



A Note on a Corporation Aircraft of the 1930s

by Alfred E. Cornebise

On 13 October 1933, at the Waco factory in Troy, Ohio, Waco UIC serial number 3316, NC13562, was purchased by the William Randolph Hearst Corporation, joining others owned by the huge conglomerate. The four-place cabin biplane was equipped with a Continental R-670 engine rated at 210 horsepower turning a Hamilton steel-bladed propeller.

For several years following, in the skillful hands of its regularly assigned pilot, E.E. Dildine, the plane amassed hundreds of hours of flying time on corporation business ranging throughout the United States and Mexico. Its red fuselage and silver wings and tail became a familiar sight to residents near San Simeon, Hearst's fabulous California castle, for the plane, according to its logbook, regularly appeared there. Another place frequented was Hearst's million-acre ranch—Hacienda Babicora—located near Madera, Mexico, northwest of Chihuahua.¹ Oftentimes in Mexico, Mexican military officers or officials, or employees of the ranch, were taken on joy rides or on business trips. Occasionally, flights were made deeper into the interior of Mexico, on one occasion reaching as far as Iguala, in the rugged mountains south of Mexico City.

In 1933-1934, the cattle branch of the Hearst Corporation fattened thousands of livestock near Brownfield, Texas, shipping the beeves in from Babicora by truck. The Waco was frequently used to survey the operations. Among Dildine's passengers on such occasions were Randolph W. Apperson, one of Hearst's cousins, who was manager of another vast Hearst ranch adjoining the San Simeon estate, and sometimes William W. Murray, manager of Hearst's ranch properties.

The Hearst Corporation sold the aircraft after some years of safe, and apparently satisfactory, operations.² It eventually found its way into the hands of Pup Thomas of Lubbock, Texas, and was purchased by its present owner, Ralph Brown, of Plainview, Texas, in 1944. It has recently been restored to its original condition by the Hutcherson

Air Service in Plainview, under the supervision of Jarvis Nowell. Though the Waco no longer braves the wilds of Old Mexico, it has earned repose, remaining a good example of a corporation aircraft of the era of the 1930s.³

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. The Babicora ranch was purchased by William Randolph Hearst's father, George, in the 1880s. See W.A. Swanberg, *Citizen Hearst, A Biography of William Randolph Hearst* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1961), p. 29.
2. The logbooks reveal only minor and routine repairs and maintenance.
3. The author wishes to acknowledge the assistance of Jarvis Nowell of Plainview, Texas, in the collection of the data and materials for this note.

Jarvis Nowell at right. Ralph Brown, the plane's present owner, is at left.
(Jarvis Nowell Collection)

