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Harold E. Morehouse Flying Pioneers Biographies Collection - Johnston, St. Croix

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ST. CROIX JOHNSTONE
Early Chicago Monoplane Pilot

St. Croix Johnstone was born in Toronto, Canada, in 1885, son of a prominent physician. When he was a small boy his parents moved to Chicago, Illinois, where he attended local schools, and in his youth raced motorcycles and automobiles.

With the advent of early aviation interest in the Chicago area he tried to build an airplane, which was not a success. As a result he went to Europe during the fall of 1910 and enrolled for a flying course at the Bleriot School, Hendon Aerodrome, near London, England. There, through November, he learned to fly from instructor M. Pierre Prier. Continuing his practice, Johnstone obtained F.A.I. British Flying License No. 41, dated December 28, 1910.

Johnstone returned to the United States very early in 1911, joined the Moisant International Aviators at Hempstead, Long Island, New York, and began flying a Moisant-built Bleriot copy monoplane with a 50 h.p. Gnome rotary engine. His first exhibition engagement was at an aviation meet in Havana, Cuba, beginning March 19th. Other Moisant aviators also flying there were French pilot Rene Barrier, Rene Simon, and Rolland Garros. Curtiss pilot J. A. D. McCurdy also flew there. On March 22nd Johnstone made a flight over Havana and the harbor, then circled Morro Castle. While returning to the aviation field Johnstone engine began throwing oil badly and he was quickly drenched. Partially blinded, he made a hasty bad landing and wrecked the landing gear, but was not injured. This misfortune put him out of the remainder of the event.

Returning to Long Island Johnstone resumed practice and on May 22nd won a silver trophy offered by J.J. Lannin, owner of the Garden City Hotel, for the first local aviator who flew three circuits over a course between Mineola and his hotel. At that time Johnstone was flying regularly around the Long Island flying field and soon "stole the spotlight" among the local aviators. He raced trains, flew over polo games, made cross-country flights and at times seemed to be trying to establish an altitude record. On June 4th he made a fine thirty minute

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