Success Is In The Air

Kansas in the 1920s experienced great growth. Kansans were eager to get into industry and investing in American manufacturing. The city of Wichita had long been a center for wheat farming and distribution. The discovery of oil in the area increased wealth. People were willing to take chances on new businesses. With its clear, fog-free air perfect for flying, one growing industry for Kansas was airplane manufacturing.

There were already people in Kansas who were interested in flying and building planes. Many were pilots during World War I, like architect Lloyd Stearman and auto mechanic Walter Beech. Some, like Beech and former automobile dealer Clyde Cessna, were barnstormers, pilots who flew planes to entertain audiences in rural areas.

Stearman, Beech, and Cessna opened their own airplane manufacturing company in Wichita in 1924. They named it the Travel Air Manufacturing Company. For several years Travel Air was the most successful company of its kind in the United States. Several factors contributed to its success. Travel Air planes were the winners of several important races. These wins proved to customers that Travel Air made high quality, reliable airplanes.

Travel Air also produced airplanes with innovative designs. Most airplanes at the time were biplanes, planes with two wings stacked one above the other. Travel Air offered a single-wing monoplane that was both fast and efficient. Soon people across the country wanted to buy Travel Air planes. The factory in Wichita kept growing to keep up with demand.

A Travel Air biplane
Travel Air Company New Plant and Plane

Herewith is pictured an artist’s conception of the new Travel Air Inc. building which is being erected at the municipal airport on East Central avenue, and a new Travel Air monoplane.

The new building, which will cost $30,000 when completed, is 75 by 275 feet and will have 20,000 square feet of inside floor space. It represents the latest word in factories for the manufacture of airplanes.

The company has six acres of land for use on the field.

The airplane is one of the newer machines and has received considerable favorable comment.

The new Travel Air Monoplane was used by four Wichita businessmen to make a six-day business and good will tour through Texas and Oklahoma. They visited the following cities: Oklahoma City, Fort Worth, Waco, Houston, LaWard, San Antonio, Austin and Dallas, returning to Wichita by way of Oklahoma City. They left Wichita Saturday morning, March 12, with Pilot C.E. Clark, returning Thursday afternoon, March 17th, covering 1450 miles, actual flying time being 14 hours and 45 minutes.

If this trip had been made by rail, actual time on the train would have been 64 hours.