

Discovery Theater & The National Air & Space Museum!

Flyin' Free – Flight Path 1

Harriet Quimby

Just inside the exit of the Early Flight Gallery, you'll see large cutout pictures of two women. The one in purple is Harriet Quimby, who

- inspired Bessie Coleman to dream about flying.
- was the **first licensed woman pilot in the U.S.**
- was the **first woman to fly solo over the English Channel.**
- was an **actress, journalist, and screenwriter for silent films** before she became a pilot in 1911

Q. Do you notice anything about the way she is **dressed**?

A. She is wearing **pants!** This was a time when women wore skirts for everything – even swimming.

Q. But skirts were **dangerous** in an airplane. Why?

A. Long, full skirts could flap in the wind and **get tangled** in the engine or wires. Plus, a pilot needed to be able to move feet and legs freely to work the steering controls.

- Harriet had a real sense of style. She designed this special **plum-colored satin suit** to fly in (and be photographed in!). When she was done flying, she could unbutton the inside seams of the knickers and rebutton them to convert the pants to a skirt.

The Blériot XI

Walk further inside the gallery and turn left to see the Blériot XI airplane.

The Blériot XI was

- a famous French-made plane invented by Louis Blériot.
- the kind of plane **Harriet Quimby flew** on her daring solo flight across the English Channel.



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Q. What do you notice about it?

Q. What is it made of?

A. **Wood** framework; wings covered with **cloth**.

Q. This airplane could carry only **one person**, the pilot. Where did the pilot sit? (Hint: look at the plane's right side.)

Q. Is this plane a **biplane**?

A. No, because it has only one set of wings instead of two. That makes it a **monoplane**. To see several early biplanes, look up!

The Curtiss "Jenny"

Retrace your steps and exit the gallery. Heading to your left, pass the white Airbus nose cone and find the **hanging biplane** with the number 4983 in its side.

This is the **Curtiss JN-4D**, nicknamed "**Jenny**," which



- is the kind of plane **Bessie Coleman** flew
- is the kind of plane used by the military **to train pilots during World War I**. After the War, the government sold them cheaply to get rid of them.

Q. Is this a biplane or a monoplane?

A. A biplane.

Q. What is it made of?

A. **Wood** framework; wings covered with **cloth**.

Q. Find where the pilot and the passenger sat. What do you see that would **protect** them while they were flying?

Q. How would it feel to do a **loop the loop** in this plane? to walk on the wings?

Q. Look at the large panel under the Jenny with the photograph of a pilot. **What was he wearing?** Why?

A. **Goggles** protected the eyes from wind, bugs, and drops of oil that flew out of the engine. The **leather coat and other warm clothes** kept the pilot from freezing in the cold wind and upper air. A **leather helmet** protected the head and helped keep it warm at the same time.

Q. Look across at the nose cone of the **Boeing 747** (huge plane with red top). Where does the pilot sit? Which plane would you rather fly? Why?