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Harold E. Morehouse Flying Pioneers Biographies Collection - Cooke, Weldon B.

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One of the first Hall-Scott engines ever built was installed in this plane. By this time Cooke was rapidly gaining prominence, and on the evening of February 16th, he was the guest of honor at a banquet given by the San Francisco Press. Later, with the Noonan-Wiseman plane, he carried airmail -- the first official mail flight at Eureka, California, April 21, 1912. For some time he had been building a new Curtiss-type biplane, with a Roberts 6-cylinder, 75 h.p. engine for his own use.* It had greater wing span to facilitate flying in the higher elevations of many western cities.

In April, 1912, he had finished the new plane and started booking exhibitions. On July 4th he flew at Alturio, Nevada, and July 19th he was at Salt Lake City for seven days, making thirteen flights. He made numerous exhibition flights in the West that season, and late in September arrived at Cicero Field, Chicago, where he began preparations for an attempt at the American Endurance Record. He did considerable flying there, then October 11th and 12th flew at Aurora, Illinois, and October 16th to 18th at Streator, Illinois. Through November he was flying at Cicero, using a large tank for endurance work and fl[[strikethrough]]a[[/strikethrough]]ying in and out of Grant Park and over Chicago on many occasions. He apparently gave up the idea of an endurance flight. Reportedly, he flew 73 exhibitions during the 1912 flying season.

Late in December, 1912, he formed the Weldon B. Cooke Aeroplane Company, of Sandusky, Ohio, to build land and water planes, intending to give up the exhibition business. Incorporators were Cooke, E. W. Roberts of the Roberts Engine Company, Frank Fried, James Flynn, Sr., and James Flynn, Jr. The latter part of January, 1913, he had a new tandem tractor land biplane, with an inverted Roberts 6-cylinder engine, the first application of this form of engine in the United States. In early trials on the ice of Sandusky Bay, he taxied onto a thin spot in the ice and broke through, plane and all, into the

*This plane is now in the National Air & Space Museum.

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