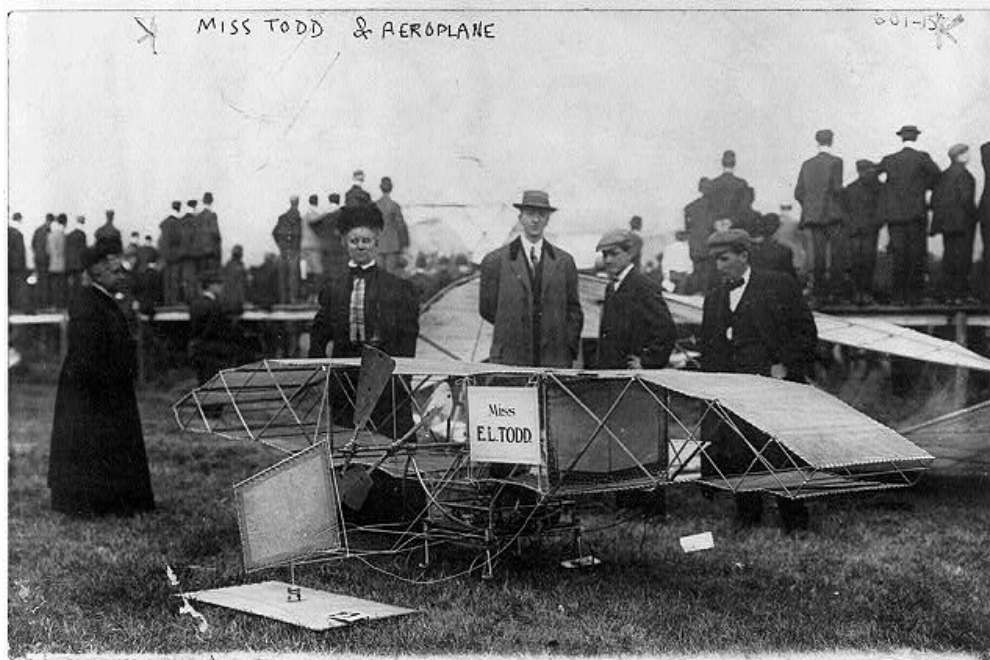


Written by MS (11/2011); Formatted by JS (02/2012)

The following was posted online in the National Model Aviation Museum's weekly History Moments column. This was from Week 3, November 17, 2011.

Miss E.L. Todd and the First Model Aeroplane Club

Ms. Todd, from her childhood, was always interested in how things worked. She would disassemble toys, typewriters, and was once even scolded for using her mother's scissors to cut wire. This interest in tinkering led her to design and patent a type writer copy holder in 1896. By the turn of the century her interest turned to aviation, and she began to experiment with rubber-powered models and airships. In 1906 she displayed one of her aircraft at the Aero Club of America show, held in Grand Central Palace, New York. According to period newspapers, her machine "attracted wide attention" and "more attention than any other display." Mr. Andrew Carnegie would even spend several hours every day of the show with Miss Todd discussing her machine. (*Evening World*, December 4, 1906)



Miss Todd standing behind her aeroplane. (Source: Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-74118)

In [1907], convinced that youth were the future of aviation, Miss Todd formed the Junior Aero Club of America. "In the increasing interest in aerial matters in this country, and because I personally know several bright boys who have shown remarkable ability in designing aeroplanes; and, second, owing to the success of recent contests in France,there is no reason why similar

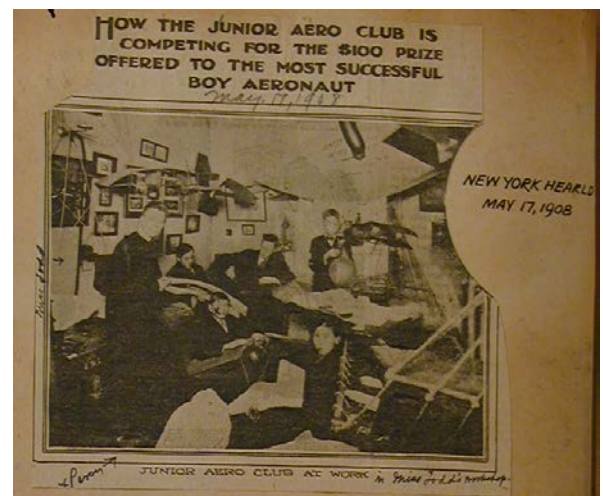
tests cannot be made here.” The new organization “was to be National in character, and the aim of its promoters is to establish branches in as many of the principal cities throughout the country as possible.” (*The New York Times*, February 10, 1908)



The Junior Aero Club of America. (Source: National Model Aviation Museum Archives, #0012 Percy Pierce Collection)

An advisory committee for the group was formed and contained members of the Aero Club America; Lee S. Burrige, Capt. Thomas S. Baldwin, Wilbur Kimball, famous balloonist A. Leo Stevens, and Ernst Jones.

The first event for the club was a kite contest, attended by more than one-hundred people and held February 21nd, 1908. “The meeting was held to arouse enthusiasm among boys interested in aeronautics. It is the intention of Miss Todd to lecture every Saturday afternoon at her office, demonstrating the problems of Aeroplane construction. (New York Herald, February 22, 1908) The New York chapter met in Miss Todd’s apartment, surrounded by her models.



A meeting of the Junior Aero Club in Miss Todd's office. (Source: National Model Aviation Museum Archives, #0012 Percy Pierce Collection)

On April 4th, 1908 club members meet on the roof of Leo Stevens' balloon shop and released hydrogen filled balloons with cards attached asking those that found the balloons to write back.

In 1909 the Junior Aero Club was reorganized under the direction of Edward T. Durant, as Miss Todd was devoting all of her time to the construction of a full-scale aircraft. On November 8, 1910, Didier Masson successfully flew her aircraft at the Garden City Aviation Field.

Following this flight it is unclear if Miss Todd continued with her experiments, moving to California in 1936. Her model club though continued and lasted for many years.

For more information on both the Junior Aero Club and Miss E.L. Todd please visit: <http://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/> and <http://query.nytimes.com/search/query?srchst=p> Search for either Miss EL Todd or Junior Aero Club and you will find many great stories about their activities.



Image of Miss Todd in cockpit of her aeroplane. (Source: Library of Congress, LC-USZ62-15081)

This PDF is property of the Academy of Model Aeronautics. Permission must be granted by the AMA History Project for any reprint or duplication for public use.

AMA History Project
National Model Aviation Museum
5151 E. Memorial Dr.
Muncie IN 47302
(765) 287-1256, ext. 511
historyproject@modelaircraft.org

