

## BURGESS AIRCRAFT

by  
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## THE MODEL D

Not long after the Harvard-Boston Aero Meet of 1910 the Burgess Co. unveiled their Model D--a large two-place biplane with forward elevator, biplane tail, and 4-wheel double skid Farman-type landing gear. Powered by a 60 hp V-type Hendee with Bosch magneto and El Arco radiator, the Model D represented a step forward in Burgess aeroplane design; not a giant step, to be sure, but a step, nevertheless.

The span of the Model D was 36<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> ft., the length 41 ft., and the height 10<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> ft. 6<sup>1</sup>/<sub>2</sub> in. Chord and gap were both 6 ft. The 8-ft. diameter propeller was a Burgess design. The Model D's ailerons and elevator were operated by Burgess "gate control"--i.e., two control sticks connected at the top by a crosspiece. Foot pedals worked the rudder.

Ailerons were "Farman flaps," arranged to move downward only. They were combined with what the February, 1911 Aeronautics

described as "Greely Curtis non-infringing deflectors." The deflectors were small flaps attached to the front end of each upper wing at the top; when an aileron on one side was pulled down the deflector on the opposite wing would rise to equalize the drag.

Wings and control surfaces were covered with a very light high-quality sailcloth manufactured by the Boston firm of Wilson & Silsby.

William Hilliard, the only one of the Burgess contingent to make any worthwhile flights at Plum Island the previous summer, had been hired by the Burgess Co. as a company pilot. In late fall of 1910 the Model D was carted to a large field on the Moulton Farm in Ipswich, Massachusetts, and on November 27 Hilliard took it up for a trial flight and declared himself satisfied. By December 9 he was carrying passengers. Later on, a Burgess circular would brag: "While the Model D biplane is designed to carry two passengers, it has proved capable of carrying two adult passengers in addition to a two-hundred-pound aviator." The size of the adult passengers was not stated.

The Burgess Co. advertised the price of a Model D with 50 hp Gnome as \$7,500, and with a 60 hp Hendee as \$5,500. Aeronautics for February, 1911 lists the cost of a Model D with Hendee motor as \$6,500. No one need lose sleep over this inconsistency, however, as the Burgess Co. built but one Model D and never did sell it.

Starling Burgess left for Augusta, Georgia in January to take lessons on a Wright Model B. He soloed in February, and

the Burgess Co. promptly announced plans to open an aviation school at Atlantic on May 1, with teaching duties divided between Starling Burgess and Hilliard. Until that time, the Burgess Co. would use the field at Mineola.

The Model D was shipped to Mineola, and Hilliard was soon taking off through mud puddles skimmed with ice and flying over the field at altitudes of 50 to 75 feet in gusty winds. Anxious to acquire an <sup>FAI</sup> license, Hilliard practiced every chance he got, usually alone but with paying passengers if possible. Upon one occasion Hilliard went aloft in the midst of a brisk snow flurry accompanied by Catherine Draper. When the couple landed a blue-faced Ms. Draper, numbed and chattering with cold, announced she was going to sell her automobile and buy an aeroplane.

Hilliard's determination and pluck--which sometimes verged on recklessness--was attracting a good deal of attention. On several occasions he requested officials to witness his attempts to qualify for a license, only to have one flight after another spoiled by his cranky Hendee, which was prone to cease operating at inopportune moments. One such failure resulted in the Model D dropping in from a height of twenty feet, with consequent damage.

Undaunted, Hilliard repaired the aircraft and continued to fly, confident that the coveted <sup>FAI</sup> certificate would be in his hands in the very near future.

These plans came to an abrupt if temporary end on April 17, 1911. With Leo Stevens, the noted balloonist, as passenger,

Hilliard was flying cross-country and had gone about two miles when his temperamental engine quit cold. While attempting to land in a field that was far too small, Hilliard stalled the Model D, which plunged into the ground and was reduced to shreds and splinters. The two men were dragged unconscious from the wreck, but it turned out that neither was badly injured. The Model D was not worth repairing.

Hilliard left the Burgess Co.; whether voluntarily or not is unknown. He went to England and enrolled in the Brooklands school, where he flew Farmans with such verve and skill as to evoke praise from British aeronautical journals. Hilliard celebrated Independence Day by qualifying for the FAI certificate and being awarded license No. 102 on July 4, 1911. He then returned to the United States and dropped out of aviation entirely. One story has it that he ~~went into~~ the automobile business, but for whatever reason, William Hilliard apparently decided to remain on the ground.