

## Lindbergh in Schenectady

by Edwin D. Reilly, Jr.  
for the Sunday Gazette

Last year, I came across a 2005 letter from John Harnden that read as follows: "The attached is something that I never knew before and that is that Lindbergh hangared his plane here while he went on his honeymoon with his new wife Anne Morrow. Where did they go, and when did they depart, I assume both by plane?"

John Harnden, of course, is the founder of the Edison Exploratorium, now the Edison Tech Center on North Broadway in Schenectady. By "here," John meant Schenectady County Airport, which is where Charles Lindbergh had landed his "Spirit of St. Louis" in 1927. I was aghast to discover, only last year, that I had failed to do the research necessary to answer the query John posed almost six years ago. This piece, then, is both my apology to him and a story that I believe will be of general historical interest.

The attachment to John's letter was a photocopy of an undated clipping from an unknown newspaper that mentions Charles Lindbergh's solo flight from New York to Paris of May, 1927 and his first, and possibly his only, visit to Schenectady two months later. But, intriguingly, it goes on to say that "In 1929, he hangared his plane in Schenectady as he and his new wife, Anne Morrow Lindbergh, began their honeymoon."

But did Lindbergh really come here a second time, in 1929? There were some clues in the clipping attached to the Harnden letter. It referred to "tonight's talk" in which "Reeve Lindberg shows how, in many ways, her father was miscast for the larger-than-life role history wrote for him." Now, I knew that Reeve was the youngest of the Lindberghs' six children, a very accomplished writer, as was her mother. The clipping also contained a cropped section of what appeared to be half of an aviator's helmet with the partial word BERGH superimposed on the top of it. So I went to Amazon.com and asked for a list of all of Reeve's books, each with a full book jacket. Sure enough, the cover of her 1998 book "Up in the Air" was a perfect match.

That was enough to ask Google whether Reeve Lindbergh had ever spoken in Schenectady. Sure enough, I was led to a Times Union story that

matched the clipping, one that said that "tonight" was December 2, 1999 and the venue was the Schenectady County Community College. I should have been there. Some of you reading this probably were.

Last Sunday I went to our main library and checked out the book in question. It was a great read, a work of literature, but it did not shed light on the Schenectady airport question. The book that did help was the Pulitzer Prize winning "Lindbergh," by A(ndrew) Scott Berg, first published in 1998, the same year as Reeve's book. The Berg biography does answer the part of John's query that reads "Where did they go, and when did they depart....," a story told with gusto and humor. After Lindbergh's very private marriage to Anne Morrow at her parents' home in Englewood, NJ on May 27, 1929, the couple did not drive to any airport.

Berg writes: "At 4:30, everybody waved as the newlyweds slipped out the back of the house and into a car. Charles and Anne drove past the entourage of newsmen waiting at the bottom of the hill....The press corps pursued them, but the newlyweds gave them the slip, driving down a blind alley in which Henry Breckinridge was waiting in Lindbergh's Franklin. They exchanged cars. Donning caps and dark glasses, Charles and Anne started their long drive to Long Island" ----

"With their two-hour jump on the press, Charles and Anne reached their destination on the Sound at ten o'clock, undetected. ... Charles rowed his bride out to their cruiser, the *Mouette*, which waited there with lights shining--- Within a few days, they reached Woods Hole, Massachusetts, where the press, at last, discovered them."

Berg goes on to describe how the press, in boats of their own of course, pursued the *Mouette* at dangerously close range all the way up to the coast of Maine.

A few pages before the foregoing description of the honeymooners "flight" (by ground and sea), Berg errs. He describes how, because the press fully expected departure by air from an airport somewhere in the Northeast, Lindbergh plotted what turned out to be a successful decoy. First, he

secretly placed an order with the Elco Company for a boat, a 38-foot motor cruiser, with instructions as to where on the Sound it was to be deployed. Berg again: "Then, the third week of May, he ordered his Curtiss Falcon flown to Rochester (sic) with instructions to leave it in a hangar fully serviced. As Lindbergh suspected, the press migrated to Roosevelt Field and northern New York, keeping their eyes peeled for a large gathering of Morrows and other dignitaries" (or discovery of the Falcon at an airport).

But why Rochester? Too far away, certainly the press would have thought, for a reasonably quick motor drive from New Jersey. Would not Albany or Schenectady provide a more reasonable ruse? Maybe, I realized, the clipping that started all this was correct. And wouldn't there have been a 1929 news story about the Falcon in some local paper?

As a last resort, one that should have been my first, I went to [FultonHistory.com](http://FultonHistory.com), Tom Tryniski's invaluable website that stores scanned back copies of many New York State newspapers, accessible by keyword search. Voila! The Johnstown/Gloversville Morning Herald of May 28, 1929, gives the whole story. Lindbergh did not come to Schenectady a second time, at least not in 1929, but his Curtiss Falcon was indeed flown to Schenectady Airport by friends, hangared there, and sent the press into a frenzy as to when and where Lindbergh would marry and when they would come here to fly away on a honeymoon trip that didn't unfold that way. The Heralded story begins:

#### LINDY'S PLANE IS LANDED AT DORP'S AIRPORT

All Day Search by Newspaper Men Fails to Locate Nation's Most Famous Flyer and His Charming Bride

#### NO ONE SEEMS TO KNOW WHERE THE LOVE BIRDS HAVE FLOWN

In Air, On Water, or on Land, No One Has Been Able to Secure Knowledge of Their Whereabouts

SCHENECTADY, N. Y, May 28—(AP) Charles A. Lindbergh's own plane, a Falcon, landed at the Schenectady airport today at 4:45 p.m. piloted by Randy Enslow, personal friend of Lindy. Lindbergh was not in the plane and Enslow offered no clue to his whereabouts. Earlier in the afternoon two unidentified young men landed another Falcon airplane at the Schenectady airport and disappeared immediately, leaving the plane with Enslow was a man whose surname was given as Stevenson, but whose first name was not learned. Enslow and his companion took off from the airport in the Falcon left behind by the two other men, leaving Lindbergh's plane at the airport.

I would now like to learn who "Stevenson" was. It is conceivable that it was Lindbergh's friend Adlai Stevenson, just two years older than Lindy. And Berg says that Adlai was one of only two Democratic presidential candidates whom Lindbergh ever voted for.

Now, to my Stevenson biographies. Stay tuned.

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