

FAMILY TREE of the A.T.C.

by JOSEPH P. JUPTNER

A.T.C. #18 - PITCAIRN "MAILWING", PA-5.

The PA-5 was the first of the illustrious "Mailwing" series and the fifth type to be brought out by Pitcairn Aircraft Co. since 1925. Harold Pitcairn, a devout air-enthusiast, engaged the services of young Agnew Larsen to design his airplanes; a fruitful association that developed such outstanding craft as the "Fleetwing 1" (PA-1), the racy "Sesqui-Wing" (PA-2), the "Orowing" (PA-3), "Fleetwing 2" (PA-4), and the famous "Mailwing" (PA-5) series. The versatility of the Wright J5 powered "Mailwing" soon became known and several early airlines used it on the early air mail routes. The PA-5 proved its mettle in the 1927 Air Races at Spokane; in the speed & efficiency race for the Aviation Town & Country Trophy, James Ray was awarded 1st place for speed (138 mph) and a 3rd place for efficiency. Improved versions later followed, such as the Wright J5 powered PA-6 & PA-6B, the J6-7 powered PA-7, and the J6-9 powered PA-8, the last of the series.

A.T.C. #19 - KREIDER-REISNER, "CHALLENGER".

Kreider & Reisner's happy and profitable association with Waco airplanes in the years previous to 1930 left them with some indelible memories and vital experience. This influenced them to investigating the attractive possibilities, then becoming apparent, for the manufacture of commercial-type airplanes. They hastily designed and produced their own "Challenger" biplane. Consistent with general practice at the time and looking much like early Waco's it was a 3-place open-cockpit biplane powered with the Curtiss OX-5 engine. It was simple and of sturdy construction; performance-wise it compared favorable with the best of the type. A good number of this model were built in a production period that lasted through most of 3 years. Some of them are still flying. Other models were developed with such powerplants as the "Caminez" and Wright J6-5-165.

A.T.C. #20 - FAIRCHILD, FC-2W.

The 1928 Fairchild FC-2W was similar to the earlier FC-2 but modified somewhat to meet the latest requirements for cargo hauling by air then rapidly increasing. It was a 5-place high-wing cabin monoplane powered with the newly developed 9 cylinder Pratt & Whitney "Wasp" engine of 420-450 h.p. The wing span and total area were increased to handle a larger payload and the added power of the "Wasp" engine gave it a substantial increase in performance & utility over the FC-2, a requirement found necessary in "bush flying" operations in Canada. An FC-2W flown by "Duke" Schiller, a noted Canadian "bush pilot", was the first to reach the ill-fated Junkers monoplane, the BREMEN, when it crash-landed in the wilds of Labrador. In view of their performance record, it was conceded that Fairchild monoplanes were designed for rugged service. The operators hauled just about anything that would fit into the cabin; and many times, if the load would not fit inside, it was strapped on the outside!

A.T.C. #21 - OX-5 SWALLOW.

The introduction of the "New Swallow" line designed by Lloyd Stearman in 1924 produced change in early American aviation. It was a new and practical approach to the light commercial-type airplane, the first to break away from the war-time concepts of airplane design. The "OX-5 Swallow" convinced the many skeptics that a 90 H.P. OX-5 engine could carry three people and still render very good performance. The resulting success of the "Swallow" biplane spurred many others in the field and a rash of new designs began coming out as 3-place open-cockpit biplanes powered with OX-5 engines. The "Swallow" was quite popular about the country; it flew well and its pleasant lines were appealing. This model was later offered with "Hisco", Wright J5, and Axelson engines, performing very well in any combination.

The Flying Pioneers

By HAROLD E. MOREHOUSE

RODERICK M. WRIGHT

Roderick M. Wright was not related to the Wright Brothers. He had entered Purdue University to study agriculture, but an article in McClure's Magazine entitled "The Men who Learned to Fly" fired his ambition to learn aviation. This was to take him away from the farm. In June 1911 Wright saw his first flying when he went to Evansville, Indiana to see Curtiss pilots Lincoln Beachey and Charles Witmer put on an exhibition.

Wright went to Dayton in July to visit the Wright Brothers, and planned to enroll in their flying school at once, if possible. When he walked into the Wright Co. office entirely unexpected, he was very disappointed to learn that neither Orville nor Wilbur were in Dayton, so he talked to Frank Russell, their Manager. For some unknown reason Russell advised Wright not to take up flying, but to stick with the farm. Somewhat disgusted, but not the least influenced by these remarks, Wright went home and spent the greater part of the next two years helping various early Indiana experimenters build and repair their homemade machines, without pay, "just to get experience and be around aeroplanes."

In July, 1913, Wright went to Dayton again and this time met a very different sort of reception. As a result he immediately signed up for instruction at the

School, and was taught to fly at Simms Station by Oscar Brindley. In the same class were John A. Bixler, Maurice T. Schermerhorn, W. E. Bowersox and Augustus A. Bressman. He gained the "feel of the air" rapidly and on July 26th he flew for his license, No. 254, and thus became Indiana's first licensed aviator. Grover Loening was his official observer. He became a mechanic on the exhibition circuit with Roy Waite, of Boston, for the remainder of the 1913 season. During 1914 he assisted in the development work at the Wright Co., with their new Model G flying boat on Lake Erie near Toledo. In 1915 he became an instructor for the Wright Co. at Simms Station and taught many Canadians, who later entered the R.F.C. and R.A.F.. Also, one of his students was Edward A. Stinson.

In September 1916 Roderick Wright joined the staff of the Sturtevant Aeroplane Co. as test pilot, working for his former observer, Grover Loening, then Chief Engineer.

When the United States entered the War in 1917 he offered his services to the Government, first as a civilian instructor, later as experimental test pilot at Langley Field, Va., where he remained for the duration of the war period. Then followed several years of instructing, barnstorming and passenger service work, with some testing with various small companies, includ-

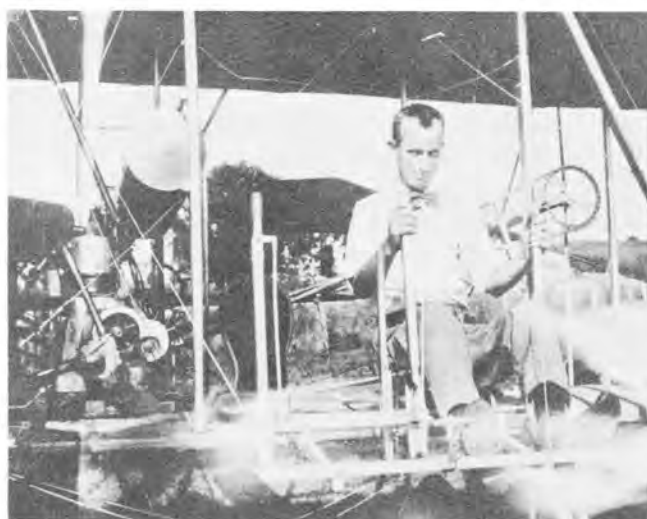


ing the Hurst Airplane and Motor Company of Evansville in 1921. Wright also managed the Graham Bros. Flying Field at Evansville for a time, and became production test pilot for the Stinson Co. at Wayne, Mich. in 1929-1930, working for his good friend and former pupil, Eddie Stinson. There he conducted initial flying tests on many models and delivered new airplanes to customers. He became a transport pilot for the Ford Motor Co. on their early airlines in 1930-1932, using Ford Tri-motored planes. His transport pilot's license was No. 4528.

After twenty years of active flying, Wright decided to return to the family farm in 1933. He prepared a private airstrip, erected a hangar, procured a family aeroplane and continued to enjoy flying for pleasure. He taught his children and grandchildren to fly and kept his original Pilot's License No. 254 valid for nearly fifty years. Occasionally he took on flying contracts and during World War II conducted parachute drop-tests for The Reliance Mfg. Co. In 1952 he was elected to the Indiana State Legislature and was re-elected for a second term in 1954.

Roderick Wright passed away unexpectedly at Washington, Indiana, on October 13th, 1960 after several months of failing health. He was buried in Oak Grove Cemetery near his farm home. Surviving him were Mrs. Wright, three children and six grandchildren. As active Early Bird and true flying pioneer, it would be difficult to equal his lifetime record in aviation, having flown scores of different types of land and water planes, large and small; and, not long ago, even a jet. During his long flying career he experienced five major smash-

ups, but walked away from all of them. He never made use of a parachute, injured a passenger, nor was taken to a hospital - truly an extraordinary record. He was a fine gentleman, loved by all who knew him. His name appears on the Wright Memorial Plaque at Dayton, Ohio.



RODERICK M. WRIGHT
Early Wright Pilot - Instructor - Test Pilot