

**THE FAMOUS LINDBERGH SONG
OH, CHARLIE IS MY DARLING**



*BEST KNOWN
of the songs
about Lindbergh
(right)*

Lindbergh in Song

Kenneth Carley

THIS SPRING marks the fiftieth anniversary of one of the most remarkable and important feats in aviation history — the nonstop, New York-to-Paris flight of Charles A. Lindbergh, Jr., of Little Falls, Minnesota. The tall, shy, twenty-five-year-old flier was little known when he took off the morning of May 20, 1927, from Roosevelt Field, Long Island, in his silver Ryan monoplane, “The Spirit of St. Louis.” But some 3,600 miles and 33½ hours later, when he landed in the glare of ground lights at Le Bourget Field, Paris, France, he suddenly was famous the world over. Not only had he made the first one-man crossing of the Atlantic by air, but he had won the \$25,000 prize that New York hotelkeeper

Raymond Orteig had offered for such a feat as far back as 1919. Most important, he had widened the horizon of the generally accepted concept of airplane capabilities, so that his flight “acted like adrenalin in the blood stream of American aviation.”¹ And by influencing aviation, it affected civilization everywhere.

After his landing on May 21, approximately 30,000 Frenchmen gave Lindbergh a frenzied welcome at the field. This touched off an unprecedented wave of mass adulation abroad and in the United States. His unassum-

¹ Editors of *American Heritage*, *The American Heritage History of Flight*, 243 (New York, 1962).

Mr. Carley is editor of this magazine and an avid collector of various kinds of popular sheet music.

—MHS—collections



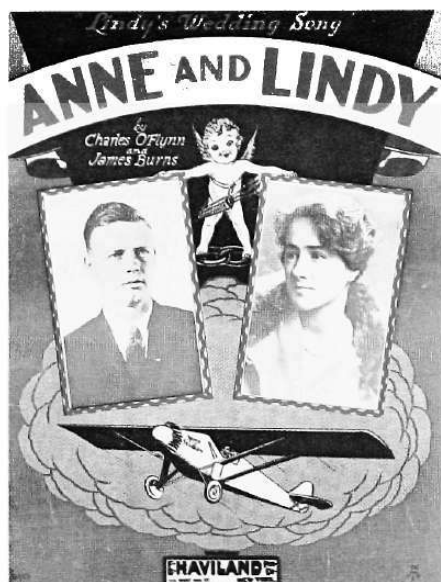
DEDICATED TO CAPT. CHARLES A. LINDBERGH

**LIKE AN ANGEL YOU FLEW
INTO EVERYONE'S HEART**
(LINDBERGH)



MOST song covers featured photographs of Lindbergh, sometimes alone, sometimes beside his plane. George M. Cohan's tribute (upper left), has same-size pictures of the song writer and the flier. At least one cover has a picture of Lindbergh's mother (see preceding page, upper left).

WEDDING SONGS (right) came out in 1929 when Lindbergh married Anne Morrow.



ing manner and infectious grin enhanced the hero worship. In part because he did not appear impressed with himself, he monopolized newspaper headlines and had honors heaped upon him by several nations. Nicknames like "Lucky Lindy," "the Lone Eagle," and "Slim" were bestowed upon him. And President Calvin Coolidge even sent the cruiser "Memphis" to carry Lindbergh and his plane back to the United States to tumultuous welcomes in Washington, D.C., and New York City. Later

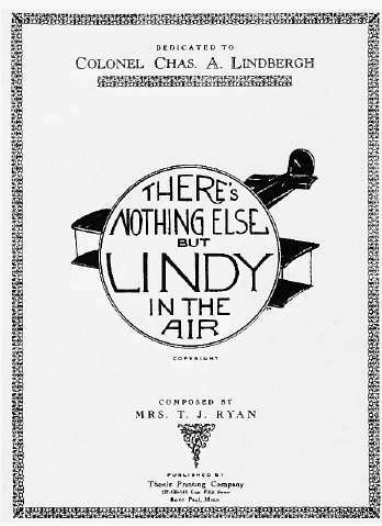
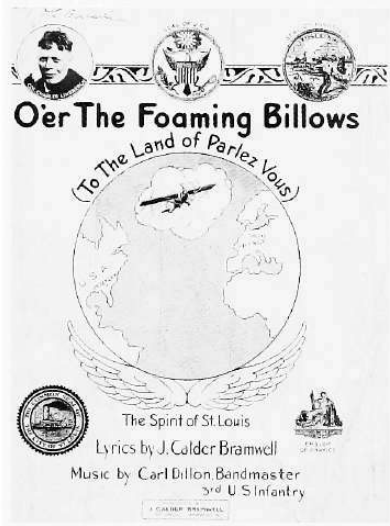
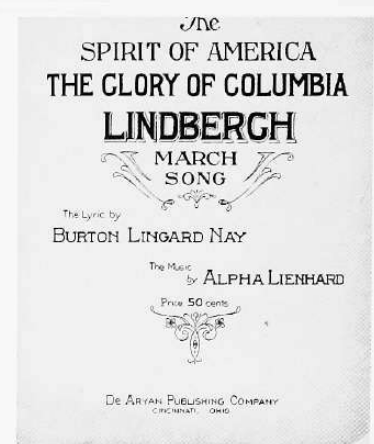
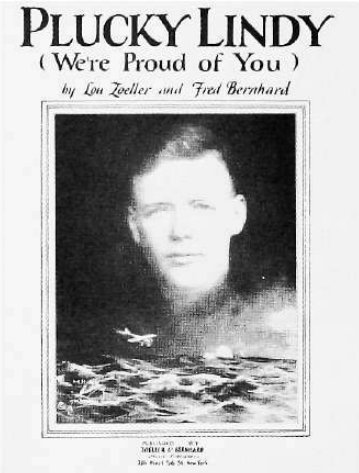
in 1927 Lindbergh made a cross-country tour to promote aeronautics and was greeted by demonstrative crowds in the Twin Cities and Little Falls, among other places.²

One result of the mass admiration accorded Lindbergh — an aspect that probably embarrassed him — was the outpouring of songs about him and his flight. Although the flight itself was certainly an impressive feat, the flights of fancy it inspired in song never got off the ground. Seizing upon the occasion "like a pack of ravenous wolves," as Sigmund Spaeth put it, musicians and lyricists wrote more than 100 songs about Lindbergh in a short time.³ James Taylor Dunn observed that most of the music was "inferior" and the lyrics "foolish."⁴ None of the songs are remembered today, except perhaps the one that enjoyed the most popularity at the time — "Lucky Lindy!" with words by F. Wolfe Gilbert

²See Bruce L. Larson, "Lindbergh's Return to Minnesota, 1927," in *Minnesota History*, 42:141-152 (Winter, 1970).

³Sigmund Spaeth, *A History of Popular Music in America*, 455 (New York, 1948).

⁴James Taylor Dunn, "A Century of Song: Popular Music in Minnesota," in *Minnesota History*, 44:136-137 (Winter, 1974).



AMONG SONGS honoring the flight in 1927 were these three, including "The Official 'Spirit of St. Louis' Welcome Song" — "Hello Lindy" — published in St. Louis.

TWO SONGS (left) by Minnesotans are among the Lindbergh items in the MHS collection.

and music by Abel Baer. Lindbergh particularly disliked this "second-rate" song, as he judged it, because he had carefully prepared for his flight and thought there was nothing "lucky" about it. On June 24, 1927, he wrote Bruce Larson that the song "was often played at dinners I attended, much to my embarrassment and annoyance."⁵

Probably the first song resulting from the flight was something called "The Song of Lindbergh," with words set to a well-known French air, which was hawked in the streets of Paris the day after the landing. It must have been written and printed overnight. It would be interesting to find a copy of it.⁶ Among the various Lindbergh songs are a few by established writers like Jimmy McHugh and Irving Mills ("Like an Angel You Flew into Everyone's Heart") and George M. Cohan, whose "When Lindy Comes Home" was not sold but was given away with the compliments of Cohan and the *New York American*, according to the back cover of the song.

Most of the writers of Lindbergh songs, however, were "unknowns" in all parts of the country. They included at least two Minnesotans, Mrs. T. J. Ryan ("There's Nothing Else but Lindy in the Air") and J. Calder Bramwell of St. Paul who wrote the lyrics to Carl Dillon's music for "O'er the Foaming Billows (To the Land of Parlez Vous)." If the music for most of the songs

was trite, the lyrics probably were more so, with several instances of "home" rhyming with "foam" (apparently meaning ocean) and "windy" rhyming with "Lindy." The songs have interest, though, as a folksy response to a famous event which captured the imagination of people everywhere. The examples on these pages are from the Minnesota song collection in the Minnesota Historical Society library and from the private collection of the writer. The two collections include about twenty Lindbergh songs, so many others are still "out there" somewhere yet to be found and added. Various MHS collections, of course, have many Lindbergh letters and artifacts, besides songs.

Two years after the flight, Charles Lindbergh married Anne Morrow, a daughter of Dwight Morrow, United States ambassador to Mexico, and Mrs. Morrow. The marriage stirred song writers to action again. They produced another round of inferior songs about Lindbergh. But, whereas the song covers for the flight in some cases pictured Lindbergh rising like a mighty presence from the ocean or standing next to his plane, the wedding songs tended to picture both "Lindy" and "Anne," with, of course, Cupid and his bow and arrows.

⁵ Larson, in *Minnesota History*, 42:148-149 (Winter, 1970)
⁶ *Mankato Free Press*, May 23, 1927, p. 1.



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