

The Flying Dutchman

Joseph Nicholas Shalz was born April 11, 1894 in Wathena, Kansas. He came to Colby, Kansas with his parents in 1906 where he spent much of his life including a time after his marriage to Helen Baird in 1917. Joe grew up on the farm and later became a mechanic. While living in Colby and Gem he was employed by the Louis Garage. He pursued his interest of mechanics by owning motorcycles, race cars and cars. He then moved to Gem, Kansas and from there to Brewster, Kansas in 1919. After moving to Brewster he owned his own garage and machine shop, selling Essex and Hudson cars, Rumely combines and tractors.

Joe was one of the first pilots and certainly the most famous in Thomas County. In 1925 he bought his first airplane and after three weeks training in Kansas City was given a license. The plane had two wings and two open cockpits. Joe was the only flier in NW Kansas to ever receive a Transport License, the highest type of certification. He was a member of the National Aeronautics Association, International and the certificate was signed by Orville Wright, the chairman of the organization.

He flew in air circuses, crop dusted, transported people from place to place, operated a flying school and delivered machine parts in his plane to farmers working in the field from his garage in Brewster. He knew Charles Lindbergh, and flew with Amelia Earhart in a Wichita airshow.

On September 17, 1931, Joe's Stinson-Detroiter monoplane crashed at the Gove County Fair, in Quinter, Kansas, killing Joe and two passengers. For years he had logged thousands of accident-free miles. On June 3, 1975, the Colby Airport was named "Shalz Field" by the Colby City Council.