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Harold E. Morehouse Flying Pioneers Biographies Collection - Johnson, Walter

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Apparently Johnson severed his connection with the Thomas Brothers Company at that time and made plans to go into the flying-school business for himself. He proposed to start a winter school in Florida at once, then return to New York State in the spring for summer operations. After purchasing a Thomas flying boat, he left for Florida in January, nineteen fourteen, where he operated a school and carried passengers during the winter months as Jacksonville. He returned North in the spring and in early May made daily flights at Greenwich, Connecticut, for two weeks. On May thirty, nineteen fourteen, he started the Walter E. Johnson School of Aviation at Conesus Lake, Livonia, New York, using a dual control Thomas hydro and the flying boat he had been using in Florida. With him in the venture were his former Thomas student C. A. Herrmann and W. H. Minnerly. The school started with five students and the prospects of a promising summer-resort passenger carry business. Johnson also took on some exhibition work that season and flew at Owasco Lake, Auburn, New York, on June thirtieth and Ludington, Michigan, July third and forth at a harbor celebration.

Johnson continued to operate his school and passenger business at Livonia through the nineteen fourteen season, but discontinued it that year, [striketrough] for [striketrough] as during the early spring months of nineteen fifteen he became a pilot for the Curtiss Company at Hammondsport. During nineteen fourteen Curtiss had made some short test hops with the original Langley "Aerodrome" which had been sent to Hammondsport from the Smithsonian Institution to see if it would fly, and to determine its flying and handling characteristics. Floats had been attached and Curtiss made brief hops from Lake Keuka but the original Manly engine was developing only about three-fifths of its original fifty-two hp. With the added weight of the floats it would barely rise. As a result, later in nineteen fourteen a Curtiss eighty h.p. engine was installed, and during the late fall further test hops were made by Doc Wildman and Gink Doherty. In the early spring of nineteen fifteen, the pontoons were removed and skids attached. Johnson made several flights with the Langley plane from the ice during March, nineteen fifteen. Later that season both Johnson and Doherty made many additional flights with this historic plane

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