



**Smithsonian Institution**

*Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Archives*

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

Extracted on Apr-24-2024 08:02:11

**The Smithsonian Institution thanks all digital volunteers that transcribed and reviewed this material. Your work enriches Smithsonian collections, making them available to anyone with an interest in using them.**

The Smithsonian Institution (the "Smithsonian") provides the content on this website ([transcription.si.edu](https://transcription.si.edu)), other Smithsonian websites, and third-party sites on which it maintains a presence ("SI Websites") in support of its mission for the "increase and diffusion of knowledge." The Smithsonian invites visitors to use its online content for personal, educational and other non-commercial purposes. By using this website, you accept and agree to abide by the [following terms](#).

- If sharing the material in personal and educational contexts, please cite the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Archives as source of the content and the project title as provided at the top of the document. Include the accession number or collection name; when possible, link to the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Archives website.
- If you wish to use this material in a for-profit publication, exhibition, or online project, please contact Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Archives or [transcribe@si.edu](mailto:transcribe@si.edu)

For more information on this project and related material, contact the Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Archives. [See this project](#) and other collections in the Smithsonian Transcription Center.

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 ~~was transferred to newly formed~~ met the requirements for the Postal Air Mail Service which took over this newly formed operation from the Army on August 1st 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 ~~Canadian~~ Curtiss-built JN4C JN4-6H planes with ~~Hisco~~ Hispano-Suiza engines they had many hair raising experiences during the early era of that service. On one flight Shank carried Douglas Fairbanks Sr. during a Liberty Loan Drive campaign.

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 ~~2-1/2~~ 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, ~~and~~ carried passengers, and later advertised exhibition ~~work~~ flights, aerial photography and advertising. Their school and passenger business ~~went well~~ 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

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 <sup>met the requirements for the Postal Air Mail Service</sup> met the requirements for the Postal Air Mail Service which took over this newly formed operation from the Army on August 1st 12, 1918 and was one of the first four pilots to fly air mail over the original route between New York, Philadelphia and Washington, D.C. Flying <sup>Curtiss-built JN4-6H</sup> Curtiss-built <sup>Hispano-Suiza engines</sup> planes with <sup>Hisco</sup> Hispano-Suiza engines they had many hair raising experiences during the early era of that service. ~~On one flight Shank carried Douglas Fairbanks Sr. during a Liberty Loan Drive campaign.~~

After eight months flying air mail, 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 2-1/2 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, <sup>carried</sup> carried passengers, and later advertised exhibition <sup>work</sup> flights, aerial photography and advertising. Their school and passenger business <sup>progressed</sup> went well.

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



## Smithsonian Institution

*Smithsonian National Air and Space Museum Archives*

The mission of the Smithsonian is the increase and diffusion of knowledge - shaping the future by preserving our heritage, discovering new knowledge, and sharing our resources with the world. Founded in 1846, the Smithsonian is the world's largest museum and research complex, consisting of 19 museums and galleries, the National Zoological Park, and nine research facilities. Become an active part of our mission through the Transcription Center. Together, we are discovering secrets hidden deep inside our collections that illuminate our history and our world.

Join us!

The Transcription Center: <https://transcription.si.edu>

On Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SmithsonianTranscriptionCenter>

On Twitter: [@TranscribeSI](https://twitter.com/TranscribeSI)

Connect with the Smithsonian

Smithsonian Institution: [www.si.edu](http://www.si.edu)

On Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Smithsonian>

On Twitter: [@smithsonian](https://twitter.com/smithsonian)