



## KANSAS LEGEND BIOGRAPHY

### Clyde Vernon Cessna (1879-1954)

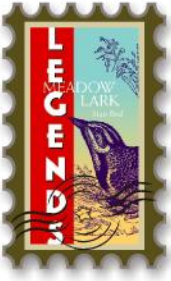
The world of aviation owes a great deal to Kansas legends such as Clyde Vernon Cessna. Cessna was originally from Hawthorne, Iowa, but settled in Kingman County, Kan., just two years later. The young farm boy learned a great deal from living a pioneer's life. He showed mechanical aptitude and much creativity as he worked on and improved farm machinery and equipment.



Cessna avidly followed advancements in the automotive industry. He used his mechanical abilities to work on cars and eventually moved to Enid, Okla., to work in car sales. As a successful Overland car salesman, his interests took a turn when the Wright brothers began flying and the Bleriot IX traversed the English Channel.

Cessna built his first monoplane, dubbed Silverwing, in 1911 and began flying it himself with no flight experience. Eventually, he flew a successful five miles and landed the plane without damage or injury. The accomplishment led Cessna to give up the automotive business and put all of his efforts into establishing his exhibition flying company.

In 1913, Cessna moved his family back to Kingman County and would build planes on his land during the winters. The new and improved planes would be ready for exhibition once the seasons changed, and he would tour fairs and shows throughout the Midwest and the South. The Cessna Exhibition Company led Cessna to dream of designing his own planes for public consumption.



A vacant building in Wichita, Kan., soon became home to Cessna's manufacturing efforts. It also served as a flight school for pilots until war broke out. Cessna returned home to harvest wheat but longed to resume his manufacturing business. In 1925, Cessna joined Walter Beech and Lloyd Stearman in forming the Travel Air Manufacturing Company. Cessna served as company president for two years until he decided to venture out on his own.

In 1927, the Cessna Aircraft Company was born, with Cessna serving as president and chief engineer. He developed the cantilever wing on a monoplane named Phantom. Cessna soon manufactured the Model AW, which flew up to 145 miles per hour and could remain in the hour for more than seven hours. The CR-1, CR-2 and CR-3 followed, setting speed records and winning National Air Races.



With the collapse of the economy, Cessna soon found himself over-extended financially and filed for bankruptcy in 1931. Cessna and his wife moved to Rago, Kan., and focused on farming. In 1936, Cessna's nephews regained control of the Cessna Aircraft Company from stockholders and developed the Cessna C-34, which was known as "The World's Most Efficient Airplane."

Cessna died in 1954 after spending more than 40 years in aviation, leaving behind a company renowned for its small aircraft production and an unforgettable legacy.

