

Carl H. Deude and Iowa's First Airmail

BY SUZANNE BEISEL

On June 9, a man by the name of Carl H. Deude of Stuart, Iowa made the first airmail flight in Iowa. Though it was rather short and insignificant, it was an Iowa "first."

The plane was carrying not the usual parcels and letters from all over the country and world which are usually associated with today's airmail, but instead, it carried, from Des Moines to Guthrie Center, 100 copies of the *Des Moines Daily Capitol*, the local newspaper at the time.

The flight was made in an Army surplus, Curtiss biplane which was purchased by the citizens of Guthrie Center from the Canadian Government. Deude was hired to go to Montreal, Quebec, Canada and fly the plane back. He landed on the Fort Des Moines army post parade ground, 14 hours and 45 minutes after leaving Canada, and picked up the pouch of papers. He then flew on to Guthrie Center, 50 miles away, in one and one half hours.

There were only a handful of people watching the landing of that historical flight. The newspapers thought it worthy of only a short, back-page story, but it cannot be denied that this was Iowa's first airmail service.

The pilot of that plane was one of Iowa's flying pioneers, Carl Deude. His occupation was a painter and decorator, but he had quite a colorful career flying gliders before World War I. He was, in fact, the first Iowan to make successful glider flights in his state.

In 1907, Deude was flying a Chanute-type glider that resembled a box-kite. It was made of piano wire, hand-carved cypress, and oil-coated muslin. He flew in a pasture near his hometown of Stuart, towed by a horse and buggy. The craft was attached to the buggy by 150 feet of rope and it reached heights of 75 to 100 feet from the ground.

The *Des Moines Tribune* reported that seven years later, Deude built his first successful power plane. He whittled out a propeller and wired together a biplane. He used a two-horsepower motor, a three-gallon gasoline tank, and for his ignition he used three dry cell batteries. He took it to a pasture near Stuart and much to everyone's surprise, the ship flew.



CARL H. DEUDE
IOWA'S FIRST AIRMAIL PILOT

The *Tribune* said, "The Stuart folk had come out to the pasture to see Deude die. The editor of the *Stuart Herald* already had written Deude's Obituary." It wasn't used.

In 1914 Deude did it again. He built his first, really successful power plane using an old 4-cylinder Veile automobile motor and a radiator from a Model-T which was leaky and had been discarded. Deude said his only complaint in flying this machine was that hot grease and radiator water showered him from all sides. Consequently, it was hard to see.

Farmers in the area objected to Deude and his cohorts flying the "noisy machine" over their pastures, claiming they were scaring their livestock, so the pilots started fly-

ing at night using bonfires to light the fields. The irate farmers even tried to destroy the planes when they were tied down at night.

With the coming of the war, Deude answered a call for civilian pilots to train United States Army pilots in flying the wartime "Jennies" which were Curtis-JN4D planes. He served in seven army airfields and was one of 40 of the 150 original pilots to come out alive. He also served in Montgomery, Alabama as a chief test pilot, and made the first night flight at that field, using bonfires and car lights to light the runway.

Iowa's Deude had the honor of being one of two Iowans in "The Early Birds," an international organization of aviators who flew powered aircraft or gliders before December 17, 1916. The other Iowan was A. I. Hartman of Burlington.

Deude made his last flight as a pilot in 1919. A man in New York had hired him to fly a "flying boat." After his flight, he retired from the flying field and stuck to painting and decorating in Stuart and Las Vegas, Nevada during the winter. Deude died September 11, 1956 at the age of 70.

Coming . . .

. . . in the next issue, Fall, 1963, a complete story on the recent find of the Indian burial site in West Des Moines. This discovery brought to light, many new insights to the life of Indians who lived in that area at least 200 to 400 years ago.

Archaeologists are currently working to find out all they can about crosses which were found at the site to see if there is any religious connection. Any white, religious influence upon this Mississippian culture would be extremely rare and change many theories about life of the Indian.

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