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Harold E. Morehouse Flying Pioneers Biographies Collection - Thomas Brothers: William T. and Oliver W.

Extracted on Apr-16-2024 10:04:09

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Company on the design and development of their engines. The Thomas Aeromotor Company was formed and the first engine was an all-aluminum Vee-8 geared engine of 135 h.p. This new engine was installed in the Thomas military tractors at once and materially improved their performance. Known as the D-2 this plane had a top speed of 95 mph and a climb of 4,500 feet in 10 minutes, both exceptional at that time. At the end of 1915 the flying school was moved to St. Augustine, Florida, for the winter months with C. Ray Benedict as instructor. During the 1914-1915 period Thomas graduate Charles Fay also did considerable flying for the company on exhibition and test work.

Late in 1915 Oliver Thomas became the European sales and engineering representative for the company with an office in Great Britain, a position which he held until late 1917 when he resigned to become affiliated with the Dayton-Wright Aeroplane Company, Dayton, Ohio, as an aviation engineering consultant and advisor. There for the remainder of World War 1 he assisted with various programs, including the Kettering "Bug" aerial torpedo. In connection with that project Oliver designed and supervised the construction of a small one-man biplane, known as the "Messenger," to manually flight-test the "Bug" engine.

During 1916 a Thomas Flying School graduate, Paul Wilson, was appointed as one of the firm's test pilots and contributed much to their development and product evaluation program through World War 1 and later. In July, 1916, announcement was made of a twin-engine experimental battle biplane ~~plane~~ of 78-foot wing span using two Thomas 135 h.p. engines. The United States Army began buying Thomas planes and small trial orders were received from both the Navy and Signal Corps branches.

At Ithaca, in January, 1917, the Thomas aircraft and engine divisions were merged into one firm, known as the Thomas-Morse Aircraft Corporation, through a connection with the Morse Chain Company. The flying school was

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