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Coins, Banknotes and Tokens Show:

Aviation Is Fueled With \$100 Bills

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What makes an airplane fly? Funding! "No bucks, no Buck Rogers." It might be the US Congress authorizing billions of dollars for NASA. It might be the lone pilot paying \$45 per hour to rent an old single engine plane. The bottom line is that all aviation is fueled with \$100 bills.

Today, we credit the Wright Brothers with the first sustained, controlled, powered flight of a heavier-than-air craft in 1903. However, at first, their success was not official. The International Aviation Federation granted an award to Alberto Santos-Dumont for his November 1906 flights of 14bis, a powered box kite. Santos-Dumont previously had won recognition for his controlled airship flights around Paris. In his words: "The most rational consecration of such an effort and its fulfillment is found in a serious money prize." Wilbur Wright went to Paris and, on August 8, 1908, at Le Mans, proved beyond a shadow of a doubt that the claims of the Wright Brother preceded all others.

Therefore, it is appropriate that the United States put an aircraft on its series 1914 Federal Reserve Note \$20 bill. This note features a ship, a car, a train, and in the distance, a small airplane, perhaps a Wright Flier 3, perhaps something similar but different.

Fifteen years later, the airship Graf Zeppelin sailed around the world. From August 8 to 29th, 1929, it covered over 21,000 miles from Lakehurst, New Jersey, across the Atlantic, over Europe, across Siberia to Japan. From there the airship traversed the Pacific and the continental United States. The German republic commemorated this flight with two series of coins, a 3-mark and a 5-mark. Both had high mintages. Both were struck at several mints. Both are available in business strikes and proofs. This means that the collector has a lot of options. You can find one nice proof (or circulated) of each or you can pursue the entire set.

In addition to these government coins, many private medals resulted from the first flight around the world. Earlier, Charles Lindbergh's solo crossing of the Atlantic on May 20-21, 1927 also generated a flurry of government and private commemoratives. The United States Post Office issued an airmail stamp in June that featured his path, the Ryan monoplane he flew, and his name. A year later, Congress awarded him a medal, copies of which can still be bought from the U.S. Mint. (The U.S. Mint also honored Chuck Yeager, the Double Eagle II, Gen. Ira Eaker, and Robert Goddard with gold medals, official bronze copies of which are still for sale.) In addition, private medals, medallions, and other memorabilia were issued. On the 50th anniversary of his flight, even more of these charms appeared, the rising price of silver being an attraction to anything struck on a one-ounce bar.

In 1941 the Bank of Communication of China put a plane similar to Lindbergh's on the back of a 25 yuan note. The plane appears again, smaller, from another view, on the front. Also on the front is a dirigible, a ship, a locomotive, power lines, and a generator. A two-engine transport plane appears on the back of a 1942 5 yuan note from The Central Bank of China. Similar to planes from Beech, Lockheed, and DeHaviland, the picture is not a perfect match for any of them, but is closest to the DH91. In 1953, the People's Republic of China issued a 2 Fen note with a Lisunov-2 on the front. This plane was made in Russia under license from Douglas and is a direct copy of the famous DC-3, "the plane that changed the world."

The Douglas DC-9 appears on the 2 1/2 Guilder of the Netherlands Antilles. Boeing's 727 graces the back of a 50 shillings note from Kenya. Malawi's 20 kwacha shows a Boeing 737. A Boeing 747 in Baruda livery is on the Indonesia 50,000 rupiah note. The Saudi Arabian Monetary Agency placed a Lockheed L1011 on the back of a 1 riyal. Malaysia included an Airbus A300 along with a cargo ship and a train on the 10 ringgit of 1998. Singapore honored the Concorde on a \$20

note from 1979.

It is appropriate that aviators also receive their share of honors. In 1967, Brazil placed Alberto Santos-Dumont on the front of a 10000 cruzeiros and his 14bis on the back. Technically, the 14bis was the first officially recognized heavier-than-air craft to obtain and maintain controlled flight under power. Even if the claim was eclipsed by the Wrights, Santos-Dumont's work with lighter-than-air craft still mark him as an important and successful aviation pioneer.

In 1450, Portugal's Prince Henry was called "The Navigator" for his exploration of the African coast. In 1922, Portugal's Admiral Gago Coutinho launched via seaplane an astronomical survey of the stars for more accurate navigation. The admiral and his plane appear on a 20 escudo note of 1979.

Beginning in 1991, Lithuania began commemorating the ill-fated (though successful) flight of Darius and Gerinas on the current issue of 10 litu notes. In 1933, Steponas Darius and Stasys Gerinas flew out from New York City. Their destination was Vilnius. They never made it. Over Germany, they came down and died. Allegations against the Germans were never substantiated. Their flight still set a distance record at the time. The 10 litu notes show the pilots on the face and their Bellanca CH-300 Pacemaker on the back.

Peru recently commemorated the self-sacrifice of Capt. Jose Abelardo Quinones Gonzales. In the 1941 war against Ecuador, during the battle of Zumilla, mortally wounded, he completed his flight with a frontal assault on a Ecuadoran artillery emplacement.

Antoine de Saint Exupery -- most famous for his "Little Prince" -- was also a war hero. Like Charles Lindbergh, he was an airmail pilot in the 1920s. Like Anne Morrow Lindbergh, he was a keen writer with a broad vision for the compelling truths that define our lives. He wrote several books about his experiences of the pilots and navigators he knew. American readers recognize his book *Terre des Hommes* as *Wind, Sand and Stars*. He also wrote *Night Flight*. Saint Exupery disappeared while flying for the Free French in 1944. Antoine de Saint Exupery and his Little Prince appear on the most recent 50 Franc note of France. With a current exchange value of about US\$15, the bills will become worthless in July 2002, when the Euro becomes the only currency of France. The first issue of 1993 includes an error, somewhat more valuable as a collectible, and particularly galling to the Banque de France: the man's name is misspelled, with an extraneous accent over the initial E in Exupery.

"I am looking for a great warrior," said Luke Skywalker. Yoda clucked back, "Wars do not make one great." Of all the aviators and all the airplanes to appear on money, one man stands out as perhaps the greatest material benefactor of humanity: Harry Ferguson. Like the Wrights, Joe and Harry Ferguson repaired bicycles. Wilbur Wright astounded the French at Le Mans in August of 1909. On December 31, 1909, Ferguson made a flight of 130 yards (118 meters). He flew again in early 1910. However, aviation was not what made him famous. Ferguson wedded the plow to the automobile. He also created a hydraulically-activated control for plow. Massey-Ferguson tractors were a quantum leap in mechanized agriculture. Harry Ferguson and his airplane and tractor appear on the 20 pound notes of the Northern Bank Limited of Northern Ireland.

North Carolina's circulating commemorative quarters celebrate the Wright Brothers first flight at Kill Devil Hill. Ohio's quarter also has an aviation theme. Canada honored Aviation on its November 1999 circulating commemorative 25-cent coin. In fact, Canada issued two series of aviation commemoratives in the 1990s. Both sets offered crown-sized silver coins with smaller inset cameos highlighted with gold foil. The design featured a famous Canadian plane, such as the Gipsy Moth, Otter, Harvard or and Lancaster. The inset cameo image was usually the inventor of the plane.

In 1997, Finland issued a set of commemorative coins honoring the World Air Games, sponsored by the Fédération Aéronautique Internationale. The events include extreme sports such as skysurfing.

The old "\$5 Introductory Flight" token from Piper is the one aviation collectible that is easiest to discover in a coin dealer's junk box. For an example of the deep meaning this token holds for many pilots, consider the story of Mildred Wirt Benson of Toledo, Ohio. She created the Nancy Drew stories writing the first 17 as the original "Carolyn Keene" for the Stratemeyer Syndicate. Then, she went to work for the Toledo Blade. One day, The Blade sent her to Wagonwheel Airport to meet someone for an interview. When she was there, she picked up one of the \$5 Tokens and eventually earned a private pilot's license. "It was the most expensive five dollars of my life," she said.