

First county air show fizzled

By ROSE McILVEEN

Special to the H-T

The first time Monroe Countians saw one of those magnificent men in their flying machines was Oct. 11, 1911. They almost saw him flying.

SEVERAL MONTHS EARLIER there was held a meeting of the Bloomington Commercial Club. Made up of merchants, it was a forerunner of the Chamber of Commerce or a kind of Downtowp Merchants Association, if you will.

They were looking for a gimmick — one that would bring a big crowd to town to stimulate business. It is not known which member came up with the idea of a really, live, yessir airplane flight, but the Club committee assigned to the task bought it.

THEY STARTED shopping around for a flying man. There were several young companies of daredevil aviators. One was an Indiana pilot, Capt. Brumbaugh, but his rates seemed too high. He quoted the following for the Club:

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\$800 — airplane flight;

\$800 — "dirigible" balloon, and

\$600 — balloon ascension carrying six passengers.

Unfortunately the Commercial Club had allotted \$400 for a flying machine exhibition. But when they heard some of the quotes from other outfits, they had some real soul-searching (or pocket-searching) to do.

The Club finally bought a contract with the Curtis Exhibition Company of New York City for a whopping

big \$750! C.H. Springer, secretary, wired acceptance from this end.

THERE WAS ALMOST a last-minute hitch when a Curtis aviator was killed the week before the Commercial Club's highly publicized Booster's Day. Curtis reckoned by wire that they might not be able to produce a flyer. The Club reckoned by wire that there would be a law suit.

The advance ads in the Bloomington Telephone said the flyer would be a John D. Cooper. They even carried a picture of him to prove it. However, Cooper turned out to be a Horace Kearney, complete with plane and mechanics.

The crowd was estimated by the Telephone to be 6,000. (My mother, then Mary Neal, was brought by buggy from Stinesville to watch the show on Dunn Meadow. It was a 15th birthday present for her.)

HIS PLANE'S ENGINES revved up, if not exactly purring, Kearney charged across Dunn Meadow. Un-

(Continued on page 2, Col. 6)