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*Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Archives*

## **Harold E. Morehouse Flying Pioneers Biographies Collection - Havens, Beckwith**

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and although he sold no ~~airplanes~~ <sup>airplanes</sup> he ~~earned the title of becoming~~ <sup>became</sup> the first aircraft salesman.

Still harboring the desire to learn to fly Havens decided that if he was to sell airplanes he should know how to fly them. He asked Fanciulli for this privilege and was sent to Hammondsport about April 1st for flight instructions. Since he was then employed by the company Havens assumed there would be no charge for lessons, but Curtiss refused to agree. Both stood their ground and Havens returned to New York to consult Fanciulli, who offered to loan him the money, to be paid back later from exhibition earnings. Havens agreed and returned to Hammondsport, paid his instruction fee, then learned that Curtiss ~~did not have~~ <sup>had no</sup> school machine and ~~no instructor~~ <sup>no instructor</sup>, so he hung around the factory for something to do. ~~There~~ <sup>There</sup> Henry Kleckler, a Curtiss shop foreman, took an interest in him and proceeded to get parts together to build ~~up~~ <sup>a</sup> school machine. With some instructional help from Lt. Theodore G. Ellyson, U.S.N., Havens started the usual grass-cutting practice and all went well until one evening a puff of wind raised him about thirty feet in the air. He kept his head, made a circle, came back in to the field and made a successful landing. Reportedly, this occurred on May 1, 1911.

Havens continued his practice and in June Curtiss asked if he would take on an exhibition date. Curtiss stated he had contracted to send a plane to Batavia, New York, on July 4th and asked Havens to fill the engagement. Curtiss told Havens all he would have to do was assemble the plane, but he would not necessarily have to make a flight. Havens went to Batavia fully intending to do only what he had been told, but a large crowd had assembled. The place he was to fly out of was a stump patch and Havens was quite determined not to attempt a flight, but before dark there was so much yelling that he decided he would have to try. Selecting the longest open space of ground available he succeeded in getting off without hitting a stump, but immediately the engine began to falter and after several hundred feet it quit entirely and he piled up in a bunch of stumps. He was not injured but the plane was wrecked. Nevertheless, he was a hero - he had flown - had he was the guest of honor at a banquet that evening.

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