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Harold E. Morehouse Flying Pioneers Biographies Collection - Cessna, Clyde V.

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carnivals throughout Oklahoma and Kansas.

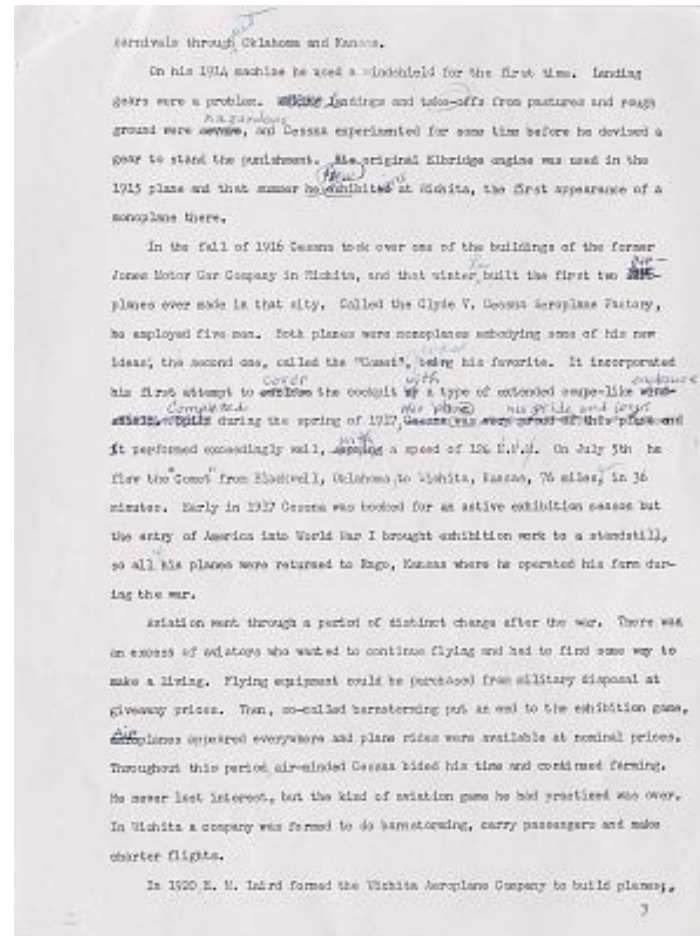
On his 1914 machine he used a windshield for the first time. Landing gears were a problem. ~~Landings~~ ^{his landings} and take-offs from pastures and rough ground were ~~dangerous~~, and Cessna experimented for some time before he devised a gear to stand the punishment. His original Elbridge engine was used in the 1915 plane and that summer he ~~exhibited~~ ^{was} at Wichita, the first appearance of a monoplane there.

In the fall of 1916 Cessna took over one of the buildings of the former Jones Motor Car Company in Wichita, and that winter he built the first two airplanes ever made in that city. Called the Clyde V. Cessna Aeroplane Factory, he employed five men. Both planes were monoplanes embodying some of his new ideas; the second one, called the "Comet", being his favorite. It incorporated his first attempt to cover the cockpit with a type of extended coupe-like enclosure. Completed during the spring of 1917, this plane was his pride and joy. It performed exceedingly well, with a speed of 124 m.p.h. On July 5th he flew the "Comet" from Blackwell, Oklahoma, to Wichita, Kansas, 76 miles in 36 minutes. Early in 1917 Cessna was booked for an active exhibition season but the entry of America into World War I brought exhibition work to a standstill, so all of his planes were returned to Rago, Kansas where he operated his farm during the war.

Aviation went through a period of distinct change after the war. There was an excess of aviators who wanted to continue flying and had to find some way to make a living. Flying equipment could be purchased from military disposal at giveaway prices. Then, so-called barnstorming put an end to the exhibition game. Airplanes appeared everywhere and plane rides were available at nominal prices. Throughout this period, air-minded Cessna bided his time and continued farming. He never lost interest, but the kind of aviation game he had practiced was over. In Wichita a company was formed to do barnstorming, carry passengers and make charter flights.

In 1920, E. M. Laird formed the Wichita Aeroplane Company to build planes.

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