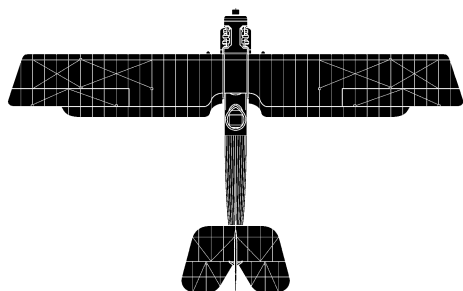


Airpower Classics

Artwork by Zaur Eylanbekov

JN Jenny



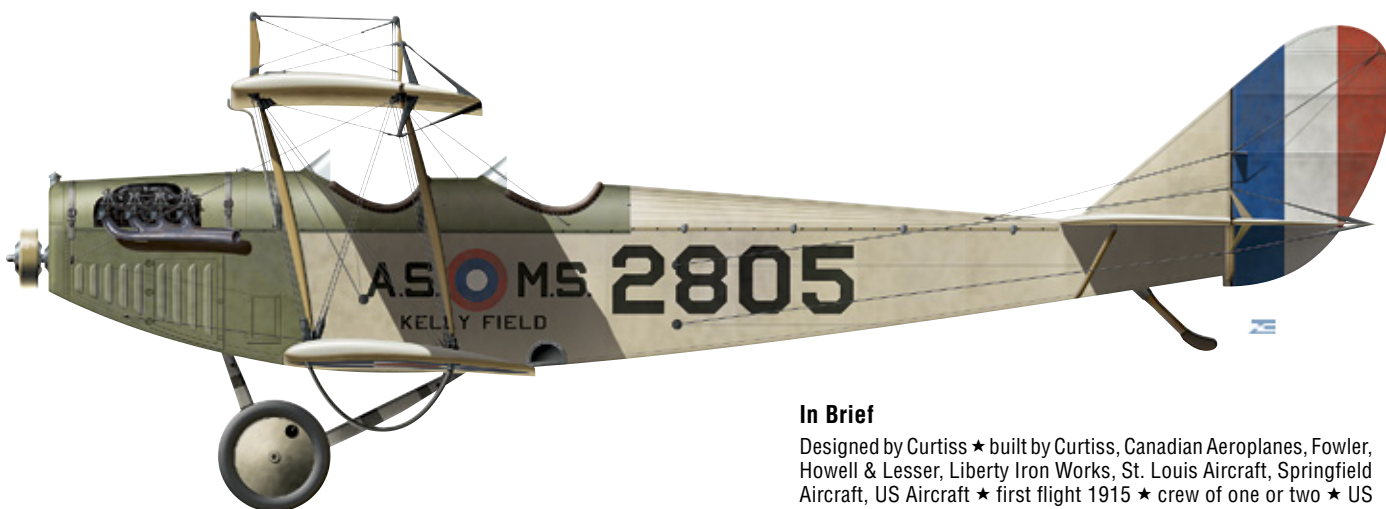
The JN “Jenny” biplane was America’s first mass-produced aircraft. An early version was used in 1916 during Maj. Gen. John J. Pershing’s punitive expedition into Mexico, the Army’s first operational use of aircraft. However, it was most famous as a trainer during World War I, and it reached its peak of popularity in the hands of the civilian barnstormers, flamboyant airmen who brought aviation to the American public after World War I.

The Army had suffered many fatal crashes of its “pusher” type aircraft. This inspired Glenn Curtiss to design a “tractor” type, with the propeller in front. By 1914, the combination of two Curtiss types produced the “JN,” a docile yet modern-looking two-seater with a conventional wood-and-fabric structure. The timing was perfect, as World War I aviation created a tremendous demand for pilots, and the Jenny went into mass

production at eight companies, including one in Canada. The definitive version—the JN-4—was built in the thousands for Allied airmen. Some 95 percent of US and Canadian pilots flew a Jenny at some time in training.

In the postwar demobilization, thousands of Jennys were sold or scrapped. Some were used in 1918 to carry the first scheduled air mail between New York, Philadelphia, and Washington D.C. A few years after the war, the Jenny became available to private pilots at successively lower prices, ultimately becoming the defining airplane of the Golden Age of Aviation. There were frequent crashes, but parts were abundant, and replacement OX-5 engines sold for \$250. The US Army Air Service retained the Jenny as a trainer until 1924, and the last one was retired in 1927, making the Jenny a much-loved relic of a receding past.—*Walter J. Boyne*

This aircraft: US Air Service JN-4 D2 Jenny—No. 2805—as it looked in 1918 when assigned to the Air Service Mechanic’s School at Kelly Field, Tex.



Maj. Rueben Fleet (left) after 1918 airmail run in JN-4H.

In Brief

Designed by Curtiss ★ built by Curtiss, Canadian Aeroplanes, Fowler, Howell & Lesser, Liberty Iron Works, St. Louis Aircraft, Springfield Aircraft, US Aircraft ★ first flight 1915 ★ crew of one or two ★ US number built 6,070 ★ **Specific to JN-4D:** one Curtiss OX-5 V-8 engine ★ armament none ★ max speed 75 mph ★ cruise speed 60 mph ★ max range 155 miles ★ weight (loaded) 1,920 lb ★ span 43 ft 7 in ★ length 27 ft 4 in ★ height 9 ft 11 in.

Famous Fliers

US military notables: James Doolittle, Benjamin Foulois, Charles Lindbergh, Thomas Milling, William Mitchell, Eddie Rickenbacker
Barnstormers: Jimmy Angel, Clarence Chamberlain, Bessie Coleman, Doug Davis, Ivan Gates, Arthur Goebel Jr., Gladys Ingle, Ormer Locklear, Clyde Pangborn, Jessie Woods, Jimmy Woods

Interesting Facts

Nicknamed “Canuck” (Canadian JN-4) ★ sold in postwar civilian market for as little as \$50 each ★ JN-3 deployed in 1916 to Mexico for aerial observation in Pershing’s punitive expedition against Pancho Villa ★ fitted with bomb racks, machine guns, and cameras in later models ★ pictured on now-valuable “inverted Jenny” 1918 air mail stamp ★ used on rare occasions as ambulance aircraft ★ picked up name “Jenny” from JN, a simple combination of the two designations “J” and “N” given to earlier aircraft.