

LINDBERGH'S 1927 VISIT TO WISCONSIN

by Harry H. Anderson

Late in August, 1927 a considerable crowd of Milwaukeeans, certainly including members of the local Swedish American community, gathered at the lakefront in Juneau Park for a welcoming reception to honor the then most popular hero of the day, both in the United States and throughout the world, Charles A. Lindbergh, the young aviation enthusiast and airmail pilot whose solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean has taken place barely three months earlier.

Lindbergh's visit to Milwaukee was part of a cross-country tour of important cities in this country which also included a later stop at the state capital in Madison, and some 80 other visits to major centers for air travel in the U. S. The principal purpose of this effort was to stimulate popular interest in aviation and to encourage development of more urban air fields and demonstrate the reliability of air travel.

Arrangements for the visit of "Lucky Lindy" and his plane, "The Spirit of St. Louis," to Wisconsin involved his arrival on a Saturday afternoon at the Milwaukee County Airport (today's General Mitchell Field). From there a 15 car motorcade escorted the visitor to downtown Milwaukee's Juneau Park, passing through thousands of cheering spectators lining the curbsides enroute. A special grandstand had been erected on Lincoln Memorial Bridge where the official welcome was made along with formal addresses by Lindbergh and local dignitaries.

Following this, while enroute to a local hotel, Lindbergh remarked to a reporter that his welcome to Milwaukee had been "the most orderly reception I have received so far." He also praised the city for its progress in the area of aviation, probably referring to the then recent developments at today's Mitchell Field.

On the evening of August 20, more than 800 guests attended a dinner at the Pfister Hotel in Lindbergh's honor where he again spoke, as did several local dignitaries. These included Major Daniel Webster Hoan who observed that Lindbergh "did more for us in Europe than all of our diplomats in the last one hundred years." Lindbergh responded (after a standing ovation that lasted more than four minutes) that in Milwaukee the objective of his nationwide trip to promote aviation "had been accomplished."

Lindbergh and his party stayed overnight in Milwaukee as guests in the home of local businessman Clarence Falk on Green Bay Avenue. Thirty deputy sheriffs provided security on the grounds around this home to keep out intruders.

Lindbergh left Milwaukee on Monday, August 22, flying "The Spirit of St. Louis" to Madison, but first dipping the plane's wings over the Soldiers Homes at Wood, Wisconsin to honor the war veterans residing there. He also flew over Oshkosh enroute to the capital.

In all, Lindbergh's flights touched down in all 48 states, before returning to New York on October 23. He had flown over 22,350 miles and had been seen and heard by an estimated 50 million people.

Swedish American Historical Society of Wisconsin Inc.

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