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FAMOUS HOLLYWOOD AIRCRAFT ENJOY PERMANENT LANDINGS ON CALIFORNIA'S CENTRAL COAST

Movie Props from *The Aviator*, *Flight of The Phoenix*, *Winds of Kitty Hawk* and *The Rocketeer* on Display at Santa Maria Museum of Flight

Santa Maria, CA—In the Howard Hughes biopic *The Aviator* starring Leonardo DiCaprio, the eccentric pilot emerges unscathed after crashing his H-1 Racer into a beet field while setting the land-plane speed record. Today, Hughes' original H-1 is prominently displayed at the National Air & Space Museum in Washington D.C.

But whatever happened to DiCaprio's H-1? It's now displayed at the Santa Maria Museum of Flight on California's Central Coast, where several cinema props have found a permanent landing. Among the museum's featured movie props are a full-scale Wright glider from *Winds of Kitty Hawk* and a large radio-controlled model airplane that flew in the *Flight of The Phoenix*. Even the museum's main building is an original wooden hangar featured in the movie *The Rocketeer*. A custom acrobatic plane from *The Rocketeer* is also featured.

However, there's much more than Hollywood at the heart of this little museum, which features a variety of planes, models, photos, memorabilia and exhibits, including a restored F4 fighter jet that served in Vietnam and a 1929 Fleet biplane.

The Santa Maria Museum of Flight was established in 1984 by a group of dedicated citizens who wanted to preserve the Central Coast's aviation history.

Indeed, the Santa Maria Valley has long been an epicenter of aviation activity. In 1928, Captain G. Allan Hancock founded the Allan Hancock Air Field in Santa Maria, where he established a flying school. The Hancock Foundation College of Aeronautics later became a major pilot training center during World War II.

The nearby Santa Maria Army Air Field was commissioned in 1942 as one of the largest wartime bases on the West Coast, where pilots trained to fly the famed P-38 Lightning. This field later became Santa Maria Public Airport, which offers commercial flights by United Express and Allegiant Air.

Aerospace has also played a major role in the development of Santa Maria. The 30th Space Wing at Vandenberg Air Force Base, located 20 miles southwest of the city, is responsible for all Department of Defense space and missile launch activities on the West Coast.

On August 23-24, the Santa Maria Museum of Flight will host the "Thunder Over the Valley" air show. Held at the adjacent Santa Maria Public Airport, the show will feature the A-10 West Demo Team and the F-18 Tac Demo Team. Other exciting aircraft will be added to the lineup in early summer.

The Santa Maria Museum of Flight is open Friday through Sunday from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at 3015 Airpark Drive at the Santa Maria Public Airport. The Santa Maria Museum of Flight also offers educational programs for students of all ages. See www.smmof.org or call (805) 922-8758 to learn more about visiting the Santa Maria Museum of Flight.