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## **Harold E. Morehouse Flying Pioneers Biographies Collection - Niles, Charles**

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CHARLES F. NILES  
Early Thomas Brothers Pilot - Exhibition Aviator

Charles F. Niles was born at Rochester, New York, October 5, 1888, and attended grade and West High School there. Mechanically inclined he loved automobiles and became quite an expert in driving and the care of them.

Niles became interested in aviation in 1910 and 1911 through a series of flying activities in Rochester ~~[[[Rochester]]]~~. In 1910 Dr. William Green built a plane or two there and made a few brief flights during the summer, then J. J. Frisbie brought his plane there in September. In mid-October Walter Johnson, another young man from Rochester made a flight in a Thomas biplane at the Broome County Fair.

During 1911 Curtiss aviator Hugh Robinson made flights in Rochester on July 13th to 15th, and Wright pilot Arch Hoxsey made flights on September 27th to 30th. Earl Beers, a neighborhood chum of Niles, was also interested and together they became determined to learn to fly.

As a result, when the Thomas Brothers announced their flying school in early 1912, both Niles and Beers enrolled in the first class, with Walter Johnson instructing. Also in the class were Frank Burnside, Ralph Brown and D. C. Patmore. Their instruction period was through April and May, using a Model B-10 Thomas pusher biplane with a Kirkham 4-cylinder, 50 h.p. engine. By mid-May Niles was flying capably and on June 10th he made a cross-country flight to Savona, New York, where the Kirkham Company did some work on the engine and fuel system, then Niles flew back to Bath the next day. He continued his practice and remained with Thomas Brothers through the mid-summer months. In late August he arranged to do some flying for the Curtiss Exhibition Company and his first assignment was at the New York State Fair, Syracuse, New York, on September 12th to 14th. Just prior to this event Niles flew his license tests, qualified and on November 6th was granted F.A.I. ticket No. 181. Also flying at the Fair were Beckwith Havens, Walter Johnson and William Hemstrought. Niles made a good showing in his first public exhibition flying, winning second place in a race on the 14th. His next exhibition

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