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Harold E. Morehouse Flying Pioneers Biographies Collection - Curtis, Greely S.

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GREELY S. CURTIS

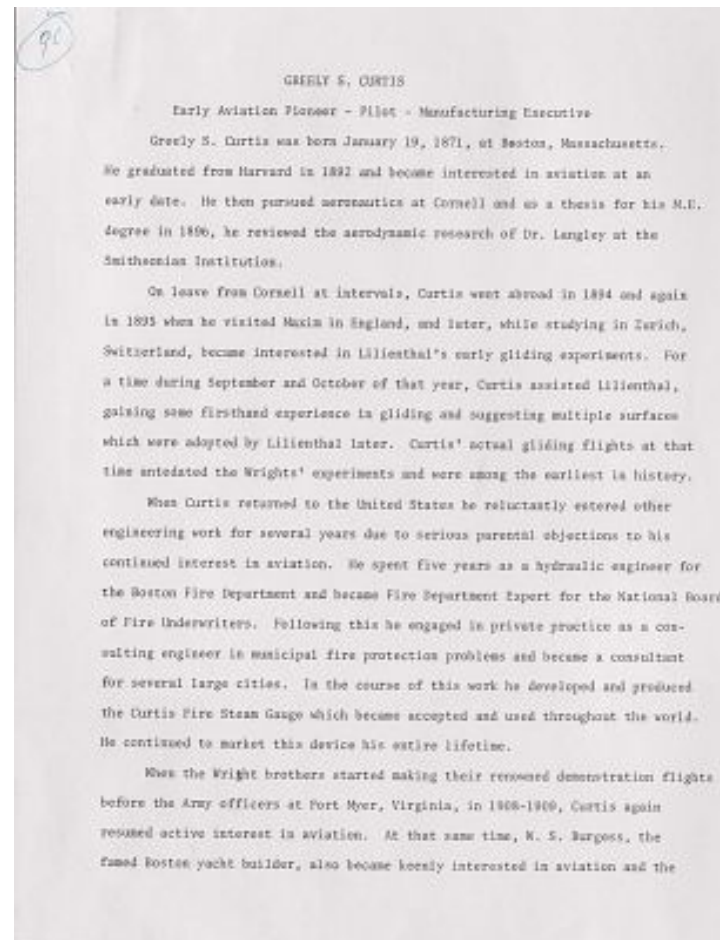
Early Aviation Pioneer - Pilot - Manufacturing Executive

Greely S. Curtis was born January 19, 1871, at Boston, Massachusetts. He graduated from Harvard in 1892 and became interested in aviation at an early date. He then pursued aeronautics at Cornell and as a thesis for his M.E. degree in 1896, he reviewed the aerodynamic research of Dr. Langley at the Smithsonian Institution.

On leave from Cornell at intervals, Curtis went abroad in 1894 and again in 1895 when he visited Maxim in England, and later, while studying in Zurich, Switzerland, became interested in Lilienthal's early gliding experiments. For a time during September and October of that year, Curtis assisted Lilienthal, gaining some firsthand experience in gliding and suggesting multiple surfaces which were adopted by Lilienthal later. Curtis' actual gliding flights at that time antedated the Wrights' experiments and were among the earliest in history.

When Curtis returned to the United States he reluctantly entered other engineering work for several years due to serious parental objections to his continued interest in aviation. He spent five years as a hydraulic engineer for the Boston Fire Department and became Fire Department Expert for the National Board of Fire Underwriters. Following this he engaged in private practice as a consulting engineer in municipal fire protection problems and became a consultant for several large cities. In the course of this work he developed and produced the Curtis Fire Steam Gauge which became accepted and used throughout the world. He continued to market this device his entire lifetime.

When the Wright brothers started making their renowned demonstration flights before the Army officers at Fort Myer, Virginia, in 1908-1909, Curtis again resumed active interest in aviation. At that same time, W. S. Burgess, the famed Boston yacht builder, also became keenly interested in aviation and the



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