

Queen of the Hurricanes: The Fearless Elsie MacGill (A Feminist History Society Book)

Crystal Sissons



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Elsie MacGill achieved many firsts in science and engineering at a time when women were considered to be inferior in the sciences. In 1923, at the age of nineteen, she became the first woman to attend engineering classes at the University of Toronto. She was the first woman in North America to hold a degree in aeronautical engineering and the first woman aircraft designer in the world.

As chief engineer for the Canadian Car and Foundry Company she oversaw the production of the Hawker Hurricane, and designed a series of modifications to equip the plain for cold weather flying. Her Maple Leaf trainer may still be the only plane ever to be completely designed by a woman. And she did all this while suffering from polio. In this biography we learn that she supervised 4500 workers and produced about 1450 Hawker Hurricanes by the end of WWII.

Elsie was a popular heroine of her time, inspiring the comic book "Queen of the Hurricanes" in the 1940s. In later life she became a powerful feminist activist, advocating for the rights of women and children.

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