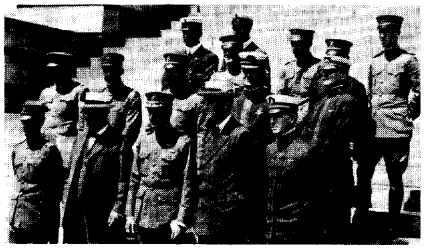
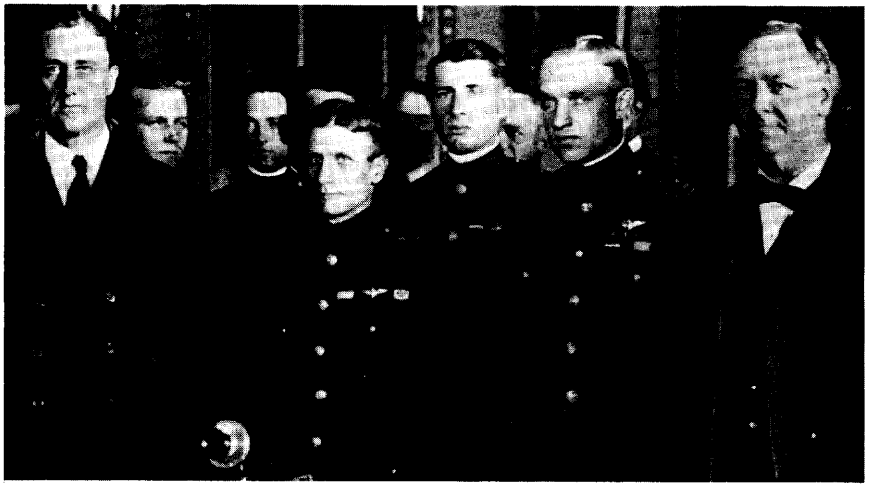


Norfolk Museum

WIVES *of the returning NC flyers await ship in Hoboken, N.J. (above left). Crews pose for photograph in Washington (left). The medallion (above) was presented to all hands by Glenn Curtiss at congratulatory banquet held in their honor in July 1919.*

. . . and a triumphant return!



NAVY 'WELL DONE' *is expressed at a ceremony held in the Secretary's office. Left to right are Roosevelt, McCulloch, Byrd, Read, Hinton, Towers and Secretary of Navy Josephus Daniels. Meanwhile, the NC-4 was being overhauled and prepared for an extensive Navy recruiting tour. The crew was honored by foreign decorations, but it was not until ten years later, in 1929, that a special medal (below) was struck by an Act of Congress. (Note misspelling of Chief Rhoads' name.)*

VISION

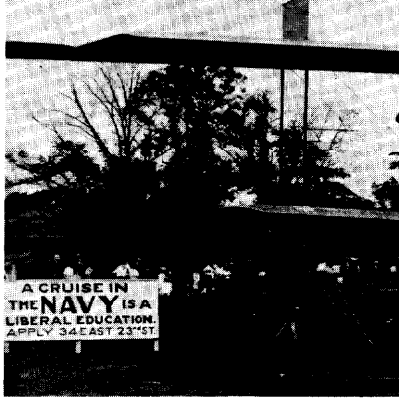
EARLY IN 1919, a young Naval Aviator wrote an article which was published in the *Yale Graphic* regarding the preparations of the NC boats. He predicted that the expedition would "demonstrate that a flight across the Atlantic Ocean is a perfectly safe and sane commercial proposition and not a gigantic gamble." The visionary author was Juan Terry Trippe, destined to be founder, president and then chairman of the board, Pan American World Airways.

On May 20, 1939, 20 years to the day that the NC-4 flew from Horta to Ponta Delgada, Trippe was standing on a pier at Port Washington, New York, just on the other side of Long Island from Rockaway. He was watching the takeoff of his *Yankee Clipper* which was inaugurating the first regular trans-Atlantic air mail service.

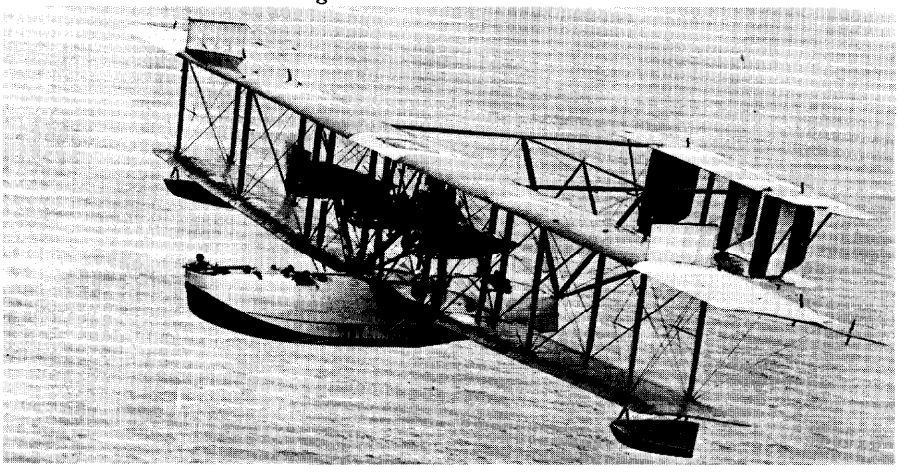
The *Yankee Clipper* was a Boeing 314 flying boat, three times the weight of the NC-4. Just one of her Wright *Cyclone* engines had almost as much power as the NC-4's four *Liberty's*. Two days later, after a stop in Horta, the *Yankee Clipper* was in Lisbon. A month later, the *Dixie Clipper*, a sister ship, made the first flight of scheduled passenger service across the Atlantic.

It was 20 years between the historic, pathfinding flight of the NC-4 and regular mail and passenger service. One can wonder who was the greater visionary in 1919: Juan Trippe, who predicted such a flight would be "safe and sane," or LCdr. Albert C. Read who wrote, "Anyone in the present age of new and startling inventions who says positively that we will never attain an altitude of 60,000 feet, will never fly at 500 miles an hour, or will never be able to cross to Europe in the forenoon and return in the afternoon, is a most courageous person, with a courage similar to that of those doubters in the olden days who proclaimed that iron or steel ships would never be successful."

Trippe and Read were both right.



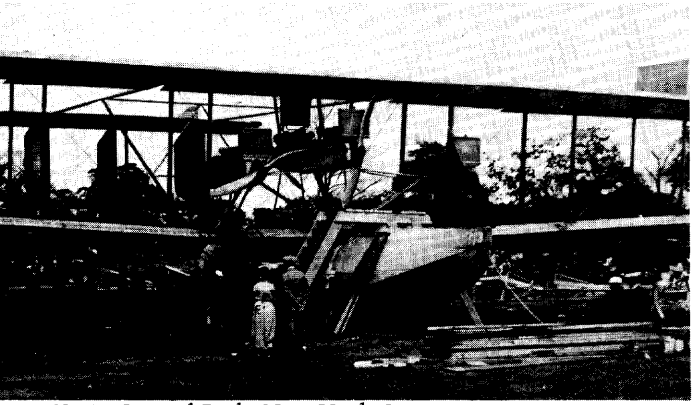
Overhauled NC-4 on recruiting tour in November 1919.



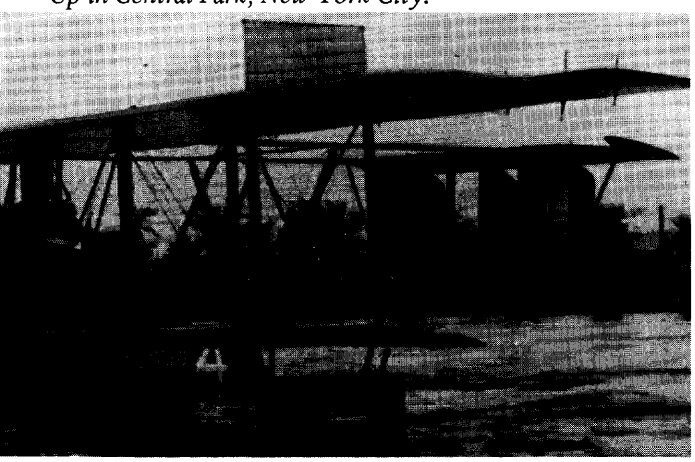
NC-9 made final operational flight in November 1922.

THE FIRST MAN *to fly the Atlantic,*

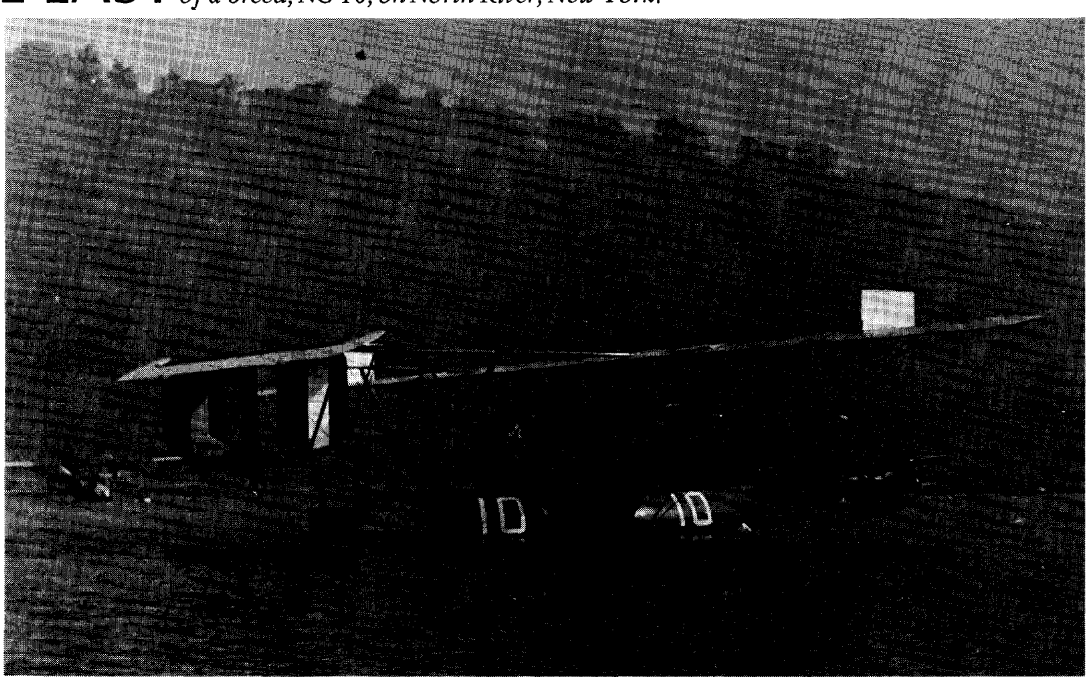
Albert C. Read, took the NC-4 on a recruiting tour of 39 cities after his famous flight. During WW II, Rear Admiral Read served as Commander, Fleet Air Norfolk. In the photo at right, he conducts an inspection aboard USS Guadalcanal in 1944. . . . A total of ten NC-4 flying boats were built. The NC-5 through -10 were constructed in a three-engine configuration. Three of the planes were lost owing to difficulties associated with open sea landings and subsequent attempts to have-them towed by ship.



Up in Central Park, New York City.



On Anacostia River, Washington, D. C.

NC-5, damaged under tow, was sunk by gunfire in 1921.

THE LAST *of a breed, NC-10, on North River, New York.*