

# Aviation Pioneer



Linc Binion, Matthew's Assistant pulling Matthew and his glider down the hill.

My daughter-in-law's 4th great-granduncle, Lincoln Binion, was tragically killed in one of the nation's first airplane related accidents. And he never left the ground.

Binion was an assistant and best friend of Matthew Bacon Sellers II, a Kentucky inventor who in the early 1900s became a leading pioneer in the field of aerodynamics. While most believe the Wright Brothers to be the first to achieve manned flight, Sellers, with Binion by his side, was not far behind. In 1903, the year of the Wright Brothers' first recorded flight, Sellers was already building and testing gliders. It was an odd-four winged contraption built from sticks and linen, which Sellers would wheel to the top of a Kentucky hill outside his family home. Binion would then grab hold of a tether and race down the hill, pulling the machine behind him until it reached a speed necessary to take flight.

It was 1908 when Binion switched his attention to powered flight. His aim was to make the lightest aircraft capable of flying with the least amount of power and he succeeded. He was also the first to invent a retractable landing gear.

The tragedy that befell Lincoln Binion occurred in 1911. While

he was assisting Sellers prepare for yet another flight, the propeller of the craft which was about to be launched darted backwards and struck Binion in the head, killing him. Sellers was so distraught, he left Kentucky and his family home. He returned just once more during the remainder of his lifetime.

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