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## **Harold E. Morehouse Flying Pioneers Biographies Collection - LaChapelle, Duval**

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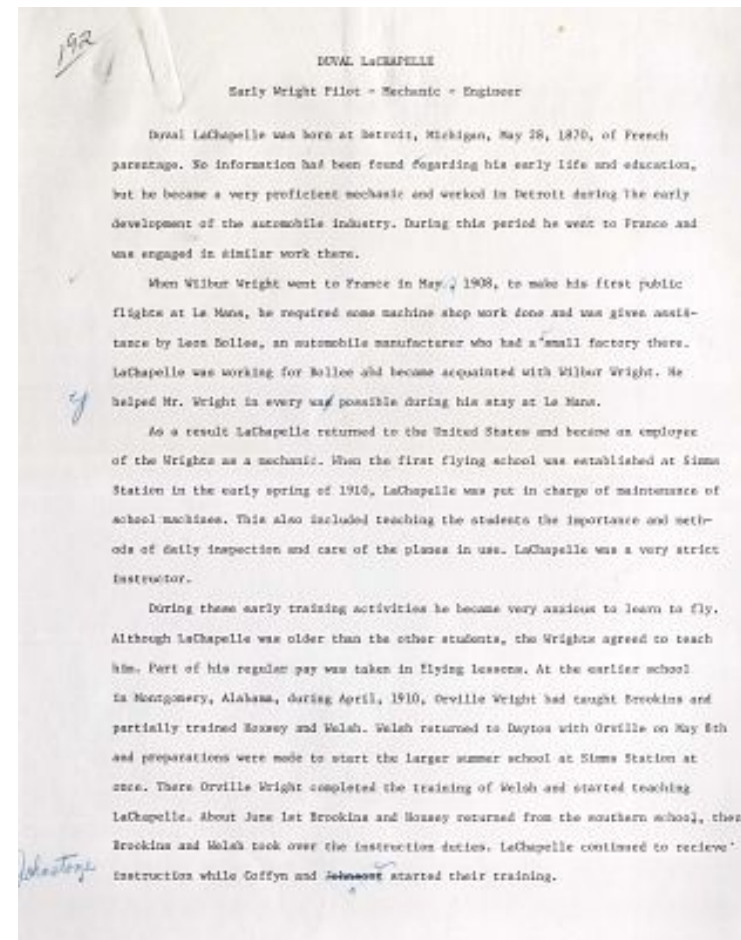
DUVAL LaCHAPELLE  
Early Wright Pilot - Mechanic - Engineer

Duval LaChapelle was born at Detroit, Michigan, May 28, 1870, of French parentage. No information had been found regarding his early life and education, but he became a very proficient mechanic and worked in Detroit during the early development of the automobile industry. During this period he went to France and was engaged in similar work there.

When Wilbur Wright went to France in May, 1908, to make his first public flights at Le Mans, he required some machine shop work done and was given assistance by Leon Bollee, an automobile manufacturer who had a small factory there. LaChapelle was working for Bollee and became acquainted with Wilbur Wright. He helped Mr. Wright in every way possible during his stay at Le Mans.

As a result LaChapelle returned to the United States and became an employee of the Wrights as a mechanic. When the first flying school was established at Simms Station in the early spring of 1910, LaChapelle was put in charge of maintenance of school machines. This also included teaching the students the importance and methods of daily inspection and care of the planes in use. LaChapelle was a very strict instructor.

During these early training activities he became very anxious to learn to fly. Although LaChapelle was older than the other students, the Wrights agreed to teach him. Part of his regular pay was taken in flying lessons. At the earlier school in Montgomery, Alabama, during April 1910, Orville Wright had taught Brookins and partially trained Hoxsey and Welsh. Welsh returned to Dayton with Orville on May 8th and preparations were made to start the larger summer school at Simms Station at once. There Orville Wright completed the training of Welsh and started teaching LaChapelle. About June 1st Brookins and Hoxsey returned from the southern school, then Brookins and Welsh took over the instruction duties. LaChapelle continued to receive instruction while Coffyn and [scratched] started their training.



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