

Fred Wiseman Scrapbook

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CORREO AEREO PANAMA-MIAMI AIR MAIL

VIA [[image - logo of Pan American World Airways]] PAN AMERICAN WORLD AIRWAYS]
40° ANIVERSARIO
40th ANNIVERSARY
C.A. deGIERS
VUELO EN PANAMA
PANAMA FLIGHT

In general, the public too frequently takes for granted our modern commercial air world with its fast passenger, cargo and airmail services and seldom gives thought to the daring trials, efforts and achievements of the individual pioneer airmen who have made possible the rapid aerial communication and transportation of today. It is to recall just such an exploit and to honor one of these early airmen that the Jack Knight Air Mail Society (Chapter No. 23, A.A.M.S.-S.P.A.), The Early Birds and Pan American World Airways System are jointly commemorating the 40th anniversary of deGiers' 1912 pioneering flight-- Panama's first-- by providing world aerophilatelists with this historical commemorative cover flown from Panama City to Miami, Florida, on April 21, 1952. Pan American has taken great pleasure in being able to arrange to have Mr. deGiers aboard as a passenger on this dedicated flight.

The first aeroplane flight on the Isthmus of Panama was made by Clarence A. deGiers on April 21, 1912 in an American built Bleriot of design similar to that used by Louis Bleriot in the first crossing of the English Channel on July 25, 1909. The Bleriot flown by deGiers was equipped with a 7 cylinder rotary 50 H.P. Gnome motor. The monoplane wing spread was 28'6" with an overall length of 25'2". The wing chord was 6'8". The landing gear was of caster type with bicycle wheels and tires

In 1912, officials of the City of Panama, R. de P., established a purse of \$3,000 for performing the first successful aeroplane flight. Mr. deGiers, who was affiliated with the Moisant Internationale Aviators Company, won this award on April 21, 1912. He made a number of exhibition flights to paid admissions thereafter.

Mr. deGiers learned to fly at the age of twenty-two, one of those few who learned without being accompanied by an instructor. He flew for and received his Fédération Aéronautique Internationale license number 77 in 1911. Mr. deGiers is an active member of the Early Birds, an organization comprised of men and women who flew solo before December 17, 1916. He retired from active flying at the close of World War I and soon after became president of The Liquidometer Corporation which was formed to exploit his instrument inventions that are used on present day aircraft.

Aviators of that era who aspired to fly in the tropics were confronted with practically insurmountable problems. An article dealing with these problems written by James H. Hare, Staff Photographer of Colliers who accompanied two aviators to the Isthmus, appeared in the April 1912 issue of "FLYING" published by the Aero Club of America. A number of aviators, at great expense, preceded deGiers to Panama with crated aeroplanes; they left without attempting to fly, even though it would have been profitable to do so. While low speed, weak construction and poor motor reliability were factors, the failure of his predecessors may be

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The System of the Flying Clippers



attributed largely to terrain and climate, particularly the latter. Wings of aeroplanes of that period were in most cases covered with rubberized cotton fabric that was affected by the humid Panama climate. At certain times of the day the fabric wing covering would become loose and sag between the wing ribs, and at other times would shrink to a tightness that caused it to pull away from the fastenings. Another problem was that the glue used in parts of the plane and propeller structure became soft and the glued parts separated. In face of this, deGiers went to Panama and with the Bleriot aeroplane left by another aviator, made Panama's first successful flight which has been accorded a place in the records of early aviation. No souvenir covers were carried on the original flight.

Glowing accounts of deGiers' flights appeared in all the newspapers of the Isthmus at the time. The following extracts are typical:

[[images - photos of flight of C.A. deGiers]] [[caption]] Reduced reproduction, NUEVOS RITOS PANAMA, April 22, 1912 [[/caption]]

STAR AND HERALD, April 21, 1912: "Many aviators have paid a visit here, all of whom voluble in their promises of what they intended doing in the aviation line, but so far Mr. deGiers is the only one who has not backed out on one excuse or another, several days in advance of the time for the scheduled flight."

NUEVOS RITOS, April 22, 1912: (translation) "A quiet afternoon, filled with sunshine. Along the winding road the constant come and go of coaches and automobiles. Deafening noise of bells and horns. Here a fruit and refreshment peddler calling the excellencies of his wares; there another arguing about prices. A policeman directing traffic. A coachman who argues; a boy who sneaks in without a ticket; and on the sun-baked field are thousands of men and graceful feminine figures, with small feet, willowy waists, faces alight and eyes shining. Bursts of beautiful music, light and animation and movement and life. Suddenly there was a loud noise. In the midst of a burst of applause the airplane of Mr. deGiers, like a giant condor, spread its wings and lifted itself into the air, majestically and smoothly."

STAR AND HERALD, April 23, 1912: "At the instant the machine left the ground, the pent-up emotions of the thousands of enchanted spectators broke loose into a long round of cheers, the band struck up a lively strain and unconfined enthusiasm over the demonstration that man had at last conquered the air seized the crowd. The machine, under perfect control at all times, made a wide circuit of the surrounding fields and the nearby bay, and after encircling three times, in circumferences of about four miles and at the rate of about 40 miles an hour, the aviator gracefully lowered his machine to earth near the starting point, and Panama's first aviation meet was over."

LA ESTRELLA DE PANAMA, April 23, 1912: (translation) "The first flight in a Bleriot monoplane took place Sunday afternoon, April 21st, in La Sabana, at the Juan Franco Field. The plane was flown by Clarence A. deGiers, the North American aviator. There were about 4,000 spectators at the field. When the hour for the flight arrived, the plane rose majestically to a height of about 40 meters, and was cheered by the spectators. The aviator circled the field three times on a radius of over a kilometer. It was a beautiful afternoon and there was only a light breeze

blowing. The landing was magnificent and brought forth another cheer from the spectators. Mr. deGiers, the aviator, has attained a brilliant success which has been fully recognized by the spectators; his first flight in Panama satisfied everyone."

DIARIO DE PANAMA, April 22, 1912: (translation) "The large crowd of spectators dispersed, satisfied because they had seen on Panamanian soil the sublime spectacle which an airplane offers as it cruises through the air, announcing a new and brilliant triumph of man which will bring about far-reaching changes in the customs of the countries of the world."

LA PRENSA, May 23, 1912: (translation) "Yesterday, very early, the residents of this city were agreeably impressed by the visit of the young aviator, Mr. Clarence deGiers, who flew over the city in his Bleriot monoplane. Mr. deGiers made two flights. During the first flight he rose over Juan Franco grounds, at 6:30 a.m., to an altitude of 200 feet more or less and was up for about five minutes. This was a practice flight over the grounds to study the air currents, atmospheric conditions and a new motor. He landed and rested for ten minutes, then started on his second flight over the city of Panama at a height of 400 to 500 feet. He then directed his course to the Island of Flamenco, returning once more to fly over the city. He then flew toward Ancon, circling over the hill and the railroad for a few moments before starting for Colon on the Atlantic Coast. He was unable to complete the flight to Colon because of atmospheric conditions, and was forced to return to Juan Franco grounds, from which he started, landing without mishap. This second flight lasted 35 minutes."

[[image - logo of Pan American World Airways, drawing of a globe with wings extending from top right, and the letters PAA printed on the wings]]

David C. Crockett, Chairman, Sponsors' Committee, 88 Elton Rd., Stewart Manor, Garden City, N. Y.

[[image - logo of Pan American World Airways, drawing of a globe with wings extending from the top left, and the letters PAA printed on the wings]]

The System of the Flying Clippers

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