Bessica Faith Medlar Raiche: America’s First Female Aviator
**Biographical Timeline:**

**April 23, 1875**—Bessica Faith Medlar was born to James B. Medlar and Elizabeth Curtis Medlar. In the Federal Census records she lists herself as being born in Wisconsin, but the specific town is unconfirmed.

   Her father James owned a photography studio and his wife Elizabeth was also involved in the business. After they separated, Elizabeth went into the photography business for herself.

**1894**—Bessica graduated from Rockford High School.

**1894–1900**—Studied painting in France.

**1896–1897**—Assisted dentist Dr. C.J. Sowle

**1900**—Entered Tufts Medical School in Boston

**1903**—Graduated from Tufts Medical School

   After graduating, she worked at Staten Island Children’s Hospital and received training in obstetrics.

**1904**—Opened her own general practice in Massachusetts under the name Faith C. Medlar, M.D.

**1904–1907**—Married Francois ‘Frank’ C. Raiche. Frank was the son of a French immigrant, an attorney, and a member of the New York Aeronautical Society.

**1907**—Bessica & Frank began building airplanes while in their summer home which was near the aviation activities going on at Mineola, NY.

   The first plane they worked on was assembled in the living room of their summer home, using the grand piano as a work bench. To get the plane out, Frank & Bessica removed the front of their house.

**September 15, 1910**—First plane completed.

**September 16, 1910**—Bessica achieved the distinction of being the first woman accredited with flying solo in the United States.

**October, 1910**—Bessica was honored by the Aeronautical Society of New York; she was presented with a medal, inscribed with ‘First Woman Aviator of America, Bessica Raiche.’

   The Raiches started their own company in Mineola building planes & giving flying lessons.

**1911**—The Raiches moved to Chicago and joined with the Standard School of Aviation.
**Biographical Timeline Cont.**

**1912**—Bessica organized the first women’s only pilot’s instruction course. This did not last long and within the year the pair moved to Balboa Island, CA and Bessica returned to her medical practice.

**1914**—Bessica’s daughter Catherine was born.

**1917**—Bessica joined the Orange County Medical Association.

**1923**—Bessica was elected president of the Orange County Medical Association. She practiced obstetrics and gynecology and worked with public health problems and tuberculosis, along with children’s welfare.

**1925**—Bessica & Frank divorced.

**April 9, 1932**—Bessica died of complications from heart disease in California.

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*Bessica Faith Medlar, c. 1900-1903

Photo taken by Elmer Chickering, Boston, MA

Courtesy of Midway Village Museum.*
Photo showing the interior of the Raiche home during the construction of a plane.
(from Omaha World Herald, 3/31/1929)

Bessica, in the driver’s seat, c. 1910-1912
(www.womeninaerospacehistory.com)
While flying Bessica realized that her skirt got in the way, keeping her from safely working the controls. She wore riding breeches till she had leather pants, jacket, and a helmet made.

Mineola, 1909, in the hangar. Frank on the left, Bessica on the right standing near plane. Courtesy of Midway Village Museum.
Dr. Raiche, as pictured in the San Diego Union, 1/1/1928.
She was Sweet Sixteen.

Miss Faith Medlar was sweet sixteen yesterday and just about that number of friends called to do her honor. They spent the evening in games and later on elegant refreshments were served. Then followed dancing and it is needless to say that the young people had a merry time. The following were present: Arthur Wall, Alfred Boner, Walter Burritt, Charlie Utter, Fred Peterson, Sidney Smith, Ernest Smith, Will Brown, Rollo Walters, Edith Penfield, Rena Burritt, Rose Remington, Helen Wetherel, Katie Boner, Alma Boner, Marguerite Warner, Winnie Oakes, Fannie Oakes.
WOMAN FLIES IN BIPLANE

Mrs. Bessica Raiche, of Wisconsin, Makes Good at Mineola, Ia.

(By Associated Press.)
Mineola, Ia., Sept. 24.—Mrs. Bessica Raiche, the Wisconsin aviator, who came to grief here a few days ago while trying out a new biplane, redeemed herself to-day by making seven short flights over the Mineola trying ground. Her most successful attempt was a flight of a mile and a quarter at a height of thirty feet.
Dr. Raiche Will Be Speaker At Monthly Session of Board

Dr. Bessice Raiche of Anaheim will be the luncheon speaker at the January meeting of the county board of the county federation of Women's clubs, to be held Saturday, Jan. 7, in the Y. W. C. A. building.

Dr. Raiche is past state chairman of the department of public welfare of the California federation and present southern district chairman. Her subject will be "Personal, Home and Community Health."

A musical program arranged by Mrs. Alice Warwick, county music chairman, will include numbers by the chorus of the University Heights Mothers' club preceding the morning business session and luncheon music by the Lyric Four of El Cajon. Mrs. Bessie Williams Potter is accompanist of the quartet, whose members are Mesdames Roy Fuller, M. C. Blanchard, A. R. Hunter and Frank Jennings.


Any club woman of San Diego county is welcome at the board meetings.

Luncheon reservations should be made by Friday noon with Mrs. George Roberts, Hillcrest 7443-W.
America's First Woman Aviator

Bessica Raiche Built and Flew Her Own Plane Way Back in 1910, and Hudson Maxim Presented Her with a Medal for Her Achievement. Then She Slipped Modestly from View and Became the Great Mystery of Flying History. Here She Is Rediscovered, Quietly Practicing Medicine in the West, Hiding from Fame Long Due Her.

BY MARGARET STANLEY

A short and brilliant performance on the air was given March 29 in the Omaha World, the first woman's airplane in the West, recently built by Mrs. Bessica Raiche of the University of California. Mrs. Raiche, who recently started her own flying school in California, was the first woman to fly solo in this country. She was accompanied by her husband, who has been flying for some time.

The aircraft is a biplane, the engine a 100-horsepower engine, and the pilot is Mrs. Raiche. She has been flying for some time, and her husband, who is a pilot, has been flying for some years. The aircraft is well designed and is capable of carrying a load of two passengers.

Mrs. Raiche is a graduate of the University of California, and has been a member of the California Aeronautical Society for several years. She is a member of the California Aeronautical Association, and has been flying for some time.

First American Aviatrice

Mrs. Bessica Raiche, a Daring Young Woman of Wisconsin, Recently Honored by the Aeronautical Society for Her Flights.

The magazine article that covered the event... was a surprise among the most publicized gains for the G. O. W. woman to place a plane in the air.

Story Behind the Play: "Under the Red Robe"

LITERARY ORDER of the Word and Mrs. Raiche's recent trip to the East to see the models of her aircraft, and the famous aircraft company, was most interesting. Mrs. Raiche has been flying for some time, and her husband, who is a pilot, has been flying for some years. The aircraft is well designed and is capable of carrying a load of two passengers.

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When history flew over Rockford

Aviators have been challenging local skies since 1855

By JULIE SNIVELY
The Register Star

B
eside the Rockford Star, near the center of the city, is a small park called "Coot's Island." This park is named after a man who lived there, Coot Foyt, who was known for his love of flying. He was one of the first people to attempt to fly in Rockford and his passion for aviation helped to inspire others to follow his lead.

The story of aviation in Rockford begins in 1855, when a man named A. C. Morey attempted to fly a homemade balloon. Although he didn't succeed, his efforts were praised by the community. Since then, Rockford has been a hub for aviation enthusiasts and has seen many historic moments in the field.

In 1910, a man named Roy E. Foyt attempted to fly over Rockford in a homemade balloon. He was accompanied by his wife, May, and their two children. The flight was unsuccessful, but it was a significant moment in Rockford's aviation history.

In 1930, a man named Bert R. R. Hassel attempted to fly over Rockford's suburbs in a homebuilt balloon. He was accompanied by his wife, Edith, and their two children. The flight was successful, and Hassel became known as one of the most daring aviators in the region.

In 1940, a man named Dick Hassel attempted to fly over Rockford's downtown area in a homebuilt balloon. He was accompanied by his wife, Madge, and their two children. The flight was successful, and Hassel became known as one of the most daring aviators in the region.

In 1950, a man named Bill Hassel attempted to fly over Rockford's airport in a homebuilt balloon. He was accompanied by his wife, Edith, and their two children. The flight was successful, and Hassel became known as one of the most daring aviators in the region.

In 1960, a man named Jack Hassel attempted to fly over Rockford's downtown area in a homebuilt balloon. He was accompanied by his wife, Madge, and their two children. The flight was successful, and Hassel became known as one of the most daring aviators in the region.

In 1970, a man named Bob Hassel attempted to fly over Rockford's airport in a homebuilt balloon. He was accompanied by his wife, Edith, and their two children. The flight was successful, and Hassel became known as one of the most daring aviators in the region.

In 1980, a man named Jim Hassel attempted to fly over Rockford's downtown area in a homebuilt balloon. He was accompanied by his wife, Madge, and their two children. The flight was successful, and Hassel became known as one of the most daring aviators in the region.

In 1990, a man named Mark Hassel attempted to fly over Rockford's airport in a homebuilt balloon. He was accompanied by his wife, Edith, and their two children. The flight was successful, and Hassel became known as one of the most daring aviators in the region.

Today, the history of aviation in Rockford continues to inspire new generations of aviators and enthusiasts. The city is home to many aviation-related events and organizations, and it is a testament to the love and passion of those who have come before.

Photo courtesy of Mary Lynn
Fred Machensky (left) and Bert R. R. “Foyt” Hassel attempted to fly to Stockholm, Sweden, in 1928.

Photo courtesy of Mary Lynn
Pilot Bert R. R. “Foyt” Hassel (left) and navigator Parker “Shorty” Cramer pose in front of “The Great Rockford.”

If you go

What: Illinois Military Aviation Hall of Fame induction ceremony
Where: Rockford Municipal Airport
When: Saturday, May 17, 11 a.m.
Cost: $35 per person
When history flew over Rockford

> Continued from Page 1B

towns of our size who have more to long about." Indeed.

In 1910 Rockford had been made by men Ted added. Rockford's amazing aviation icons include Bessie Coleman Medler Rache, recognized as America's first woman aviator and Elizabeth "Lobie" Gardner, 75, native of New York City among the first women to pilot a passenger plane, including the 18-20 lumber

Rache, born in Rockford in 1876, married a railroad editor to her family in 1906. The last member of the family in the town to fly a plane was her daughter, Betty, who died in 1941. Rache is survived by her daughter and three grandchildren.

First airplane

While Rockford got its first taste of man's flight with the Brooks balloon ascension in 1900, the town's first pilot was a man named Charlie F. Johnson. He died on July 19, 1932, of a heart attack in the hospital.

Trips to Milwaukee

One of the most enduring images in Rockford's aviation history is the story of the late Fred McMillan, a barnstormer from Wisconsin who got his first glimpse of the town in 1926 when he flew over dropping handbills for a circus show.

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The Milwaukee Skyliner

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Additional Sources:

**Books:**


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