

EARLY HISTORY OF ARMY AVIATION

by

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Regarding my early experiences in aviation, the following resume is submitted which in reality dates from what I feel is real beginning of military aviation in this country.

In August, 1907, I was a member of the Signal Corps stationed at Fort Omaha, Nebraska. The latter part of August, the Company Commander, Captain W. H. Owry [?], called me into the orderly room and asked me if I were afraid to go up in a balloon. Inasmuch as I had never seen other than a hot air balloon as used in carnivals, I answered to the effect that I was willing to take a chance. I was then informed that an aeronautical detachment was being organized within the Signal Corps to be stationed at Jamestown Exposition, Va. As I remember, six men were picked from Fort Omaha, Nebraska, and ordered to proceed to Jamestown Exposition for duty and report to Capt. Charles Chandler upon arrival. Names follow:

P.F.C.	Benjamin Schmit, Illinois
"	Frank Miller, Akron, Ohio
"	E.O. Eldred, Denver, Colorado
"	S.K. Rosenberger, Philadelphia, Pa.
"	G.R. Madole, New York City
"	V.L. Burge, Champaign, Illinois

Of the above list, I am the only one still on active duty. The first three men have been lost track of. Rosenberger purchased his discharge at Fort Myer in 1908, joined the Washington Fire

Department and was later killed by a fall from a fire ladder. Pvt. Madole died of tuberculosis at Fort Sill, Oklahoma in 1915 while the 1st Aero Squadron was stationed there.

Upon arrival at Jamestown Exposition, we were attached to the 23rd Infantry for rations and quarters and reported to the aeronautical building, exposition grounds for duty. Other than numerous aeronautical exhibits, the only aeronautical equipment was several free and captive balloons. Mr. Israel Ludlow, balloonist of that period was in charge of building and was attempting to fly a glider of bamboo construction towed by a boat, which was unsuccessful. Also present and operating a captive balloon for passenger hire, was Mr. Bud Mars, later a famous airplane exhibition pilot and believed to be still alive.

Upon arrival at Jamestown we also found that several men from Fort Wood, N.Y. had preceded us as follows: Cpl. Edward A. Ward, now retired; Pvt. J.C. Connel, deceased; and Pvt. C.E. Coile, retired as Master Sergeant, C.A. C. [Coast Artillery Corps].

The latter part of September, 1907, the Aeronautical Detachment, as it was then known, received orders to proceed to Washington Barracks, D.C. for station and for further instruction in balloon work. Upon arrival at Washington, the detachment daily proceeded to the Washington gas plant where they were instructed in folding, inflating, and handling of balloons. The instructor was Mr. Leo Stevens, a famous balloon pilot and manufacturer of balloons. During and after the Great War, Mr. Stevens was an instructor at Fort Omaha, Nebraska and Scott Field, Illinois.

During the time the detachment was in Washington, numerous free balloon flights were made by Captain Chandler and Lieutenant F.P. Lahm. The latter had only recently returned from Paris where he had won the international balloon race in 1906. Captain Chandler completed his tests for, and received his license as balloon pilot about this time. Captain Chandler died recently.

Later in September 1907, the detachment was ordered to proceed to Jefferson Barracks, Mo., to assist in handling balloons for International Balloon races to be held in St. Louis that year. Captain Chandler and Mr. Charles McCoy, a Major in Air Corps during the war, were designated as pilot and co-pilot of Signal Corps balloon No. 1. This balloon was of 20,000 cubic feet capacity and was considered large for that time and day. Germany, France, England and other foreign nations were also entrants for the race. While our entry did not win, it made a very commendable showing. The ten men of the detachment were assigned to different balloons to assist in inflation and handling of bags.

Upon completion of duty at St. Louis, the detachment was ordered to Fort Wood, N.Y. for duty during winter months.

In the Spring of 1908, the detachment was again ordered to Fort Myer, Va. for duty. The general rumour being at that time, that the Signal Corps would purchase a dirigible balloon and that the Wright Brothers would make an attempt to qualify their aeroplane (heavier-than-air) by attempting to pass the War Department requirements which at that time were considered impossible, as no one believed heavier-than-air flight possible. A Mr. Herring also was supposed to enter an aeroplane, but failed to appear.

Several additional men were assigned to the detachment as follows: Sgt. Lattimore, now retired; Cpl. H. Marcus, retired; PFC. S. J. Idzorek, now Lt. Colonel, A.C.; PFC Kenneth L. Kintzel, now Chief Clerk, Q.M. Edgewood Arsenal; John Crotty, PFC W. C. Abolin, PFC F.A. Tait, accidentally killed in France; and PFC Charles De Kim.

After arrival at Fort Myer, VA., the detachment received further instruction in balloon work and also generation of hydrogen gas. Later, in the summer of 1908, the dirigible balloon arrived. It had been constructed at Hammondsport, N.Y., by the then famous aeronaut, Captain Tom

Baldwin, and the gas bag looked like an overgrown cigar. Underneath was suspended a wooden frame-work which contained a Curtiss four-cylinder engine and its controls. Mr. Glenn Curtiss of aeroplane fame, acted as engineer and rode in the forward compartment. Captain Baldwin rode in the rear and controlled rudder surface, the elevator being controlled from the front compartment.

This dirigible was of 20,000 cu. feet capacity and was known as Signal Corps Dirigible No. 1. It successfully passed all tests (20 miles per hr.) and was accepted. It was later that year flown at military tournaments in St. Joseph, Mo., Toledo, Ohio, Des Moines, Iowa and then shipped to Fort Omaha, Nebraska where it came to an ignominious end. While being piloted by Lieutenants Lahm and Winter, it was steered into a telephone pole. A hole was torn in the nose, gas escaped, and the brame buckled over wires, ruining telephone service in that area for some time. This was the end of No. 1.

To return to Fort Myer. In the meantime - August or September (1908) - Wright Brothers had arrived and began assembling their aeroplane, as it was then called, in the old balloon hangar. Naturally this contraption was the cynosure of all eyes. At that time no-one, including officers, believed heavier-than-air flight possible. Their old mechanic, Mr. Charles Taylor, who was like one of the Wright family, was in charge of the assembly of the plane. After several days, the plane which resembled a box kite, with controls fore and aft, and warping wings for lateral control, was assembled. A four-cylinder gasoline engine of their own construction was placed in the plane and two large chain-driven propellers in the rear were driven in opposite directions, by means of crossing one chain which of itself was quite an innovation.

The first plane was not equipped with wheels, this being considered a minor matter, compared with actual flight. The plane was launched in flight from a long mono-rail by the expedient of dropping a 1500 pound weight. A rope was attached to the plane in such a manner that when the weight was released, the plane moved rapidly down rail and at the proper moment,

the pilot operated the elevators to rise into the air. Balancing a plane on this device was of itself no simple matter. When landing, the engine was stopped and a glide established, and the plane landed on skids which naturally meant replacement of skids at frequent intervals. Wrights later equipped all planes with wheels as soon as flying was a proven fact.

After the first plane was assembled, they anchored skids to the floor of the hangar prior to running up the engine. This, of course, caused amusement as it was not believed that such a device could move. However, in view of what is now known, this precaution was indeed necessary.

After the engine was tested, the plane was placed upon an escort wagon to be transported to the Cavalry Drill Field at Fort Myer, Va. From above it can be imagined how small this plane was. In a recent issue of a picture-magazine, I saw a photo of this plane being transported on the escort wagon. This was the first knowledge I had that such a photo existed. I do not remember the name of the magazine.

It might be well to list at this point, officers who were on duty with the aeronautical Detachment at this time: Lt. F.P. Lahm, in charge; E.D. Foulois, now retired; E.S. Bomberger, now on duty, 2nd C.A., as Colonel, AGD; J.C. Winter, retired; and Lt. Selfridge, later killed in first heavier-than-air plane crash; and Lt. Humphrey, later resigned.

A wooden shed had been constructed at the lower end of the drill field and the plane was housed therein. After several preliminary flights, such to the astonishment of assembled multitude, the Wrights began carrying officers as passengers. Late in September, 1908, while Orville Wright was piloting a plane with Lieutenant Selfridge as a passenger, the plane crashed, seriously injuring Mr. Wright and fatally injuring Lieutenant Selfridge. The cause of this crash was believed to be due to the fact that two new propellers approximately six inches longer than the old ones, had been

installed. It was believed the single wire bracing each side of the tail surface vibrated until the end of one propellor struck it, causing it to break, thus allowing the entire tail structure to swing to one side which caused the plane to dive head-on to the ground.

This accident put an end to tests in 1908 and the detachment again returned to Fort Wood, N.Y., for winter months.

In the spring of 1909, Mr. Orville Wright returned with a new plane. Mr. Wilbur Wright in the meantime had gone to France and was winning wide acclaim there from royalty.

During the 1908-1909 tests, many famous people journeyed to Fort Myer hoping to see the plane in flight. Few, if any of these people believed heavier-than-air flight possible, and many expected to see a failure or crash. Luckily the crash, due to structural failure, occurred after heavier-than-air flight was a proven fact or heavier-than-air flying might have been retarded for years. Few, if any, of the officers believed heavier-than-air flight possible.

Among these visiting Fort Myer were the President of the United States, W.H. Taft, the entire Congress, which often would adjourn for this purpose. Among this group was the famous Speaker of the House for a decade, Uncle Joe Cannon, who was quite outspoken and caustic regarding the possibility of heavier-than-air flight. He was heard to remark that "no-one can convince me such a thing will fly." Even after the plane had flown successfully, Uncle Joe conceded nothing. He simply remarked, "Well, it's in the air, but you can't make me believe it will stay there."

The unassuming Wrights were not at all impressed by those important personages. They, and mechanic Charles Taylor, who manufactured the engine and was greatly responsible for actual construction of the plane itself, journeyed from Washington to Fort Myer via electric railway and

refused to be stampeded into premature flight. Mr. Taylor is now in charge of Ford's Aviation Building, Greenfield, at the River, Plant. Many times a passenger would arrive at times when the President was present and wished to see a flight. Invariably the Wright Brothers would reply, "Very sorry, but weather is not propitious," or "the plane is not mechanically right."

They simply refused to seriously consider all the fuss as important as successful flights. In those days, and for several years afterward, as a matter of fact, no-one would attempt flight if there was any tracible wind. The Wrights favorite method of determining this was to wet a finger with saliva and hold above their heads. If enough breeze was blowing to dry saliva they refused to fly and often returned to Washington when the President, Senators, Congressmen and thousands of spectators were awaiting to see them fly.

As late as 1915 they Army Aviation School at North Island, San Diego, California, would begin flying instructions at break of dawn and fly for a few hours in order to escape winds which usually occur later in day. Instruction ceased about eight or nine o'clock in the morning and the officers adjourned to the Coronado Hotel where most of them lived and were heroes to many beautiful debs at that famous old society resort.

Practically every newspaper in the world had representatives present. A tent was erected for them and many interesting stories were swapped among these while awaiting trial flights. The outstanding funsters seemed to be representatives of the Hearst papers. They always appeared to be in the limelight and could out-talk any of the group.

The 1909 tests moved forward without incident and the machine successfully passed War Department tests in excess of speed required. On the final test, over a course from Arlington to Alexandria, Virginia, and return, with Lieutenant B.D. Foulois, later Chief of Air Corps, as

passenger and official observer, Mr. Orville Wright piloted the plane and later received over \$30,000.00 for successfully accomplishing the flight. The course was marked with small captive balloons to prevent wandering off course.

Immediately after tests the machine was accepted and moved to College Park, Maryland, where Mr. Wilbur Wright instructed Lieutenants Lahm, Foulois and Humphrey to operate the plane. Shortly after Lieutenant Humphrey, Engineer Corps, who was a wealthy man, resigned because the War Department would not detail him permanently to aviation duty.

About this time Lieutenant Lahm, who was in charge permitted Mr. Wright to carry as a passenger, a Mrs. De Loffre, wife of a Major, Medical Corps, now retired and living in France. Incidentally, she was the first woman to fly in a heavier-than-air machine. Of course the many newshounds present played this up with big headlines, and Mrs. De Loffre was quoted freely by reporters. Her outstanding comment was, "I now know why the birds sing."

This flight occurred early in the morning and was flashed on Bulletin Boards of various Washington papers prior to its being published. General Allen, Chief Signal Officer, under whom aviation was then vested, read these startling headlines enroute to his office. He remarked, "It's damn funny I don't know what is going on in my own outfit." Lieutenant Lahm was promptly relieved and returned to his Cavalry regiment where he remained until 1912 when he was again detailed for aviation duty in the Philippines. He is at present on duty as Air Officer, 2nd Corps Area, Governors Island, New York.

In those early days of flying no-one considered winter flying possible. Consequently the school would winter at Augusta, Georgia, where the climate was suitable for winter flying. Late in 1913 or 1914 the school was permanently established at North Island, San Diego, California, which was an immense area of flat sand several miles square. This later became Rockwell Field

and a much sought after station. The weather was excellent for year around training and many famous pilots, among them being Lieutenant Luke, famous balloon buster, received their wings at Rockwell. Lincoln Beachy also flew here. In 1917 the Navy appropriated a small strip of the island and have encroached on Army area to such an extent that it has been decided to move to Sacramento where a \$10,000,000 depot is being constructed, leaving the entire Island for Naval activities.

After the first instruction flights of 1909 at College Park, Maryland were completed, it was decided to ship the original plane and personnel to Fort Sam Houston, Texas, where warm weather existed the year around. Prior to this, however, the Electrical show being held at the Colliseum, Chicago, desired to have the plane exhibited at their show. The plane and entire detachment proceeded to Chicago and the plane was assembled and was a point of interest for thousands of visitors.

After completion of the electrical show the plane was shipped to Fort Sam Houston, Texas. Here a shed had been erected to house the plane and detachment in the center of the large Cavalry drill field which was level and several miles square. The plane was assembled and daily flown by Lieutenant Foulois, the only officer left with the detachment. Considering the limited instruction he had received at College Park, he did remarkably well and the plane survived these flights. Later it was replaced with a new model and Wright Brothers turned the old plane over to Smithsonian Institute, Washington, D.C., where it is now on exhibition.

These flights were still being made by launching the plane by means of a catapult. Lieutenant Foulois designed and installed the first wheels to be used on Wright plane. Later models were all equipped with wheels at the factory. Civilian mechanic, Mr. O.G. Simmons, later a pilot for Mr. Collier of New York, and now President of the Cleveland Tool Company, actually

performed all the machine work for the installation. He was formerly a machinist and draftsman at Naval Gun Factory, Washington, D.C.

During the spring of 1911, the Wright factory ordered one of their famous exhibition pilots, Mr. P.G. Parmelee, killed in 1912, to San Antonio to instruct Lieutenant Foulois. This instruction proved invaluable inasmuch as in attempting to teach himself the then little known art of flying, Lieutenant Foulois naturally made many mistakes. Later that fall, Mr. Frank Coffman another of the famous original Wright exhibition pilots, arrived to give additional instruction. In the meantime, Mr. Robert G. Collier of New York had purchased a Wright airplane and loaned it to the Government. The original Fort Myer Wright airplane had been returned to the Wright factory and they had supplied a new model B for the old original No. 1 plane which was later placed in Smithsonian Institute, Washington, where it is today.

About this time practically the entire army was mobilized on the drill ground around the hangar due to the Japanese having been promised a naval base by Mexico at Magdalena Bay. This was later designated a Manoeuvre Division under Command of Major General Carter. At that time the public little realized that we were on point of invading Mexico and had she not withdrawn Japanese Naval base privileges, the army would have invaded Mexico.

Three Army Officers had been detached to the Glenn Curtis flying boat school at North Island, California. They were Lieutenant Paul W. Bock, murdered in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma in 1920, John G. Kelly, killed in 1911 at Fort Sam Houston, and for whom Kelly Field was named; John C. Walker; all of infantry arm. These officers arrived about this time and were equipped with a Curtiss pusher type biplane. Lieutenant Bock, being senior assumed command, and there was more or less rivalry, as well as friction, between Wright and Curtiss enthusiasts as to the qualities of their planes.

Daily flights were made with resultant thrills. Lieutenant Bock was forced down in the mesquite back of the camp necessitating rebuilding of the Curtiss plane. Lieutenant Walker narrowly escaped death, but, luckily recovered from a side slip within 200 feet of the ground. He was so upset that he returned to his regiment and never flew thereafter.

Shortly afterwards Lieutenant Kelly was making an early morning flight before reveille. He was gliding in for a landing and failed to level off in time to avoid a crash. The front wheel struck the ground with such force that it was crushed. At the same time the left wing struck the ground practically wrecking the machine. No safety belts had been worn up to that time. Consequently, Lieutenant Kelly was catapulted over front elevator of the plane for approximately one hundred feet, landing on his head and shoulders. His skull was crushed and he lived but a few hours. The Curtiss detail then proceeded to College Park, Maryland, and the wreckage of the plane was also shipped to College Park, Maryland, which had been reopened as a flying school.

The Wright Plane and detachment with Lieutenant Foulois and Mr. P.G. Parmalee, Wright Pilot, were ordered to Fort McIntosh, Laredo, Texas, in the fall of 1911. The plane was assembled and many local flights accomplished. While at Laredo it was decided to make a non-stop flight to Eagle Pass, a distance of one hundred and fifty miles. This was really the first cross-country flight of any consequence in the history of aviation. An extra gasoline and oil tank was installed and the flight to Eagle Pass accomplished without incident. The Rio Grande River was followed generally. On the return flight, when about halfway to Laredo, engine trouble developed and a forced landing in the river resulted, completely wrecking the plane. Luckily neither Lieutenant Foulois nor Mr. Parmalee were injured. The Detachment returned to Fort Sam Houston where flights were resumed with Collier's machine. Later all equipment and personnel were ordered to College Park, Maryland.

In December 1912, the Army shipped a Wright plane to Manila, P.I., Lieutenant Lahm at that time was on duty with the 7th Cavalry at Fort McKinley, P.I. He was detailed to fly the plane and establish a flying school. Two enlisted men were ordered to Manila as a nucleus for the enlisted personnel. They were:

Corporal Vernon L. Burge, Signal Corps

PFC Kenneth L. Kintzel, Signal Corps

Several men were assigned from Signal Corps troops at Manila, bringing strength of detachment to ten men.

A large shed had been erected on the upper end of Polo Field and this plane was assembled and first flown early in March, 1912 by Lieutenant Lahm.

In the meantime, several officers had been ordered to receive flying instructions as follows:

1st Lieut. Moss L. Love, Cavalry, killed at San Diego, California

In 1913 and for whom Love Field, Texas was named.

1st Lieut. C.G. Chapman, Cavalry, now retired

Corporal V.L. Burge, (now Colonel), Signal Corps, in charge of enlisted detachment, was also detailed to receive instruction and qualified as a pilot in April 1913, being the first enlisted man to pilot an airplane in the United States Army, receiving Aero Club of America License 152.

Due to the rainy season the school was closed until Spring of 1913, and again re-opened at Fort McKinley. In the meantime two more officers had been detailed to receive instructions:

2nd Lieut. F.A. Mangus C.A.C., now Assistant Chief of Air Corps and a Brigadier General.

2nd Lieut. P.C. Phillipine, Scouts, killed at Passy Beach, Manila, P.I., in 1913 while flying a new type "C" Wright plane. He crashed into the bay from a height of several hundred feet and was immediately killed.

Another airplane, a Burgess-Wright equipped with pontoons, had been received and it was shipped to Corregidor Island at the entrance to Manila Bay, Lieut. (now General) H.A. Dargue was in charge. Corporal (now Colonel) V.L. Burge also was ordered to Corregidor for duty. Many flights were made and artillery fire observed for the Coast Artillery. Lieut. Dargue also installed radio apparatus, which while crude, actually worked and he succeeded in transmitting and receiving messages. Late in 1914 the plane was wrecked and Lieut. Dargue and Corporal Burge were ordered to the Army Aviation School, San Diego, California, where they continued flying.

The annual report of Major General Franklin J. Bell, commanding the Phillippine Division in 1912, is of interest. It reads as follows:

An innovation in signal corps work, in this division, has resulted from the fact that an aeroplane was received in Febraury 1912.

"The machine is a type B. Wright aeroplane, 30-h.p., with floats, and a supply of spare parts. A hangar, 50 x 75 feet, inside dimensions, with concrete floor, galvanized iron roof, sliding doors entirely across the front, and large enough to accommodate two assembled machines, was erected by the quarter-master's department on the reservation, adjacent to the polo field at Fort William McKinley, at a cost of \$1,809.91.

"1st Lieut. Frank S. Lahm, 7th cavalry, was detailed for temporary duty with the signal corps for aviation work and entered upon this duty March 11, 1912. Two noncommissioned officers and four men of the signal corps selected for their mechanical ability and especially for their experience with gasoline engines, were assigned to duty as mechanics.

"The aeroplane was assembled and flown for the first time March 21. Thereafter, flights were made every morning; the total time in the air up to June 30, was 34[?] hours and 5 minutes.

"On June 14 Cpl. Vernon L. Burge, signal corps, of the aviation detachment successfully fulfilled the requirements of the International Aeronautical Federation for an aviation pilot's license, and on June 23, Lieut. Moss L. Love signal corps, successfully passed the same test.

"There are at present three aviators in the division and one aeroplane. Requisition has been submitted for two aeroplanes, one a high power machine suitable for use in connection with the defense of Corregidor Island, and the other a type B Wright machine suitable for use at maneuvers or wherever needed."

Cpl. Burge, mentioned in the report, now colonel of the Air Corps, was the first enlisted pilot.

Lieut. Love was killed at San Diego in 1913.

The "three aviators in the Division with one aeroplane" were Lieuts. Lahm, Love, and Cpl. Burge.

In 1914 all training activities for flying had been concentrated at North Island, a large sandy waste adjacent to San Diego, California, an ideal location for year round training. North Island is now the site of the largest naval air training base in the United States.

North Island produced practically all the early army pilots, among them being Lts. Carberry, B.Q. Jones, first officer to loop the loop in an Army plane, milling, Fitzgerald, Sutton, MacDill, Taliaferro, Dodd, Netherwood, Brereton, Geiger, Geratner, Morrow, Kilner, Spaatz, Brett, Johnson, Curry, Kennedy, Krogstad, Burwell, Richardo, Rader, Churchill, Scanlon, Harms, Harmon, N.F. McDonnell, Lovel, Davidson, _____, Royce, Call, Ellington, Kelly, Eberts, Ryan, Cousine, Gilkeson, Stratemeyer, Robertson, and many others. The civilian instructors were two famous pilots, Mr. Oscar Brindley, of the original Wright exhibition team, and "Doc" Wildman of the Old Curtiss exhibition team. These two pilots trained practically all of the early Air Corps pilots prior to 1917.

In June 1915 the First Aero Squadron was organized and proceeded to Fort Sill, Oklahoma, for temporary duty at the Artillery School of Fire. The squadron was commanded by Capt. B.D. Foulois, the army's second pilot, and later chief of aviation in France and Chief of the Air Corps. After several months at Fort Sill the squadron was ordered to Fort Sam Houston, Texas where hangars had been constructed at the site of what is now the remount station. The enlisted men proceeded by trucks, train and the eight JN2 Curtiss planes were flown. This was the first mass cross-country flight in the history of aviation. Landings were made at Witchita Falls, Texas, Fort Worth, Texas, Waco, Texas, and Austin, Texas. The truck train was so scheduled as to arrive in time to service planes each day. That all planes arrived safely at Fort Sam Houston was remarkable, considering the planes and engines of that day.

Hardly had the squadron settled in its new home when Villa raided Columbus, New Mexico, and orders were received to entrain for that point. The squadron arrived by rail the day General Pershing's Punitive Expedition crossed the border in April 1916.

The planes were assembled and immediately took off for Casas Grandes, Mexico, some 150 miles to the south. All planes arrived there safely late that day. It immediately became apparent that the J-N type plane, powered with 90 H.P. Curtiss V-Type engine were not powerful enough to operate from the altitude of Casas Grandes which was over 5,000 feet. Although many important reconnaissance flights were made for General Pershing's troops and mail and dispatches carried to and from the border, it was evident that as the expedition southward it would not be possible to fly over the mountains. After hedge hopping the mountains for approximately a month, the squadron was equipped with a new type Curtiss R. plane with a 160 H.P. engine which proved very satisfactory.

The farthest point south reached by the squadron was Satevo, Mexico. 60 miles south of Parral, Mexico. At this point the squadron, while proceeding thru a narrow gorge on the night of April 16, 1915, was attacked by Vincent Lopez's bandits and things looked rather bad for a while. Luckily the bandits did not follow up the attack and no casualties resulted. However, a Dodge car which had been abandoned was burned.

During the time the squadron was at Satevo, Mexico, General Pershing directed Captain Foulois to fly to Chihuahua City, some 50 miles to the north east, with important dispatches for the American Consul. The late Lieut. Townsend F. Dodd accompanied Captain Foulois on the flight. They landed near the penitentiary and left the plane in the care of Mexican troops. While they were delivering the dispatches someone loosened the pipe which held the top of the fuselage, or "turtle-back", in place. When they took off amidst a hail of stones the "turtle-back" blew off, damaging the rudder. However, they managed to make the return flight in safety.