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The Great Chicago Air Show

CHICAGOANS WERE ACCORDED their first opportunity to observe a flying machine in October 1909. Glenn Curtiss, shortly after he captured the Gordon Bennett Cup in August of that year, received a telegram proposing a \$1,000 guaranty for a week of aerial exhibitions in “the windy city.” The telegram was dispatched by Stewart I. deKrafft, a civil engineer representing a party of Chicago promoters.

Chicago lived up to its sobriquet—only once during the week’s schedule did winds subside below the 10 mph specified as safe for flight. Curtiss seized the moment to aviate his biplane a quarter-mile in forty seconds over the Hawthorne racetrack in Cicero. The promoters lost \$26,000 on the event.

Early in 1911 Harold F. McCormick,* president of International Harvester Company, undertook to uplift the level of Chicago’s enlightenment

*Son of Cyrus H. McCormick, the “reaper king.” The McCormicks (he was married to the former Edith Rockefeller) dominated Chicago society. In 1913, Harold made news by flying from his home to his office, landing on the Grant Park lakeside in his “aeroyacht.”