



Charles Lindbergh



In May 1927, 25-year-old Charles Lindbergh flew solo across the Atlantic in 33-1/2 hours, becoming the first pilot to accomplish this feat. And with this triumph, he emerged from virtual obscurity to instantaneous world fame, transforming an oddball loner into a beloved Lindbergh was now the nation's most eligible bachelor. Before marrying the middle daughter of Ambassador Dwight Morrow in 1929, he first courted Anne's older sister Elizabeth, but dumped her for Anne within several months. Also during this time, youngest Morrow sister Constance received a letter threatening to abduct and kill her unless \$50,000 was paid and placed in a specially made box in a cemetery....an eerie harbinger of the kidnapper's ransom demand in 1932. The perpetrator of this earlier threat was never identified.

While seven months pregnant in 1930, Anne flew with Charles for two weeks in an open cockpit at high altitude. Upon returning she was hospitalized for four days, yet when questioned Lindbergh lied about this to the press. After he was born, baby Charlie was immediately put on a special diet. The child had a larger head than normal, and he showed other symptoms indicative of rickets. Rumors that something was seriously wrong with the world's most famous baby would never subside.

Only Charles, Anne, their three servants, and some servants at the Morrow mansion in Englewood NJ knew that the family would be staying at the Hopewell house on a Tuesday night...and only after Lindbergh decided they would remain there past Sunday for the FIRST time ever.

Lindbergh's new home, named Highfields, was in an isolated area of the Sourland Mountains near Hopewell NJ. Charles had rented a farmhouse about four miles away from the construction site to oversee the initial phase. In the winter of 1932, the house construction was almost finished, but the grounds were a muddy mess.

The family's habit was to stay there on the weekend but return to the Morrow mansion on Monday. The last minute decision to stay over at Highfields because of baby Charlie's cold was unprecedented...a complete break from Lindbergh's established pattern.

On the night of his son's abduction, Charles Lindbergh did something completely out of character.

He was a scheduled speaker at the New York University alumni dinner, and Lindbergh never missed an opportunity to be adored and applauded. Yet on this night in question, he blew off this social function without even notifying them. Instead, he drove the two hours back to Highfields, where he arrived around 8:25 PM.

Lindbergh had phoned ahead with strict instructions that no one was to enter the nursery between 8-10PM that night...he didn't want the child "coddled". Both Anne and nursemaid Betty Gow were in and out of their respective bathrooms (next to the nursery) during that period, but neither woman heard anything.

Baby Charlie was missing from his crib when Betty checked him at 10 PM. She and Anne both assumed that Lindbergh had removed the child as a practical joke. Yet when confronted with the empty crib, Lindbergh exclaimed, "THEY have stolen our baby!" With his unfounded pronouncement, from that moment on this crime was considered a kidnapping.

A ransom note was eventually found on a nursery windowsill... the kidnapper apparently entered through this window on a broken ladder found nearby. But how could he have backed out onto this rickety ladder through the window while carrying a 35lb child on a windy, rainy night without disturbing anything by the window? And also leaving no muddy footprints on the nursery floor?

Other things didn't add up. Why did "THEY" enter the house when all five adult residents were awake and moving about, instead of waiting until after midnight?

How did "THEY" know which room was the baby's nursery, and how did they know which nursery window had the broken shutter lock?

The "Lindbergh Baby Kidnapping" became an instant media sensation. Journalist H.L. Mencken set the bar for hyperbole by calling it "the biggest story since the Resurrection". Indeed, the mysterious abduction of the premiere American power couple's first born child would become an international obsession.

With the eyes of the world upon him, Charles Lindbergh immediately took control of the investigation and directed it away from Highfields. He erroneously assumed the New York mafia had stolen his son, and foolishly gave gangster Mickey Rossner a copy of the ransom note to circulate among the underworld, which led to 13 other ransom notes being delivered

The fascination with this crime endures eight decades later. Even though a man was convicted and executed, the police, prosecution, and press were never able to reveal precisely who the kidnapper was and what preparations and methods he, or they, employed.

All the evidence BEFORE Hauptmann's capture indicated a well-prepared gang was involved... at least in the NY extortion case. Yet all the evidence at the crime scene in Hopewell suggested that the removal of the child could have been an inside job.

- Lindbergh was scheduled to attend the NYU alumni dinner, yet he didn't show or call to cancel. Despite his renowned reliability, he blew off a commitment on the night his son was taken.
- He told Anne he heard the sound of wood snapping from outside, yet Anne and the three servants said later they heard nothing that night, and the normally alert family watchdog Wagoosh did not bark.
- When Betty Gow found the empty crib at 10 PM, both she and Anne assumed Lindbergh had taken the child as a practical joke, as he had done several weeks before by hiding him in a closet.
- When Lindbergh saw the empty crib he announced. "Anne, they have stolen our baby!" Even before searching the house for the toddler, Lindbergh planted the seed that his son had been kidnapped.
- Anne and the servants searched the house, starting in the nursery, and none of them saw the ransom note on the window sill. Yet Lindbergh discovered it after returning to the nursery alone.
- Handwriting experts would later agree that THIS FIRST note was different from the other 13 ransom notes, suggesting it was written under duress and an attempt was made to disguise the writing.
- Lindbergh put himself in charge of the investigation, insisting that the NJ State Police turn over all their information to him. At one point he threatened to shoot any officer who violated this order.
- Lindbergh rejected an NYPD plan to stake out the ransom drop at the cemetery.

Lindbergh tried to explain this behavior away by saying he did not want to jeopardize the safe return of his son.

Lindbergh also had a bent toward what we now call bioengineering. In the 1920s, frustrated by medicine's inability to help his sister-in-law, who suffered from a damaged cardiac valve, he turned to one of the most famous men of his day, Dr. Alexis Carrel, a French surgeon who had been awarded the Nobel Prize in 1912 for his pioneering work on vascular anastomosis.

Being staunch eugenicists, the men also held that these medical breakthroughs should be restricted for use by the "white race." As Carrel put it, and Lindbergh concurred, "There is no escaping the fact that men are not created equal...."

In addition to his eugenic [the study of how to arrange reproduction within a human population to increase the occurrence of heritable characteristics regarded as desirable] beliefs, Lindbergh also admired the social and political policies of Hitler and the Nazi party. He visited Germany several times in the 1930s and proudly received a swastika-shaped and jewel-encrusted award, the *Verdienstkreuz Deutscher Adler* ("service cross of the German eagle"), beneficently bestowed upon him by his aviator colleague Hermann Göring, one of Hitler's henchmen.

During a visit to Germany in 1936, Lindbergh wrote enthusiastically to Carrel: "I believe that Germany is in many ways the most interesting place in the world today, and some of the things I see here encourage me greatly."

After World War II, Lindbergh remained unapologetic for his war-time stance. Lindbergh's *Wartime Journals* (1970) "contained passages that seemed indifferent to the regimented brutality of Hitler's Nazi Germany..."