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## **Harold E. Morehouse Flying Pioneers Biographies Collection - Lees, Walter E.**

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planes. This school was known as the Atlantic Coast Aeronautical Station, and was under the management of Capt. Thomas S. Baldwin, veteran airman and close friend of Glenn Curtiss. This field soon became a major Curtiss training center and consisted of a dirt strip about 200 foot wide and 3,000 feet long, with some old buildings and good water frontage. At its height seven instructors used it from daylight till dark (except Sundays) without serious mishaps. Many of the students were Canadians, sent by the Government for flight training. After completing the course the usually returned to Canada and joined the R.A.F. also trained were numerous U.S. National Guardsmen and Army Reserves. The class, as a rule, consisted of thirty or more, and in early spring of 1916 Lees assisted in the instruction of Vernon Castle, the well known dancer. <sup>Later that year Lees was one of the instructors of Major William Mitchell who was stationed in Washington, D.C.</sup> Later that year Lees was one of the instructors of Major William Mitchell who was stationed in Washington, D.C. as a civilian. Later he personally trained Billy Mitchell during the spring months of 1916 and 1917.

On March 10th, 1916 Lees flew a Curtiss flying boat from <sup>powered by an</sup> from <sup>powered by an</sup> from Newport News, Virginia to Washington, D.C., carrying Charles Pond as a passenger, making one stop at Lewisetta, Virginia for gas. He remained in Washington for about two weeks flying for the Curtiss Company, then flew back to Newport News. August 26th he attended a family picnic for all Curtiss employees at Erie Beach, Buffalo, where he was one of several company pilots taking employees and their families for rides in <sup>seaplanes</sup> seaplanes and flying boats. They were kept busy all afternoon and evening, but it was impossible to take every one up. Lees was an <sup>instructor</sup> continued as instructor at Newport News through 1916 and into 1917. <sup>On February 21st he obtained his regular pilot license, No. 660, then on March his Expert pilot license, No. 79.</sup> On February 21st he obtained his regular pilot license, No. 660, then on March his Expert pilot license, No. 79.

When World War 1 broke out, Lees answered the call for civilian instructors and served at the following government flying fields: Ashburn-Chicago, Chanute, Selfridge, Ellington, Gerstner and Brooks, then finished the last eight months as an experimental test pilot at McCook Field, Dayton, Ohio. After the war <sup>was over</sup> was over and he returned to Curtiss until October, 1919 as a test and demonstration

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