The economic depression of the early thirties slowed the expansion of Naval Aviation. But, surprisingly, research and development continued.

Lieutenant Apollo Soucek topped his own world altitude record of 1929 when he flew his *Apache* to a new height of 43,166 feet. Other tests on September 23, 1931, set the stage for future vertical flight. Lt. A. M. Pride piloted the Navy's first rotary-wing aircraft, an XOP-1 autogiro, landing aboard and taking off from *Langley* while underway.

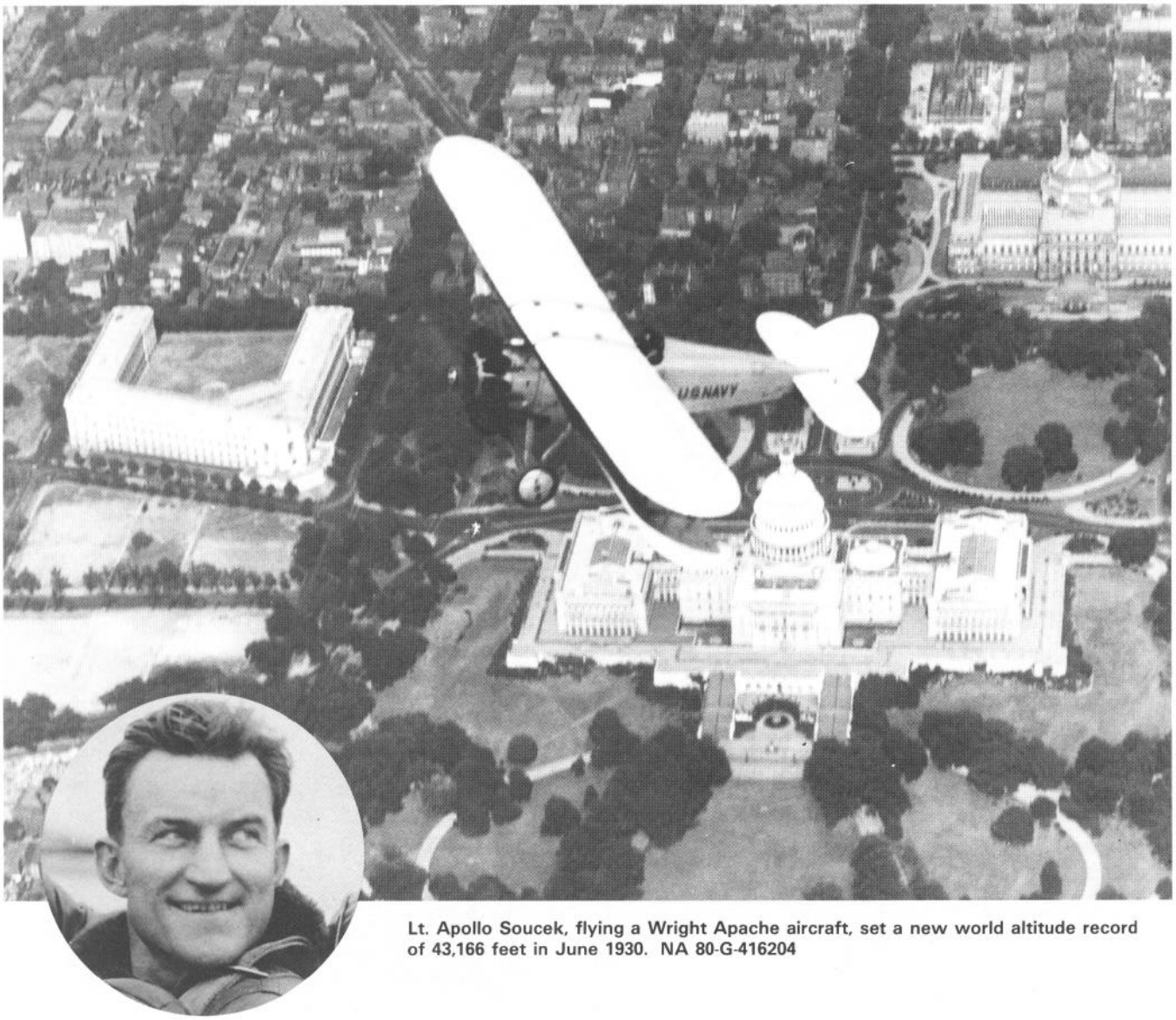
Official Navy participation in air races was drastically curtailed in the thirties due to economic restrictions. Under a congressional mandate to complete a five-year program of building up and maintaining 1,000 aircraft and two large airships, it became necessary to limit costs. Navy withdrawal from official competition was a disappointment to many — especially men like Lieutenant Al Williams, who elected to continue on his own.

Some of the gains in aviation technology during the thirties included improved radios, supercharged engines, controllable-pitch propellers, retractable landing gear and folding wings. The most obvious change in heavier-than-air craft, however, was the transition from biplane to single-wing design. New aircraft such as the TBD-1 torpedo bomber, F4F fighter and the PBY patrol plane began to take form.

Hydraulic arresting gear and catapults were installed in the three carriers that joined the fleet in the 1930s. *Ranger,* the first U.S. Navy ship to be built from the keel up as an aircraft carrier, was commissioned in 1934 — followed by *Yorktown* and *Enterprise* in 1937 and 1938, respectively.

Increased numbers of aircraft were used during the thirties, turning what had previously been individual feats into the coordinated efforts of squadrons. In 1934, six Consolidated P2Y-1s of VP-10F, commanded by Lieutenant Commander K. McGinnis, made a nonstop flight from San Fran-

Naval Aviation entered the 1930s having received the first deliveries of the new Boeing F4B-1 fighter a few months before. This well-known classic made its first appearance aboard Langley and Lexington. David S. Ingalls, Assistant Secretary of the Navy and the Navy's first ace during WW I, had one modified for his use as an executive aircraft. Improved versions of the F4B remained in service throughout the decade. USMC 514948



Lt. Apollo Soucek, flying a Wright Apache aircraft, set a new world altitude record of 43,166 feet in June 1930. NA 80-G-416204

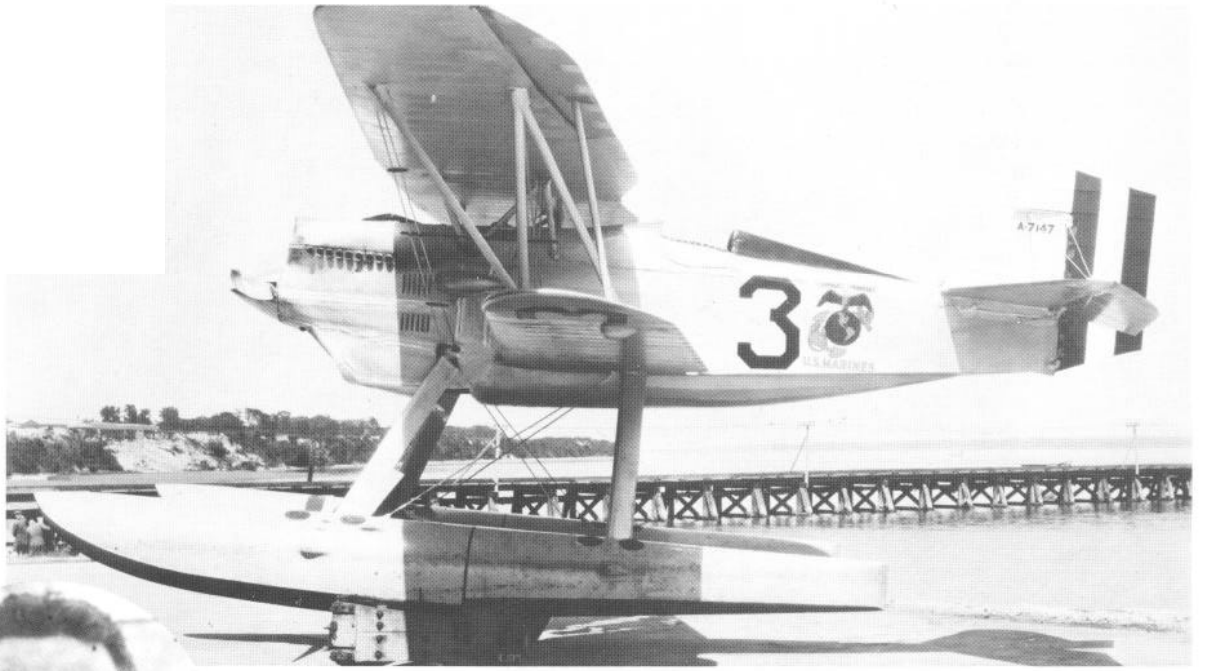
USN 460290

cisco to Pearl Harbor in 24 hours and 35 minutes. This record bettered the best previous time and exceeded the distance record for mass flights in C Class seaplanes.

Passage of the Aviation Cadet Act on April 15, 1935, created the grade of Aviation Cadet in the Navy and Marine Corps reserves. The new program offered pilot training to qualified individuals between the ages of 18 and 28 who would receive one year of flight instruction, benefits of pay, uniform gratuities and insurance. After serving three additional years on active duty, participants were commissioned ensigns or second lieutenants, paid a bonus of $1,500 and returned to inactive duty as members of the Reserves.

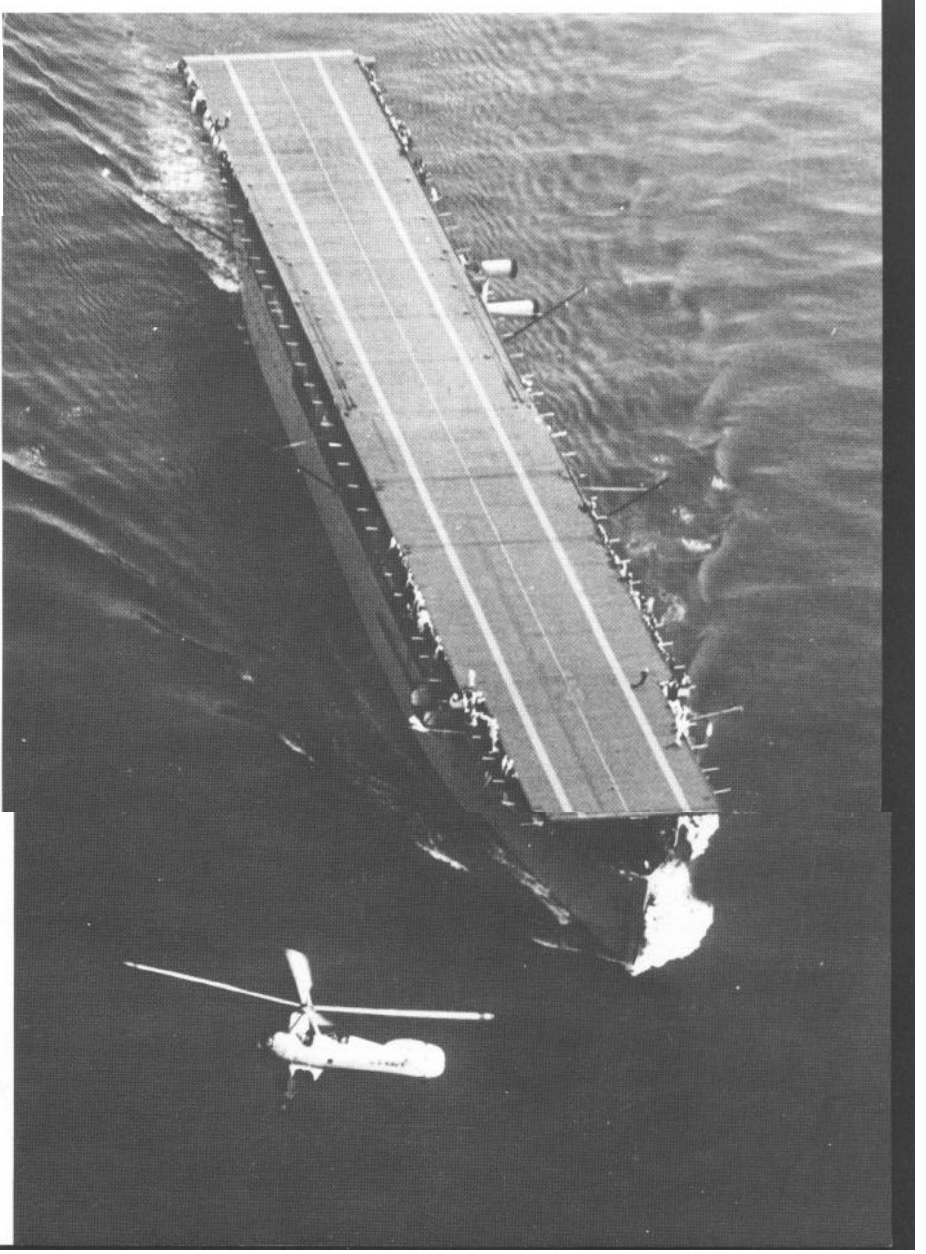
With the commissionings of the giant rigid airships *Akron* and *Macon* early in the decade, the Navy finally had vehicles capable of long-range reconnaissance missions. Aside from their increased size and technical improvements over previous rigid airships, they were also capable of carrying aircraft. On the underside of their gigantic hulls was a T-shaped door through which aircraft could be hoisted or lowered on a trapeze recovery/launch device to and from an internal hangar. Though ZRS-4 and ZRS-5 were considered unique among airships of the day, their contributions to fleet operations were short-lived. The crashes of *Akron* in 1933 and *Macon* in 1935 ended the Navy's rigid airship program. Nonrigid airships, however, continued to operate successfully for many years and were used extensively for convoy and antisubmarine warfare during WW II.

As signs of another world conflict appeared in Europe and East Asia, Naval Air continued to grow. Pilot training and aircraft procurement were stepped up and new carrier designs were on the boards. As the decade drew to a close, Naval Aviation was being accepted as an integral arm of U.S. naval power.

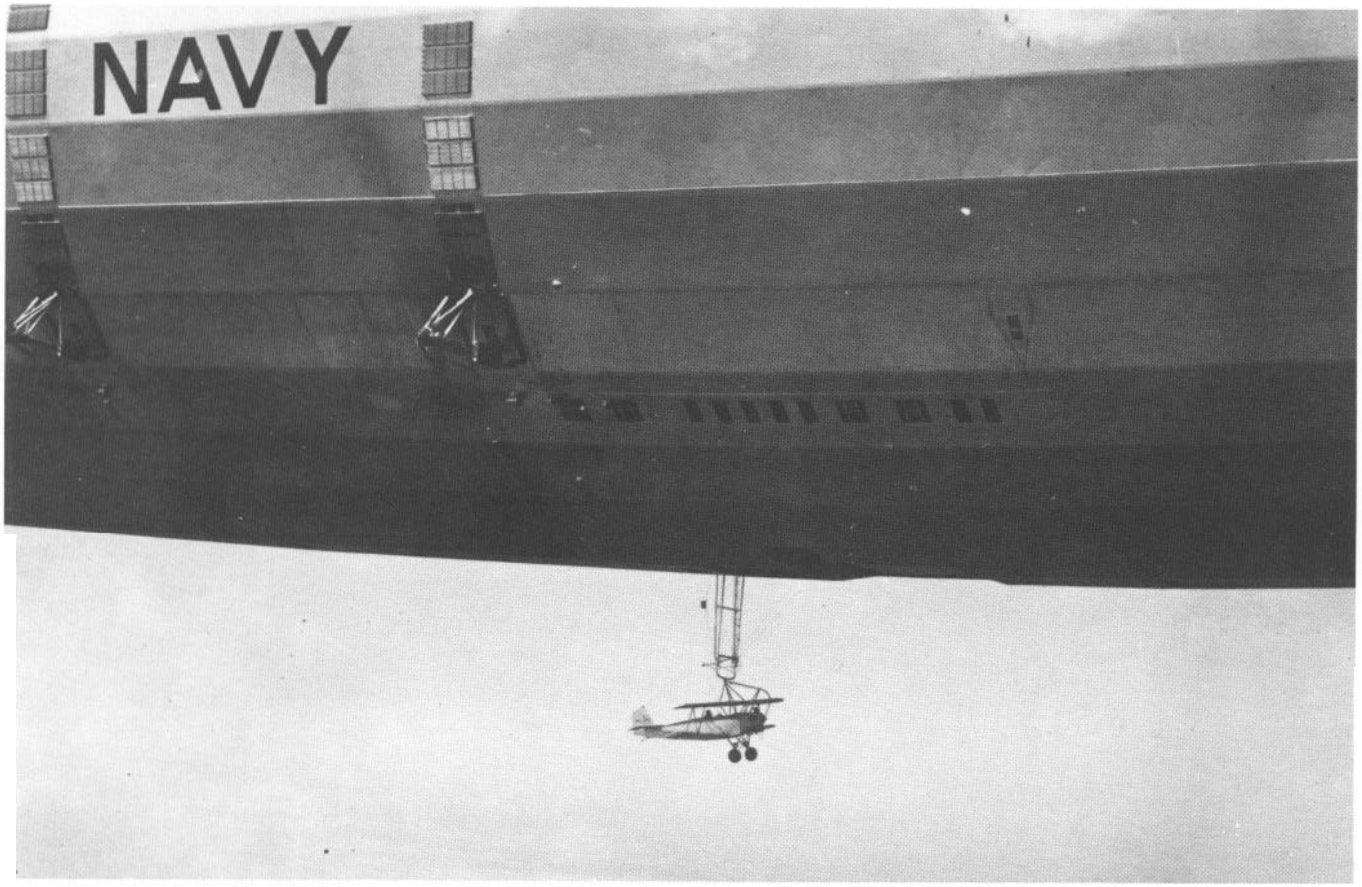


USN 460434

The last Curtiss Marine Trophy Race was flown over the Potomac River off NAS Anacostia in May 1930. Marine Capt. Arthur H. Page took top honors in a Curtiss F6C-3 fighter with a speed of 164.08 miles per hour. Page lost his life in this aircraft months later at the National Air Races.



USN 466608



The airship Akron was commissioned in October 1931 and in May of the following year made her first recovery of aircraft. Here, a Consolidated N2Y hooks on. Tragedy struck in April 1933 when Akron crashed in a severe storm off the New Jersey coast, killing 73, including Chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics RAdm. William A. Moffett. USN 416528

The U.S. Navy ordered its first rotary-wing aircraft, the Pitcairn XOP-1, in January 1931. Lt. Alfred M. Pride, who had done so much to develop the Navy's original arresting gear system, made the first rotary-wing landings and takeoffs aboard Langley while she was underway in September of that year.

USN 215856

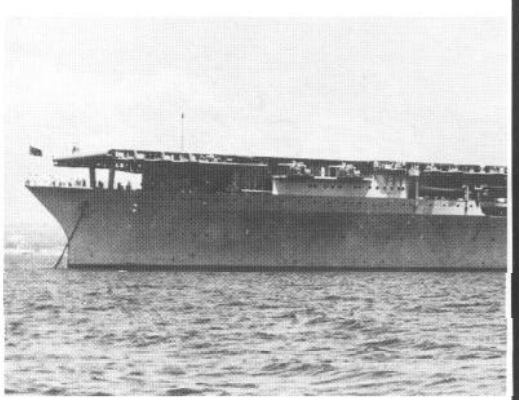
Settle NA 306-NT-87213

Lt.Cdr. Thomas G. "Tex" Settle, USN, and Maj. Chester L. Fordney, USMC, set a world's altitude record of 61,237 feet in a 600,000-cubic-foot free balloon on November 20, 1933. Here, the balloon is shown being readied for flight at the Akron, Ohio, municipal airport.

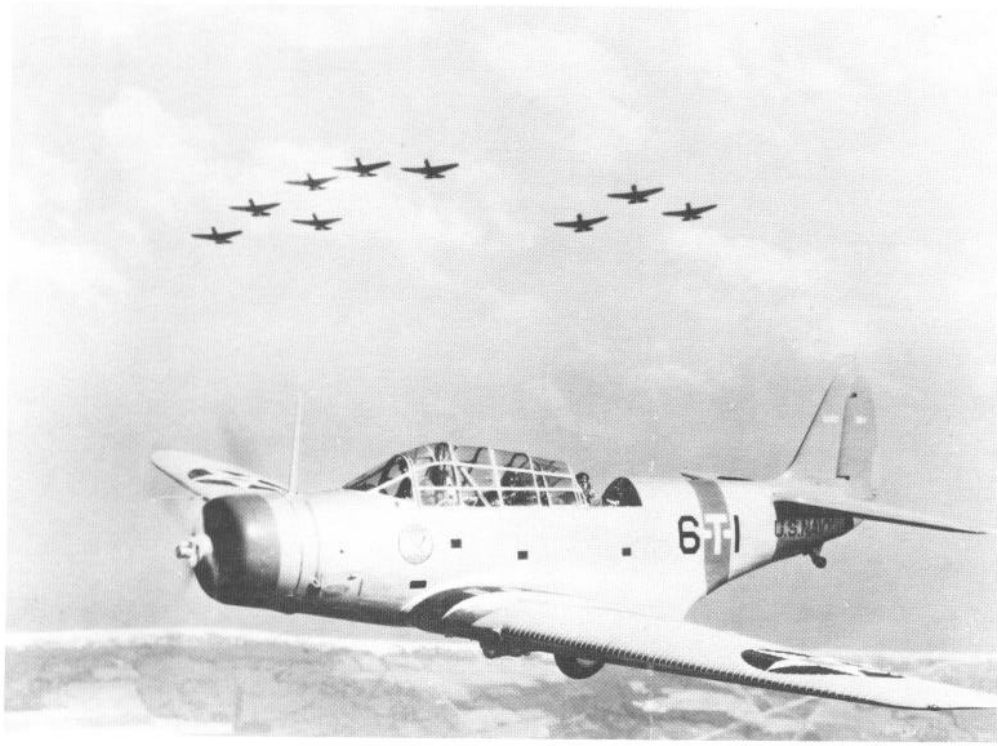
In January 1934, six Consolidated P2Y-1 patrol aircraft of Patrol Squadron 10F, under Lt.Cdr. Knefler "Soc" McGinnis, flew from San Francisco to Honolulu in 24 hours and 35 minutes, setting several records and demonstrating the increased reliability and flexibility of patrol aviation.
USN 17806

The airship Macon, which was commissioned in June 1933, continued to make a case for the big dirigibles working with fleet units and participating in fleet exercises throughout 1934. This photo shows her about to recover two of her Curtiss F9C-2 Sparrowhawk fighters. Macon crashed off Point Sur, Calif., on February 12, 1935, killing two crew members and signaling the end of rigid airships in the U.S. Navy.

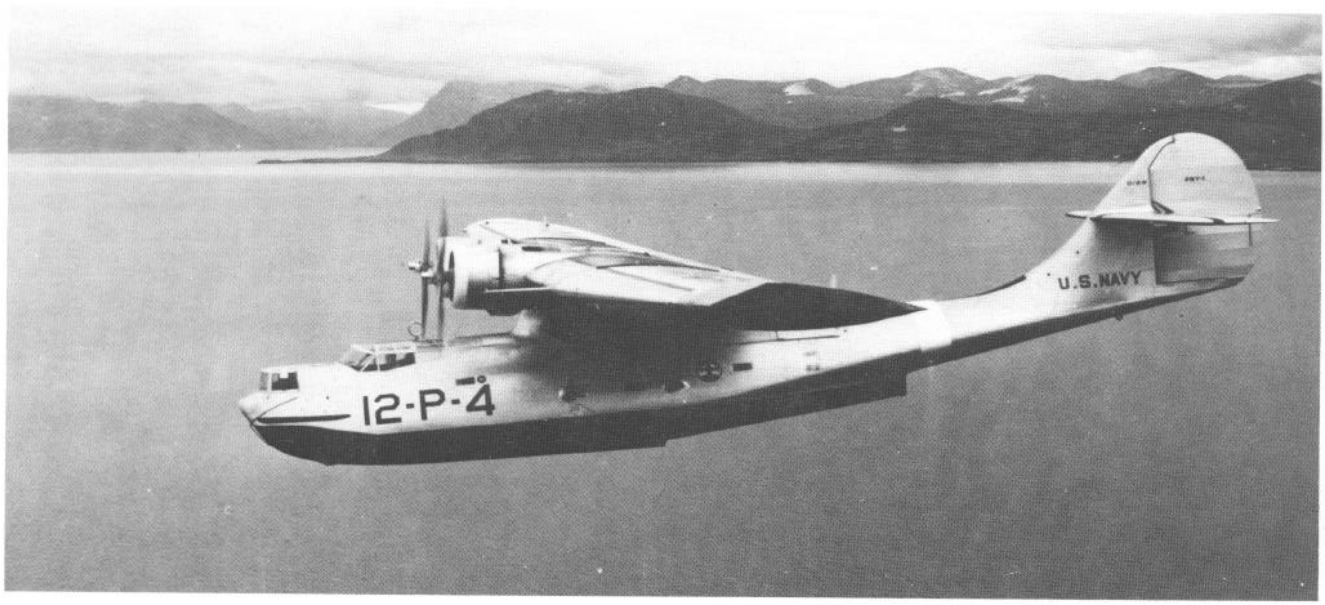
One of Macon's F9C-2 Sparrowhawks. NH 77428

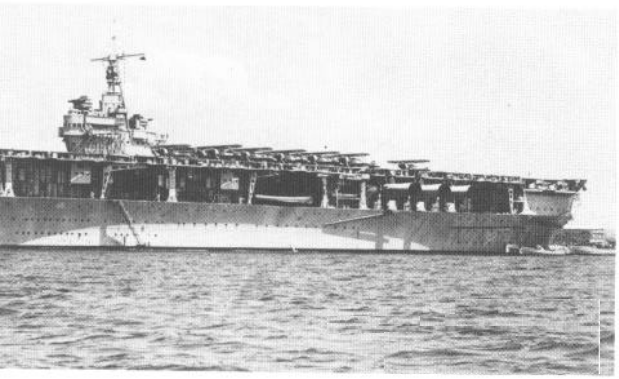


Ranger, the first U.S. Navy ship to be built as a carrier from the keel up, was commissioned in Norfolk, Va., on June 4, 1934, and two months later conducted her first air operations off Cape Henry, Va.



By the end of the decade, it was clear that monoplanes were the aircraft of the future. The first Douglas TBD-1 Devastator, like those shown here, was delivered to Torpedo Squadron 3 in October 1937. Other monoplane aircraft were in the final stages of development. USN 19342





War clouds were gathering quickly. In September 1939, President Roosevelt ordered the Navy to establish a Neutrality Patrol to guard the sea approaches to the United States and the West Indies. Consolidated PBY-1 aircraft patrolled the Atlantic from Greenland to the northern coast of South America.