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## **Harold E. Morehouse Flying Pioneers Biographies Collection - Johnson, Edward A.**

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equipment. He also did rebuilding and repair work, conducted a flying school, carried passengers, and did commercial flying. He established his own flying field and buildings, and remained in business there until 1938.

In April, 1921, another ex-Curtiss pilot and former flying associate, James M. Johnson, joined the firm. The two men were not related, but together they proceeded to build up a very substantial business. In 1922, they founded the Johnson Flying Service to manage and control the flying end of the business. Weekend and holiday passenger carrying specials were initiated which rapidly flourished and another ex-Curtiss pilot, Walter Lees, was added to the staff. Their business growth soon enabled them to also employ the well known aeronautical engineer, Ivan Driggs, who proceeded to design and supervise the construction of some new Johnson aircraft.

The first of these was the Model D-J-I Johnson-Driggs light plane for the 1924 National Air Races held in Dayton, Ohio, in October, 1924. This competitive event, sponsored by the Dayton Daily News, was the first contest for light planes in the United States. Engine piston displacement was limited to 80 cubic feet and the race was for 25 miles from a standing start. Called the "Bumble Bee," the Johnson-Driggs D-J-I was a high-wing, full-cantilever monoplane with a 27-foot span, and a 4-cylinder Henderson motorcycle engine. The total weight of the plane was 325 pounds. This plane, flown by James M. Johnson, won the contest easily at an official speed of 64.1 miles per hour, at Wilbur Wright Field on October 3, 1924.

Walter Lees left the firm that fall to go with the Packard Motor Company as test pilot on their aircraft diesel engine project, and Johnson then engaged Jack Laas and Clyde Emerick as pilots to enlarge the staff. About this same time Driggs also engineered a second Johnson airplane, called the "Canary." It was quite conventional tractor biplane, with tandem seating for the pilot and two passengers forward, side by side, using a Curtiss OX engine. This plane was utilized in their passenger carrying business and was announced to the trade in April, 1925.

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