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Harold E. Morehouse Flying Pioneers Biographies Collection - Cato, Joseph L.

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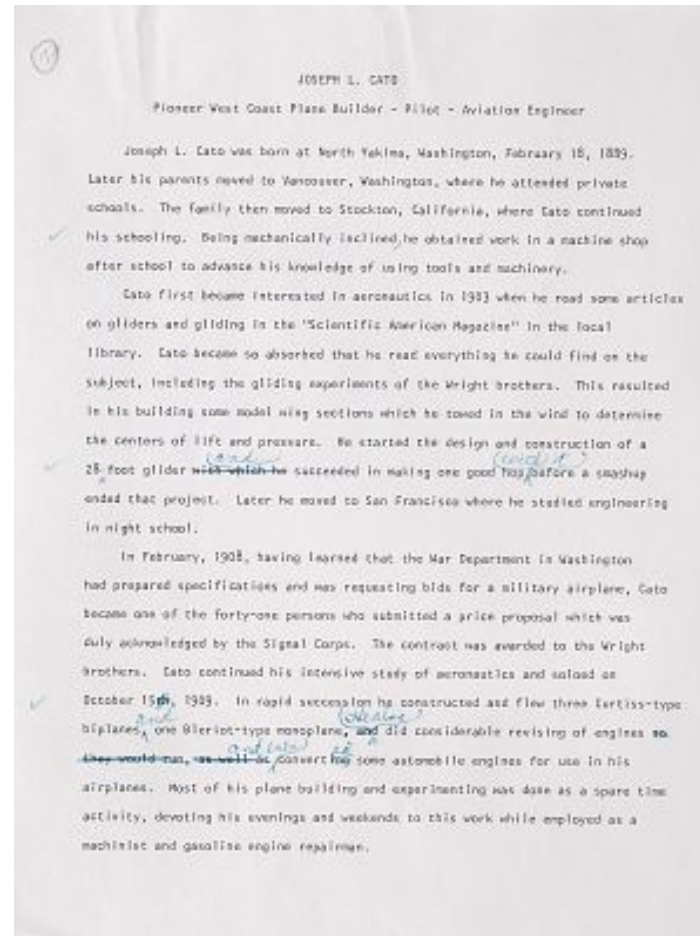
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JOSEPH L. CATO
Pioneer West Coast Plane Builder - Pilot - Aviation Engineer

Joseph L. Cato was born at North Yakima, Washington, February 18, 1889. Later his parents moved to Vancouver, Washington, where he attended private schools. The family then moved to Stockton, California, where Cato continued his schooling. Being mechanically inclined, he obtained work in a machine shop after school to advance his knowledge of using tools and machinery.

Cato first became interested in aeronautics in 1903 when he read some articles on gliders and gliding in the "Scientific American Magazine" in the local library. Cato became so absorbed that he read everything he could find on the subject, including the gliding experiments of the Wright brothers. This resulted in his building some model wing sections which he towed in the wind to determine the centers of lift and pressure. He started the design and construction of a 28-foot glider ~~with which he~~ and succeeded in making one good hop with it before a smashup ended that project. Later he moved to San Francisco where he studied engineering in night school.

In February, 1908, having learned that the War Department in Washington had prepared specifications and was requesting bids for a military airplane, Cato became one of the forty-one persons who submitted a price proposal which was duly acknowledged by the Signal Corps. The contract was awarded to the Wright brothers. Cato continued his intensive study of aeronautics and soloed on October 15, 1909. In rapid succession he constructed and flew three Curtiss-type biplanes and one Bleriot-type monoplane. ~~[[crossed-out]]~~ and ~~[[/crossed-out]]~~ He also did considerable revising of engines ~~[[crossed-out]]~~ so they would run, as well as ~~[[/crossed-out]]~~ and even ~~[[crossed-out]]~~ converting ~~[[/crossed-out]]~~ converted some automobile engines for use in his airplanes. Most of his plane building and experimenting was done as a spare time activity, devoting his evenings and weekends to this work while employed as a machinist and gasoline engine repairman.



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