

Foundation, P.O. Box 80337, RDU Airport, North Carolina 27623, or call 919-840-2003.

Aviation and aerospace industries, along with professional organizations, have expressed strong interest in the celebration and, as 2003 draws near, more groups and organizations will join the commemoration. Congress is considering legislation for the establishment of a national commission. North Carolina has established the First Flight Centennial Commission to develop events honoring the first flight. The Commission has already begun a major education effort within the North Carolina school system. The 2003 Committee, established in the Wright brothers' hometown of Dayton, Ohio, leads the observation in Ohio. NPS staff at the Wright Memorial are working with the staff at Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park, which was established October 16,

1992, to commemorate the contribution of the Wrights and the early development of aviation in the Dayton, Ohio, area.

*Mary Doll is Superintendent of the Wright Brothers National Memorial.*

*Jill Hanson is a historian with the NPS Southeast Support Office in Atlanta.*

## NPS Sites Related to Aviation History

**Crissy Field at Presidio of San Francisco, Golden Gate National Recreation Area**

**Dayton Aviation Heritage National Historical Park, Dayton, Ohio**

**Floyd Bennett Field, Gateway National Recreation Area, Brooklyn, New York**

**Indiana Dunes National Lakeshore, Porter, Indiana**

**Wright Brothers National Memorial, Kill Devil Hills, North Carolina**

*—Compiled by Ann Deines, historian  
Dayton Aviation Heritage  
National Historical Park*

Liam Strain

## Floyd Bennett Field Gateway of Flight

**F**loyd Bennett Field, now part of the Breezy Point/Jamaica Bay Unit of Gateway National Recreation Area, played an important role in New York City's aviation history. The field was New York's municipal airport from 1930 to 1941 and the site of many record-breaking flights and technological advances during the Golden Age of Aviation.

Floyd Bennett's superior facilities, including steel-reinforced concrete runways, 10 million candlepower lights for night operations, and one of the first directional radio beacons, made it an ideal location for record-breaking transcontinental and transatlantic flights. The airfield was also used for the Bendix Cup airplane races. One of the more colorful pilots who broke records at Floyd Bennett was Roscoe Turner, who flew with a live lion cub. The media attention generated by these

flights helped change public perceptions of aviation, which was still a novel means of travel.

Floyd Bennett Field was also the site of several technical innovations. Among the breakthroughs associated with the field are the Sperry autopilot used by Wiley Post in his 1933 around-the-world flight; Howard Hughes' global communications network created for his 1938 around-the-world flight; and a helicopter wench developed by Igor Sigorsky. Floyd Bennett also saw the first rotor-wing aircraft used for police work.

Today, the NPS interprets the contributions of Floyd Bennett Field to aviation history. Gateway NRA has developed the Historic Aircraft Restoration Project (H.A.R.P.), a Volunteers-In-Parks program dedicated to restoring vintage aircraft acquired by the park. The park also preserves eight original hangars, the original Administration Building (including the control tower), other related buildings, and the original runways and taxiway in its Historic District. Much more will be done to preserve and interpret Floyd Bennett Fields historic structures to help the public understand its aviation heritage.

*Liam Strain is a park ranger at Gateway National Recreation Area.*