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Harold E. Morehouse Flying Pioneers Biographies Collection - Robinson, William C.

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About December 1st Robinson was back in his home town of Grinnell, Iowa, where, in early January, 1914, he and five business associates formed the Grinnell Aeroplane Company. He was made secretary of the new company and work was started at once on a new monoplane, the main feature being that the pilot's range of visibility enabled him to see both above and below the wing in flight. It was powered by a new 100 h.p., 6-cylinder, radial-type, air-cooled engine designed and built by Robinson. By mid-summer he had this new plane and engine in the air and on September 8th and 9th flew an exhibition date with it during a homecoming celebration at Tama, Iowa. He continued test and development work and during the early part of October began to plan a nonstop flight to Cicero Field, Chicago.

On October 18th Robinson left Des Moines intending to fly to Chicago, but en-route he became lost in high winds and a severe rain storm which carried him off course to the South and east of Chicago. He finally landed at Kentland, Indiana, after four hours and forty-five minutes in the air, most of which was flown at 7,000 to 9,000 feet altitude. As it turned out he had flown 370 miles, establishing a new American cross-country record. On this flight Robinson carried some special mail and newspapers for delivery at Chicago. The next day he flew from Kentland to Cicero, 81 miles, to complete the trip and deliver his mail. Following this he went to San Diego, California, to conduct flying demonstrations of the Macey automatic stabilizer before government flying officers at North Island.

On March 10, 1916, while attempting to set a new American altitude record at Grinnell, Robinson evidently blacked out at about 16,000 feet and fell out of control for a considerable distance, then regained consciousness enough to make a landing on a seldom used area of the field. However, during his roll the wheels dropped into a ditch, the plane somersaulted, then caught fire and he died in the burning wreck. Robinson was married and had four children.

Wholeheartedly devoted to aviation, William C. Robinson was an excellent pilot and all-around engineer-mechanic, hard-working and deserving of great credit ~~in the~~ in the early pioneering days of aviation. His radial engine was a very creditable ac-
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