

# *CFB PETAWAWA*

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH THE

HONOURABLE MR. JOHN ALEXANDER DOUGLAS MCCURDY

BORN: Aug 2, 1886 at Baddeck, Nova Scotia.

1907: Graduated from Toronto University of Practical Science with an M.E. degree.

Oct 1, 1907: Formation of the Aerial Experiment Association (A.E.A.) at Baddeck, Nova Scotia under the chairmanship of Dr. A.G. Bell. McCurdy was the Assistant Engineer and Treasurer of the Association. The object of the Association was, as recorded by Bell, "The construction of a practical aerodrome ...."

Mar 12, 1908: Mr. Baldwin, a member of the A.E.A., was the first Canadian and first British subject to fly an aerodrome outside of the British Empire.

Feb 23, 1909: Date of the first powered flight in the British Empire made by Mr. J.A.D. McCurdy in the SILVER DART over the frozen waters of Baddeck Bay. The SILVER DART was the last of four aerodromes built by the A.E.A.

Mar 27, 1909: Mr. Bell addressed the Canadian Club in Ottawa: "The country should have the benefit of these Canadian boys (McCurdy, Baldwin) ... The nation that controls the air will be the foremost nation of the world."

Mar 31, 1909 With the A.E.A. disbanded, McCurdy and Baldwin formed Canada's first aircraft company, "The Canadian Aerodrome Company (CAC)." They had hopes of interesting the Canadian government in military aviation. Within four months they had completed their first airplane, BADDECK 1 and started on their second, BADDECK 2.

Aug 2, 1909 Mr. McCurdy made four successful practice flights in the SILVER DART at Camp Petawawa prior to the military demonstration. During the practise flights, he flew Mr. Baldwin and a workman on separate flights to become the first passenger flights in Canada. The SILVER DART was destroyed while hitting a sandy knoll on the fourth flight, while McCurdy and Baldwin escaped with minor cuts and scrapes. The BADDECK 1 was hastily readied for the postponed demonstration.

Aug 12, 1909: Mr. McCurdy flew the BADDECK 1 on one demonstration flight resulting in a crash landing and a slight injury to the pilot. The disappointing outcome of the Camp Petawawa demonstrations and the government's indifference to military aviation helped to bring about a collapse of the Canadian Aerodrome Company. The Government of Canada decided to wait for the outcome of similar trials in England before financing further experimental aerodrome flights.

Aug 27, 1910: Mr. McCurdy is credited with the first wireless transmission from an aircraft, a transmission of two miles, in Sheephead Bay, New York.

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**HERITAGE COLLECTION**

**File: Canadian Forces Base Petawawa**

**Item # 17**

Oct 5, 1910: Mr. McCurdy held Pilot's Licence No 18, issued by the Aero Club of America, the first of two Canadians so licensed at that time.

1915-1918: The Curtiss Flying School was operated with Mr. McCurdy as President; its mandate was to train pilots for the Royal Flying Corps and the Royal Naval Air Service.

1939-1945: Mr. McCurdy was appointed as the Assistant Director General of Aircraft Production with the Department of Munitions and Supply, and later Director of Purchasing.

Aug 12, 1947: Mr. McCurdy was appointed Lieutenant Governor of the Province of Nova Scotia until his retirement from public life on Aug. 12, 1947.

June 25, 1961: Mr. McCurdy died in Montreal of bronchial pneumonia at the age of 74 years. He had a memorable career as an engineer, inventor, pilot, industrialist, public servant and representative of the Crown. He was bestowed many awards and honorary degrees for his innovative and pioneering efforts to have Canada at the forefront of the aviation industry.