

Still another trouble was the procurement of suitable wheels. As they could not get what they wanted, they were obliged to resort to the use of bicycle wheels, as most other pioneer airplane builders did, and as a consequence they found later that such wheels were not too sturdy for the purpose.

As the work progressed, the inventors made many enquiries in an effort to obtain a suitable engine, but in most cases costs were too high, and it seemed for a time their efforts might stagnate for want of a motor.

Unlike most early airplane builders, the Peppers made no attempt to keep their plans a secret, and it paid off. Interest in their project became a local topic, and as they were able to interest several people in their efforts, a small, unregistered private company was formed. They financed the purchase of an engine.

The chief subscribers were the late Doctor Craig, and the late Mr. Rutledge, both of Davidson, who held great faith in the young men's abilities and the machine's future.

With money subscribed, a seven-foot propeller, and a 30 h.p., air cooled motor were ordered from a United States source, but the name of the actual firm, except that it was situated in Chicago, has been lost to history. However, it is known that it was a two cylinder affair, and that it possessed the trade name of **Miss Detroit**. Like many motors of early vintage, it could not always be induced to run smoothly. 'Ace' admitted however that they knew absolutely nothing of the whims of internal combustion engines, so in fairness to the engine, he figured most of the trouble caused in its operation was their own.

They had no one to turn to for advice, and many who offered it certainly were not experts.

Finally the job was finished, and actual tests began early in July, 1911. Considerable taxiing was in store for George, who was elected as pilot, as he tried to accustom himself to the controls. The big day was the 14th, when the budding airman settled himself firmly in the craft's single seat, and with a firm grip on the levers, he gave the engine full throttle and hoped for the best.

It was not to be that day. One of the wheels came in contact with a sturdy tussock of grass, and buckled, slewing the airplane sideways. It broke the undergear and propeller.

True pioneers, the brothers were quite undaunted and with sufficient funds still available, they set to making repairs. Without the slightest previous knowledge of how to go about such work, they laminated

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spruce boards together, and laboriously carved a new propeller. When completed, it looked like a real professional job.

They wasted little time, because by the end of July they were ready to try again, and August 1, saw George once again in the pilot's seat with intent to fly.

Having found their home pasture too rough for their liking, and the bicycle wheels too weak, they moved to the nearby, half-mile race track which the village proudly owned.

Again George gave the engine full throttle, and after a very short run the dainty little biplane lifted into the air and set off at a fast clip.

With success almost within his reach, George, like many other budding aviators of that period, had too little knowledge of actual flying conditions.

A stiff cross wind was blowing, and when the machine reached the end of the track area, flying beautifully at a height of thirty feet, a strong gust caught the left wing, upsetting its stability. No one knows for certain what happened then, but it was emphatic enough. Either George was not quick enough to overcome the wind's effect, or the controls were not sufficiently sensitive to do the job quickly. Something went wrong, and as the right wing rose higher and higher, the tiny craft suddenly swung its nose viciously to the left, then downwards, straight for the ground.

As the crackle of splintering wood and tearing fabric died away, and the wind carried the dust clear of the wreckage, George scrambled free, only badly shaken up, but the wreck of the biplane was complete.

With their funds depleted, and no further finances to turn to, the hopes of the Pepper Brothers of becoming full fledged Canadian airmen came to an end, to drift away on the dust cloud which swept away from the crash over the Saskatchewan country side.

Had more money been available, it is probable the young builders could have gone forward to make another, and more successful machine, but one year ran into the next as they let things slide, and then along came World War One.

With the tremendous impetus it gave to aviation, little was left for the pioneers to accomplish.

The sad remains of the Peppers plane languished beside their barn for several years, while they and their experiments slipped into oblivion.

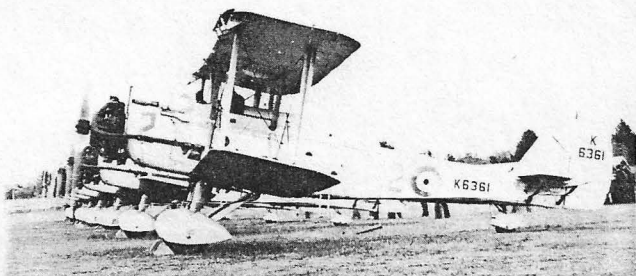
So far as the advancement of aviation was concerned, their efforts added not one whit, but their failure by no means belittles their accomplishment, for of such stuff pioneers are made. ➤

Last Month ▼

Quiz Craft

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New Zealand's first line bombers at the start of W.W.II, the Vickers Vincents, were last month's puzzlers. Frank Thomas, also from New Zealand and now flight engineer for Shell Aviation at Calgary, supplied us with this picture.



It isn't new and it isn't old,
Barely fired up before it got cold.

