

Hiller Aviation Museum Exhibit Safari

California Aviation History

The Golden State Takes Flight

ANSWER KEY

1. The 1911 Tanforan Air Meet was held near the major city of San Francisco, California.

The earliest major air shows in the United States were held at Dominguez, California (near Los Angeles) and Tanforan, on land in present-day San Bruno and Burlingame. Most modern air shows are intended primarily for entertainment, but these early air meets served as an important public showcase for the newest developments in aviation. At a time when seeing any airplane was still a novelty, such meets proved extremely popular.

2. A larger version of the Marriott Avitor was intended to carry passengers from New York to California for what purpose?

The Avitor was conceived as a fast, convenient means of transportation to California's gold fields. At that time the fastest journey from New York to California required an ocean voyage to Panama, an arduous land crossing of Central America, and another long ocean voyage to San Francisco. However, the transcontinental railroad was completed in 1869, the same year the small test version of the Avitor flew. It was not until the 1930s that aircraft could cross the continent more quickly and more safely than passenger trains.

3. Professor John Montgomery designed his gliders and taught aeronautics at what Bay Area university?

Santa Clara University, then known as Santa Clara College.

Montgomery was inspired to study aeronautics when he observed an early flight of the unmanned Avitor. He designed, built and flew several gliders but was best known for the one that carried the name of his school, the Santa Clara.

4. The Black Diamond Airplane was built in the shipyards of Antioch, California, and first flew near the modern town of Pittsburg.

The Black Diamond was not an original design, but rather was a Curtiss Pusher built under license by a pair of East Bay aviation enthusiasts. It set several altitude and duration records at the Dominguez Air Meet in 1912.

5. Wind tunnel research was conducted at Stanford University to investigate propeller design and efficiency.

The Wright Brothers were the first aeronautical designers to fully appreciate the role of propeller shape in an airplane's performance. During the late 1910s and early- to mid-1920s, Stanford University took a leading role in propeller research and design by building and operating a wind tunnel dedicated to propellers. This research was supported by the National Advisory Council on Aeronautics (NACA), predecessor of our modern NASA. NACA later established the Ames Research Center in Mountain View.

6. Where in California did the first transcontinental (Atlantic to Pacific) flight end in 1911?

Long Beach. It took pilot Calbraith Rodgers nearly two months to make the flight from Long Island to Long Beach in his Wright EX biplane, a trip marked by multiple breakdowns and several minor crashes. Today, jet airliners fly this route nonstop in just five hours.

7. The Hiller helicopter factory in Palo Alto, California, built thousands of helicopters during the 1950s and 1960s.

Hiller Aircraft (briefly known as United Helicopters in the 1940s) was the most prolific manufacturer of rotary-winged aircraft in the late 1940s and early 1950s. The factory on Willow Ave near the Dumbarton Bridge produced several thousand Hiller-designed helicopters.

8. SpaceShipOne landed at Mojave Spaceport in California's high desert following each of its flights.

SpaceShipOne was built by Scaled Composites in Mojave, California, in the high desert northeast of Los Angeles. During its flights in 2003 and 2004, SpaceShipOne and White Knight, its carrier aircraft, operated from Mojave Airport, which was renamed Mojave Spaceport as a result of these pioneering civilian flights into suborbital space.

9. The Grumman Albatross flew around the world following the route taken by Amelia Earhart in 1937. Both flights started at Oakland Airport in California.

Amelia Earhart and her crew departed Oakland International Airport in a Lockheed Electra airplane on May 20, 1937, intending to circumnavigate the world flying eastbound in a mission broken down into many legs. On July 2 Earhart and her navigator, Fred Noonan, departed New Guinea on a planned leg of over 2,500 nautical miles to the small atoll of Howland Island. Earhart and Noonan were unable to find Howland Island and disappeared, sparking a mystery that persists today.

10. What major body of water separates SFO and OAK airports?

San Francisco Bay. Both San Francisco and Oakland airports are visible on the Sectional Chart mounted next to the observation windows on the Mezzanine Level. These two airports, along with Moffett Federal Airfield and San Jose Airport, are the four airports able to accommodate large jet transports in the Bay Area.