

Lewis Earle Sandt BROOKVILLE'S BIRDMAN

By Carole A. Briggs



Lewis Earle Sandt was a young man with many “firsts” to his credit. Born and raised in Brookville, the seat of rural Jefferson County, at a time when the world was witnessing awe-inspiring changes in culture and technology, Earle was on the cutting edge of 20th-century innovation. He was the first in his hometown to own a motorcycle and one of the first to own and drive an automobile. After training as a pilot, he was the first to fly from Brookville to Punxsutawney and first to fly over the city of Pittsburgh. More impressive, he is also credited as being the first United States citizen to complete an international flight.

With nothing to hang on to except a steering wheel, Earle (pictured in one of his first planes) pushed the limits of early aviation.

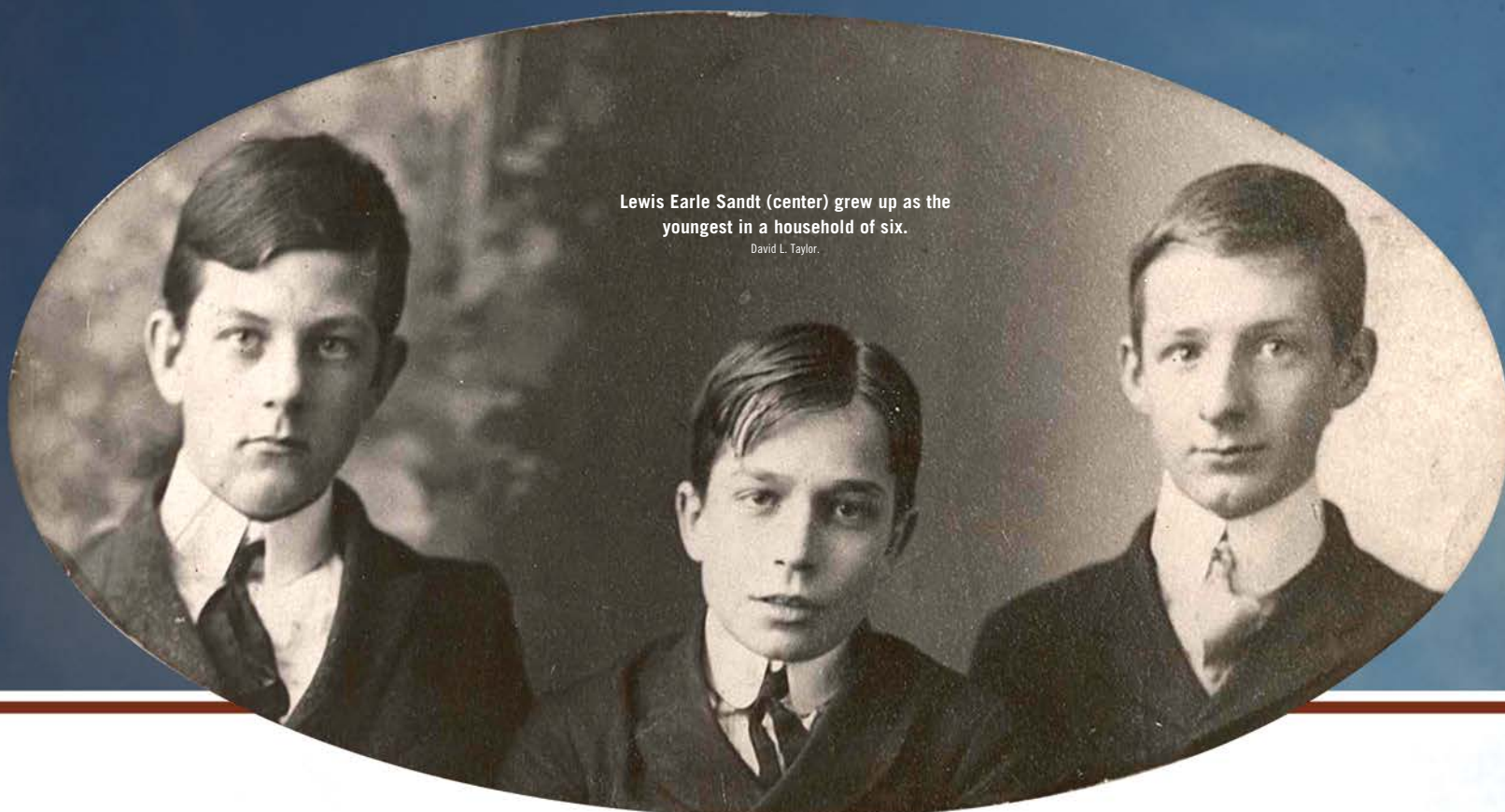
David L. Taylor.



Earle showcased his airplane at
Waldameer Park, Erie, in 1912.

David L. Taylor.





Lewis Earle Sandt (center) grew up as the youngest in a household of six.

David L. Taylor.

Caught up in the whirlwind of fast cars and aeronautical acrobatics, flying captured Earle's imagination at an early age. He was 15 when Wilbur and Orville Wright flew their plane at Kitty Hawk, though Brookville newspapers made little or no note of it. Earle was 20 when western New York's Glen Curtiss finally flew the "White Wing" airplane more than 1,000 feet. Before long, Curtiss and the Wright brothers had formed teams of exhibition flyers composed of aviators who entertained crowds on the ground by performing daring feats in the air. Earle almost certainly stood in those crowds, watching as exhibition flyers like Lincoln Beachey and "Bud" Mars performed their stunts nearby, and dreamt of following in their footsteps.¹

Brookville's Mary Geist Dick was a young girl when Earle took to the air. In later years, she reflected, "I must be truthful with you. Most people thought he was a little nutty. You see, that was the very early aviation ... and the conservatives had not taken it up, shall we say, but the nutty ones, like Earle, had."² Did Earle, like Curtiss, the Wrights, and others who were dubbed "birdmen" by the media, understand

the potential of flight? Or was he simply "a nutty one," an exhibitionist, and a thrill seeker? Perhaps he was a bit of both. Earle was a natural born tinkerer with all things mechanical, particularly with the planes he flew. His curiosity about this revolution called flight led him to test the limits of early aircraft, and his youthful spirit and bravado created just the right amount of exhibitionism to capture the imaginations of his fellow Western Pennsylvanians.

Lewis Earle Sandt was born May 18, 1888, the youngest child of Brookville druggist George L. and Mary Verstine Sandt. He and his three older siblings, Valetta, Harriett, and Walter, enjoyed life in small-town America—their Verstine grandparents lived just across the street, their grade school was nearby, Main Street offered shopping just blocks away, and the waters of Red Bank Creek served as

their natural playground. Across the creek, buggy factories, lumber mills, gristmills, and Bonnett's gun shop all provided exciting places where Earle could observe the mechanical world.

Nineteenth-century America was an era of inventions and engineering wonders. Von Drais had invented his walking machine (a bicycle without pedals) in 1817; then Kirkpatrick MacMillan added pedals in 1839.³ Others tried to power such vehicles in new ways. Gottlieb Daimler succeeded in 1885 when he attached a gas engine to a wooden bike, creating what is now considered the first motorcycle.⁴ Still others worked to power the horseless carriage with steam, gasoline, and electricity. By the time Earle entered his teens, Henry Ford had proclaimed, "I will build a car for the great multitude."⁵

Young Earle preferred tinkering to the tedium of classroom learning.⁶ He left school at 15 and worked in his father's drugstore. Some say he wired the family home and the new Twyford Automobile factory with electricity.⁷ Soon he purchased his own motorcycle, the first in his town to do so, and later both Walter

Portrait of young Earle Sandt.
Jefferson County History Center Collections.

**"You see, that was the very
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-Mary Geist Dick



Early exhibition flyers performed at county
fairs, jubilees, and festivals like the one in
Grove City in June 1913.

David L. Taylor.



and Earle bought automobiles.⁸ Earle's niece, Mary Margaret Sandt, wrote of his fascination with early cars, "how he thrilled at 'opening her up' and tearing along at 25 miles an hour!"⁹ It is possible that 19-year-old Earle was the target of a local newspaper editor, who commented, "We're not going to complain, nor report anyone to the town council, but there isn't a day in the week that the state law against fast driving isn't violated over and over by horseless carriages in Brookville."¹⁰

In 1909, Earle's brother purchased a garage in Erie and Earle joined him there, although the reasons the brothers chose Erie are unknown. Perhaps they envisioned tapping into the automobile market there, a market that was growing nationwide as hundreds of companies were manufacturing cars. Earle applied his mechanical expertise at the storage garage on French Street, repairing motorcycles and automobiles. "There is mighty little that Earle doesn't know about the innards of an automobile and he will be a valuable man around the garage when the machines get appendicitis," commented the *Brookville Republican*.¹¹

He tested the machine's capabilities as well. The same paper reported, "Earl¹² [sic] Sandt, son of Mr. and Mrs. George L. Sandt, who is interested with his brother Walter in a garage in Erie met with an accident on Monday evening when he ran off a bridge in North East in a car, sustaining some severe bruises and lacerations."¹³

In October 1910 the brothers contracted with the Baker Motor Vehicle Company in Cleveland, and the next April with a Buffalo agent to sell the Mitchell, a motorcar manufactured in Racine, Wisconsin.¹⁴ Business must have been good because in November 1912, Star Electrical & Garage manager Clarence R. Cummins negotiated a loan agreement with the Erie County Electric Company for \$15,000 (\$348,000 in today's purchasing power) for alterations and improvements on the building.¹⁵

While Walter and Clarence took care of the details of the expanding business, Earle saw to the repair work in the garage and, like many a 20-year-old of 1908, enjoyed life. According to his niece, "Fluttering and adoring women did not annoy my Uncle.... The more they

fluttered the better he liked it."¹⁶ Did he perhaps escort these ladies to see the nation's most famous daredevils as they buzzed around Erie? In the heyday of exhibition fliers, J.C. "Bud" Mars and Lincoln Beachey were at the top of the list. An article publicizing a 1910 exhibition in Honolulu called Mars "the most daring flyer in the United States."¹⁷ Orville Wright once said about Beachey, who began flying for Curtiss's team in 1910, "An aeroplane in the hands of Lincoln Beachey is poetry. His mastery is a thing of beauty to watch."¹⁸ During the summer of 1911 both Mars and Beachey flew in and around Erie. Beachey took off in a June drizzle and flew over the lower falls at Niagara and became the first person ever to fly a plane under a Niagara Falls bridge.¹⁹ In the middle of July, Mars flew an exhibition in Erie and crashed.²⁰ Their daring made national news.

That autumn, at age 23, Earle entered a six-week course at the Curtiss School of Flying in Hammondsport, New York.²¹ He returned to Erie with instructor Francis A. "Doc" Wildman and a new Curtiss biplane. According to Mary Margaret Sandt, "He had

Training at Hammondsport, New York, 1911.

David L. Taylor.

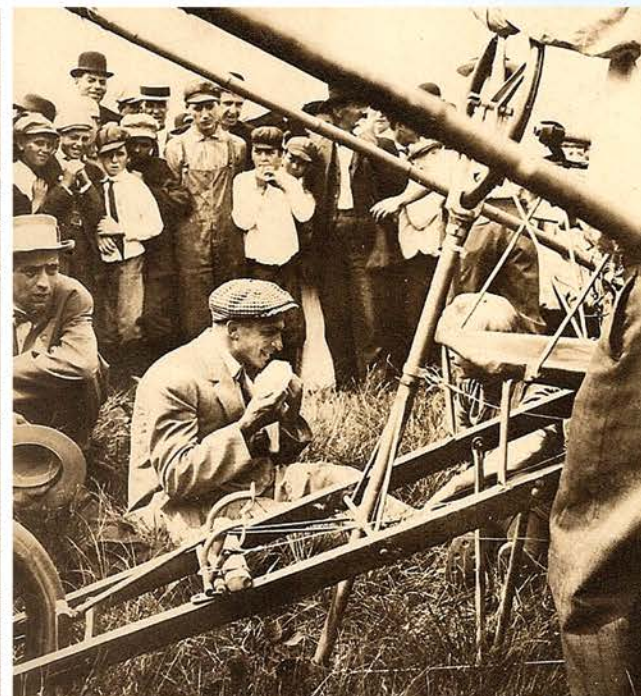


Seated next to his father George, Earle rests on the porch of his family home in Brookville, his arm in a cast after a mishap.

David L. Taylor.

Earle takes a break for lunch during one of his flight exhibitions.

Jefferson County History Center Collections.



**“The sight of him sitting there,
steering that great spluttering, humming
thing away up above them,
frightened even the birds on wing”**

gone to the Curtiss factory at Hammondsport, against his parents' wishes, and bought a biplane for \$5,000 [equal to \$120,000 today]. Grandmother told me that months before he begged and teased for a ship, but she and Grandfather were too afraid to let him have one.”²²

On the day before Thanksgiving, November 29, 1911, he took off. The plane rose 40 or 50 feet. He flew 45 feet along the lakefront, then a wing caught a telephone wire, and Earle went down in his first mishap.²³

Several months later, Earle invited reporters to a dinner at the Reed House in Erie, where he declared his intention to be a greater aviator than Beachey.²⁴

Just months later, the Erie Weather Bureau asked Earle to fly across Lake Erie and see if it was entirely frozen.²⁵ He took off on February 20, 1912. After 34 minutes of flying and covering 40 miles, a brace broke and he landed at the Long Point lighthouse in Canada. After recovering from the initial shock of watching the plane land, the lighthouse

keeper helped Earle refuel and fed him lunch. Fifteen minutes into the return trip, the motor died and the plane collided into an ice hill, knocking Earle unconscious. After coming to, he walked towards the lights of Erie and hours later passed out on the doorstep of a house near North East. The plane was lost,²⁶ but the story of the first international flight made the front pages.²⁷

Earle's niece wrote in 1932 that he asked his parents for money for a new plane. “They flatly refused.”²⁸ Though Earle's mother's

family members were successful lumbermen and capable of buying Earle a new plane, he was forced to get creative in his search for funds. So, his niece remembered, the “men who loafed [at the Sandt brothers’ garage]—all good fellows who liked my uncle—planned a campaign to raise money for the second plane.... Erie citizens answered the call with just three or four hundred dollars. Uncle Earle schemed and planned and talked and worked until he had persuaded some kind-hearted person to lend him the rest. So, in the spring his new plane, costing \$500 more than the first, was delivered.”²⁹ It is possible that the “kind-hearted person” was Walter’s wife, Brockway native Gertrude Buzard. The daughter of a Clarion County lumberman, she had inherited a substantial sum.³⁰ After marrying Walter, she had assumed the lease and made the payments on the garage.³¹

Earle’s plane was a “pusher type,” meaning the propeller was in the rear. There was no cockpit, nothing to hang onto except the steering wheel. Newspapers called it a Thomas or Curtiss biplane, after Englishman

W.T. Thomas, who worked for Curtiss before he and his brother Oliver set up the Thomas Brothers firm, where they built experimental pusher biplanes between 1910 and 1913.³²

During the next 16 months, Earle Sandt was indeed on his way to becoming a greater aviator than Beachey. He and others formed the Aero Exhibition Company, which included manager Clarence Cummins, two stenographers, and mechanics James Rowan and John Hiney.³³ The company sent letters to officials in eastern states, inquiring about exhibition possibilities at county fairs during the forthcoming summer at a price of \$1,000 per flight—a price that proved negotiable.

Contracts in hand, Earle began the 1912 summer season at Waldameer Park in Erie. Then, as he usually did, he shipped his plane to DuBois. After all, flying to an exhibition site would take away the thrill for people who usually paid to see him take off and land. From there he traveled to Warren and then Pittsburgh for a flight sponsored by the *Pittsburgh Post*. “It will be the first time in

history that this section of the United States will see the great wonder—flying by a heavier-than-air machine.”³⁴ On June 15 he took off from Schenley Park, crossed the Monongahela River, flew over the South Side, crossed the Ohio River, flew over the Point twice before flying north over Lawrenceville and Bloomfield, and then returned by flying over East Liberty.

Local papers kept Brookville folks informed of Earle’s exhibitions; excitement grew as his friends and neighbors anticipated a hometown show. To the south, Punxsutawney saw enthusiasm mount as well. In April businessmen had “paid out their hard coin” to arrange an exhibition, then were disappointed when high winds and malfunctioning parts prevented “Aviator” Stockman from flying.³⁵ By early June businessmen in both towns had made arrangements for Earle to fly from Brookville to Punxsutawney and pick up the \$375 for the flight.³⁶

Brookville is surrounded by seven hills, but a field near Walnut Street appeared to



After learning to fly, Earle's first flight took place in Erie in 1911.

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Earle, center, poses with friends
(possibly his mechanics) on his airplane.

Jefferson County History Center Collections.



**Sixteen minutes later, citizens of the nearby town of Punxsutawney “witnessed a sight that a few years ago was thought impossible.”
The plane circled the Punxsutawney fairgrounds, then circled again.**



The *Pittsburgh Post* sponsored Sandt in what became the first flight over that city, on June 15, 1912.

David L. Taylor.

Earle took off before a large crowd of Brookville friends and neighbors on June 29, 1912, and flew to Punxsutawney, where another large crowd waited and watched.

David L. Taylor.



Sandt returning from his exhibition flight at Brookville June 29 1912.

be long and level enough for take off, and a large crowd gathered there on Tuesday, June 25, 1912. W.A. "Pete" Reilly, then age eight, recalled that Earle's young cousin, "Toots" Verstine, was in the plane with Earle on that first attempt. There wasn't sufficient room for takeoff, the plane swerved and overturned. Earle asked his passenger if he was hurt: "Young Verstine, game as a fighting cock, clung to his seat ... smiled back and answered, 'No.'"³⁷

Replacement parts were ordered from Hammondsport and the flight was rescheduled for Saturday. This time people prepared a new, longer roadway, but Toots' mother decided he would not be on board.³⁸ At two o'clock Earle attempted to take off. He failed, made minor repairs, and one hour and 13 minutes later attempted to take off again, this time successfully. First flying north, then south along North Fork Creek, the "whistles of the various mills and factories" resounded throughout Brookville in celebration.³⁹

As Earle left Brookville, someone phoned the Punxsutawney news office, where a whistle blew "a loud and long blast,"⁴⁰ a prearranged signal for all to look northward. Sixteen minutes later, citizens of the nearby town of Punxsutawney "witnessed a sight that a few years ago was thought impossible."⁴¹ The plane circled the Punxsutawney fairgrounds, then circled again.

The sight of him sitting there, steering that great spluttering, humming thing away up above them, frightened even the birds on wing, appeared to be the first time that many realized that a human being was the guiding hand to steer the aeroplane, and that a man's life depended absolutely upon the perfect working of the gasoline motor and the absolute security of the propeller that whirled swiftly, cutting the air and driving the aeroplane forward ... as well as the absolute safety of every iron brace and piece of wood of which the airship is made.⁴²

Earle confronted the unknown challenges of this new environment with bravado, learning to take off and land on racetracks and fields and to control his machine amidst strong air currents, varying weather conditions, and temperature changes. At the end of August 1912, Earle was flying over the Moravia valley in western New York, where air currents were strong and treacherous. "The view a thousand feet above Moravia village is beyond my power of description. I could see miles and miles," he told the *Auburn Semi Weekly Journal*.⁴³

After his Pittsburgh flight, reporter George Seldes had written, "Risking his life to the treachery of a gale and battling with the elements, Earl [sic] Sandt thrilled Pittsburgh by his spectacular flight over the city yesterday afternoon."⁴⁴ While high above Pittsburgh's Brunots Island, a storm broke. Later Earle declared it the most dangerous experience he'd ever had.⁴⁵

Exhibition flight, Ulrichsville, Ohio. This "real picture" postcard was sent to the Aero Exhibition Company, Sandt's company, in Erie. A typewritten message on back reads, "At our Fall Festival September 18-20, Aviator Sandt gave three successful flights—all of which showed he was master of the air. Everybody was pleased and the people of Tuscarawas County will remember their first aeroplane flight for as long as they live."

David L. Taylor.



Earle poses just before his fateful flight in Grove City, June 1913.

David L. Taylor.



Even stray bullets did not stop him. In Moravia, the "Birdman"⁴⁶ had described hearing "a punking [sic] noise back of him ... a moment later small puffs of smoke emanating from the [ground] were sufficient to appraise him of the fact that the hole in the plane was made by a bullet ... perhaps a woodchuck hunter had mistaken him for some giant denizen of the air."⁴⁷ He immediately flew to a higher altitude.

In promotions, Walter referred to his brother's "iron nerve."⁴⁸ Earle took the mishaps and crashes of testing the new environment in stride. He had crashed in Erie on his first flight attempt, crashed and lost his plane on the return from Canada, and spent 10 days in the hospital after a crash at Conneaut Lake.⁴⁹ For the 1912 Big Ripley Fair, he made two flights of seven minutes each before crashing into a fence.⁵⁰

Earle had grown up as the son of a prosperous businessman. Money was of no concern to him, yet there was a cost to what he did. His niece, Mary Margaret, commented, "Although the Aero Company filled many engagements and took in a lot of money, expenses were so large that it was constantly 'broke,' but financial troubles gave Sandt no care. 'Let some one else worry.'"⁵¹

Train tickets and hotel bills added up. For an exhibition in Ulrichsville, Ohio, mechanic John Hiney arrived on Saturday, and Earle on Tuesday, before making a "splendid flight" on Friday witnessed by 7,000 people.⁵² Contracts specified that the folks at the site assume the cost of transporting the plane from the railroad station to the exhibition site, and gave Aero exclusive rights to sales of programs and souvenirs.⁵³

Aero manager Clarence Cummins did wheel and deal, but so did the potential hosts. He quoted \$1,000 to the Marquette Agricultural Society in Minnesota and added, "You realize there are lots of schools that are sending out inexperienced men at a much lower figure.... Cheap flights have proven so

Exhibition flyers were known for their stunts, and Earle did not disappoint his fans. Promotional letters touted the "Dip of Death," "The Ocean Wave," "The Dutch Roll," spirals, and figure-eights.⁵⁸ Five thousand Ohioans watched three flights he made at heights of 1,500 and 2,000 feet. "People thought the

In Erie, Walter arranged for the plane's repair and Gertrude tried to locate aviators to fulfill his contracts. Walter was also negotiating with insurance companies. He had paid the Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company in May to continue Earle's life insurance policy, but he had not had success

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unreliable."⁵⁴ Cummins received a postcard in reply that said, "price quoted is more than we can pay. I've had several offers a trifle over half."⁵⁵ Although businessmen in small communities and corporate sponsors like the *Pittsburgh Post* were up front with money (and admissions, programs, and souvenirs brought in a bit), Aero Exhibition ran up the bills and never seemed to get ahead.

The next winter the company was down to one mechanic and Earle. Nevertheless, Walter and Gertrude, working without pay, sent letters to agricultural societies and communities looking to celebrate the Perry Centennial,⁵⁶ and inquiries to booking agencies like Frank Melville in New York. They advertised in *The Billboard*. Edward Weyerson, described as "The largest independent theatrical exchange in Chicago," contacted them. Walter bargained, "\$500 for one day ... \$1050 for six days. No flights no pay." Weyerson countered, "I charge twenty-five percent (25%) commission on all aviation contracts." Walter re-countered, "could pay you the usual 10% that we have paid other booking agencies."⁵⁷

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Passengers and parachutists were other enticements. For a fee, Earle would take a passenger, but unlike other aviators who took anyone under 175 pounds, he preferred someone who weighed less than 125 pounds. And in the spring of 1913, while flying over Akron in Earle's plane, "Chute Jumper" Jackie Somers made his first drop.⁶⁰

The 1913 season opened Memorial Day weekend. On June 12, Earle performed in Grove City for the town's summer festival. It was not to be a performance without incident. At Grove City, his plane hit an air pocket, struck a building, and crashed into a newly plowed garden. Earle suffered compound fractures and his plane was in ruins. A night letter from Walter relayed the news to E.J. McNamara, who had replaced Cummins and remained in Belleville to arrange summer and fall bookings: "Earl badly hurt at Grove City today, arm and leg broken—will not be able to fly for two months."⁶¹

in securing insurance on the plane.⁶² An Erie agent replied, "I have a great deal of correspondence from various companies, but the majority say that they do not care to write this class of insurance."⁶³


By Friday, June 20, Earle was recovering and planning to fly three days later at Trenton, Ontario.⁶⁴ Then his condition worsened: his teeth clenched, his jaws locked—classic signs of a tetanus infection. Tetanus, or lockjaw, occurs when the bacteria *Clostridium tetani* or their spores, which live in soil and animal feces, infect a wound. Earle had landed on freshly plowed ground and "his left leg and arm were broken, the ends of the bone protruding through the flesh were driven about twelve inches into molded earth."⁶⁵ The attending doctor thought "there was something taken into his wounds from the soil," presumably manure.⁶⁶ Treatment for tetanus was relatively new, nevertheless Earle's doctor decided to administer the necessary serum. None was available in Grove City and a storm prevented the physician from contacting Walter until midnight. Gertrude scoured Erie for serum and Walter arranged for a special train.

When Walter arrived in Grove City on June 21, Earle spoke grimly through clenched teeth, "I think I know what I have."⁶⁷ In an odd twist of fate, Earle's mother had written to him only one month before the accident, wishing him success but also admonishing him that, "I would rather you would give it up altogether. Your life is worth more than money."⁶⁸ But the call to fly was too strong. Being in the air was his greatest thrill and he appeared not to fear death, replying, "I won't die until my time comes."⁶⁹ Sadly, his time had indeed arrived. Lewis Earle Sandt succumbed to tetanus and

interviewed him extensively about the physical aspects of flight recalled "an unassuming young fellow with a lot of grit.... No over-confidence or grandstand posing for him; simply a strict attention to his business of flying and making sure that everything is right before he starts."⁷⁴ Other publications continued the praise: "one of the greatest aviators we have ever seen, and his work in the air is magnificent."⁷⁵ Another commented, "his nerve and good judgment has been surpassed by none."⁷⁶

Nearly 50 years after his death, a writer for the *American Aviation Historical Society*

estimate that the fatality rate among exhibition pilots was as high as 90 percent. "For those early aviators who never became rich, famous, or even well known, that was an expensive price to pay."⁸⁰

During his brief life, Lewis Earle Sandt introduced crowds to the thrill of flying, all the while experimenting with this newfangled invention, pushing it to new limits. Certainly Brookville's Birdman was an innovative and courageous man, with just a tad of exhibitionism thrown into the mix to satisfy his thrill-seeking heart. 

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died in the Grove City hospital on Sunday, June 22, 1913, at age 25. His body was returned to the Sandt homestead for services; he was buried in the Brookville cemetery.⁷⁰

Accolades accrued for years. During Brookville's 1930 centennial, Charles Lindbergh's mother, Evangeline, visited and placed a wreath on Earle's grave.⁷¹ Commemorative airmail envelopes honored him during National Air Mail Week in 1938.⁷² In 1957, State Representative Ralph A. Marsh introduced a resolution paying tribute to Earle.⁷³ Today both the DuBois Area and Grove City airports display Lewis Earle Sandt plaques, and a Pennsylvania State Historical Marker identifies his Brookville homestead.

Was Brookville's Birdman a barnstormer, an exhibition flyer, or as Mary Geist Dick suggested, "a nutty one?" Locals might have described him as a grandstander but others saw something more. The DuBois reporter who

Journal penned, "Earle Sandt was one of the very first of the few early aviators of Pennsylvania. In his youthful enthusiasm he was determined to experience the new thrill of flying, and he rightfully deserves full credit and proper recording in the history of those early flying pioneers who gave their lives during the period of its initial development."⁷⁷

Earle had bragged to reporters that he would be a greater aviator than Beachey, but he did so in the manner of exhibition flyers by experimenting with limits. Just as Earle had tested the capabilities of the motorcycles and automobiles he drove, he tested the capabilities of the planes he flew. He flew them higher, passing Walter Brookins' 1910 record of 6,234 feet.⁷⁸ He flew them faster, nearly doubling Louis Bleriot's speed of 47 mph when Bleriot crossed the English Channel in 1909.⁷⁹ He flew in difficult weather and manipulated his plane in new ways. Scholars like David Onkst

Carole A. Briggs, volunteer curator at the Jefferson County History Center, writes books and newspaper columns about the people, places, and events of Jefferson County. The Jefferson County Historical Society is grateful to David L. Taylor, who has provided our archives with photocopies of original Sandt documents, as well as the two-part article by Mary Margaret Sandt.

¹ For more on early aviators and their quests for thrills and fortune, see David Courtwright's book, *Sky As Frontier: Adventure, Aviation, and Empire* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005).

² Christopher Taylor, "Lewis Earle Sandt: Straight A's in Aviation," *The Journal of Erie Studies, Erie County Historical Society/Mercyhurst College* 18 (Fall 1989): 2.

³ "Kirkpatrick Macmillan (1812-1878)," www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures.

⁴ Mary Bellis, "History of the Motorcycle," <http://inventors.about.com/od/mstartinventions/a/motorcycle.htm>, accessed 29 December 2011.

⁵ Henry Ford and Samuel Crowther, *My Life and Work* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1922), Chapter 4.

⁶ Taylor, 48.

A postcard depicting the wreckage of Earle's plane after it crashed into a Grove City field.

The Way We Were: Grove City, Pennsylvania, by Thomas Armour, Donald Beightol, and Willie Caldwell (Grove City Area Historical Society, 2005).

Below: After Earle's death accolades accrued. Charles Lindbergh's mother, Evangeline, visited and placed a wreath on his grave during Brookville's 1930 Centennial.

Brookville Heritage Trust, Frederick E. Knapp, photographer.



- ⁷ "Aviator Earl Sandt Died Sunday Morning," *Sykesville Post-Dispatch*, 27 June 1913.
- ⁸ "Brookville's First Car: Sandt's Thomas," *Jeffersonian Democrat*, 17 January 1985, and "County's Early Cars Included the Twyford," 24 January 1986, quoted from *Prothonotary's Records of 1904*.
- ⁹ Mary Margaret Sandt, "Struts and Bamboos," *The Airpost Journal*, December 1932, 4.
- ¹⁰ "Things We Hear," *Jeffersonian Democrat*, 22 August 1907.
- ¹¹ "Home Happenings," *Brookville Republican*, 14 January 1909.
- ¹² In newspaper articles, Earle is often misspelled as "Earl."
- ¹³ "Town and Country," *Brookville Republican*, 21 July 1910.
- ¹⁴ Agency Agreement between J.A. Cramer and the Star Garage Company, 3 April 1909.
- ¹⁵ Articles of Agreement between the Erie County Electric Co. and Clarence R. Cummins, 25 November 1912.
- ¹⁶ Mary Margaret Sandt, "Struts and Bamboos," *The Airpost Journal*, December 1932, 4.
- ¹⁷ <http://hawaii.gov/hawaiiaviation/hawaii-aviation-pioneers/j-c-bud-mars-1/j-c-bud-mars/>.
- ¹⁸ David Onkst, "Early Exhibition Aviators," www.centennialofflight.gov/essay/Explorers_Record_Setters_and_Daredevils/early_exhibition, accessed 24 August 2011.
- ¹⁹ www.nationalaviation.org/beachey-lincoln/.
- ²⁰ "Lincoln Beachey," www.absoluteastronomy.com/topics/Lincoln_Beachey, accessed 30 December 2011.
- ²¹ Sources vary. Some indicate Curtiss himself taught Sandt, others reference aviator Francis A. "Doc" Wildman.
- ²² Mary Margaret Sandt, "Struts and Bamboos," *The Airpost Journal*, December 1932, 4. There is conflicting documentation about the cost of his first plane and about who provided the money.
- ²³ "Earl Sandt Takes Forty Foot Tumble," *Brookville Republican*, 7 December 1911. Taylor, 2.
- ²⁴ "Glenn's Orbital Trip was 50th Anniversary of Pioneer Lake Erie Flight by Earl Sandt," *Jeffersonian Democrat*, 1 March 1962.
- ²⁵ G.R. Oberbrozes, Letter to Mr. L.E. Sandt, 17 February 1912.
- ²⁶ Mary Margaret Sandt, "Struts and Bamboos," *The Airpost Journal*, December 1932, 19.
- ²⁷ "Is Sandt Lost?" *Erie Daily Times*, 20 February 1912.
- ²⁸ Mary Margaret Sandt, "Struts and Bamboos," *The Airpost Journal*, December 1932, 19.
- ²⁹ Ibid.
- ³⁰ Jefferson County Will Book, 376-378.
- ³¹ Lease of H.T. Raser to Star Electrical and Garage Company, 6 February 1907; transferred to Gertrude Sandt, 2 January 1909.
- ³² "Thomas-Morse Scout-USA," www.aviation-history.com/thomas/scout.html, accessed 30 December 2011.
- ³³ Again, sources vary. Sandt 1933 names the five people who were the Aero-Exhibition Company. Taylor writes that Walter, Earle, and Charles R. Cummins founded the company.
- ³⁴ "Earl Sandt to Soar Over City Today," *The Pittsburgh Post*, 13 June 1912. Pitt Digital Archive does reference the following: John Kowalski, marine engine maker, recorded the first flight of an airplane built in Pittsburgh when he accidentally took off in a four-cylinder plane he had devised. The reference does not say where the accidental flight happened, only that the aircraft was built in the city.
- ³⁵ "'Aviation Meet' A Great Big Fake," *Punxsutawney News*, 15 May 1912.
- ³⁶ "From Brookville to Punxsy on Aeroplane Tuesday, June 25," *Punxsutawney News*, 19 June 1912.
- ³⁷ "Minor Accident Prevents Flight Sandt will Try Again Saturday," *Brookville Republican*, 27 June 1912.
- ³⁸ Randon W. Bartley, editor, *Jeffersonian Democrat*, 4 April 1984, quoting W.A. "Pete" Reilly.
- ³⁹ "Earl Sandt, the Brookville Aviator makes Thrilling Cross Country [sic] Flight to Punxsutawney Saturday," *Brookville Republican*, 4 July 1912.
- ⁴⁰ "Punxsutawney People Witnessed Wonderful Sight on Saturday," *Punxsutawney Spirit*, 3 July 1912.
- ⁴¹ Ibid.
- ⁴² Ibid.
- ⁴³ "Moravia Fair Opened," *Auburn New York Semi Weekly Journal*, 30 August 1912.
- ⁴⁴ George H. Seldes, "Thousands See First Successful Aeroplane Flight Ever Held Here," *Pittsburgh Sunday Post*, 16 June 1912.
- ⁴⁵ "Flight in the Clouds," *Auburn New York Semi Weekly Journal*, 6 September 1912, quoting from a Pittsburgh dispatch.
- ⁴⁶ Papers throughout the United States referred to the Wright brothers and other early aviators as "Birdmen." Papers including the *San Francisco Call* and the *El Paso Herald* used the term when reporting Sandt's Lake Erie flight in February of 1912.
- ⁴⁷ "Moravia Fair Opened," *Auburn New York Semi Weekly Journal*, 30 August 1912.
- ⁴⁸ Walter J. Sandt, Letter to The Tom Lot Sale Co., Hastings, Florida, 21 April 1913.
- ⁴⁹ "Aviator Earl Sandt Died Sunday Morning," *Sykesville Post-Dispatch*, 27 June 1913.
- ⁵⁰ "Wonderful Exhibition On Daring and Skill In Mid-Air," *Mountaineer*, 20 September 1912.
- ⁵¹ Mary Margaret Sandt, "Struts and Bamboos," *The Airpost Journal*, December 1933, 6.
- ⁵² "7,000 See Sandt Fly Thursday," reprinted in *The Chronicler*, Tuscarawas County Historical Society, New Philadelphia, Ohio (Winter 1998).
- ⁵³ Contract between Erie Motorcycle Club and Aero-Exhibition Co., 21 May 1912.
- ⁵⁴ Charles R. Cummings, Letter to Marquette Agricultural Society, 17 June 1912.
- ⁵⁵ W.A. Ross, Postcard to Gentlemen, 14 June 1912.
- ⁵⁶ Under the command of Oliver Hazard Perry, the U.S. naval fleet on Lake Erie defeated the British squadron on September 10, 1813, giving control of the lake to the United States. In 1913 many Great Lakes communities were planning centennial celebrations.
- ⁵⁷ Walter J. Sandt, Letters to and from Edward Weyerson, 27 February 1913—2 April 1913.
- ⁵⁸ Aero Exhibition Company, Letter to George Tilden, 7 May 1913.
- ⁵⁹ "Thousands See Sandt Fly Friday," from unidentified newspaper article reprinted in *The Chronicler*, Tuscarawas County Historical Society, New Philadelphia, Ohio (Winter 1998).
- ⁶⁰ "Chapter From Sandt's Life," *Brookville American*, 13 November 1930.
- ⁶¹ Walter J. Sandt, Letter to E.J. McNamara, 13 June 1913.
- ⁶² Receipt from Massachusetts Mutual Life Insurance Company, 28 May 1913.
- ⁶³ F. Schlaudecker, Letter to Walter Sandt, 16 June 1913.
- ⁶⁴ E.J. McNamara, Telegram to Walter Sandt, 9 June 1913.
- ⁶⁵ "Aviator Earl Sandt Died Sunday Morning," *Sykesville Post-Dispatch*, 27 June 1913.
- ⁶⁶ "Earl Sandt Dead," *Jeffersonian Democrat*, 26 June 1913.
- ⁶⁷ Mary Margaret Sandt, "Struts and Bamboos," *The Airpost Journal*, December 1933, 7.
- ⁶⁸ Gertrude B. Sandt, Letter to Lewis Earle Sandt, 5 May 1913.
- ⁶⁹ Mary Margaret Sandt, "Struts and Bamboos," *The Airpost Journal*, December 1933, 6.
- ⁷⁰ "Earl Sandt Seriously Injured in Ugly Fall," *Brookville Republican*, 19 June 1913.
- ⁷¹ "Decorates Grave of Brookville's Pioneer Aviator," 9 September 1930.
- ⁷² "Commemorative Air Mail Cachet," *Jeffersonian Democrat*, 5 May 1938.
- ⁷³ "Early Flier Is Cited In Resolution," *Jeffersonian Democrat*, 6 June 1957.
- ⁷⁴ "Aviator Sandt Made Two Great Flights and DuBois is Airship-Mad," *DuBois Courier*, 30 May 1912.
- ⁷⁵ Lieutenant Colonel L.W. Marsh, Letter to To Whom It May Concern, 4 June 1913.
- ⁷⁶ "Aviator Earl Sandt Died Sunday Morning," *Sykesville Post-Dispatch*, 27 June 1913.
- ⁷⁷ "L. Earle Sandt (1888-1913)," *American Aviation Historical Society Journal* (Fall 1960).
- ⁷⁸ "U.S. Aviation Firsts," www.aerofiles.com. This site lists both 6,175 and 6,234 feet.
- ⁷⁹ www.wright-brothers.org, from *Flight* magazine, 31 July 1909.
- ⁸⁰ David Onkst, *Early Exhibition Aviators*, www.centennialofflight.gov/essay/Explorers_Record_Setters_and_Daredevils/early_exhibitionb, accessed 24 August 2011.

In 2009 the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission installed a state marker at the Sandt homestead, 64 Pickering Street, Brookville.

Jefferson County History Center Collections.

Below: Earle, smoking a pipe in his aircraft.

The Way We Were: Grove City, Pennsylvania, by Thomas Armour, Donald Beightol, and Willie Caldwell (Grove City Area Historical Society: 2005).



"The propeller, especially is a fine piece of laminated work, being built of from twelve to eighteen layers of thinly cut wood. Heavier and more flexible wood forms the core." Exhibit at the Jefferson County History Center.

Jefferson County History Center. Photo by David L. Taylor.