

SOCIAL STUDIES ACTIVITY

Vin Fiz

Name: _____

In the fall of 1911, Calbraith Perry Rodgers set off to cross the continental United States in his new Wright Model EX, named the *Vin Fiz*. He was one of the first aviators who learned to fly at Wright Flying School, located at Huffman Prairie just outside Dayton, Ohio. With 90 minutes of flight time and a single solo flight to his credit, Rodgers had just received his pilot's license a month before.

William Randolph Hearst, the wealthy owner of several newspapers, offered \$50,000 to the first person to fly across the United States in 30 days or less. Despite Orville Wright's warning that there wasn't an airplane around that could make that sort of trip, Rodgers took off from Sheepshead Bay, New York on September 17, 1911, in one of Wright's planes.

Rodgers flew his plane, named the *Vin Fiz* after his sponsor's new soft drink, along the same route as the railroad tracks of the times. He used railroad tracks as his guide across the United States because airplanes at that time were not equipped with navigational tools or compasses.

Fifty days after he began his transcontinental flight, Rodgers landed in Pasadena, California, on November 5. He was not awarded the \$50,000 because the flight took longer than 30 days. However, Rodgers earned a place in aviation history as the first person to successfully complete a transcontinental flight.

On December 10, in order to say he successfully flew from coast to coast, Rodgers landed at Long Beach, California and taxied the *Vin Fiz* into the Pacific Ocean.

Visit these sites for more information on the *Vin Fiz* and Calbraith Perry Rodgers:

<http://www.aerofiles.com/vinfiz.html>

<http://www.wrightstories.com/afterwards.html#vinfiz>

<http://www.nationalaviation.org/enshrinee/rodgers.html>

Exercise #1

After reading materials from the above story and the information found on the provided websites, write a brief factual history of Calbraith Perry Rodgers' trip. Relate the *Vin Fiz* flight to what was going on in the world at that time by researching other events that occurred in the year 1911 to give your history depth.

Exercise #2

Rodgers' trip from the Atlantic shore at Sheepshead Bay near New York City to the Pacific surf at Long Beach, California took a strange route. It went through these cities:

- Sheepshead Bay, NY
- Chicago, IL
- Kansas City, KS
- Dallas, TX
- Tucson, AZ
- Phoenix, AZ
- Pasadena, CA
- Long Beach, CA.

Find a map of the United States and chart a course from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean through these cities. Then answer, why did he take this geographic route in 1911?