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Harold E. Morehouse Flying Pioneers Biographies Collection - McCurdy, John A.D.

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flying practice in the "June Bug." McCurdy developed his "first wings" soloing on this airplane.

At Fort Myer, Virginia, where Orville Wright was demonstrating the Type-A Flyer to the Army, Lt. Selfridge was the passenger on September 17, 1908. After making three circuits above the drill field, the airplane suddenly nosed over and crashed. Orville was badly injured and Selfridge suffered a severe concussion, never regaining consciousness. His death was a severe shock to Dr. and Mrs. Bell and to the Associates.

On September 30th the one-year term of the Aerial Experiment Association expires and Mrs. Bell renewed it for six months while she continued to finance the project. After more than 150 successful flights the three remaining members decided to transform the "June Bug" into a seaplane which they named the "Loon." They fitted two pontoons to the undercarriage. They were never able to get this aircraft to rise from the water.

The fourth plane, to McCurdy's design, was completed that fall and flown at Hammondsport. This was called the "Silver Dart" and followed their general designs but used a new Curtiss water-cooled engine. McCurdy made the first flight in this machine at Hammondsport on December 6th, then after a few more flights the "Silver Dart" and the "Loon" were packed and shipped to Baddeck. McCurdy and Baldwin returned to Nova Scotia for the winter.

There the "Silver Dart" was assembled and McCurdy flew it from the ice on February 23, 1909, the first heavier-than-air flight in Canada. He made another good flight the next day and continued flying the machine for some time, for distances of up to 20 miles. As a result of McCurdy's noteworthy flying Dr. Bell made a speech before Canadian government officials at Ottawa on March 27th in an effort to encourage their interest in the aviation developments of the Association but failed to do so.

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