



Alex Francis Arcier

(1890-1969) was an aviator, scientist, designer and engineer whose pioneering work in aviation design spanned six decades and earned him many honors. Born in London, he studied aeronautics in Passey, France under Gustave Eiffel, the designer of the Eiffel Tower. He served as draftsman for such notable aircraft designers as Gabriel Voisin, Henri Coanda, Frank Barnivell and Gordon England. At the age of 21, he learned to fly and received his international aviator's certificate. He served as a flight instructor at the Hall School of Flying in Hendon, England and during World War I, with Handley Page, Ltd. He designed the first twin engine and the first four engine bombers used by the United States and its Allies. Arcier emigrated to the United States in 1919 and was employed as Chief Engineer at the Witteman Aircraft Corporation, makers of the Barling Bomber designed by Arcier. It was the largest heavier-than-air aircraft of its time. During his years with Witteman, Arcier won the Army Air Service Engineering Divisions' design competition for a bomber aircraft design. That same year, Arcier became Chief Engineer for the Fokker Aircraft Corporation, where among other notable accomplishments; he designed the Fokker Trimotor Transport which was used by Amelia Earhart and by Richard Byrd in his flight over the North Pole and also across the North Atlantic. After Arcier attained his United States citizenship in 1929, he became Vice President of Operations and Director of the General Airplanes Corporation in Buffalo, New York. In 1930 under his leadership, the "Mailplane", one of the first all-metal airplanes, was built. Later in 1930, Arcier became Chief Engineer of the Weaver Aircraft Company, WACO. He worked for WACO for 17 years in various capacities. Arcier and the Waco Aircraft Company made many contributions to the National Defense Program during World War II such as the Model UPF-7. The Waco Company was entrusted with the entire combat and cargo glider Program of the U.S. Army Air Forces. This was initiated in an Army Design Competition which the Company won and resulted in a program involving the design, prototype construction and, in some cases, production construction of some twelve models ranging from Model CG-3A to the CG-15A. These gliders were built by the thousands under Arcier's technical direction by sixteen prime contractors and many hundreds of sub-contractors throughout the nation. In 1948, Arcier became Chief Scientist for U.S. Air Force Intelligence at Wright-Patterson AFB until he retired in 1963. After his retirement, he served as consultant to the Commander, Foreign Technology Division and Special Advisor to the Division's Advisory Group on scientific and technical intelligence matters. Among his honors were the USAF Meritorious Civilian Service Award (1953), and the USAF Distinguished Civilian Service Award (1961.) A. Francis Arcier died on November 21, 1969.

This biography was derived from the National Air and Space Museum, Archives Division.

Personal Inputs

Following was prepared by Rob Young, NASIC Historian

After retiring as a revered aircraft designer, Mr. A. Francis Arcier accepted the position of special consultant contracted to the Technical Intelligence Division of Air Materiel Command in 1947. His outstanding work led to a civil service position as "Scientific Advisor to Chief, Intelligence Department." He became our unit's first chief scientist, providing counsel and advice on programs and on the technical accuracy of produced intelligence. One of his big efforts was to assure complete technical intelligence coordination within all services and that our products truly met the needs of the customer. Another unusual quality about him was that he was BRITISH! (Naturalized in 1929)

He brought great prestige into the job with him, for he was co-designer of the Handley-Page bombers of World War I, the Fokker Trimotor and the famous Waco gliders used on D-Day. He knew the Wright Brothers and was inspired by them. This prestige and stature led to him being "recognized as the embodiment of air technical intelligence at its best." He retired from Foreign Technology Division in 1963.

From Tom Persing:

WACO was a local firm in Troy Ohio and was owned by Clayton Brukner. There is still a WACO organization that has a grass strip runway off 25A south of Troy. They have fly-ins of WACO manufactured planes as well as a historical museum at the site.)