New Airport to Be Named in John B. Moisant’s Honor

The new municipal airport at Kenner, which will rank among the world’s largest airports, will be named in honor of John B. Moisant, who as early as 1910, the year of his death in an airplane crash near Harahan and the site of the new airport, foresaw the airplane as “the most terrible fighting machine ever devised.”

Tributes Paid Moisant

Accounts of his death filled the pages of New Orleans newspapers the next day. Mayor Martin Behrman said Moisant’s death was “indeed a sad and tragic ending of a most promising and brilliant life in the aviation world.”

A citizens’ committee said: “Great men—pioneers in the advancement of civilization—have invariably laid down their lives that the progress and happiness of mankind might be assured; and in the list of these immortals it is fitting and proper that the name of John B. Moisant be given place.”

Moisant lived as a youth in Chicago and San Francisco, and while still young went to San Salvador, where he and two brothers, one of whom, Alfred, was associated with him in the air corporation, entered business. One of their activities was to establish a sugar plantation. The next year John Moisant went to Guatemala and opened a bank. It failed and subsequently Moisant decided to go to Europe to study flying. He took up aviation only six months before his death.

Dies As Plane Crashes

He reached the point circled twice, and on the third circle appeared to be preparing to land. He descended to an altitude of 200 feet, headed the machine into the wind, and dipped its nose earthward.

A moment later, when the craft was approximately 25 feet high, it took a sudden dive and Moisant was thrown from his seat. The plane crumpled on impact with the ground, and Moisant struck the ground at a point approximately 30 feet ahead of the plane. His back was broken.

Rushed to the city after being placed aboard a box car attached to an Illinois Central railroad switch engine, Moisant was pronounced dead upon examination by physicians which met the train at the depot. Remaining events of the air meet were cancelled.

Only the day before his death, he had predicted that airplanes would attain a speed of at least 80 miles an hour and he prophesied that in time “positive and practical demonstrations will be made to prove that the airplane is the most terrible fighting machine ever devised.”

The Times Picayune
November 18, 1941
Work Begins on New Airport to Be Called Moisant Field

Workmen are shown above beginning clearing for the new city-owned airport near Kenner on the Air-Line Highway. Inset is John B. Moisant, pioneer aviator, for whom the 800-acre field will be named. He died in a crash in 1910, only a short distance from the field which will bear his name.