Lieutenant Elmer F. Stone, 
United States Coast Guard

First Pilot to Fly the Atlantic

Basic Historic Facts: In May of 1919, the first trans-Atlantic flight was made by a US Navy 'flying boat'. It was not a non-stop flight...the first event of that nature was accomplished just a month later by two British aviators. It was not a solo effort either...it would be eight more years before Charles Lindbergh accomplished that world-renowned feat.

Three US Navy amphibian aircraft left New York on May 8, 1919. Only one of them, a huge, but flimsy-looking, open-cockpit seaplane known simply as NC-4 completed the mission, arriving in Lisbon, Portugal on May 29th.

The NC-4 had a crew of six. Five of these adventurers were members of the United States Navy. The sixth man was Elmer Stone; the aircraft's pilot and the only representative of the US Coast Guard to participate in that historic flight.

Today, their achievement is little remembered; largely eclipsed by Lindbergh's more dramatic crossing a few years later. Even less remembered is Elmer Stone, an aviation pioneer who later had many other accomplishments. This is his story.
**Early Life:** Elmer 'Archie' Fowler Stone was born on a farm in Livonia, New York in 1887, just south of Rochester. When he was eight years old, his family moved to Norfolk, Virginia. Stone attended high school there, and after graduating was employed at a local newspaper as a stereotypist.

In 1910, at age 23, he became a cadet in the Revenue Cutter Service after passing the entrance exam with the highest scores of all applicants that year. Between April 1910 and June 1913, he was enrolled in the Revenue Cutter Service’s School of Instruction; forerunner of the US Coast Guard Academy.

An important part of his training included going to sea in one of the Revenue Cutter Service’s sailing vessels. In the photo on the right, Cadet Stone is the young man on the far right.

On June 7, 1913, Stone was commissioned as a third lieutenant in the Revenue Cutter Service. His first assignment placed him onboard the cutter ONONDAGA, operating out of Hampton Roads, Virginia and patrolling the mid-Atlantic coastline.

Considered qualified by his superiors to serve as an engineering officer, he was elevated to that position of responsibility in February of 1914. Later that same year, Stone was transferred to another cutter and in February of 1915, back to his first vessel.

By that time, the nation's Revenue Cutter Service had been combined with the Life-Saving Service to form the United States Coast Guard (USCG), which, in peacetime was an integral part of the Department of the Treasury. In wartime, the USCG becomes an integral part of the United States Navy.

In early 1915, during his second tour of duty in the ONONDAGA, depicted on the left, Stone participated in the rescue of seven seaman from a shipwrecked vessel off Virginia’s coastline south of Virginia Beach. He commanded a lifeboat during that rescue, and was later commended for his bravery and seamanship.

In a letter of commendation written by the Assistant Treasury Secretary, Stone's skill and judgment was recognized and that letter concluded with the following somewhat prophetic statement: "...this occasion stamps you as a man of resourcefulness who overcomes obstacles."
**Introduction to Aviation:** Sometime later in 1915, while his ship was anchored in Hampton Roads, Stone witnessed aircraft flying from the Curtiss Flying School, which had been established the year before and which was located adjacent to the boat harbor and ferry landing at Newport News, Virginia.

Fascinated, Stone soon arranged, presumably on an unofficial basis, for a short flight in a Curtiss Model F flying boat. The image on the right shows one of these fragile flying machines in front of the aircraft hangar at the Curtiss Flying School. Stone’s exhilarating experience...taking off from and landing on the water, and seeing the Hampton Roads area from an otherwise unattainable elevation, was a watershed moment for him...and for the US Coast Guard. Stone envisioned that a USCG air arm could revolutionize the service’s search and rescue, and law enforcement capabilities.

Together with a classmate and shipmate, Stone developed a proposal for creating an air search capability for the USCG. Together, they convinced the officer in charge of US Navy training at the Curtiss Flying School to loan them a pilot and a flying boat for demonstration purposes.

After seeing first hand what could be accomplished using aerial search techniques, the skipper of the ONONDAGA enthusiastically endorsed their proposal and forwarded it to the Commandant of the USCG.

**Flight Training:**
On March 21, 1916, Stone and another Coast Guard officer were assigned to aviation training at the US Navy’s air station in Pensacola, Florida. A little over a month later, they had completed their flight training. On April 17, 1916, Stone was officially designated as US Naval Aviator No. 38.
World War I: Earlier that same month, the United States formally entered World War I. As expected, operational control of the Coast Guard was transferred to the US Navy and personnel from both services were intermingled, according to military need.

In July of 1917, Stone was assigned to the aviation detail of the USS HUNTINGTON (ACR-5), an armored cruiser. Built by Newport News Shipbuilding, this vessel had originally been named WEST VIRGINIA. She was renamed to enable her first name to be given to a new battleship, which also was built at Newport News.

A few months before Stone joined the HUNTINGTON, she had been fitted with a catapult and related equipment to accommodate four seaplanes. Additional gear was also installed to enable her to operate an observation balloon at sea, as shown on the right.

Serving as the cruiser's primary aviator, Stone also made a number of observations from the balloon while the cruiser escorted six troopships going to Europe in the summer of 1917.

These airborne activities were not considered successful by the Navy. In October of 1917, the aviation-related capabilities of the HUNTINGTON were removed and Stone was reassigned to Naval Air Station Rockaway Beach in New York, which is where JFK International Airport is now located. In June of 1918, he transferred to the Navy's Bureau of Construction and Repair's Aircraft Section.

His assignment in that organization was to conduct inspections and trials of seaplanes. Stone quickly demonstrated that he was an accomplished engineer and test pilot. By July of 1918, he held the rank of first lieutenant in the Coast Guard.

The NC Flying Boats: In parallel with Stone's wartime activities, the Navy Department, working closely with aviation pioneer Glenn Curtiss, was developing the design of a huge seaplane that could land and take off in the open ocean in all kinds of weather and also stay aloft for hours. Such an aircraft was envisioned as being the answer to the U-boat threat to Allied shipping.

The Navy asked Curtiss to include in its design the potential to transit the Atlantic Ocean. The NC [Navy-Curtiss] aircraft he created proved up to that task.
What Curtiss fashioned was a flying boat design that even by today's standards, would be considered big. Their 126-foot wingspans were 18 feet greater than that of a Boeing 727 jetliner. Four of these aircraft were built; NC-1 through NC-4.

Their unique hulls were more like boats than airframes. Designed to survive in rough seas, they were divided into six watertight compartments each, as the follow cross-section indicates. Movement fore and aft was possible internally, but crew members had to squeeze through watertight hatches and past a series of large fuel tanks that filled the center portion of the flying boat's hulls.

Each of these flying boats had a crew of six. Three of them, the pilot, the co-pilot and the navigator sat in open, unheated cockpits as shown on the left, above, exposed to the elements and the roar of the four Liberty engines. The other three crew members huddled aft in the engineers' and radio operators' compartment.

Originally, these aircraft were fitted with three 'puller' engines; each developing 400 horsepower. Later, in order to permit these flying boats to safely take off under full load and weighing 28,000 pounds, a fourth 'pusher' engine was added. This added horsepower allowed these aircraft to achieve a maximum speed of about 84 knots [approximately 97 mph].

Each aircraft could fly a maximum distance of 1,278 nautical miles [1,470 statute miles] without refueling. Their service ceiling was 4,500 feet. Pretty amazing, all in all, since they were built mostly of wood. Their wing and tail surfaces were covered with cloth and held in place with a large number of pre-stressed wires.
**The Challenge:** Following the conclusion of World War I, American naval aviation officers urged that an attempt be made to cross the Atlantic, using one or more of the giant flying boats. It would be a daunting task. But others were also working hard to go down in history as the first to fly across the Atlantic, including three teams of British civilian aviators.

That trio was spurred on by the London *Daily Mail*'s promise of a $50,000 prize to the first team to successfully make that crossing. There were no requirements that such a flight had to made non-stop, much less solo. But the British newspaper did require that in order to win the prize, flying across the Atlantic would have to be achieved in 72 hours or less.

The speed of the NC flying boats was too slow to meet that latter stipulation. Nevertheless, the honor and prestige of being 'the first across' was enough to cause the Secretary of the Navy, on February 4, 1919, to approve of an attempt to make a trans-Atlantic flight before anyone else could do so.

That set in motion an elaborate effort. A flight path had to selected, and associated weather data gathered. A sizable fleet of support vessels had to be assembled. Some of them were temporarily fitted with aviation fuel tanks to replenish the aircraft in mid-ocean. All of them had to have then-state-of-the-art radios installed to enable communication and to provide navigational assistance to the NC aircraft while flying over a trackless ocean.

In parallel, some of the NC aircraft were flown extensively to determine their capability to make a trans-Atlantic flight. As a result of that experience, the aircraft, which had originally been manufactured with three engines had a fourth one added. Aircraft NC-1 is shown on the right, before the fourth engine was added. NC-2 had a different combination of 'puller' and 'pusher' engines than the other three, which ultimately resulted in her not be able to attempt the ocean crossing.

After a flight route...from New York to Newfoundland, then on to the Azores and finally to Europe...was established in late March of 1919, Stone and the Navy's designated commanding officer for NC-1 went to Newfoundland to survey possible landing and takeoff locations in protected waters, as well as the availability of support facilities. What they found was considered barely minimal.
**NC Seaplane Division One:** On May 4, 1919, NC-1, NC-3 and NC-4, the three NC flying boats assigned to the trans-Atlantic mission were rolled out of their hangar at the Rockaway Beach Naval Air Station. With their crews standing proudly alongside, they were placed in commission as NC Seaplane Division One. It was the first, as well as the last time that a group of aircraft were formally identified as a Navy division; just like surface ships.

Each aircraft was assigned a commanding officer/navigator, a pilot, a copilot, a radio officer and two engineers. They were all US Navy officers or enlisted men...with one notable exception. First Lieutenant Elmer F. Stone, USCG [right] was named pilot of NC-4. His selection was largely due to the Navy's appreciation of Stone's considerable flying skills while serving in the HUNTINGTON during World War I.

By May 6th, in spite of a number of setbacks, including a fire that could have destroyed NC-1, the three aircraft and their crews were ready to go. As they waited anxiously for the weather to improve, the group's commanding officer received a telegram from Franklin D. Roosevelt, Assistant Secretary of the Navy that read as follows:

"CONGRATULATIONS ON SPEEDY REPAIRS. THE NAVY WISHES YOU AND YOUR OFFICERS AND MEN ALL SUCCESS IN THIS FIRST ORGANIZED EFFORT TO CROSS THE ATLANTIC [by] AIR. I WISH I WERE WITH YOU."

**NC-4's Inauspicious Start:** Bad weather delayed their departure for two more days. Six hours into their flight, Stone, the NC-4's piloted, had to shut down one malfunctioning engine. The other two aircraft flew on as the NC-4, which could easily fly on three engines, proceeded at a slower pace.

Then the ailing aircraft lost a second engine. With only two engines left, Stone was forced to put the NC-4 down in a moderately rough sea. He then proceeded to taxi the damaged aircraft to the Chatham Air Station near Cape Cod where a Navy boat towed the NC-4 to shore.

The problems with NC-4's two failed engines proved to be serious. Several days were required to repair the damage. Meanwhile, NC-1 and NC-3 had proceeded as planned, making a stop in Halifax, Nova Scotia and then going on to Newfoundland to await the arrival of NC-4.

Newspaper reporters were quick to hang an unflattering moniker on the NC-4, calling her The Lame Duck. There were rumors that the Navy might withdraw the troubled NC-4 from the remainder of the trans-Atlantic flight attempt. No such decision was made...or even contemplated...and on the morning of May 14th, the NC-4 flew on to Nova Scotia and then Newfoundland.
"Let’s Go": By the morning of May 16, 1919, all three aircraft had been fully fueled, but bad weather kept them grounded. Shortly after 5 PM when the weather had improved, the NC crews climbed aboard their aircraft, which were quietly floating at moorings. The senior officer of the squadron, standing in the nose of NC-3, gave a hand signal to start engines and shouted: "Let’s Go."

Eight engines roared to life, but when Stone closed his starting switches, none of The Lame Duck’s four engines would start! After her engineers fixed an ignition problem, the trio of amphibian aircraft took off a little after 6 PM, local time. Their destination was the harbor at Horta in the Azores; some 1,196 nautical miles [1,378 statute miles] away. Each aircraft was filled to the brim with 1,800 gallons of aviation fuel and each weighed two tons more than normal. They had to race across two miles of calm water in order to build up enough speed to get aloft.

The plan was for them to fly in loose formation at an altitude of 1,000 feet. At a rate of advance of 75 miles per hour, their flight time was an estimated 15 hours.

Fifteen Hours to Horta: In order to refuel the squadron, as well as to provide navigational assistance, a string of US navy destroyers had been pre-positioned along the flight path. This was a major logistical effort, involving as many as 39 vessels stationed at regular intervals between Newfoundland and Portugal.

The NC aircraft flew southeastward in darkness. As they neared each ship, the crews of those support vessels, warned of the planes’ approach by radio signals and/or the roar of the aircraft engines, turned on searchlights and fired rockets.

The air that night was turbulent, making aircraft handling difficult. In their open cockpits, the pilots and copilots concentrated on their dimly lit and rudimentary instrument panels to maintain proper altitude and attitude. Compass bearings were provided to them by the aircraft’s radio operators, who manned radio direction finder gear all night and into the next day.

Bouncing around in the rough air, with wind buffeting them and the roar and vibration of four engines above and just to the rear of their positions, Stone and his copilot periodically suffered air sickness. To compensate, they took turns every thirty minutes flying the plane while the other closed his eyes.

In spite of these conditions, the NC-4 performed well. At dawn on May 17th, the turbulence diminished, and all of the three aircraft’s crews began to breathe easier. By 0745 hours, the NC-4 had overflown the fifteenth American destroyer in the long line of ships stationed between Newfoundland and the Azores.
And Then There Was One: Shortly after dawn, the flying boats flew into thick fog. Flying on instruments and unable to see their waterborne navigational aids, the three aircraft became separated. The NC-1 became lost primarily because that aircraft's ignition system interfered with its radio direction finder.

The commanding officer of NC-1 decided to set down and wait for the fog to clear so that he could use an old-fashioned, hand-held sextant to determine his location. Later in the day, and hopelessly lost in the persistent fog because of a malfunctioning radio direction finder, the commanding officer of NC-3 decided to do the same thing before he ran out of fuel.

Neither aircraft was able to continue the mission. Both were severely damaged while landing in rough seas, and their crews was unable to get them airborne again. In fact, they were lucky to stay afloat. The crew of the NC-1 was rescued by a passing Greek merchant ship, which took the disabled aircraft under tow. But three days later, it broke up and sank in deep water.

The NC-3's crew tried to taxi their flying boat to the Azores. But after running out of fuel, in an impressive display of seamanship, they figured out how to SAIL their aircraft backwards, using the plane's large tail assembly as a sail. It took them two days to cover 200 nautical miles and reach land. After being disassembled, the NC-3 was returned to the United States onboard a naval vessel. She never flew again.

Things were not much better that morning onboard NC-4, although she stayed aloft. In thick fog, her crew could not even see the aircraft's wingtips. The aircraft commander decided that they needed to get above the enveloping fog.
When the flying boat's copilot tried to climb above the fog, rough air caused the NC-4 to go into a spin. Stone recognized that the NC-4 was also experiencing a stall. Taking over the controls, Stone recovered from what could have been a fatal situation. After leveling out at 1,200 feet, he put the NC-4 in another climb.

But when the aircraft emerged above the fog bank, the position of the bright sun revealed that they were flying in the wrong direction and wasting precious gas. Cruising at 3,400 feet, Stone set the NC-4 back on course to the Azores.

Heading generally southeastward again, by 1127 hours the fog began to dissipate. Suddenly, the navigator of the NC-4 spotted land through a hole in the fog from his exposed perch in the flying boat's bow. To determine where they were, Stone dropped NC-4 through a crack in the fog, and finally came into the clear at an altitude of just 200 feet above the sea.

After determining their position, Stone flew over the port city of Horta before landing near the USS COLUMBIA, which had been pre-positioned there to refuel the NC aircraft. The crew of the NC-4 had been in the air fifteen and a half hours since leaving Newfoundland.

**On to Portugal:** Bad weather kept the NC-4 and her crew idled in the Azores for several more days. Finally, on May 27, 1919, the crew of NC-4 were able to resume their epic journey. That afternoon Stone lifted his aircraft off the water and headed for Lisbon. Several hours later, a significant landmark was sighted, the lighthouse at Cabo de Roca, located at the westernmost point in Europe. Notified of their progress, the crew of the USS ROCHESTER, anchored in Lisbon harbor, ‘dressed ship’ and then manned the rails. Thousands of civilians watched from every nearby vantage point.

Dramatically, at sunset, the NC-4’s silhouette appeared in the western sky. As she approached the harbor, the sound of her four Liberty engines were drowned out by a clamor of whistles, sirens and church bells.

At 2001 hours, local time, Stone eased the hull of NC-4 onto the harbor’s waters and chopped his throttles. As the flying boat touched down, the ROCHESTER began firing a salute. History had been made. Stone [top, center], his five US Navy comrades and The Lame Duck had completed their mission.
When the aircrew disembarked from the NC-4 and boarded the ROCHESTER, the ship's Marine band struck up the Star Spangled Banner. A New York Times reporter that was present described the scene in flowing prose typical of that time:

"It was a wonderful picture. In the foreground was the little group who had done what no man had done before, standing stiffly at salute in the dazzling brightness of a searchlight. Beyond them were rows of naval and military officers in uniform, and a dark mass of civilians, splashed with the color of women's dresses.

"On the left was the witchery of colored lights gleaming amid the bright-hued flags, and in the center and on the right background were sailors' faces - grave and reverent in homage of their country's national hymn - rising tier upon tier until lost in the darkness overhead."

To Plymouth by Seaplane: After days of celebration in Lisbon ended, Stone and his comrades prepared to fly on to their final European destination...Plymouth, England. Plymouth had been pre-selected as the location where the NC-4 was to be disassembled for shipment back to the United States. That location also had been chosen as a gesture of Anglo-American goodwill, since Plymouth was the MAYFLOWER's departure point three centuries previously when she carried the Pilgrims to America.

That last leg of the NC-4's odyssey was not uneventful. An engine's water jacket developed a leak, requiring Stone to land in shallow waters off the Spanish coast. While repair work was underway, the flying boat drifted onto a sand bar. After the repair was completed, Stone ran the aircraft's engines at full power as his companions dangerously ran back and forth on the NC-4's lower wing to rock its hull free from the sand.

On May 31, 1919, the NC-4 reached Plymouth, where her crew were greeted once again with great fanfare. It had taken them 23 days to fly from Newfoundland to England. During that time, the NC-4 was in the air for over 52 and a half hours and have traveled 3,936 nautical [4,529 statute] miles.

As planned, the NC-4 was disassembled [right] in Plymouth and shipped back to America where, thankfully, the government preserved it. After being honored at numerous celebrations in England, her crew returned to AMERICA via ship.
Their feat was quickly overshadowed the following month by a successful non-stop crossing of the Atlantic by two British aviators. In addition, eight years later, Lindbergh's solo non-stop aerial crossing completely captivated the world, and the NC-4 and her crew were mostly forgotten.

A Belated Award: Ten years after the NC-4's accomplishment, Congress got around to creating a military decoration to commemorate that event. In May of 1930, the crew of the NC-4 assembled at the White House, where President Herbert Hoover awarded the decoration depicted on the right to the deserving men. On the reverse side, each of their names are inscribed.

Long before that event transpired, Stone had returned to the ranks of the US Coast Guard, albeit only for a brief period of time. In March of 1920, he was appointed as Coast Guard Aviator No. 1. In November of 1920, he was placed on loan again to the US Navy. The Navy saw fit to award Stone and his comrades the Navy Cross that same month for 'distinguished service in making the first successful trans-Atlantic flight'.

Bureau of Aeronautics Accomplishments: Between November of 1920 and October of 1926, Stone participated in a variety of activities sponsored by the Navy's Bureau of Aeronautics. He also spent a brief period of time in Dayton, Ohio, helping to test new aircraft for Army Air Service.

During his six years with the Bureau of Aeronautics, Stone not only served as a test pilot, he also participated in the design and testing of catapult systems and arresting gear for the nation's first aircraft carriers. One of his activities involved the testing of a compressed air catapult, mounted on a coal barge. This device was later installed in the Navy's very first aircraft carrier, the Langley (CV-1).

Stone also invented a gunpowder-actuated catapult design and then went on to lead in the development, testing and installation of hydraulic arresting systems for use on early aircraft carriers. He also created the initial test requirements for the nation's first three aircraft carriers. While working with the Navy, Stone continued to support attempts to create an aviation arm for the US Coast Guard. On April 21, 1924, he was promoted to lieutenant commander. By that time the USCG had adopted the Navy's rank structure.

Sea Duty: When he was detached from the Navy Department and returned to the Coast Guard in September of 1926, Stone requested sea duty. In November of that year, he was assigned as executive officer of a cutter. After two years in that billet, he was given command of the COAST GUARD destroyer MONAGHAN. He served as her skipper until June of 1929.
The MONAGHAN was a former Navy vessel, built by Newport News Shipbuilding. She had been turned over to the USCG to help enforce Prohibition. Between June of 1929 and May of 1931, he served as captain of another destroyer on loan to the Coast Guard, the CUMMINGS.

**More Flying Activities:** Stone's next assignment was to serve as the senior member of a trial board to evaluate a newly designed seaplane called the RD Dolphin [right], which was under development in 1931/1932 and capable of being operated from land or sea. The Coast Guard later acquired a number of these versatile aircraft, on Stone's recommendation.

On March 8, 1932, he reported as the commanding officer of the USCG air station at Cape May, New Jersey. The following April, he flew a RD-4 Dolphin to a meeting in the Washington, DC area. While at that meeting he learned that the US Navy airship AKRON had crashed off the New Jersey coast. Some of his closest Navy friends were onboard.

When he was told that foul weather and heavy seas were hampering rescue efforts, Stone, on his own authority flew to the scene and despite encountering 40-knot gusting winds and rough seas, he landed at the crash site. All he could find were two bodies, which he recovered. When later asked why he had flown such a dangerous mission, Stone's response was: "It was the least I could do."

In April of 1934, Stone was loaned once again to the Navy Department by the Coast Guard. On April 23, 1934, he became the Chief Inspector of Naval Aircraft at a civilian aircraft factory in California. On December 20, 1934, he established a world record for amphibian aircraft. Flying over a three kilometer course off Buckroe Beach, Virginia, he attained a top speed of 192 miles per hour. In the image on the left, Stone is depicted climbing into the cockpit of the Grumman JF-2 aircraft he used that day.

It must have been satisfying to achieve that feat just a few miles from where Stone took his first airplane ride in 1915. On May 1, 1935, he was promoted to the rank of commander. Later that same month, he reported to what turned out to be his final duty station; command of the Air Patrol Detachment at the Naval Air Station in San Diego, California.
**An Untimely Death:** On May 20, 1936, Commander Elmer F. Stone, USCG was inspecting a new model patrol plane. Suddenly feeling ill, he sat down, then fell over, fatally stricken by an unexpected attack of coronary thrombosis that resulted in almost instant death. Stone was only 49 years old...

He was buried in Arlington National Cemetery on what is called Coast Guard Hill. When he was laid to rest there, officers of both the USCG and the US Navy served as his pallbearers. His grave is marked by a marble slab, suitably engraved. Over the years many honors have been provided in his memory.

**Tributes...and a Frank Appraisal:** When he was inducted into the United States Naval Aviation Hall of Honor; Commander Stone became the first Coast Guard pilot to be so honored. As one might expect, USCG Aviator No. 1 was the very first individual to be enshrined in the Coast Guard Aviation Hall of Honor, when it was established.

Currently, the Coast Guard Aviation Association annually recognizes fixed-wing aircrews who have demonstrated exceptional performance while engaged in search and rescue missions by presenting them with the Elmer Stone Award. A statute of him stands at Coast Guard Air Station San Diego.

One historian wrote the following about him: "Commander Stone’s uncanny foresight and ability in aviation, his fine qualities of leadership, made him respected and beloved by all who served under him."

There have been many similar accolades published over the years for him. But I like best how one of his fellow officers who knew Stone well described this over-achiever: "He was pop-eyed, bushy-haired, stub-nosed, careless of dress, but as alert as a terrier; a man who cared little for the form, but much for the matter."

My kind of guy...

**Bill Lee**
January 2018
Postscript: This article would not be complete without mentioning what happened to the NC-4. Happily, she is still around and currently on display at the Museum of Naval Aviation in Pensacola, Florida [see below]; not all that far from where Elmer Stone trained to become a naval aviator.

But her survival was not always something taken for granted. After she was disassembled in England and returned to America onboard a US Navy vessel, the NC-4 was reassembled and she made a flying tour of the United States. That was followed by her being exhibited as a static display in several places, including New York City's Central Park.

The Navy donated the hull of the NC-4 to the Smithsonian Museum in 1927. Her other components were retained by the Navy and placed in storage until 1961, when they were also given to the Smithsonian. In May of 1969, to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first trans-Atlantic crossing, she was fully restored and briefly placed on display on the National Mall [right].

Disassembled yet again, the NC-4 was placed in storage until 1974, when she was placed on loan to the Naval Aviation Museum. There is every indication that this historic aircraft will remain there on display for the foreseeable future.