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WOMEN AND AVIATION

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High Ladies of the Land

One pilot, one airplane and one motor took off from Long Island together recently, and before they got back down again a new woman's altitude record had been established. Elinor Smith, of Freeport, L. I., was the pilot, the plane was a Bellanca cabin monoplane, and the motor a Wright Whirlwind 300. Two mute official witnesses testified in black on white that a woman had taken a plane higher into the air than any woman has ever done before.

As soon as the two sealed barographs placed in the plane by an observer for the National Aeronautic Association, representative of the Federation Aeronautique Internationale, have been checked in Washington, the official distance of her altitude record will be announced. One of the instruments read 30,000 feet, the other 32,000 feet when Elinor Smith landed.

Undoubtedly her record will exceed the previous high record of 23,996^{feet}/made by Marvel Crosson last year. This was made in accordance with F. A. I. regulations but cannot be considered official because at that time recognition had not been accorded to women's records as separate and distinct from the records of men.

The first woman's altitude record since the F.A.I. sanction was accorded was made on November 18, 1929 by Ruth Alexander at San Diego, California. This 15,718 foot record has been submitted to the International body for approval and will probably stand as the first official woman's altitude record. However, Elinor Smith had the satisfaction of making, both actually and officially, a new world's altitude record for women.

Now that records are really records for women, it is interesting to look back over the days when other women's altitude records were made which, though unrecognized as such, were records still in the eyes of the press, the aviation industry and the public.

Three of these altitude records were made in accordance with the F. A. I. regulations. On December 2, 1928, Lady Mary Heath went up to 16,430 feet at Curtiss Field, L. I., and established an altitude record for women in this country. She had previously made an unoffi-

which were records, but aren't officially records any more, by Lady Heath and Louise Thaden in 1928 and by Marvel Crosson in 1929.

This brings us up to Ruth Alexander's record in November, 1929, and finally to Elinor Smith's plucky rise to the present woman's world altitude record on March 11, 1930.

Pilot's License Notes.

Another week has brought nine more private women pilots, to raise the present total from 187 to 196. Of these 16 are transport pilots, 19 limited commercial pilots, and 161 private pilots. About six of the new additions to our records we have no information except that which appeared on the new list for March 1st from the Aeronautics Branch of the Department of Commerce. They are: Elizabeth Bowen of Hollywood, Cal.; Dorothy Christy Beechurst, Long Island, Shirley E. Dickson, Alhambra, Cal.; Gene La Vock, Los Angeles, Cal.; Mary L. Moore, Brainard Field, Hartford, Conn., and Sarah M. Toney, Los Angeles, Cal.

Three of the new pilots are Curtiss Wright Flying Service graduates. Ruth Dodd is a student at the Los Angeles base and obtained her license in February. Out of the same base flies Elizabeth Hayward who is piling up time for her limited commercial license. Miss Hayward was the first woman student of the Curtiss Wright Los Angeles base. She graduated from the ground school with the highest mark in her class, topping out 21 masculine competitors. She is dietician for the Methodist hospital in Los Angeles. The food code that she lives by and advises for her fellow fliers is: "Don't go up on an empty stomach, nor on one that is over-loaded."

Alfreda Schwarz of Montclair, N. J., distinguished herself by a splendid showing in passing her private pilot's test at the Curtiss Essex Airport, Caldwell, N. J. She owns a Curtiss OX Robin, and is well on her way to a limited commercial license. She will act as test pilot for the new Wing Aeronautical Corporation of Jersey City.

END

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Louise Thaden went up to 20,270 feet at Oakland, California; and on May 23, 1929, Marvel Crosson at Los Angeles, California, established the record which has stood for nearly a year.

It is interesting to note that ^{Miss Crosson's} record was also made with the same motor, a Wright Whirlwind, as that used by Elinor Smith. Marvel Crosson's plane was a Ryan; Louise Thaden used a Travel Air with a Hisso motor. The first altitude record with benefit of barograph was made by Amelia Earhart, using a little 60 horsepower Lawrance motor, built by Charles L. Lawrance, the same man who designed Wright Whirlwinds. Lady Heath used a Gypsy Moth plane powered with a Gypsy motor. Miss Earhart's plane was a Kinner Airster, and she really went up for the purpose of testing the ceiling of her newly purchased ship. She requested the Aero Club of California to send a sealed barograph along up so that she could prove how high her plane would go. She went up to 14,000 feet. When she got down, they informed her that she had made a record and the papers picked up the story that way.

It is difficult to get accurate details of earlier altitude flights, but in the files of the Aeronautical Chamber of Commerce are some old press clippings that tell an interesting story of earlier women's altitude flights. In September, 1917, Ruth Law made what appears to be the first woman's altitude record flight at Peoria, Illinois. She went up to 14,217 feet in an old Curtiss pusher plane.

An amusing commentary on what the world in general thought of women as pilots in 1920 is a story in the New York Times of June 24 of that year which states that "Louise Favier, well-known French woman aviator, broke the world's record for women by reaching a height of 21,325 feet." As an afterthought they drag in the fact that the plane was piloted by a man.

Amelia Earhart's accidental altitude record was made in 1921 in California. On May 28, 1923, Mlle. Andre Peyre, a Frenchwoman who had been flying for two and a half years, mostly in America, went up in a 70 horsepower sport machine to a height of 15,000 feet, according to officials at the Aero Club of Southern California. An editorial in the Wichita Eagle of July 25, 1923, states that Mrs. Bertha Dale Horohem broke the world's altitude record for women in a made-in-Wichita Laird. Details were lacking.

No reports on altitude records by women in this country for the period between 1923 and 1928 were available. Next come the records