

CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD

ACCIDENT INVESTIGATION REPORT

Adopted: January 18, 1951

Released: January 18, 1951

AERONCA COLLISION, SHARON SPRINGS, KANS., APRIL 30, 1950**The Accident**

At approximately 0958, April 30, 1950, two Aeronca aircraft, N-2427E and N-1086H, collided eight miles northwest of Sharon Springs, Kans. The occupants of both aircraft, the pilots and a passenger, were killed. Both aircraft were destroyed.

History of the Flight

The pilots were Roland O. Scott and Wilmer L. Rivers. They were enrolled in a veterans flight training program, which was being conducted by the Moritz Flying Service of Sharon Springs. Scott, a student pilot who had only an hour and 45 minutes solo time, had been instructed by Moritz to practice "S" turns at 500 feet in the local practice area. Rivers, a private pilot who had considerably more experience than Scott, had received no specific instructions before flight, and it is not known whether he was accomplishing a part of the training program or flying simply for pleasure.

Both pilots departed from Sharon Springs Airport within 10 minutes of each other. Scott took off first, at approximately 0930, in a yellow Aeronca Champion, N-2427E, and Rivers followed in a red Aeronca Sedan, N-1086H. Gerald Rawson, who had no qualifications as a pilot, rode as a passenger in the red Aeronca Sedan. Neither he nor the two pilots were equipped with parachutes, and none were required.

Approximately 25 minutes after takeoff from the Sharon Springs Airport, the two airplanes were observed about eight miles northwest of the airport. This was within the local practice area. According to witnesses, Rivers in the red aircraft performed a series of steep dives and climbs at a low altitude while circling a farmhouse, after which he flew straight and level for a brief

time toward the east. During the same period Scott practiced "S" turns at an altitude of 500 feet, progressing slowly to the east. Immediately before the collision both aircraft were observed flying an easterly heading. Rivers, in the red aircraft, seemed to be slightly below, ahead, and to the right of Scott. Then, both aircraft turned left, but Rivers' turn was considerably steeper than Scott's. As a result both aircraft collided. (See Chart, Appendix I.)

Investigation

Although it is not known for what purpose Rivers was flying, it is known that he had permission from Moritz to use the aircraft and to carry passengers. Since passengers were not permitted to be carried on a training flight, it would appear that Rivers was flying only for pleasure.

Nothing was found during the course of the investigation which would indicate that either of the aircraft was not in airworthy condition. The examination of the wreckage disclosed no evidence of any mechanical or structural failure. The fire which occurred was the result of the collision, there was no fire in the air. The only evidence concerning the condition of the windshields is the statement of the owner and operator, Oscar Moritz, who testified that they were clean and clear.

The right wing tip of the red Aeronca was found 250 feet from the rest of the wreckage. On the undersurface were found streaks of yellow paint. Yellow paint was also found on the leading edge of the right wing strut. The fuselage longerons and diagonal braces just forward of the tail post of the yellow Aeronca were found to have been severed by an impact force from the right. The tail group remained attached only by the elevator and rudder cables.

At the time of this accident the visibility and ceiling were unlimited.

All times referred to herein are Mountain Standard and based on the 24-hour clock.

Analysis

Damage found in the wreckage, as described above, supports the testimony of the witnesses that the red Aeronca made a steep left turn and collided with the yellow Aeronca. The yellow markings on the right wing tip of the red aircraft, and the breaks in the longerons and diagonal braces of the yellow Aeronca's fuselage showed that Rivers must have collided with Scott from the right and below, the right wing of the red aircraft almost severing the tail section of the yellow aircraft.

The cause of this accident lies in the fact that Rivers did not carefully look for other airplanes before he executed his steep left turn. Note (c) of Section 60.12 of the Civil Air Regulations cites as one example of careless and reckless operation of aircraft, "the lack of vigilance by the pilot to observe and avoid other aircraft." The note provides that a pilot, "must clear his position prior to starting any maneuver either on the ground or in flight." It is clear from the facts as described above that Rivers would have not collided with the yellow Aeronca if he had looked into the area where he intended to turn before starting the maneuver.

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Findings

On the basis of all available evidence the Board finds that

- 1 Both pilots and both aircraft were properly certificated
- 2 There was no indication of mechanical malfunctioning or structural failure of either aircraft prior to the collision
- 3 The right wing tip and leading edge of the right wing strut of the red aircraft collided with and severed the fuselage longerons and diagonal braces of the yellow aircraft while passing below it in a steep left turn

Probable Cause

The Board determines that the probable cause of this accident was the failure of the pilot in the red aircraft to properly clear his position before starting a steep left turn.

BY THE CIVIL AERONAUTICS BOARD

/s/ D W RENTZEL
/s/ JOSH LEE
/s/ HAROLD A JONES

Oswald Ryan, Vice Chairman, did not participate in the adoption of this report.

Supplemental Data

Investigation

The Civil Aeronautics Board was notified of the accident at 1145, April 30, 1950, and an investigation was immediately initiated in accordance with the provisions of Section 702 (a) (2) of the Civil Aeronautics Act of 1938, as amended. A public hearing was ordered by the Board and was held in Goodland, Kans, May 12, 1950.

Flight Personnel

Roland O Scott, pilot of N-2427E, age 33, held a student permit #1330281 and a second class airman medical certificate with no restrictions. He had been enrolled in the approved course for veterans at the Moritz Flying Service since March 5, 1950. At the time of the accident he had flown a total of 15 hours, of which one hour and 45 minutes were solo flight time.

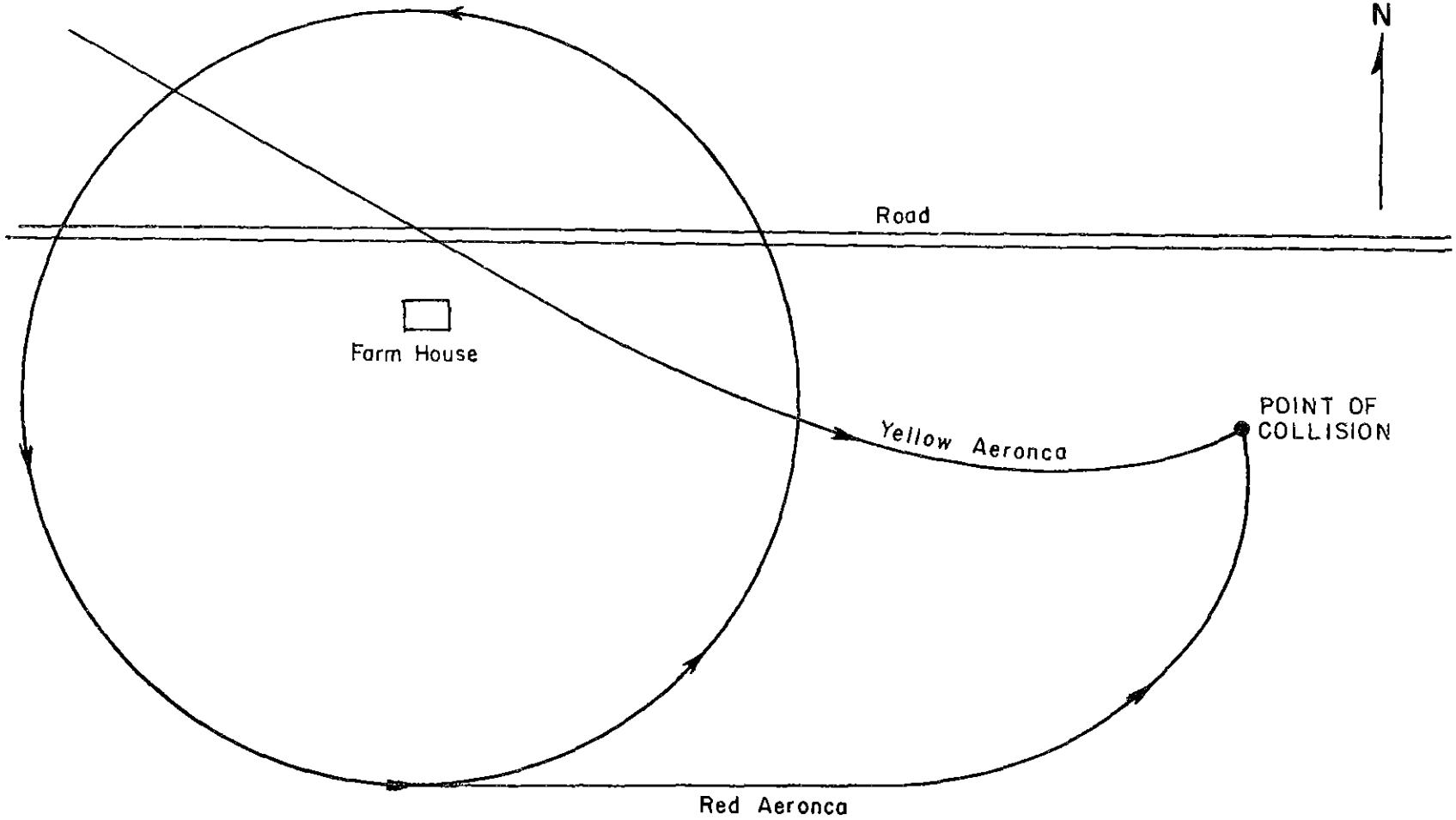
Wilmer L Rivers, pilot of N-1086H, age 25, had been enrolled in the approved course for veterans at the Moritz Flying Service

since December 5, 1949. He held a private license and at the time of the accident was enrolled in the advanced course in order to obtain a commercial license. As of April 30, 1950, he had a total of 142 hours, of which 116 were solo flight time.

The Aircraft

The aircraft, N-2427E, an Aeronca model 7AC "Champion," was currently certificated by the CAA and was owned and operated by the Moritz Flying Service of Sharon Springs, Kans. It had been manufactured in 1946 and had accumulated a total flight time of 647 hours. It was equipped with a Continental engine model A-65-8, 65 horsepower.

N-1086H, an Aeronca model 15 AC "Sedan" was currently certificated by the CAA and was also owned and operated by the Moritz Flying Service. It was manufactured in 1948 and had accumulated a total flight time of 152 hours. It was equipped with a Continental engine C-145-2, 145 horsepower.



PROBABLE FLIGHT PATHS
AS INDICATED BY WITNESSES