

Harold E. Morehouse Flying Pioneers Biographies Collection - Shank, Robert

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Shank remained there until the spring of 1917 when he and Edward Stinson formed the National School of Flying at Houston, Texas. This venture continued in operation until August 1st when they discontinued the project to become instructors for the government. Shank was first assigned to Kelly Field, then later transferred to Love Field at Dallas, Texas

After a year as a World War I civilian instructor Shank [[strikethrough]] was transferred to newly formed[[/strikethrough]] met the requirements for the Postal Air Mail Service which took over this newly formed operation from the Army on August [[strikethrough]]1st[[/strikethrough]] 12, 1918 and was one of the first four pilots to fly airmail over the original route between New York, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. Flying [[strikethrough]]Canadian[[/strikethrough]] Curtiss-built [[strikethrough]]JN4C[[/strikethrough]] JN4-6H planes with [[strikethrough]]Hisso motors[[/strikethrough]] Hispano-Suiza engines they had many hair raising experiences during the early era of that service. [[strikethrough]]On one flight Shank carried Douglas Fairbanks Sr. during a Liberty Loan Drive campaign.[[/strikethrough]]

After eight months flying airmail, Shank and one of his flying colleagues, Ed. Gardner, resigned from the service in March, 1919, to fly resort sight-seers at Atlantic City, New Jersey, during the summer for Traymore Aerial Tours. Curtiss Jennies, purchased from government surplus, were used, then when the season ended the planes were taken south on a brainstorming jaunt for the winter of 1919-1920.

On May 8th, 1919 Shank flew from New York to Atlantic City in [[strikethrough]]2-1/2[[/strikethrough]] two and one-half hours, carrying Pathe News photographer William O. Burton, to attend the Pan-American Aeronautic Convention in progress there.

In the spring of 1920 Shank returned to Huntington, West Virginia, where he and A.B. McMullen formed a partnership, known as the Shank and McMullen Aircraft Company, to buy and sell government surplus aircraft equipment. They established an airport and flying school, [[strikethrough]] nample passengers, and later advertised exhibition [[strikethrough]] work[[/strikethrough]] flights, aerial photography and advertising. Their school and passenger business [[strikethrough]] went well[[/strikethrough]] progressed.

About 1924 McMullen left to go into another field of endeavor and Shank continued the business alone.

He later took the sales franchise for Travel Air planes in West Virginia but this venture was not successful in that state, so he moved his business to Indianapolis, Indiana, in 1928 where he went into partnership with Harold Brooks to establish Hoosier Field. There they obtained the distributorship for Travel Air

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