

## THE BENOIST COMPANY

<http://www.earlyaviators.com/ejannto2.htm>

Thomas Benoist opened an aeronautical supply company late in 1908 in St. Louis, Missouri; supplying engine, wheels, propellers, wood, wire, and fabric to that small band of enthusiasts building those early “aeroplanes.” In 1910 he built and flew his first airplane. The Benoist Company built 107 aircraft of some 17 models. Just as the flood of government contracts for airplanes for World War I occurred, Thomas Benoist was killed in a street car accident June 1917. “if it were not for that street car accident” wrote Glen L. Martin, many years later. “you would probably be riding a Benoist Airline today.

---

## THE AIRBOAT

The strange craft – half boat, half bi-plane- “Benoist” airboat had no windshield, was made of wood, fabric and wires, and rarely flew five feet above the water. The airboat was known as a freight plane. It was built for stability and endurance, rather than for speed and maneuverability.

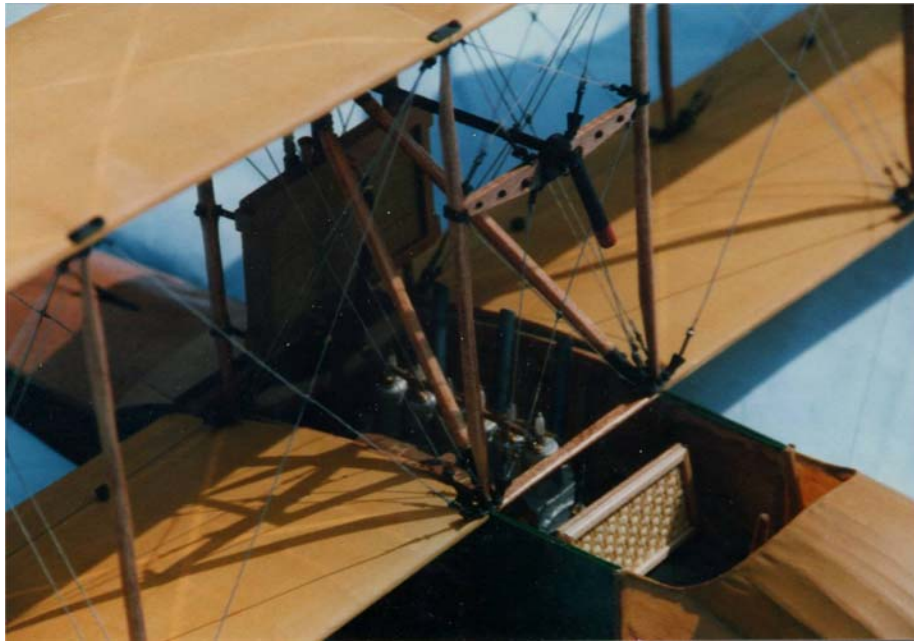
The Benoist #43 was built in the spring of 1913 for Mr. W.D. Jones of Duluth Minnesota, a wood, fabric, and wire plane with a wing span of 35 feet and a length of 26 feet. After participating in a summer carnival called the “Lark of



A view of the pusher propeller arrangement. The shaft was chain driven from below. (J. D. Fansler Photo)

Duluth.” The aircraft was taken to Paducah, Ky. and used to carry passengers and to instruct students. During this time its wing span was increased to 45 feet making it a #43 B Model. It, like most of the Benoist Aircraft, was powered by a Roberts six engine manufactured in Sandusky, Ohio.

Two additional airboats were arrived January 30<sup>th</sup> 1914 adding flights and new routes and for instruction at the Benoist Aviation School. On February 12<sup>th</sup>, the school plane was wrecked, with only the propeller and engine salvaged. The pilot was rescued.



A view of the Benoist XIV cockpit and engine location. A passenger can be seated side-by-side with the pilot. (J. D. Fansler Photo)

---

## **BENOIST COMMEMORATIVE FLIGHT, 1984**

### ***SPORT AVIATION* DECEMBER 1983**

### **75 TH ANNIVERSARY OF FIRST SCHEDULED AIRLINE FLIGHT**

#### **Aviation History in Tampa Bay**

The aircraft used for transporting passengers on the St. Petersburg-Tampa Airboat Line was a Benoist (pronounced Ben-Wah) Model 14, and was built by St. Louis manufacturer Thomas Benoist. The flying boat was made of three layers of spruce wood with fabric between each of the layers. It was powered by a Roberts 6-cylinder, in-line, liquid-cooled engine – common to several models of Benoist aircraft.



[Click below for full story]

<http://tampa.about.com/library/weekly/blbenoist.htm>

{click for story}

<http://home.earthlink.net/~ralphcooper/pimagn6.htm>

---

---

### First Flight



P.E. Fansler with Tony Jannis climbing into cockpit for first flight.  
The mayor of St. Petersburg would shortly follow as the first passenger.

Photo Courtesy of J. D. (Dave) Fansler, Son of P.E. Fansler