



A Valiant Attempt Becomes an Enduring Mystery

Ninety-two years ago, on August 25, 1927, brave young aviator Paul Redfern took off in his Stinson-Detroiter monoplane *Port of Brunswick* from Sea Island beach in an attempt to fly non-stop to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Had he succeeded, he would have broken Charles Lindbergh's distance record by 1,000 miles. His solo flight time would have been more than 50 hours compared with Lindbergh's 33.5.

Newspapers across America covered the valiant attempt, stating that experts doubted Redfern was carrying enough fuel to reach his destination. On August 26, the *Savannah Morning News* reported that U.S. Navy weather officials felt success would be "nothing short of a miracle." At no time would Redfern receive favorable winds, and he would fly in total darkness for two nights, as there would be no moon.

For navigation, Redfern relied on compasses and a map. He did not have a radio. To survive a forced landing at sea or on land, he carried a rubber raft, a rifle, flare guns, a portable distilling apparatus for water, fish hooks, a knife, matches, a surgical kit, medicine, and mosquito netting. He also took rations for ten days, which included twenty chicken, ham, and cheese sandwiches, as well as malted milk tablets, raisins, dates, nuts, chocolate, and beef bouillon cubes. For beverages, he had water and coffee.

With great optimism, Redfern proclaimed, "If I am forced down in the Amazon valley, I believe I can live almost indefinitely with what equipment I am carrying With my collapsible rifle, which also shoots .410 shotgun shells, I can bring down enough small game to satisfy my needs for quite a period." (*The Brunswick News*, August 25) Others



did not share his optimism. The *Tallahassee Daily Democrat* on August 27 described the dangers of the Amazon jungle, such as "writhing giant snakes" and "hordes of insects and tiny reptiles whose sting or bite is death-dealing."

By the afternoon of August 27, no sightings of Redfern had been reported along his route over Brazil. He and his plane had disappeared, and despite numerous rescue expeditions to the jungles of South America over the next decade, no trace was ever found.

This month's images from the Coastal Georgia Historical Society archives show 25-year-old Paul Redfern (top, right) with Paul Varner, chairman of the flight committee, and Redfern's plane taking off from Sea Island beach.

Our monthly images on this page are from the vast archives of the Coastal Georgia Historical Society. The Society's mission includes the "administration, restoration and maintenance of historic facilities and resources ... preserved as a living part of the historical and cultural foundations of our coastal community." Society facilities include the St. Simons Lighthouse and Museum, the A.W. Jones Heritage Center, and the World War II Home Front Museum at the Historic Coast Guard Station. To learn more about the Society, its diverse programs, and the benefits of Society membership, please call 912.638.4666, or visit coastalgeorgiahistory.org.