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Harold E. Morehouse Flying Pioneers Biographies Collection - Bonney, Leonard Warden

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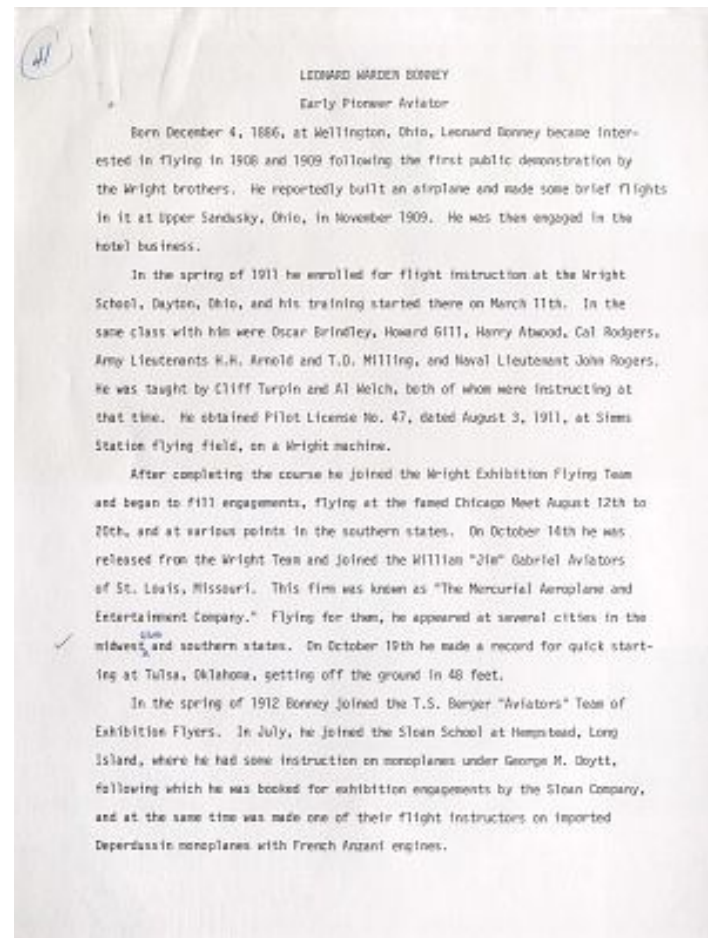
LEONARD WARDEN BONNEY
Early Pioneer Aviator

Born December 4, 1886, at Wellington, Ohio, Leonard Bonney became interested in flying in 1908 and 1909 following the first public demonstration by the Wright brothers. He reportedly built an airplane and made some brief flights in it at Upper Sandusky, Ohio, in November 1909. He was then engaged in the hotel business.

In the spring of 1911 he enrolled for flight instruction at the Wright School, Dayton, Ohio, and his training started there on March 11th. In the same class with him were Oscar Brindley, Howard Gill, Harry Atwood, Cal Rodgers, Army Lieutenants H.H. Arnold and T.D. Milling, and Naval Lieutenant John Rogers. He was taught by Cliff Turpin and Al Welch, both of whom were instructing at that time. He obtained Pilot License No. 47, dated August 3, 1911, at Simms Station flying field, on a Wright machine.

After completing the course he joined the Wright Exhibition Flying Team and began to fill engagements, flying at the famed Chicago Meet August 12th to 20th, and at various points in the southern states. On October 14th he was released from the Wright Team and joined the William "Jim" Gabriel Aviators of St. Louis, Missouri. This firm was known as "The Mercurial Aeroplane and Entertainment Company." Flying for them, he appeared at several cities in the midwestern and southern states. On October 19th he made a record for quick starting at Tulsa, Oklahoma, getting off the ground in 48 feet.

In the spring of 1912 Bonney joined the T.S. Berger "Aviators" Team of Exhibition Flyers. In July, he joined the Sloan School at Hempstead, Long Island, where he had some instruction on monoplanes under George M. Doytt, following which he was booked for exhibition engagements by the Sloan Company, and at the same time was made one of their flight instructors on imported Deperdussin monoplanes with French Anzani engines.



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