

Chicago's Edward Heath: Pioneer for the "Ordinary" Pilot

By Michael Haupt

In the years before WW1, Chicagoan Edward Heath played an integral role in growth of aviation. His focus on enabling ordinary people to have access to flight transformed many lives but has been overlooked by most historians who focus on the "biggest and fastest" developments in aviation technologies and companies.

In this presentation, you will see how Heath's entrepreneurial acumen wove five lines of business into a whole with a result greater than the sum of the parts. Using the catalog model of Montgomery Wards, and Sears Roebuck, the aircraft parts company he began in 1911 quickly became the largest in the country.

Watch as he diversifies his business by providing entire aircraft and engines in addition to parts. See how Heath expands his market through his aviation school along with an innovative work-study approach requiring only a minimal out-of-pocket expense.

Further adapting to the cash flow of ordinary workers, Heath originated the idea of selling planes as a kit. Builders could purchase parts necessary to build one section of the plane before moving on to the next section. The Heath Parasol, sold both as a complete plane and in kit form, became the most widely sold plane of the period.

The presenter, Michael Haupt, has spent decades exploring the extent of aviation activity in and around Chicago, especially in the early part of the 20th Century. His book, *Aviation Chicago Timeline*, is a product of his insatiable curiosity and research coupled with a fastidious attention to detail. The result is a well-written, fascinating history revealing many events which have been otherwise forgotten. Many regard it as the definitive history of aviation activities in Chicago and the surrounding region.



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