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By Walt Zaenker

HISTORY STORIES Reflections of Pine Knoll Shores

A version of this article appears as a post with more graphics at pineknollhistory.blogspot.com.

MRS. ALICE HOFFMAN TAKES AN AIR VOYAGE

Miami, Fla., Nov. 11—Mrs. Alice Hoffman, of Paris, 70-year old aunt of Colonel Theodore Roosevelt, was speeding southward this morning as a passenger aboard the Pan American Airways, West Indies air limited, en route to Porto Rico for a month's visit with the new Governor of the island.

Mrs. Hoffman was elated as she entered the plane here. She will lunch in the air between Havana and Camaguey today and stop overnight at Santiago de Cuba, arriving at Porto Rico Tuesday at 4:30 P.M.

The Mrs. Hoffman referred to above owns a fine estate on Bogue Island and is known by a good many Carteret [C]ounty people.

—*The Beaufort News*, November 14, 1929

The brief article above from *The Beaufort News* contains a remarkable number of references concerning aviation history, United States history and the history of Pine Knoll Shores. *The Beaufort News* was a weekly publication, each issue typically 10 to 12 pages. The quoted article appeared on the front page, prominently placed above the fold (which is prime space in a newspaper). In addition to documenting Alice Hoffman's historic flight, it tells us she was "known by a good many Carteret County people."

Another front-page *Beaufort News* article dated the day after Alice's flight reported that a "Pan American Airways seaplane en route from Anacostia to Miami was forced down by fog at Manteo," highlighting just how risky Alice's flight was. The fog story went on to say that the plane, carrying six passengers, remained at anchor overnight until conditions improved.

Scheduled commercial airline service was in its infancy after a gestation filled with fits and starts of over a decade. Hundreds of commercial ventures were started across the United States, but most resulted in early failure or bankruptcy. The late 1920s witnessed the coming together of safety, finance, technology, regulatory support and infrastructure to sustain a viable industry. Government contracts to carry mail were key to that success, and passenger travel aboard planes would become more and more popular. The Aerospace Industries Association 1930 yearbook lists annual passengers carried on commercial airlines as follows: 1927: 12,594; 1928: 52,934; 1929: 165,263. At the age of 67, Alice Hoffman became one of those passengers. (Editor's note: the article in the 1929 issue of *The Beaufort News* reported Alice's age incorrectly as 70. In addition, the article referred to Porto Rico, which was the name of Puerto Rico in the early 20th century.)

The U.S. Centennial of Flight Commission stated: "Equal parts harrowing adventure and indulgent luxury, taking an international flight in the 1930s was quite an experience. But it was an experience that people who could afford it signed up for in droves." Alice's trip probably cost several hundred dollars.

Pan American Airways used Ford Trimotor aircraft extensively. Introduced in 1928, a Pan Am plane accommodated 13 passengers in its earliest model, and up to 17 in later models.

While the advertising and public relations depictions of the glories of air travel were quite enticing, the reality was a different story. The noise level in the cabin during flights required stewards to use megaphones to address passengers. At takeoff, the noise level approached pain. With no air conditioning and little heating, the plane was hot in summer and cold in winter, and with no circulation system, its environment was made even more unpleasant by the smell of hot oil and metal as well as disinfectant

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