

E. L. OVINGTON DIES; FIRST MAIL PILOT

Flew the Initial Consignment
From Garden City Estates
to Mineola, L. I., in 1911.

COVERED TEN-MILE ROUTE

Studied at Bleriot School at Pau,
France—Owned Air Terminal
at Santa Barbara, Calif.

Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES.

LOS ANGELES, July 22.—Earle L. Ovington, first air mail pilot in the United States, died in a hospital late yesterday after an illness of several weeks at the age of 56.

Mr. Ovington was a principal figure in the epochal stride in developing postal communication by air undertaken by the United States Government. On Sept. 23, 1911, he received a sack of mail from Postmaster General Frank H. Hitchcock, and flew with it from Garden City Estates to Mineola, L. I., a distance of ten miles. His plane was a single-seater, and there was no baggage compartment. He held the mail bag on his lap.

He was born in Chicago. At the age of 20 he was employed by Thomas A. Edison in his X-ray laboratory. In 1904 he received from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology the degree of electrical engineer.

Organized Motor Company

With the advent of aviation he was one of the first in America to see its possibilities and attended the Bleriot School of Aeronautics in Pau, France, graduating in 1911. In 1905 he organized the Ovington Manufacturing Company and in 1908 the Ovington Motor Company. From 1912 to 1919 he was head of the Vitalait Laboratories, engaged in preparing bacterial cultures for medical use. In 1918-20 he was president of Curtiss Flying Station in Atlantic City. Since 1920 he had been a consulting electrical and aeronautical engineer at Santa Barbara.

During the World War he served in the navy as lieutenant commander. In 1911 he won The Boston Globe tri-State air race and a \$10,000 prize, as well as numerous other trophies in subsequent competitions. He was a founder member and a former president of the Early Birds, a member of the Quiet Birdmen, National Air Pilots Association and similar groups. He was a former rear admiral of the Southern California Yachting Association and former commodore of the Santa Barbara Yacht Club. He owned the Ovington Air Terminal at Santa Barbara.

In an effort to save his life here, three major and two minor operations were performed in recent weeks. Yesterday morning his condition appeared much improved, but a turn for the worse was noted at noon yesterday. His wife, the former Adelaide Alexander, was with him. Two children, Audrey and Kester Ovington, also survive.

Historic Flight Under Hitchcock

Although Earle Ovington's historic ten-mile flight did not establish a postoffice service, it was an inspiration to Postmaster General Hitchcock, under whose administration the aviator had been sworn in as "Air Mail Pilot No. 1." The pioneer air mailman, flying a Bleriot with the Hendee Indian edition of the Gnome Rhone Rotary motor, took off during an aviation meet at Nassau Boulevard, Garden City Estates, and carried the mail bag to Mineola, where he dropped it with-in reasonable proximity to the post-office. He continued the service for nine days and then it ended.

It was regarded at the time as "a good stunt," and few persons conceived of the tremendous development in communication it heralded. The next air transport of mail did not come until the war years, when the army and the Post-office Department cooperated to make it possible. But twenty years after Ovington's brief service the United States mail was being carried over 23,488 miles of airways.

In commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of Ovington's flight, Dean Smith, on Sept. 23, 1921, flying a 575 horsepower Hornet Pilgrim, followed part of Ovington's original course and then delivered at the Newark airport 15,000 special souvenir "covers" of the trip.



Times Wide World Photo
EARLE L. OVINGTON