



PINEHURST NC HANGAR #218

**QB MEMBER PROFILES
PROFILE NUMBER 2**

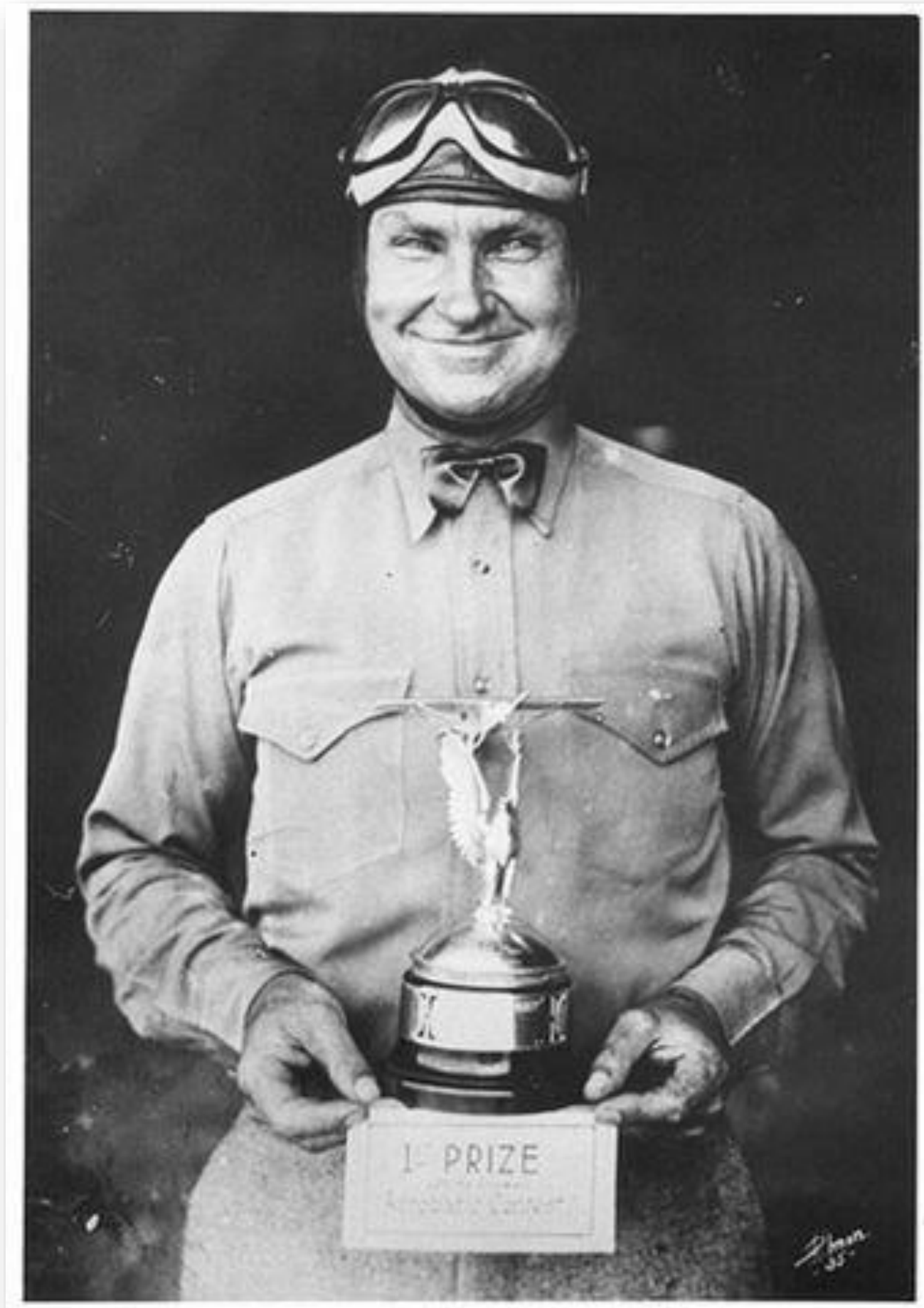
John E. Crowell

QB #3710

Hangar: #71, Charlotte, NC



QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell



QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell

- **Born September 23rd, 1893** in Union County, NC to John Kerr Crowell and Sarah Elizabeth (Poer) Crowell, 4th of five children. Known as “Johnny”.
- **His QB epitaph:** *"Johnny" Pioneer, aviator. Charlotte's first licensed pilot. Charlotte airport's first manager. Barnstorming pioneer in aviation. Set world records in aerobatics. Logged 2.5 million miles in 100 types of aircraft. Inventor and gentleman. Born and raised in Union County.*
- Little is published about his early years. The **Carolinas Aviation Museum** in Charlotte has information on Crowell's life in its archives, the John E. Crowell collection.



QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell

- As a child he was greatly interested in **anything mechanical**.
- At age 11 his admiration for **Thomas Edison** inspired him to add Edison to his name , when he became John “**E.**” Crowell.
- In 1910, at age 17, he became interested in “flying machines”. He began work in an **auto repair shop** in order to acquire the knowledge to become a “birdman” as pilots then were called.
- In 1912, at age 19, Johnny began construction of a **Bleriot Monoplane** using materials ordered from the Heath Aerial Vehicle Company of Chicago. The cost of aircraft engines during WWI prevented completion, which Crowell later cited as “... lucky, in preventing him from attempting to fly his homebuilt creation.”



QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell



Edward Bayard Heath and 1926 Parasol



QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell

- In 1915 Crowell moved to D.C. to work at the new flying school at **College Park Airport** in Maryland. Although no work was available, Crowell convinces the owners to allow him to mow their grass. Later he expressed pride in having worked at the first military “aerodrome” in the world.
- Through a letter of introduction from a mechanic at the airport, Crowell landed a job at the **Standard Aero Corporation** in Plainfield, NJ, makers of the J-1 and E-1 trainers.
- At Standard, Johnny invented the “**Tension Meter**”, or tensiometer, to measure accurately the tension on flying wires. He also invented a **timing device** for the Gnome and LeRhône rotary engines used there.
- After the Armistice, Crowell returned to Charlotte. He patented several new devices, including a **thermostatically controlled choke** for the Ford Model T and an **automatic spark advance**. His best-known invention was the **Three-Castle-Locknut** which became a standard in the US auto industry.



QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell



Standard Aircraft J-1 and E-1 Trainers



QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell



Tensiometer & Castle Nut

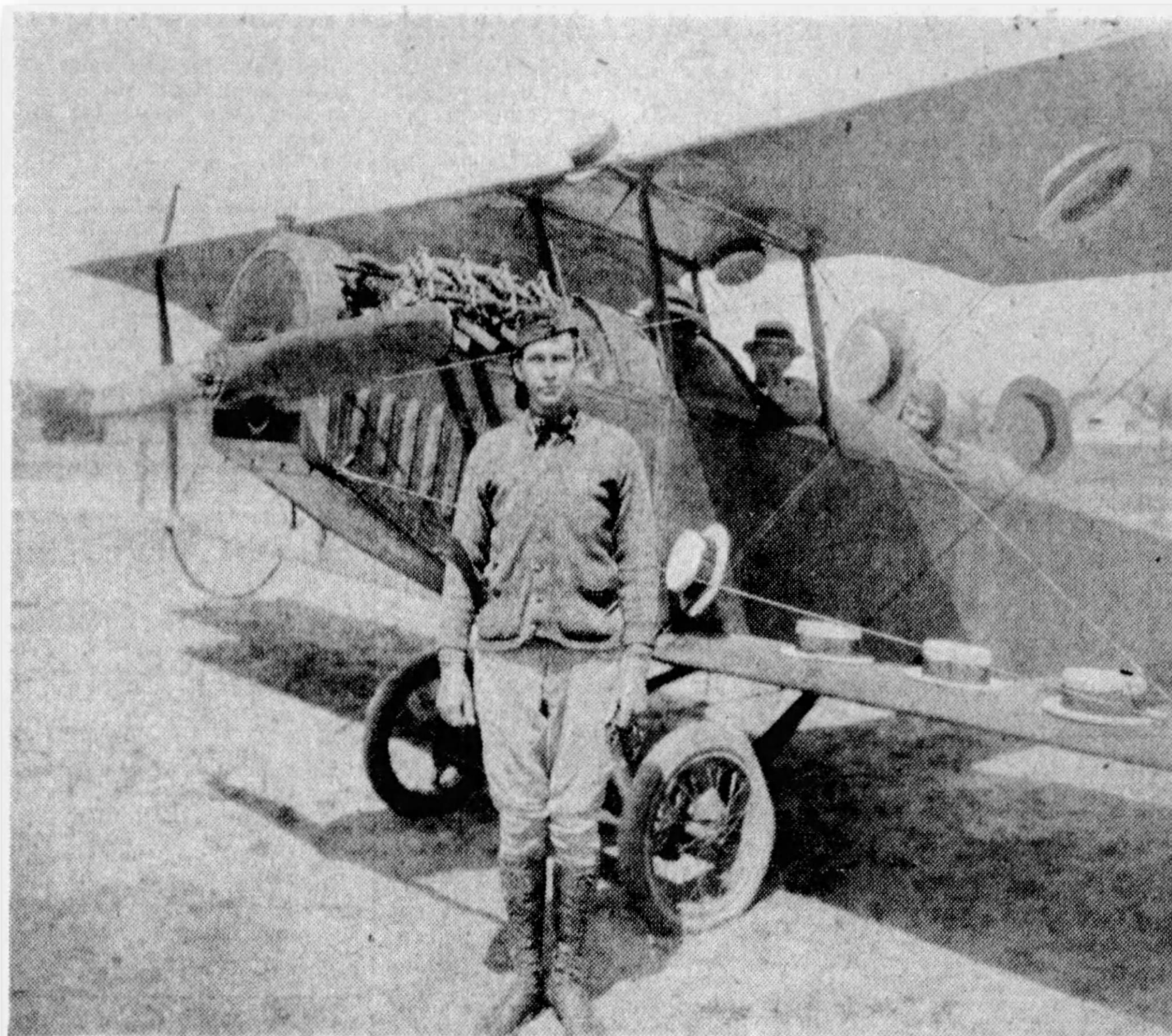


QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell

- At the age of **29 (in 1922)**, Johnny purchased **six JN-2 Jennies** at Southern Field, Americus GA. Some he sold off and ferried the rest to Charlotte NC. He left a few for **Charles Lindbergh**, QB #637, to buy in 1923.
- Two years later in **1924**, Crowell was well established as a Barnstorming aviator across the Carolinas and Virginia. His barker's claim to Johnny being a licensed pilot was backed up by F.A.I. License No. 7210 and **U.S. Pilot License 4622**.



QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell



HUCKSTER, 1923 STYLE — Back when there were no singing commercials, a Charlotte hat shop hired Johnny Crowell to load his plane with straw hats and rain them on Independence

Square at high noon. The idea was to prove that the hats really were as “indestructible” as advertised. Johnny stands in front of his World War I hat-bedecked Jenny.



QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell

- Crowell was 21 when WWI started in 1914, perhaps too old when the US entered the war in April 1917?
- After WWI he became close friends with WWI ace **Elliott White Springs** (QB #608) of Fort Mill, SC.
- Crowell and Springs became popular and financially successful **Barnstormers** in the 20s and 30s.



Lt. Elliott Springs in front of his wrecked Sopwith Camel in September 1918.



QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell



Springs Down in Plane

"Captain Elliott White Springs, for Fort Mill, and Johnny Crowell, Charlotte aviator, were forced down in Springs' plane on a return flight from Greenville here late today when an oil feed pipe line burst.

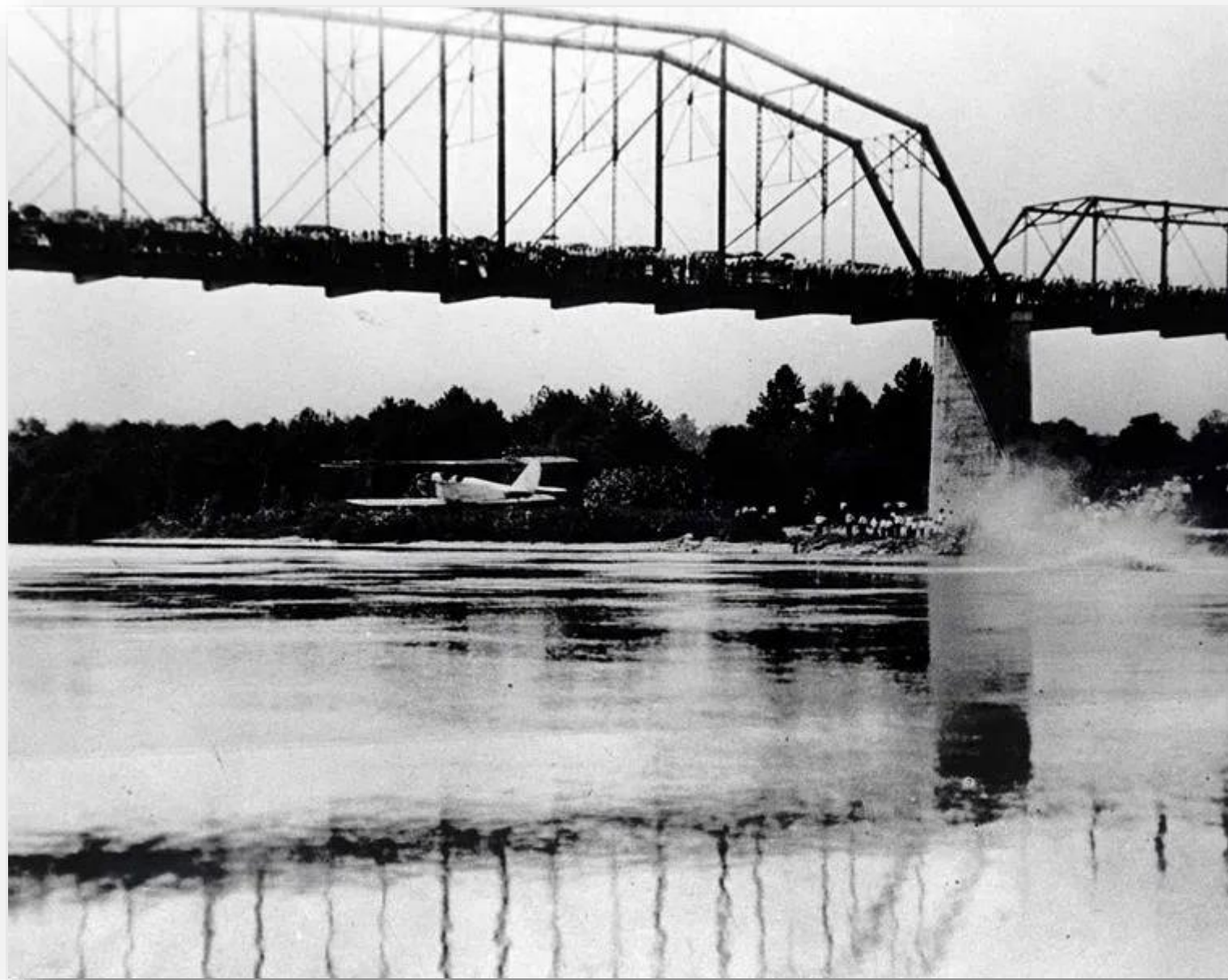
Springs, a World war flier and writer and now a cotton mill executive, and Crowell were blackened by oil but landed safely on a field near here. The plane was unhurt. The two, returning from Greenville where Springs had attended a meeting of the state textile association, were about 1,000 feet up when forced to spiral down.

They left the plane here, planning to return tomorrow for it."

QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell

Bridge Stunt

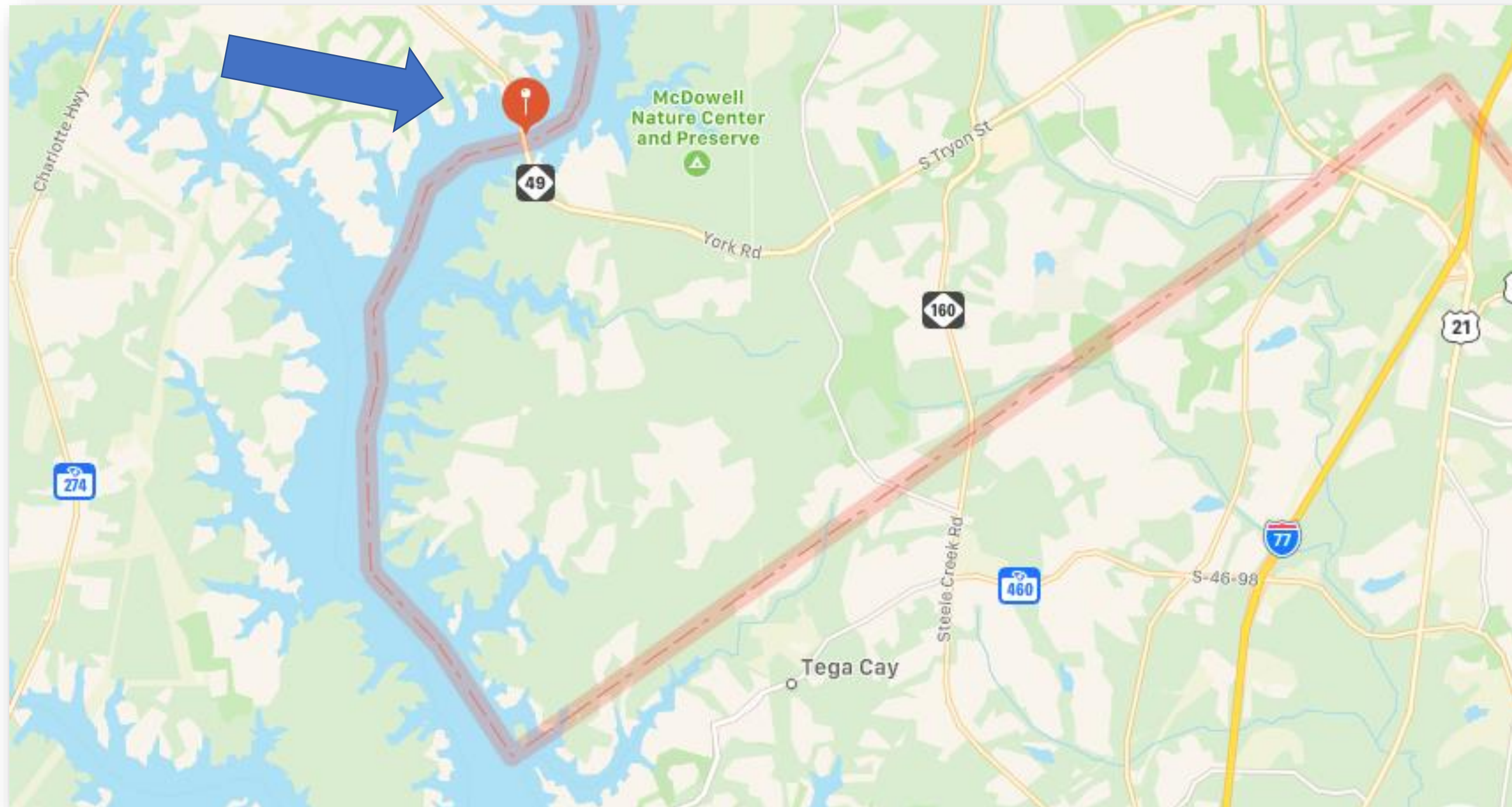
“No single date in the history of western Union County, except for the birth of Andrew Jackson, is so talked about as the date that Johnny Crowell, ace pilot and barnstormer, flew his biplane under the old Buster Boyd Bridge across Lake Wyle. Johnny was a pioneer in aviation, and he was one of our own, and we loved him. On that storied date, on a bet with a fellow pilot and WWI ace, Colonel Springs, the two of them flew their planes to the lake where, on the first dive, Johnny took his under the bridge. Colonel Springs made a few dives but pulled out of each without finishing the task. My source for this information is the Colonel's daughter, Ann Springs Close. Some popular variations on the legend have the Colonel going under the bridge and Johnny not doing so.”



Capt. Elliot White Springs performs at the grand celebration of the Buster Boyd Bridge, 1923.



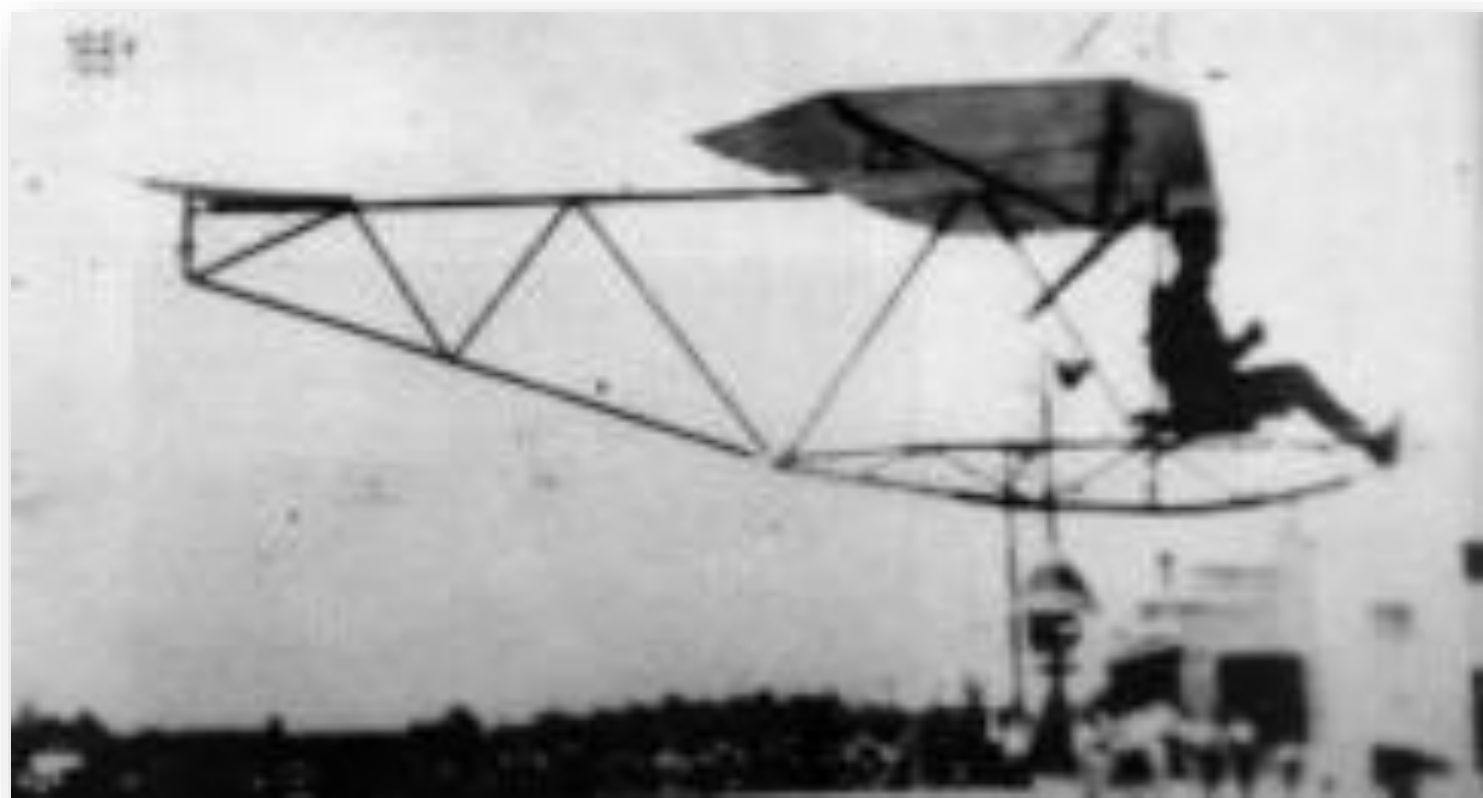
QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell



Buster Boyd Bridge, Hwy. 49 over Lake Wylie at the NC/SC state line near Charlotte.

QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell

- By 1930, Johnny Crowell was a well establish airshow pilot. Below left he is seen flying a **WACO 167Y Glider** at a demonstration in Charlotte NC.
- Crowell was an innovative showman. Below right is a circa 1934 photo showing Johnny wing-walking. Note that in this case **he is also the pilot** of this Wright 165 HP J-6-5 powered WACO "Straight-Wing." Also note the number "13" on the fuselage.



QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell

Claims Speech and Hearing Restored

Charlotte, N. C., Jan. 18.—(AP)—Restoration of his speech and hearing by an airplane ride was claimed today by Francis Roberts, young Charlotte resident, who took his second trip in the air yesterday.

The young man, who works in a restaurant here, had not been heard to speak by his fellow workers during the several months he has worked in Charlotte until after his trip yesterday when he went aloft with Pilot Johnny Crowell.

Roberts claims to have been injured in Detroit two years ago, when he lost the power of speech and hearing. Doctors here today, who had examined the young man previously and accepted his story as true, said they were inclined to believe he had been misinformed about his condition and had only been suffering from a form of "hysteria."

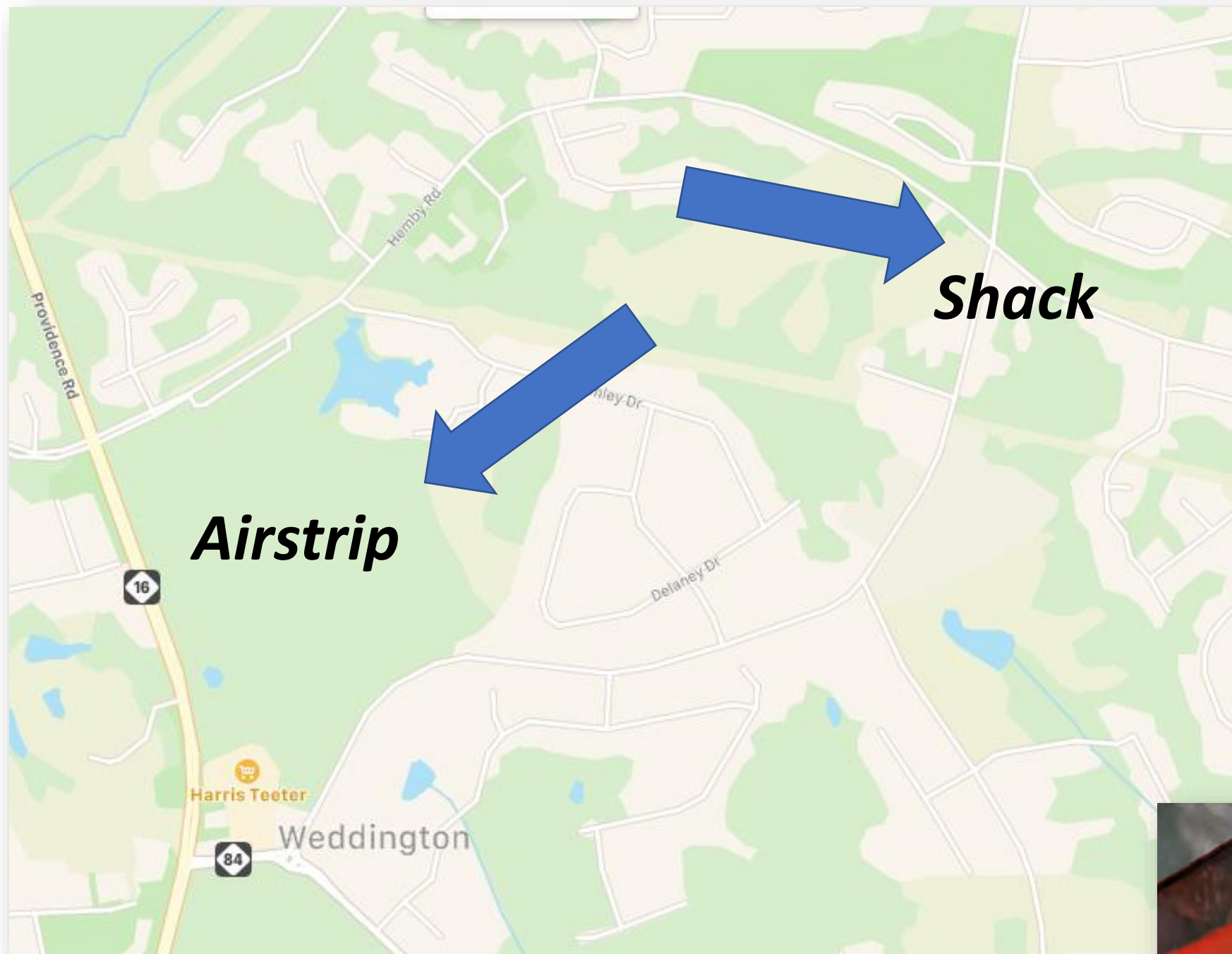
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QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell



Crowell's First Airfield?

*"Johnny lived and built his planes in an old shack at the corner of Beulah Church Road and Matthews Weddington Road. He use the large field between Providence Road and Matthews Weddington Road as his airfield. Many a Sunday afternoon, locals got into the back seat of the biplane and **got the bejeebies scared out of them** as Johnny performed his antics high over that field."*

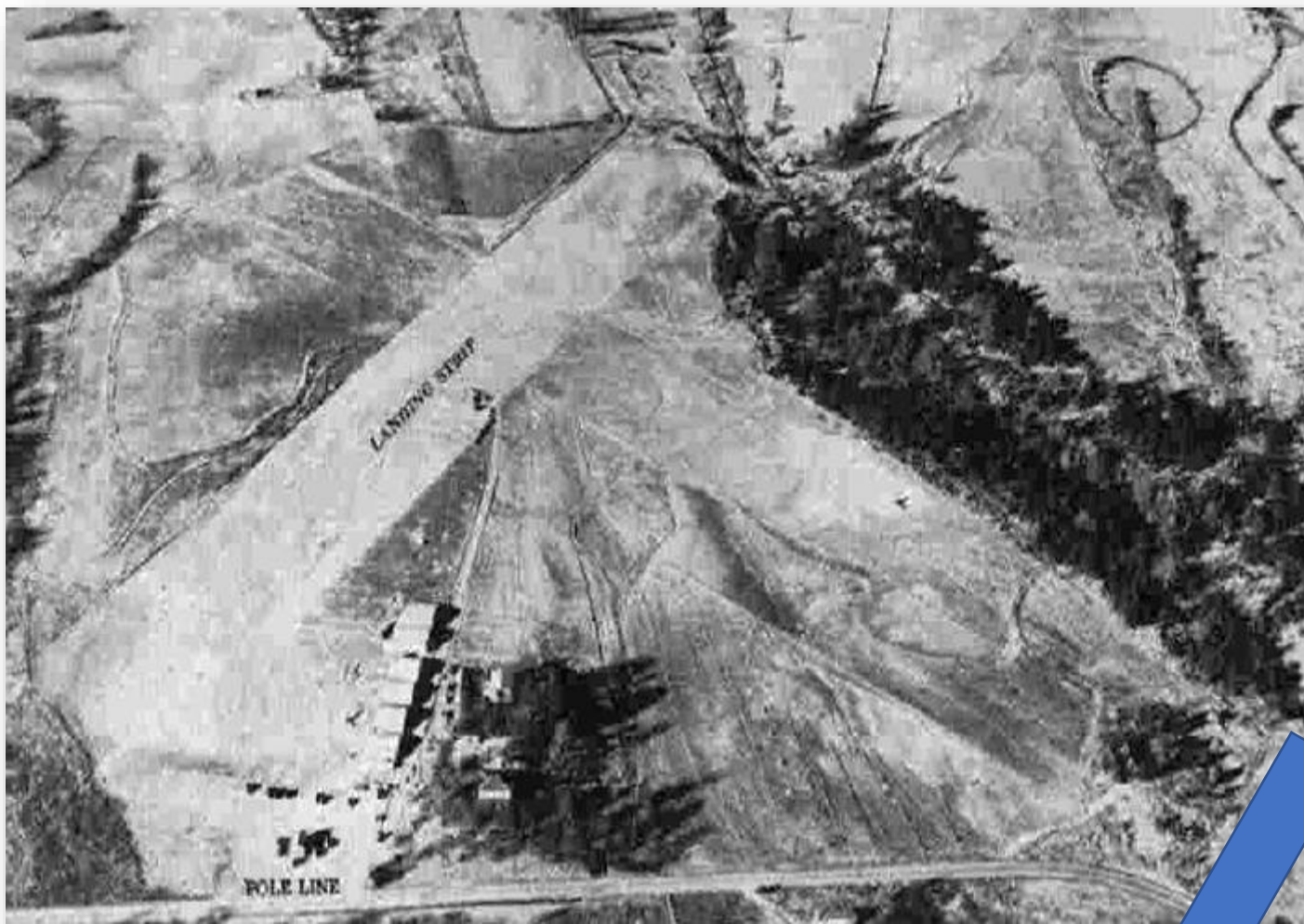


Video clip, "Scary Ride", Space Cowboys.

QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell

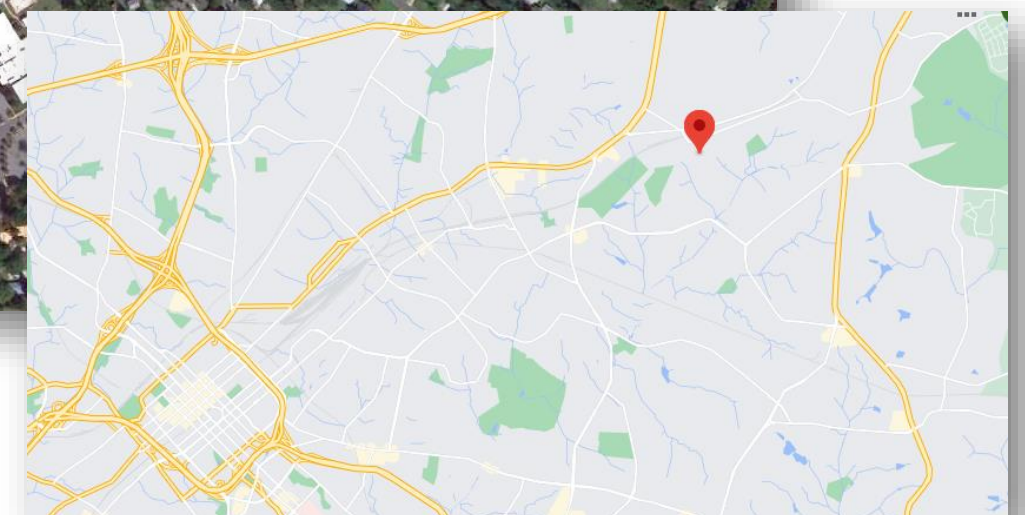
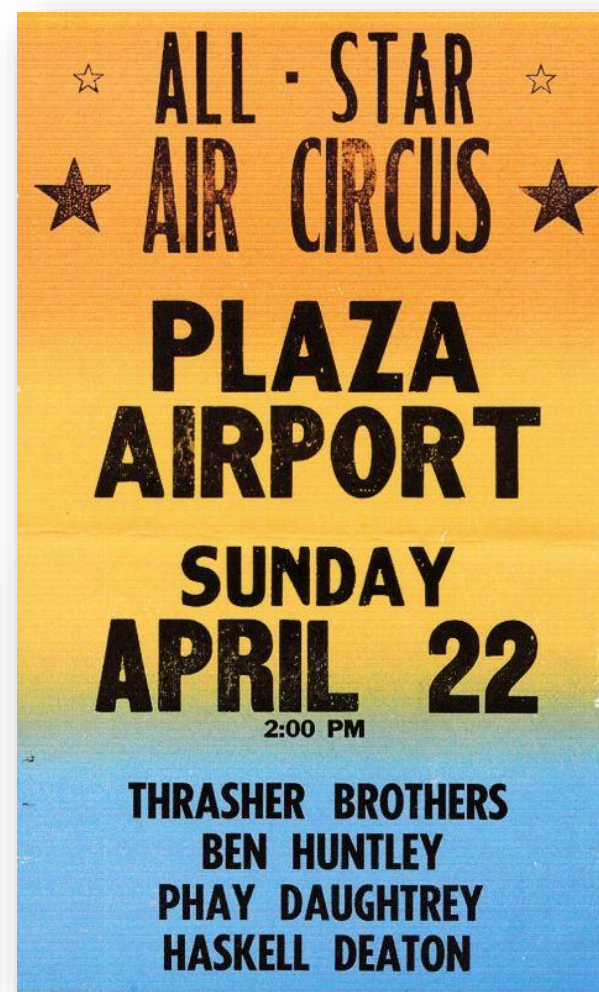
Plaza Airport

*Plaza Airport was operated by **Johnny Crowell**, a pioneer NC aviator. It may have been established in the 1920s. The 1945 AAF Airfield Directory described Plaza Airport as a 28 acre cross-shaped property having clay runways, measuring 2,000' north-northeast/south-southwest and 1,400' west-northwest/east-southeast (“badly eroded”). The field was said to have seven wooden hangars, each measuring 40' square, and was described as being owned and operated by private interests. Plaza Airport was evidently closed at some point between 1952-55, as it was no longer depicted on the February 1955 Charlotte Sectional Chart.*



QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell

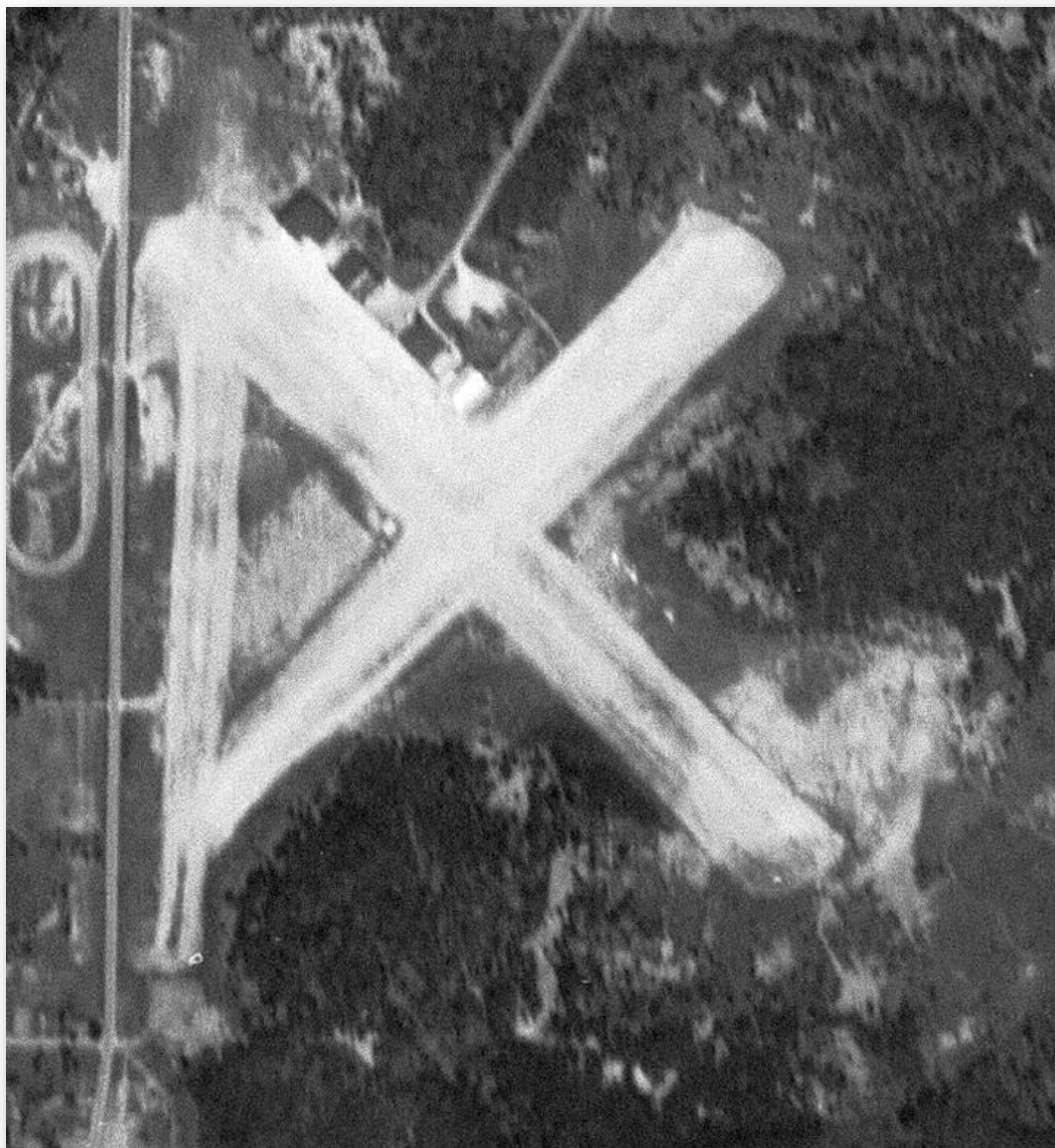
Plaza Airport, 1940s.



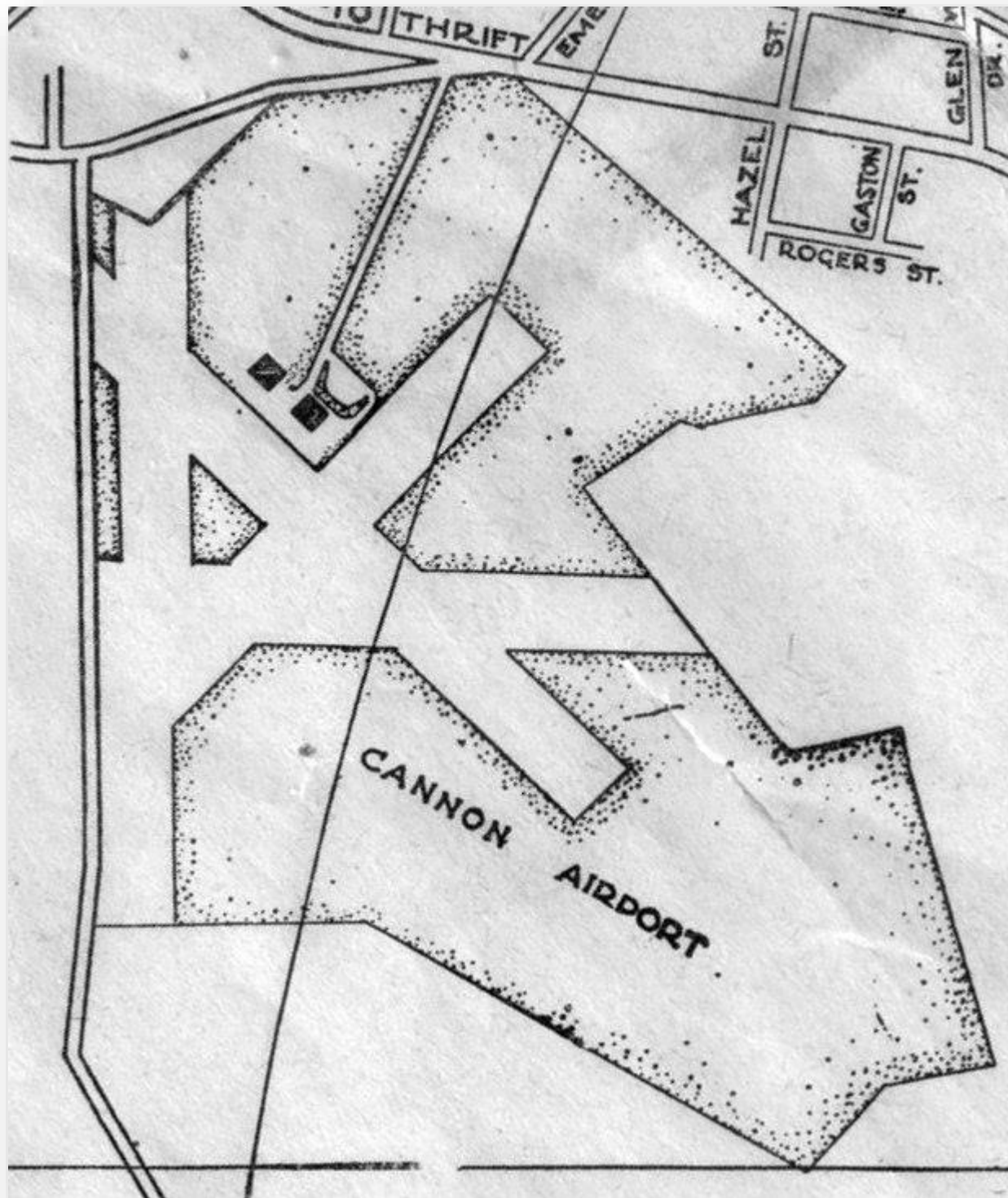
QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell

Charlotte (Cannon) Airport

*Charlotte's main airport during the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s, Cannon Airport was a small private venture operated by **Johnny Crowell**, a famed Charlotte aviator. Although this landing strip was christened amid much fanfare as an airmail stop on 4/1/30, with passenger service from Eastern Air Transport (later Eastern Airlines) following a few months later, the field was only open on weekends, for air shows, and war-pilot training. Cannon's problem was that it was somewhat hemmed in and had gravel runways, and when the airlines started talking in the late 1920s about coming to Charlotte they decided Cannon was inadequate. The Chamber of Commerce's 1935 official map of Charlotte depicted Charlotte Airport as having four runways and two hangars on the north side. The field was renamed Cannon Airport at some point between 1935-42. The 1949 USGS topo map depicted Cannon Airport as having three runways and four hangars. The January 1955 Charlotte Sectional Chart depicted Cannon as having a 2,300' unpaved runway. It was evidently closed at some point between 1955-57.*



QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell



A 1931 photo of Amelia Earhart visiting Charlotte (presumably at Cannon Airport) as part of a promotional tour sponsored by Beech Nut chewing gum.

QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell



The Freedom Mall, Charlotte's first, was built on the site of the former Charlotte / Cannon Airport.

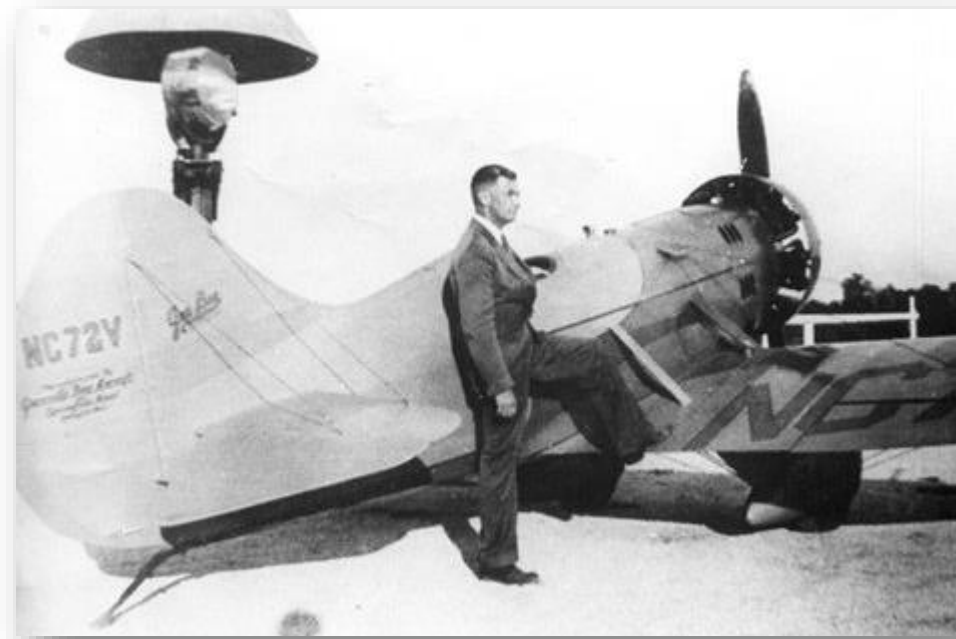


QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell



Crowell Aircraft Company, probably at the first Charlotte Airport, later known as Cannon Airport.

QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell



Fourth and the last Gee Bee Model E Sportster built, Serial #8, NC72V. Built by the Granville Brothers of Springfield, MA and sold to Bill Sloan on 6/19/1931. Johnny Crowell owned this aircraft in the 1930s. (Zantford Granville QB #4129)

QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell



Original paint scheme.



QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell



*Another 1934 photo shows Jessie Woods, co-owner and star performer of the **Flying Aces Air Circus** posing with her dog "Chandelle" with Johnny Crowell's Gee Bee Sportster E, NC72V at Charlotte NC.*

*"Jessie also told me that back in the glory years some of the pilots were prima donnas and were quick to ask for their pay. **The Aces lived well on weekends and stayed in the best hotels.** On Monday morning however they went back to "doubling up" on rooms and stayed in lower cost tourist courts if you remember what they were like. The "donnas" would stand their ground and would not often stay or travel with the rest of the group. Jessie didn't think she considered these types to be "one of us." **She often spoke well of Johnny Crowell** but I don't remember much she said about the Gee Bee. I used to ask her about **Jimmy Doolittle** and she would only wrinkle her nose and say **"he was military, and they are different."***

QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell

- In 1938, at Charlotte NC, Johnny set a record for quickest outside loop in his Great Lakes 2TIA. His time, 55 seconds for four consecutive outside loops. Asked the purpose for this record attempt Johnny stated, "was to prove that a pilot is not necessarily through at age 45."

Flier Makes 4 Outside Loops In 55 Seconds

(By The United Press)

CHARLOTTE, N. C., Nov. 3.—Johnny Crowell claimed a new world's record after completing four outside loops in 55 seconds. Crowell started today's feat at 3,500 feet, completing the first two loops in less than 30 seconds. He leveled off on the fourth at 2,000 feet with the record.



Does Outside Loop With Motor Off

Charlotte, N. C., May 22. (AP)—Witnesses at the Charlotte airport said Johnny Crowell, aviator, had done about the most difficult trick possible in the air.

Yesterday, they said, he climbed to 4,000 feet, cut off his motor, started down and did an outside loop with the motor off.

Crowell himself said terra firma felt pretty good after the trick.



QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell

- Crowell was definitely not "through." The act most remembered by those who saw Johnny fly was his **"hands-off flight."**
- The local Sheriff was recruited to tie Johnny's hands so that **he could not reach the controls of his aircraft.** Johnny then taxied to the runway and performed: a take-off, a loop, a snap roll, a spin with recovery to a point, landed and taxied back to crowd center, **his hands visible above the cockpit rim the entire time.**
- "This was a safety demonstration," stated Crowell; and he had performed this routine many times for **Army Air Force Aviation Cadets** to prove the airplane could be flown in an emergency with the feet only.



QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell



“Captain Johnny Crowell Worlds Champion Hand’s Off Pilot Celebrating 25 Years of Flying”. Crowell organized the “10 Act Air Show” at Charlotte Mun. Airport, 9/7/47.

QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell



HANDS-OFF—Here's how Johnny Crowell, veteran stunt pilot, looks when doing the famous hands-off flying he perfected in 1932. His hands are securely tied away from the controls leaving

only his feet to take off, maneuver, and land the plane. This is one of the stunts he will do at Municipal Airport on Sept. 7, "Johnny Crowell Day". This picture was made in the early 1930s.

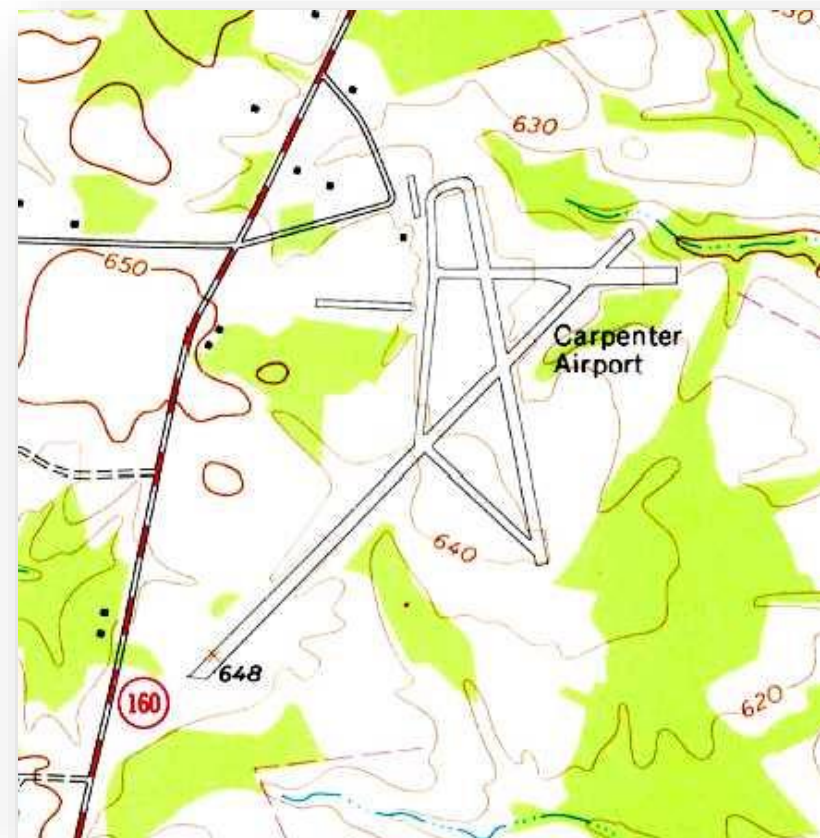
Air Show To Be Tribute To Veteran Pilot

**Johnny Crowell, Pioneer Flier
Of Carolinas, Will Be Honored**



QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell

*“Johnny Crowell drove a black Ford Thunderbird with hardtop & porthole windows. He used to give me and my younger brother nickels so we could buy a 12-ounce Coke & a pack of Lance (HQ in Charlotte) peanuts, then Mr. Crowell would show us the proper way to pour some of your **peanuts into the Coke bottle**, then drink & eat them out. Crazy, but the best memories ever! I could share some kindnesses showed to myself & my younger brother by barnstorming legend Johnny Crowell, who I can vividly remember. **He was a great old boy.**”* Stephen Hill, boyhood memories of the Carpenter Airport, southwest of Charlotte.



QB Profiles – Johnny Oliver Crowell

A NEW HIGH IN STUDENT TRAINING
The Crowell Trainer

★ Now for the first time in the history of aviation, a ground trainer is available for beginner students at a remarkably low price! The Crowell Trainer is of all metal construction and absolutely safe, operating smoothly without any engine!

★ The Crowell Trainer operates and reacts exactly as an airplane is fixed without the least change in equipment or student to be noticed. Through the use of the Crowell Trainer, flight instruction in the air is reduced from ten to twenty per cent.

Charlotte Flying Service
 Municipal Airport
 Charlotte, N. C.

December 20, 1934

Crowell Aircraft Corp.
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Gentlemen:

In response to your inquiry regarding the new, newly created CROWELL GROUND TRAINER, we hope this occasion to state that we are of the opinion that it will be invaluable in the instruction of student pilots in that it teaches the basic principle of flight.

"We have every confidence in the future of the Crowell Trainer and wish you every success."

Respectfully yours,
 Charlotte Flying Service

★ We would be glad to send full and complete information upon request of the system below. There is no cost or obligation.

★ The Crowell Trainer was developed by one of America's Ace Pilots, whose flying career began with the birth of aviation.

CROWELL AIRCRAFT CORP.
 P. O. Box 94
 Charlotte, N. C.
 Gentlemen:

Please send me full information concerning the CROWELL TRAINER.

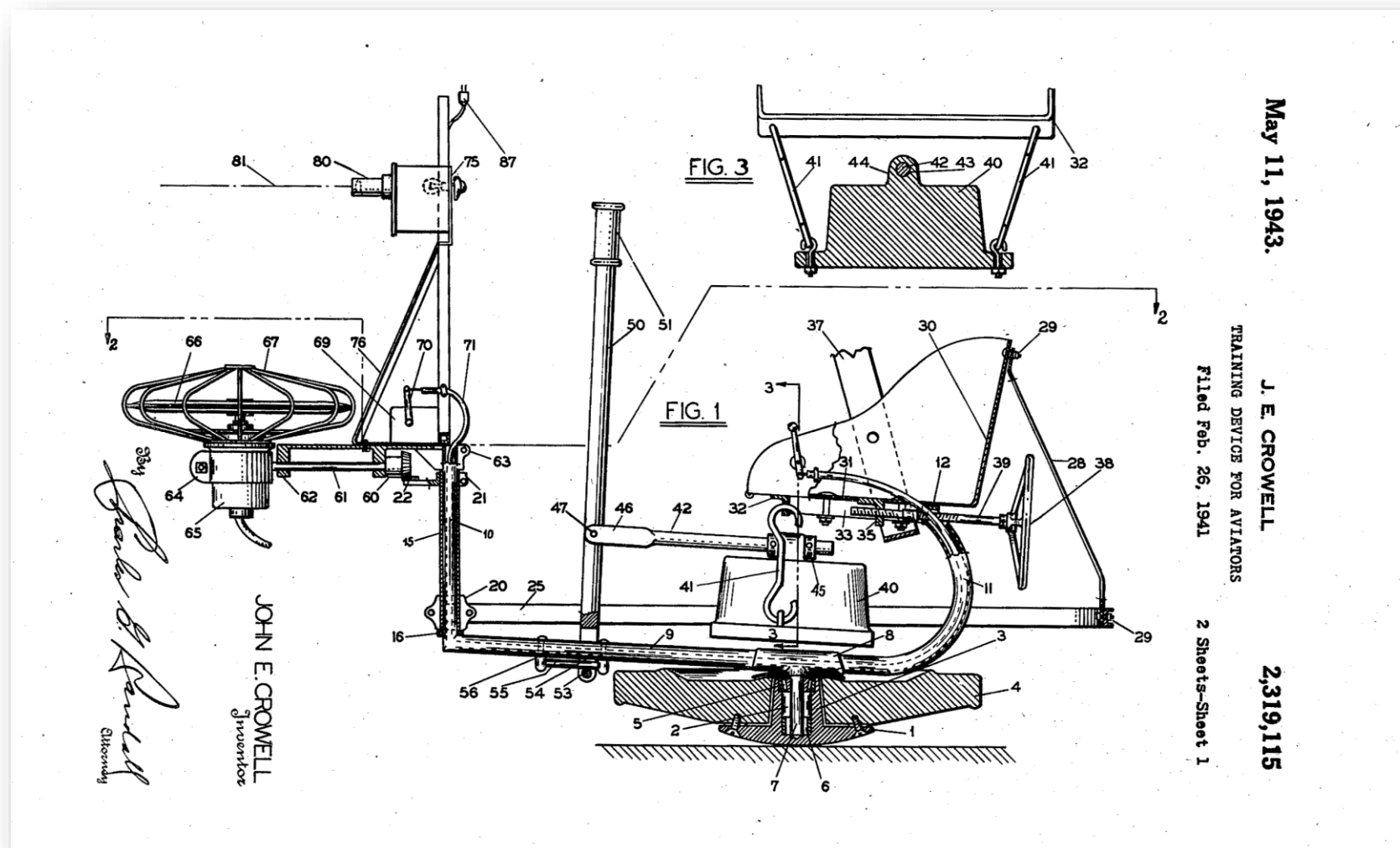
Name _____
 Address _____

Property of Carolinas Aviation Museum

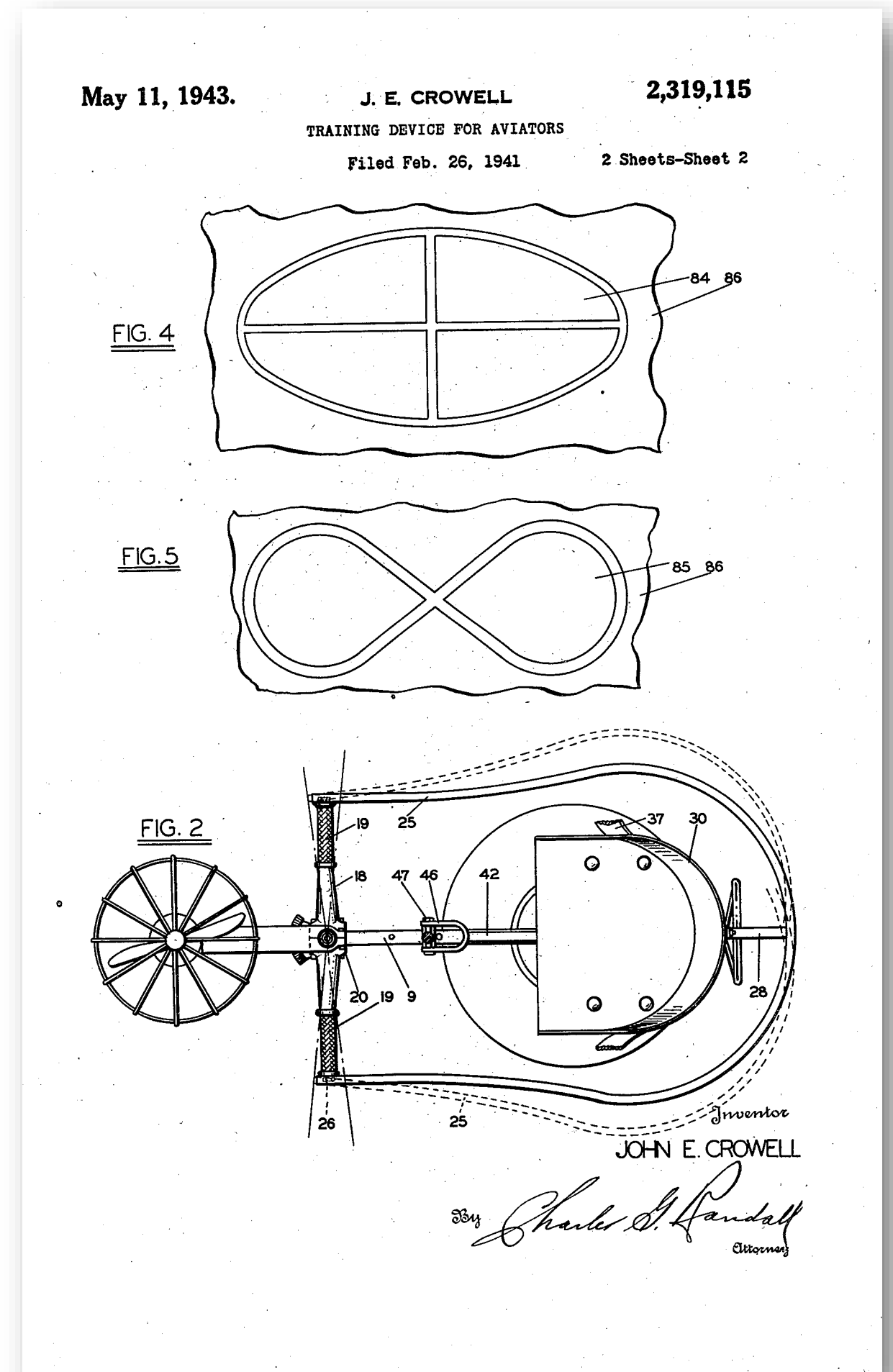


An advertisement for the “**Crowell Trainair**”. Johnny held a patent for this device which he invented and produced in Charlotte, NC. The Trainair was a simple, inexpensive pilot training aid. It is being demonstrated by his son, John O. Crowell (QB #11934). The design was purchased by the Link Corp. that produced the Link Trainer.

QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell



Patent No. 2,319,115, "TRAINING DEVICE FOR AVIATORS", granted to John E. Crowell, May 11th, 1943.



QB Profiles – John Edison “Jocko” Crowell



- *Son of John E. Crowell*
- *WWII P-47 fighter pilot, 366th Fighter Group*
- *Highest rank: Lieutenant Colonel*
- *Awards:*
 - ✓ *Air Medal with 2 oak leaf clusters*
 - ✓ *Distinguished Flying Cross*
 - ✓ *Purple Heart*
- As owner operator of **Crowell Aero Service**, he patrolled power lines, flew aerial banners gratis for **conservative politicians** and flew a 5' x 7' American flag behind a J-3 Cub over N.C. and S.C. **during the protest events of Vietnam.**



QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell



Shown in 1973 beside a restored WACO UPF

Johnny Crowell standing in front of the Spirt of St Louis replica. Gone West, October 15th, 1983, age 90.

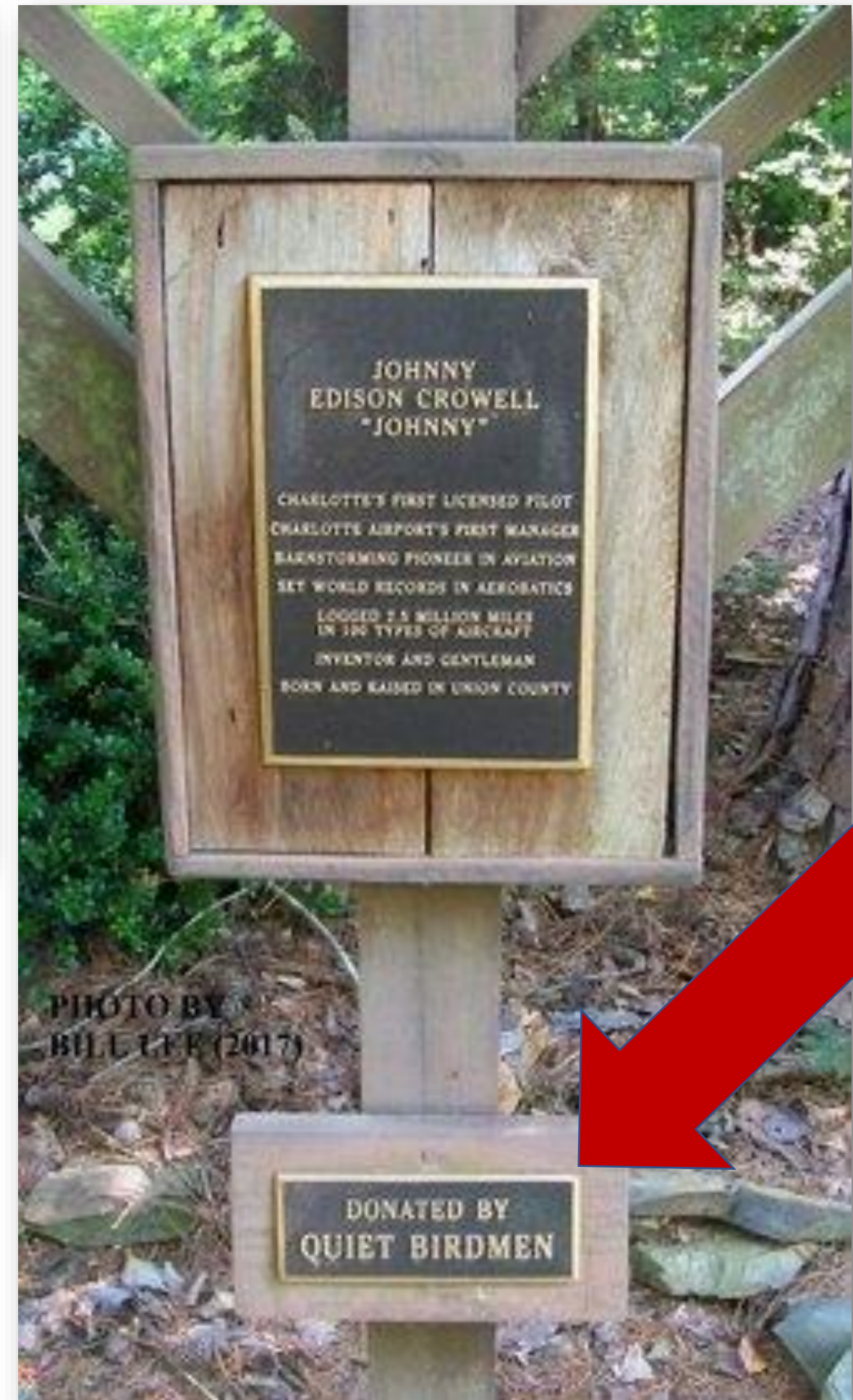
QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell



*Len Povey (QB #3192), Johnny Crowell (QB #3710),
Dwight Cross (QB #24127), CLT Hangar, image courtesy
Jim Wilson (QB #25653, CHS)*



QB Profiles – John Edison Crowell



Gravestone and plaque in Forest Lawn East Cemetery, Weddington, Union County, NC.

CAVU Forever & Many Happy Landings

BROTHER QB JOHNNY CROWELL



Thank You



PINEHURST NC HANGAR #218

**THESE QB MEMBER PROFILES FOUND AT
www.aerosouth.net/QB**



JOIN SOP – TOUR NCAM



- What: Tour of the NC Aviation Museum and Hall of Fame, Fly-In / Drive-In
- Web site: www.ncamhof.com
- When: Saturday, July 17th, 2021
- Where: Asheboro Regional Airport (KHBI), Asheboro, NC
- Time: 11AM – 2 PM
- Special Feature: Douglas A-26 Up Close
- Box Lunch: Under the A-26 (indoors)
- Who Invited: All QB Hangars in NC + SC
- Wear your QB Apparel!

LIFESTYLE

Legendary A-26 bomber 'Spirit of NC' finds new home at NC Aviation Museum

The Courier-Tribune

Published 11:52 a.m. ET Aug. 24, 2020

[View Comments](#)



Legendary A-26 bomber "The Spirit of North Carolina" Contributed Photo

RSVP ASAP to KENT MISEGADES, QB SOP
kent.misegades@gmail.com
910-568-2580



Star of Bethlehem 2020

- It's been known for thousands of years that **Jupiter and Saturn** conjunct **every 20 years** and even that the event occurs in the same part of the sky **every 800 years** or so.
- Their next great conjunction will happen on **December 21, 2020**—on the date of the December Solstice and just four days before Christmas Day—when they will appear to be a mere 0.1° from each other. That's about the **width of a toothpick held at arm's length** according to Sky & Telescope magazine.
- It will be the closest great conjunction since **July 16, 1623** and the first to be easily observable since **March 4, 1226**. Could it be the source of the “**Star of Bethlehem**” story?
- All this week and next—but particularly on the evening of **December 21, 2020**—cast your eyes to the **southwestern skies 45 minutes after sunset** and you'll see two distant worlds become one.
- Sunset in the Sandhills on 12/21/20 is at **5:10 PM**. Southwest from Valenti's is straight down Old Hwy 1.

