



# HISTORY OF FLIGHT AT MAGNUSON

Friends of Magnuson Park is proud to present this project alongside their partners: Artist Sandy Brice Miller, Seattle Department of Neighborhoods, 4Culture, Seattle Landmarks Board, Seattle Parks, Mercy Magnuson Place and Solid Ground.

With the help of local youth and young residents of Magnuson Park, these murals were painted and installed over the windows of Building 41 (the Old Gas Station), an unused historic structure within the Sand Point Naval Air Station Historic District in 2021.

The murals also protect the building's windows from vandalism and serve as an important visual marker of Sand Point's rich aviation history.

We'd like to thank the Landmarks Board, Magnuson Park Advisory Committee (MPAC), Seattle Parks, Solid Ground and Mercy Magnuson, our ever-ready-to-pitch-in Friends of Magnuson, our Board Members, Sandy Brice Miller and all the talented young people who took part in this project.

The Building 41 Aviation Murals were funded in part by the Seattle Department of Neighborhoods' Neighborhood Matching Fund & 4Culture's Preservation Sustained Support program.



## BEGIN YOUR EXHIBIT TOUR

There are a total of eight murals surrounding the building.

To experience Sand Point's aviation history in chronological order, begin on the East side of the building and move clockwise.



## Sand Point's First Airplane Landings

Researched by Dianne Hofbeck & Elisa Law  
**Friends of Magnuson Park**

Sand Point was a key part of Boeing's growth as an aviation leader and some of its earliest aircraft were assembled here.

On March 3, 1919, William Boeing and local pioneering pilot Eddie Hubbard flew the first U.S. international airmail flight from Vancouver to Seattle (Lake Union) in this Boeing Model C, modified from a World War I trainer.

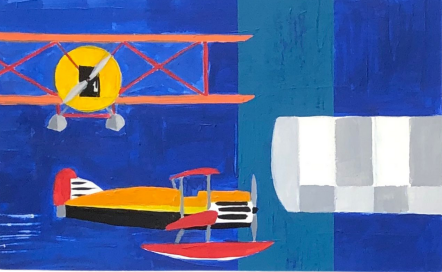
The following year, Hubbard would be the first to set down a plane on Sand Point on June 19, 1920 as part of a ceremony marking the formal development of the Sand Point Airfield on June 19, 1920.

In 1921, Major Muhlenberg of the UW ROTC made the second airplane landing (and first military landing) at Sand Point in a Curtis Flying Jenny from Camp Lewis.

Also featured in this mural are a collection of early airmail stamps, including the famous "Inverted Jenny". A single sheet of the 24 cent United States postage stamp was printed with the airplane upside down in 1918. The error made the stamp one of the most valuable in U.S. history. In 2016, a single Inverted Jenny sold at auction for over \$1.3 million dollars.



PICTURED: Mural designer, Sandy Brice Miller in front of Building 41's Aviation Mural Project, featuring a Boeing Model C & Flying Jenny (left) William Boeing (right) and Eddie Hubbard (left) completing the first U.S. international airmail flight from Vancouver to Seattle (Lake Union) in a Boeing Model-C, circa 1919 (right)



## Douglas World Cruiser

Written for Friends by Elisa Law  
Executive Director of Friends of Magnuson Park

Did you know that the first flight around the world started and ended here at Sand Point?

Donald Douglass was commissioned by the United States Army Air Corps to design this amphibious airplane for the first round-the-world flight in 1924, complete with Boeing-made convertible pontoons.

The aircraft was specifically designed to withstand extreme weather conditions from freezing rain to desert heat and to hold a massive amount of fuel for the long 'hops' required of the world flight, including the first ever flights across the Pacific and the Atlantic.



Over fifty-thousand Seattleites gathered here at Sand Point Airfield (now Magnuson Park) to watch the Douglass World Cruisers touch down, completing their 175-day journey and the first round-the-world flight.



2024 will mark 100 years since this pivotal event in aviation history. Mark your calendars for the celebration!

PICTURED: World Flyers with a Douglas World Cruiser at Sand Point Airfield, 1924. Courtesy The First World Flight, Lowell Thomas (above), Seattleites gather to celebrate landing of World Flyers at Sand Point Airfield, 1924 Courtesy Museum of History and Industry





## Navy Signal Flags

Written for Friends by Wil Shellenberger  
**Executive Director, PNW Naval Air Museum**

Little is known about the earliest signaling between naval vessels going back to antiquity. Anecdotal stories relate the positioning of sails on admiral's ship, drums and trumpets. Use of flags goes back to ancient Athenians but were almost exclusively one way from a commander to subordinate ships. Sophisticated flag signal systems emerged from the Anglo-Dutch and Napoleonic wars of the 17th and 18th Centuries. By the early 19th Century, the British and United States Navies had developed formalized flag systems providing around a thousand signal combinations primarily using numerical flags in combinations of three flags.

In the mid-19th Century, the British Board of trade developed a flag system incorporating eighteen letters that increased the potential combinations to over 20,000. Into the twentieth century navies worldwide expanded this system to incorporate the entire English alphabet of twenty-six letters and various "modifier" flags to create an almost infinite combination of signals still in use today.

Even in today's world of high tech communications, naval signal flags are a valuable means of tactical communications. In situations where radio silence is necessary, commanders can control and deploy small units of ships without exposing the units to electronic detection. Routine information can be exchanged without congesting critical communications channels as well as passing information to units and personnel lacking radio equipment.

A characteristic of Navy and International Signal flags is that they have sharply contrasting colors that make them readable at long distances. This feature has also made them attractive for decorating a wide variety of social and formal venues. Often the arrangement of the flags at such events is random with no specific meaning. But signal flags can be used to spell out WELCOME, CONGRATULATIONS or any number of messages.

The signal flags on these old gas station garage windows spell out 'FLIGHT'.



PICTURED: Signalmen explains the significance of different signal flags to fifth-grade students (left) and signalman uses signal flags aboard the guided missile cruiser USS BELKNAP (right) Courtesy NARA





PBX-5A Catalina (right) and WWII aircraft (left, top to bottom) 1940s Grumman Wildcat F4F, 1944 Grumman Hellcat F6F, 1930s Curtiss Helldiver F8C-4, 1930s Grumman Biplane F3F, 1930s Curtiss Helldiver F8C-4

## WWII Aircraft: PBX-5A

Written for Friends by John Hughes  
**Pacific Northwest Naval Air Museum**

The PBX-5A Catalina is an amphibious seaplane with a hull-shaped fuselage designed for landing on water and retractable landing gear enabling it to also land on airfields. "PBX" is an acronym for Patrol Bomber with Y designating Consolidated Aircraft Corporation, the designer and manufacturer of the aircraft. Unique to most seaplanes, two wing pontoons that fold up on takeoff become part of the wing-end and when deployed downward are used to assist in stabilizing the aircraft when landing on water.

One of the most important missions of this multi-mission aircraft was Search and Rescue. With the PBX-5A's range of 2,520 miles, this capability was invaluable in saving lives of countless US Navy and US Army Air Force airman and seaman. This is especially more important when you consider that no deployable helicopters existed during the late 1930's through the late 1940's/50's when the PBX-5A did most of this rescue work.

3,308 PBX-5A Catalinas were built between October 1941 and January 1945, with the majority being delivered to the United States Navy while some were delivered to the United States Army Air Force and other countries.

The PBX-5A is powered by two 14-cylinder Pratt & Whitney R-1830-92 radial engines producing 1200 horsepower each with a service ceiling of 12,500 ft. depending upon oxygen supply configuration. During WW-II, PBX-5A's were not only used for search and rescue, but other missions included bombing, anti-submarine warfare, cargo-ferrying and for general patrol over long stretches of water.

Naval Air Station (NAS) Sand Point was home to a number of PBX aircraft and squadrons. Though the Naval Air Station is gone today, ongoing research and restoration project work in this area will reveal more Naval aviation history in the near future. So, stay tuned!



PICTURED: Mechanics working on a PBX Patrol Bomber's engine. April 26, 1944. Courtesy National Archives



## WWII Aircraft: Fighter Planes

Researched for Friends by Dianne Hofbeck  
**Friends of Magnuson Park**

### Grumman Wildcat F4F (1940s)

The Wildcat was a carrier-based aircraft that began service in 1940. It was the only effective fighter available to the US Navy and Marine Corps in the Pacific Theater during the early part of WWII. In 1942, one of these planes crashed with a Grumman TBF1 Avenger during a training exercise over Lake Washington. The plane is still in the lake near Leschi Park.

### Grumman Hellcat F6F (1944)

The Hellcat was designed to replace the Wildcat in order to counter the Japanese Zero fighter plane.

### Curtiss Helldiver F8C-4 (later O2C) (1930s)

A carrier-based dive bomber built for the Marines, the Helldiver was eventually replaced by a land-based version. Marine Corps reservists flew these planes from Hangar #1 (now part of National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration). In 1939, USS Saratoga based squadrons of 65 land planes, including Helldivers, landed at Sand Point to demonstrate capacity. MGM made a movie titled "Helldivers" in 1932 which was filmed partly on the USS Saratoga carrier.

### Grumman Biplane F3F (1930s)

The last premier fighter of the late 1930s and the last biplane ordered by the military. It was nicknamed the Flying Barrel.

### Curtiss Helldiver F8C-4 (later O2C) (1930s)

Side view.



## 1950s-1960s Korean War Era

Written for Friends by Dianne Hofbeck & Elisa Law  
**Friends of Magnuson Park**



### **Grumman S2F1 Sentinel Tracker (STOOF)**

The S2F Sentinel (STOOF) was one of the first Anti-Submarine Aircraft Carrier airplanes specifically designed for Anti-Submarine purposes.

With sea search radar and an anomaly detection system (built to detect earth's magnetic force disturbances) capabilities, these planes usually worked with a carrier force designed to protect a troop landing or to protect the overall fleet from opponent submarine activity.

Active squadrons were stationed on both coasts as well as shore duty stations. Naval Air Station Seattle maintained an Active Duty Reserve Squadron that regularly patrolled the Straits of Juan de Fuca and the Puget Sound Area.

Our mural picture depicts one of those stationed at Sand Point.



### **Goodyear Corsair FG1D (1950)**

Corsairs, air-to-air combat fighters, were used as night fighters and fighter bombers at the tail end of WWII and throughout the Korean War.

In 1950, after a non-fatal midair collision with another Corsair, one of these planes sunk in Lake Washington. Thirty-three years later it was salvaged and restored. It is now in the Museum of Flight.





## 1950s-1960s

### Korean War Era continued

Written for Friends by Dianne Hofbeck & Elisa Law  
**Friends of Magnuson Park**



#### **Lockheed PV-1 Ventura (1943)**

The PV-1 Ventura was first deployed to the Aleutian Islands in early 1943. It flew bombing runs over Paramushiro and Shimushu, Japanese islands in the Kurile chain. In December of 1943 the aircraft were upgraded to the PV-2 Harpoon.



In the summer of 2020, when a young sailing instructor pulled up his anchor in Pontiac Bay he had a small piece of history attached.

Friends of Magnuson Park, as keepers of the site history, called City and State historic preservationists and the Navy to find out more about the artifact.

The Navy got involved and local divers helped too. It was identified to be part of a PV-2 Harpoon, a medium bomber with radar and 5 front mounted machine guns. This aircraft was used in anti-submarine work and was deployed to the Aleutian Islands and later other Japanese islands and the Solomons.

According to the Navy accident report the submerged PV-2 Harpoon went down 1000 feet off the north end of the Naval Air Station Seattle runway on September 4, 1947. The artifact is now being restored so it can be displayed in the future.



## 1950s-1960s Korean War Era continued

Written for Friends by Dianne Hofbeck  
**Friends of Magnuson Park**



### **Martin Mariner PBM5 (1952)**

During the 1950s Naval Air Station Seattle was a support facility and the aircraft overhaul and repair program was in full swing. The Martin Mariner "flying boats", which saw service during WWII and through the Korean War, could be found on the Base until they were retired in 1956.

There is a Mariner resting 100 feet deep at the south end of Lake Washington. These underwater planes remain in the custody of the Navy.



## Sikorski JRS-1 / PanAm S-43 (1935)

Written for Friends by Dianne Hofbeck  
**Friends of Magnuson Park**

In 1935 Sikorsky produced 15 passenger flying boats called the S-43 which went into service with a number of civilian airlines. The Navy acquired 17 of these planes under the designation JRS-1.

The S-43 was a smaller version of the Sikorsky S-42 "Clipper". The S-43 was known as the "Baby Clipper" in airline service.

In 1938 Pacific Alaska Airways (a subsidiary of Pan American Airways) landed a Sikorsky S-43 at Sand Point. It took off after a few days to blaze a new trail in air mail service from Seattle to Alaska. The Seattle terminal for the experiment was just north of Sand Point near where Matthews Beach is today.







## Fairchild C-11 Boxcar (1950s - 1960s)

Written for Friends by Dianne Hofbeck  
**Friends of Magnuson Park**

An American military transport, the Boxcar was designed to carry cargo, personnel, litter patients and mechanized equipment as well as to drop cargo and troops by parachute.

During the Korean war it was a troop and equipment transport, often dropping bridge sections to replace those destroyed by the Chinese.

These planes also saw service during the Vietnam War.





## Good Year Blimp (1970)

Written for Friends by Larry Duckert  
Pacific Northwest Naval Air Museum

The Goodyear Blimp has been an advertising icon of the airship industry since 1925. Prior to 1925 the design was a result of cooperation between Goodyear and the Zeppelin Company.

Unlike the semi-rigid Zeppelin the blimp lacked any internal support and its shape was maintained by helium gas.

Since 1925 dozens of blimps have served as "Goodyear Blimps". Each was named after a defender of the American Cup Yacht Race. Their histories were very colorful and the blimp "Defender" was christened by Emelia Earhart in 1929.

During WWII 5 blimps were operated by the U.S. Navy. After the war they were returned to Goodyear for advertising purposes.

The Goodyear Blimps most familiar to us were introduced beginning in 1969. Over their career they made frequent passes over Seattle and Lake Washington during SeaFair and athletic events.

The blimps landed and took off from the Sand Point Naval Air Station. This writer was once fortunate to see a Goodyear Blimp grappled to the ground at the air station where it bounced somewhat indelicately on a single wheel beneath the gondola before taking off again.

The familiar drone of the Goodyear Blimp engines was welcomed by blimp lovers until the last airship was deflated regrettably in 2017. The blimps have since been replaced by semi-rigid dirigibles that were introduced in 2014. Interestingly the airship design has evolved full circle from Zeppelin, to blimp and back to Zeppelin.



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