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Harold E. Morehouse Flying Pioneers Biographies Collection - Kirkham, Charles B.

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Kirkham 4-cylinder 22 H.P. revised automobile engine. Called the Kirkham-Eells, this plane was completed in July and there is evidence that both men started learning to fly it. By late August Eells was flying well and he took on an exhibition engagement for September 15th-16th at the Naples, New York Fair where he successfully made two flights each day. It is not known to what extent Kirkham flew this plane but his interest was probably purely for sport and to test his engines in the air.

During August the Kirkham-Eells Aeroplane Company was formed at Bath and September issues of the aviation magazines advertised "Complete planes built to order, engines, propellers and exhibition engagements arranged". In September it was announced that the Bath Motor Manufacturing Company was incorporated, taking over the former Kirkham Motor Company.

In the summer of 1910 Ted Schriver, a former Curtiss employee, and H.J. Dietz formed the Hempstead Aeroplane Company on Long Island, New York and were building a Curtiss-type biplane, powered by a revised Kirkham 6-cylinder automobile engine. By late fall Schriver was flying this plane on exhibition engagements.

As 1910 ended Kirkham was in the process of making his first engine designed especially for aeroplane use. It was to be a light weight 6-cylinder water-cooled 50 H.P. unit to weigh about 235 pounds complete. The annual National Auto Show was held that winter at Grand Central Palace, New York City December 31, 1910 to January 7, 1911, and for the first time some aviation exhibits were included. The Kirkham-Eells Company displayed one of their 4-cylinder auto engines revised for flying and some of the parts of their new 6-cylinder aircraft engine, including components of the new concentric valve arrangement to be used. This ingenious valving design consisted of both intake and exhaust valves being assembled coaxially with the intake valve in the center, allowing the cool intake charge to be conducted through the exhaust valve, thereby effectively cooling this troublesome engine part. Kirkham patented this design feature and it was successfully used in his aircraft engines for several years.

The Kirkham-Eells partnership was dissolved in late January, 1911, then in February Kirkham resigned as manager of the Bath Motor Company to devote his

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