



Smithsonian
National Air and Space Museum

William John Eck: First Pan American
Airlines Transatlantic Flight Scrapbook

Eck (William John): First Pan American Airlines Transatlantic Flight Scrapbook

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Collection Overview

Repository:	National Air and Space Museum Archives
Title:	William John Eck: First Pan American Airlines Transatlantic Flight Scrapbook
Identifier:	NASM.XXXX.0309
Date:	June 12, 1939, through April 22, 1940 (bulk June 28, 1939, through July 4, 1939)
Extent:	0.33 Cubic feet (1 scrapbook)
Language:	Multiple languages This collection is in English, with some materials in Portuguese, French, and German.
Summary:	This collection consists of a scrapbook, "To Europe By Air," assembled by railroad executive William J. Eck to document his trip June 28 to July 4, 1939, on Pan American Airways' (PAA) first transatlantic passenger flight on the Boeing Model 314 Clipper "Dixie Clipper" flying boat and containing information on its crew, passengers, and ports of call.
Digital Content:	Image(s): William John Eck: First Pan American Airlines Transatlantic Flight Scrapbook

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Unknown gift, circa 1940-1967.

Processing Information

Arranged, described, and encoded by Melissa A. N. Keiser, 2018.

Preferred Citation

William John Eck: First Pan American Airlines Transatlantic Flight Scrapbook, Acc. XXXX.0309, National Air and Space Museum, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

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Biographical / Historical

William John Eck (1876-1957) graduated from Iowa State University in 1895 with a degree in electrical engineering and went to work in the telephone industry. In 1898, at the outbreak of the Spanish-American War, Eck joined the United States Army and was sent to the Philippines; after a year Eck transferred to the U.S. Quartermaster Department and spent his next three years at sea, eventually making a trip around the world. After leaving the Army, Eck switched to the railroad business, joining the Southern Railway in 1905. Over time, travel—particularly air travel—became a serious hobby for Eck, and by the early 1930s, he had become a pioneer passenger on several early airline routes. In 1931, after chatting to Pan American Airways (PAA) pilots on a flight to Santiago, Chile, Eck contacted PAA to apply for a ticket on PAA's first transatlantic passenger flight, whenever that might occur. Eight years later, Eck was delighted to be contacted by PAA with the news that he had been designated Passenger No. 1 on the historic flight, departing Port Washington, New York, on Wednesday, June 28, 1939, aboard the Boeing Model 314 "Dixie Clipper." The flight, carrying 22 passengers, was made via Horta, Azores, with an overnight stay at Lisbon, Portugal, on June 29, finishing at Marseille, France, on June 30. Eck continued on to Paris via a land-based Air France flight. Eck and many of the outbound passengers were also on the return flight of the "Dixie Clipper," departing Marseilles on Sunday, July 2, and following the same route to return to New York on Tuesday, July 4, 1939. At the time of the flight Eck, a resident of Washington, D. C., was Assistant to the Vice President, Southern Railway Company. The newspapers noted that Eck, a widower who had recently married his second wife, Emily Magdalene Kleb, three months earlier on March 20, 1939, was unable to take her along on the flight as he had only the single ticket bought well before their marriage.

Scope and Contents

This collection consists of a scrapbook, "To Europe By Air," assembled by William J. Eck to document his trip on Pan American Airways' (PAA) first transatlantic passenger flight, and containing information on the Boeing Model 314 Clipper "Dixie Clipper" (r/n NC-18605) flying boat and its crew, passengers, and ports of call. The scrapbook is particularly rich in ephemera, with many illustrations trimmed from brochures used to embellish the black paper album pages. Contents include ephemera from the Pennsylvania Railroad (on which Eck started and ended his trip from his home in Washington, D. C.), Pan American Airways (PAA), Air France, Hotel Aviz (Lisbon), Splendide Hotel (Marseille), Hotel Plaza-Athenée (Paris), and various tourist sites; photographs; telegrams; greeting cards; maps; menus; post cards; postage stamps; a first day cover; newspaper clippings (predominantly in English, but also in Portuguese and French); PAA receipts and press releases; copy photographs of Eck's PAA tickets, ticket folder, and baggage claim check; photographs of commemorative cigarette cases presented to Eck and PAA pilot R. O. D. Sullivan; and clippings and ephemera relating fellow passengers' stories: Russell Sabor, James McVittie (who continued on to Chicago immediately after landing in New York on the return trip), Gwladys Whitney (Mrs. Cornelius Vanderbilt Whitney), Anne Lyon Haight (Mrs. Sherman Post Haight, who also flew aboard the Clipper that inaugurated the mail route between North and South America in 1931). Also included is a transcript of interviews with the passengers recorded on board the "Dixie Clipper" during the eastbound flight: Russell Sabor, William J. Eck, Mrs. Sherman Haight, Captain Torkild Rieber, Clara Adams, C. V. Whitney, Mrs. Juan Trippe, Mr. and Mrs. Graham B. Grosvenor, Mr. and Mrs. E. O. McDonnell, Roger Lapham, James McVittie, and Louis Gimbel; and on the westbound flight: J. Carroll Cone (Manager of the Atlantic Division of Pan American Airways Company).

Arrangement

The scrapbook is arranged chronologically.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

- Aeronautics
- Aeronautics, Commercial
- Airlines
- Boeing Model 314 Clipper Family
- Pan American World Airways, Inc. -- Memorabilia

Geographic Names:

- Azores
- New York, New York