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City of Billings | Aviation and Transit

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BILLINGS Logan International Airport First Flight Painting Returned to the Terminal Lobby

BILLINGS, MT: The Billings Logan International Airport (BIL) is excited to announce the relocation of the J.K. Ralston “First Flight” painting in conjunction with the opening of the new entry lobby at the airport terminal.

Local artist J.K. Ralston captured the first flight in Billings in his painting titled “First Flight”, which is now returned to be displayed prominently in the new terminal lobby. J.K. Ralston (1896-1987) was a well-known painter of the American West.

The history of flight in Billings began late in the year 1912, with local dentist, Dr. Frank Bell, and his Curtiss 0-X-5 aircraft. The first flight took place the following Memorial Day weekend in 1913. With much publicity and fanfare, Dr. Bell took off from a field in Billings flying to Park City and back, a round trip distance of 40 miles. Early flying machines used a number of open fields and pastures in the Yellowstone Valley near Billings to land and take off prior to the airport opening on May 29, 1928.

The new terminal entry lobby, located just inside Door 2, provides direct access to the passenger screening checkpoint via a new elevator, escalator, and stairway. The lobby is a component of the soon to be completed \$60 million terminal expansion project (project completion in April 2024 with the opening of the B Concourse).

“We are excited to have the Ralston First Flight painting again displayed prominently in the BIL terminal lobby,” said Jeff Roach, Director Aviation and Transit. “The painting is a significant historical treasure for Billings and a reminder of the importance of aviation to our city and region.

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