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

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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 their Government for flight training. After completing the course they 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 the early spring of 1916 Lees assisted in the instruction of Vernon Castle, the well known dancer. Later that year Lees was one of the instructors of Major William Mitchell who was taking lessons on weekends while stationed in Washington, D. C. Lees soloed "Billy" Mitchell during the spring months of 1917.

On March 10, 1916, Lees flew a Curtiss flying boat powered by an Ox engine 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 seaplanes and flying boats. They were kept busy all afternoon and evening, but it was impossible to take everyone up. Lees continued as instructor at Newport News through 1916 and into 1917. On February 21st he obtained his regular Pilot License, No. 660, then on March 21st his Expert Pilot License, No. 79.

When World War I 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 he returned to Curtiss and remained there until October 1919, as a test and demonstration pilot and instructor, assisting with the development of several

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