



## KANSAS LEGEND BIOGRAPHY

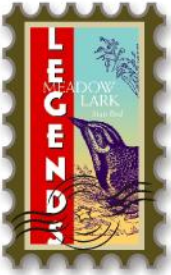
### Amelia Earhart (1897-1937)

Amelia Earhart was a legendary woman in a time and profession dominated by men. Born in Atchison, Kan., in 1897, Earhart is said to have discovered her passion for going against the grain when she was told she couldn't get on a roller coaster because it was "too dangerous for little girls." Earhart, nicknamed Meely, and her sister went on to construct a makeshift coaster in their backyard and simultaneously give Earhart her first taste of "flying."



Earhart graduated from high school in 1915 and took a job as a nurse's aide in a military hospital in World War I. Upon attending a stunt-flying exhibition on December 28, 1920, she had her first airplane ride with pilot Frank Hawks and was determined to fly herself. She held several jobs, including teacher, photographer, secretary and social worker, to help save money to fund her dream of flying. She took her first flying lesson the following month and in six months time saved enough money to buy a plane, a canary-yellow Kinner Airster.

Immediately, Earhart began making her mark as a prominent aviatrix. In the "Canary," she set her first women's record of flying at an altitude of 14,000 feet. In 1928, Earhart was asked to join pilot Wilmer "Bill" Stultz and co-pilot/mechanic Louis E. "Slim" Gordon on a flight from Newfoundland to Wales. The landmark trans-Atlantic flight made headlines around the world and ignited Earhart's drive to do bigger and better things in aviation.



In 1932, with the help of her publicist and husband George Putnam, Earhart planned for a solo trip across the Atlantic. Upon completion of the celebrated flight, President Herbert Hoover presented Earhart with a gold medal from the National Geographic Society, and Congress awarded her the Distinguished Flying Cross—the first ever given to a woman. She followed one spectacular achievement with another when in 1932, she set the women's nonstop transcontinental speed record, flying from Los Angeles, Calif., to Newark, New Jersey, and becoming the first woman to fly solo coast to coast.

Earhart's next feat was the first solo flight across the Pacific, flying from Honolulu, Haw., to Oakland, Calif., in 1935. She continued setting and breaking records, serving as a modern role model for women. Her courage and commitment led her to the challenge of flying around the world at the equator. At the age of 40, Earhart set out with a highly experienced navigator, Fred Noonan, and successfully completed more than 22,000 miles of the 29,000-mile journey.



On July 2, 1937, she left Lae, New Guinea, for Howland Island, a tiny island in the North Pacific. When the plane was due to reach its destination, Earhart radioed to the United States Coast Guard that she thought she was flying over Howland but could not see the land below. After transmittals back and forth, Earhart lost communication. A thorough search was conducted, but no trace of Earhart, her navigator or plane was ever found.

Despite the tragic end, the "Lady of the Air" and her groundbreaking achievements would forever be remembered. Earhart used her fame to advance the cause of women, advocate gender equality, and to serve as a model of integrity, determination and heart to women then and now.

