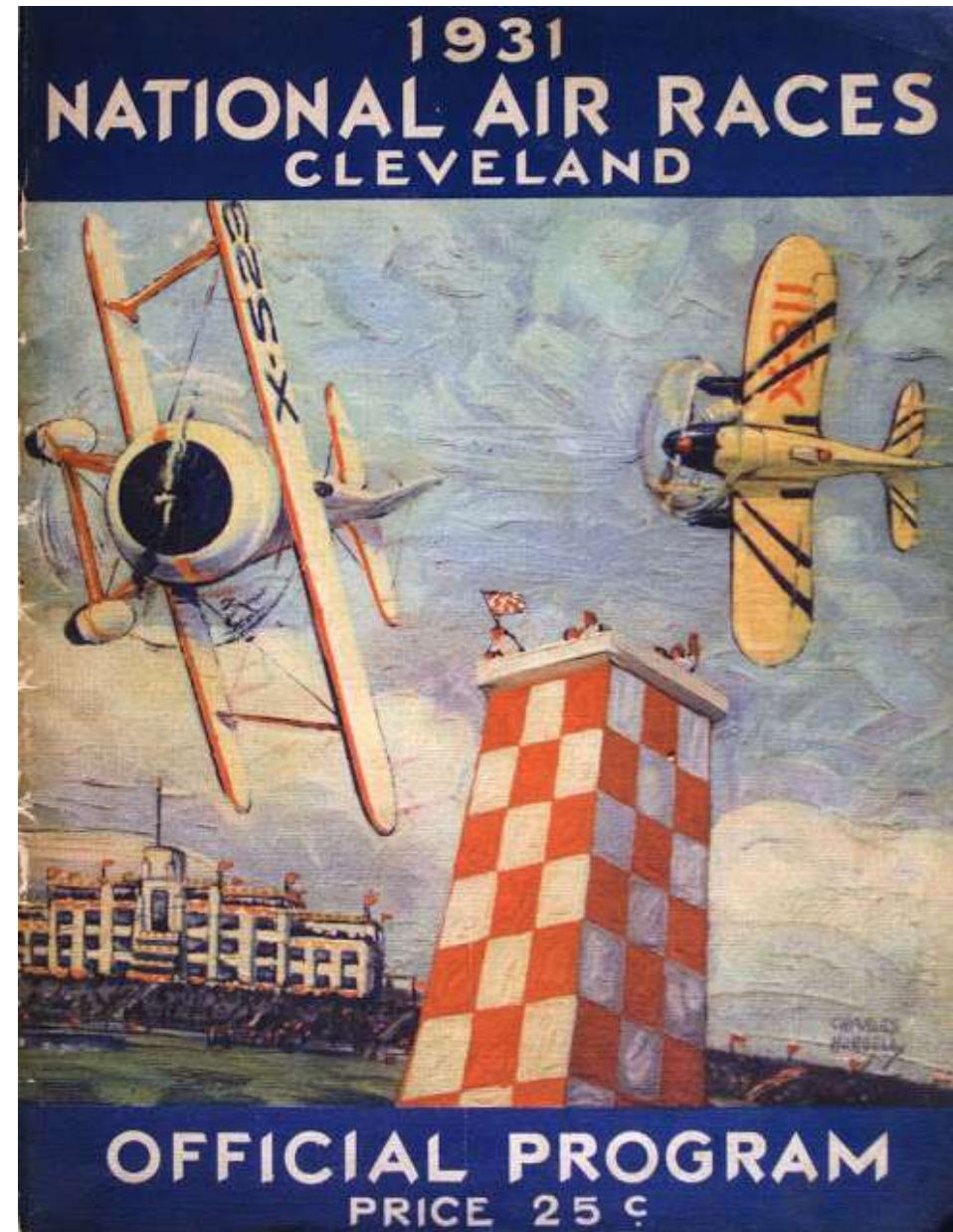
1929- Air Racing
went to Cleveland
OH

10 day meet, 100K spectators

1930
Chicago Air
Races (1
year)

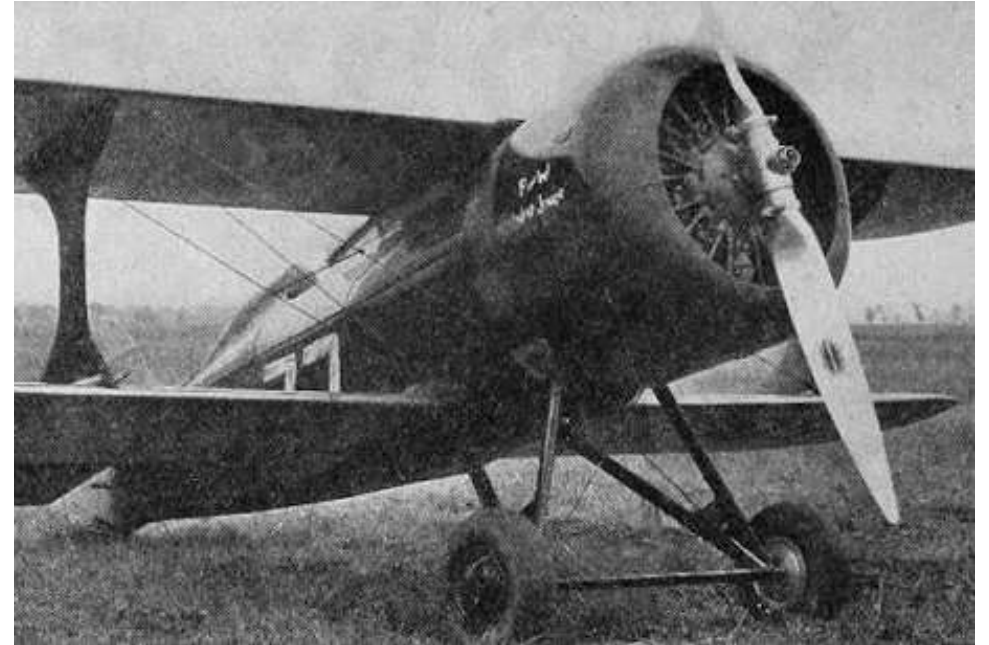


1931 Back to
Cleveland
until the war



Late 20's – 1930s Races- Highlights

- 1929 Douglas Davis won in the “Mystery Ship”. 1st monoplane to compete
- 1930- Last Biplane winner- A “Laird Solution” Pilot Speed Holman (Chicago)
- 1931- Lowell Bayles- GeeBee Z
- 1932 GeeBee R-1 (252 mph)
- Roscoe Turner (and Gilmore) won in 1934, 1938, and 1939



Innovations driven by air racing in the 20's and 30's

- NACA cowling- allowed more powerful engines- better cooling and less drag
- Retractable landing gear
- Variable pitch props
- Supercharging
- P&W Wasp family of engines
- Monocoque Fuselage
- Higher Altitudes, Longer Ranges, All Weather and Night Flying
- Winning WWII in doubt without Air Racing (IMHO), at least in 4 years.

