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Harold E. Morehouse Flying Pioneers Biographies Collection - Waterman, Waldo D.

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Race at the 1929 Cleveland National Air Races.

The Waterman Aircraft Syndicate was then formed to design and build a very unusual new plane. Called the "Flex-Wing," it was a 4-passenger low-wing cabin monoplane, powered by a C-5, 190 hp., Kinner radial engine. The wings were hinged to the fuselage and supported by air-controlled shock absorbers which enabled the pilot to flex the wings for quicker takeoffs, better cruise speed and slower landings. Landing wheels were 13 feet apart and mounted on the wings. A central skid brought the machine to a quick stop when the wings and wheels were raised, throwing the entire weight of the machine on the skid. This feature was later abandoned. Waterman demonstrated this plane at the National Air Races at Chicago, Illinois, held August 23 to September 1, 1930, and again in September for NACA at Langley Field, Virginia, however the depression prevented further development. This plane was awarded a Type Certificate by the Department of Commerce in 1931. The Bach Aircraft Company was dissolved at that time and Waterman was assigned to liquidate the assets of the firm.

For some time Waterman had dreamed of a "flying automobile," a machine which by quick and easy conversion would be practical and usable as either a plane or an automobile. Working in the corner of the former Bach factory, he built a plane embodying some of the required features as a prototype test machine. Called the "Whatsit," it was tailless, sweptback low-wing monoplane with steerable tricycle gear and powered by a 5-cylinder radial engine. Completed in July, 1932, he succeeded in flying it after a series of near serious episodes. Then he offered to let one of his friends fly it and he wrecked it completely. This was the first tailless flying wing monoplane in the United States, and also employed the first modern version of the tricycle landing gear.

Following this, Waterman took a position with Transcontinental Western Air flying Ford and Fokker tri-motors between Los Angeles and San Francisco, and left the "Whatsit" wreck to be rebuilt by a mechanic friend. While with T.W.A., the Aeronautics Branch of the Commerce Department, United States

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