

# The Bandera PROPHEET

February 18, 2025

Today in Texas History

On this day in 1910, a Frenchman, Louis Paulhan, made the first recorded airplane flight in Texas. The first people in the state to fly, in the 1860s, were air-show balloonists and their passengers, although several inventors were also busy with plans for winged flying machines. The alleged flight of Jacob F. Brodbeck in 1865 has become a Texas legend. After the Wright brothers' controlled airplane flights in 1903, aeronautical progress generally was slow until 1909-10, when European aviation made rapid strides and the United States government acquired its first aircraft.

Aerial demonstrations proliferated at sites across America, including Houston, where Paulhan made his flight. Military aviation developed at the same time. Lt. Benjamin Foulois, a colorful pioneer pilot, arrived at Fort Sam Houston in February 1910, assembled the army's recently purchased Wright biplane, and took to the air on March 2, 1910.

More than a hundred years later, Texas continues to be a leader in civil and military aviation.

Also on this day in 1943, Dolly Shea graduated with the first flight-nurse class of the United States Army Air Forces at Bowman Field, Kentucky. The San Benito, Texas, native served in the European Theater during World War II. She was killed on April 14, 1945, when her evacuation plane, ferrying wounded Americans to hospitals behind the front line, was shot down over Germany.

She was one of three women in the Army Nurse Corps known to have been killed by direct enemy action and the only one from Texas.

Her awards include the Air Medal, the Red Cross Medal, a Special Citation from President Harry Truman, and a posthumous Purple Heart.