

# THE FORGOTTEN TRIAD 1000

BUILT IN A SMALL IOWA TOWN DURING THE GREAT DEPRESSION, THIS MINIATURE TRI-MOTOR WAS MADE FOR A MARKET THAT DID NOT EXIST

BY STEVE WOLFF

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY CARROLL COUNTY MUSEUM EXCEPT WHERE NOTED



Irving Saul was the creator of the company and the driving force behind the Triad 1000. He died in 1933 at age 45.

**T**riad — a group of three persons, ideas, or things; however, for this article the name was meant for a tri-motor aircraft configuration. Aeronautical designers of the late 1920s/early 1930s seemed to be striving for an elusive combination of safety and reliability that would favorably enhance the traveling public's perception of air travel. One method was the use of tri-motor designs that offered the prospect of continuing flight on the remaining two motors in the event one engine should fail. Most often seen on large airliners — for the era — the three-engine configuration had one engine mounted in the nose and two on/under the wings. The Boeing Model 80A, at 17,500 pounds gross weight, epitomized the "giant" airliners of the time period. At the other end of the spectrum was the diminutive — and rare — four-place Saul 1000

Triad. Never heard of that one? Well, don't worry. Most aviation enthusiasts have no idea this little aircraft ever existed.

Three native Iowans — William I. Saul, Leslie R. Chapman, and Rollin W. Humphrey — formed the corporate structure of the Saul Aircraft Corporation. Born in Dennison, Iowa, during 1887, William Saul enrolled in Iowa State College where he studied electrical engineering. His early post-college years saw him serving as manager of his father's *Carroll Herald* newspaper and managing The Irving, a local Carroll theater also owned by his father. Saul Sr. was also working as a Carroll attorney. He brought the young man into his practice where William read law and was admitted to the bar in 1915.

Born in Dunlop, Iowa, during 1899, Leslie Chapman would go on to serve in the Navy during the Great War. His stint as vice president of

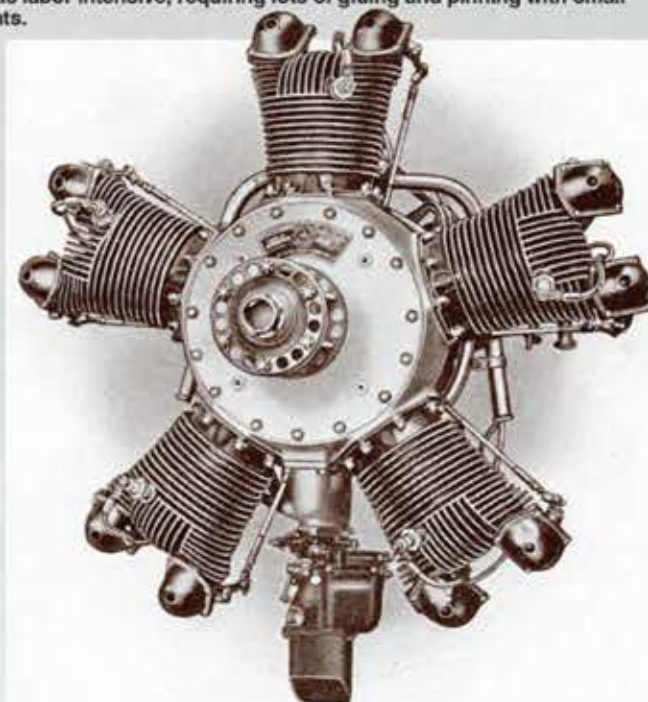
Saul Aircraft was short — running from just 1929/1930. Rollin Humphrey was born in 1898 in Carroll and would go on to the University of Iowa, achieving a science degree. He entered the Air Service in WWI and would attend the School of Military Aeronautics at the University of Texas. His position at Saul Aircraft would be secretary/treasurer.

Given his number of jobs and interests, it is obvious William Saul had an inquiring mind. He also built one of Carroll's first home radio stations before moving away from his father's influence and creating Saul Aircraft Corporation in 1929. The company's articles of incorporation stated intent "was to manufacture airplanes." An initial capitalization of \$125,000 was raised and this was a very large sum for the time period (\$2.2M in 2023). The money was raised through stock offering of \$100 per share. The money allowed the company to obtain a one-year lease on 32 acres near the Carroll County Fairgrounds and this would be the future manufacturing site. The fairgrounds' floral hall was remodeled for the factory while the old amphitheater was ripped down and horse barns were repurposed into a hangar. Construction of the tri-motor began in 1929, apparently while the fairground renovations were taking place.

Although the Triad bears Saul's name and he is re-



Wing rib for the Triad. While the fuselage was built of steel tubing, the wing was wood. Rib had a generous 84-in chord and was 11-in thick. Vertical slots are where the wing spars passed through. Rib was labor intensive, requiring lots of gluing and pinning with small brads at the gusset joints.



A trio of little LeBlond radials was chosen to power the Triad 1000. (Alpha Archive)

membered as the designer, he enlisted a talented core of individuals for help. French-Canadian Eckron LaFond became chief mechanic and was also in charge of welding the chrome molybdenum steel tube fuselage and empennage. Consulting engineer of powerplants was Glenn Boyer, formerly of American Eagle Aircraft Corporation of Kansas and he supervised the actual construction. C.L. Offenstrin, chief engineer of the Aeronautical Division of the Department of Commerce approved the final design and, of course, secretary/treasurer Rollin, with his aeronautics background, may have also contributed.

Welding began in mid-June 1929

and an ambitious first flight date of that September had been set. The tri-motor became a focal point of local pride and it was a community endeavor and generated lots of interest and enthusiasm among the rural population, no doubt due to the promotional talents of the three partners. Many of the components such as engines, wheels, wing ribs, fuel tank, propellers, and the empennage



This is the only known overall photograph showing the Saul Aircraft Triad 1000.