

A Daredevil Named Tiny

Series: Aviation



Georgia Ann Broadwick was a daredevil who became an aviation pioneer. She was nicknamed Tiny because she weighed only eighty-five pounds and stood just over four feet tall.

Tiny was born Georgia Ann Thompson in 1893 in Oxford, Granville County. Her parents struggled to make a living as farmers. When Tiny was a child, her father moved the family to Henderson, Vance County, to work in the cotton mills. Tiny also worked

in the mill to help support her family. One day she went to the carnival in Raleigh, and her life changed forever.

Of all the carnival's attractions, one event grabbed her attention—the parachute jump. Tiny watched with excitement as Charles Broadwick, a famous balloonist, floated down gracefully from a hot-air balloon high above the carnival grounds. She wanted to parachute from a balloon just as he had done. Tiny talked with Broadwick after the show. She convinced him that she could jump because of her small size, and he agreed to teach her. In 1908 Tiny made her first parachute jump. In a short time, she was thrilling carnival crowds with her feats. She was called the Doll Girl, and she parachuted in a silk dress and ruffled bloomers. Charles Broadwick adopted Tiny as his daughter, and she changed her last name to Broadwick.

Parachuting from a hot-air balloon was dangerous. Sometimes balloons caught on fire, were blown off course by the wind, or even crashed. Tiny accepted these risks because she wasn't afraid. She broke a few bones, landed in trees and swamps, was dragged by her parachute, and once leaped from a burning balloon. But she always loved the adventure.

After watching Tiny perform, aircraft designer and pilot Glenn L. Martin asked her to parachute from his airplane. She made her first jump on June 21, 1913 and became the first woman to jump from a plane. Tiny also became the first woman to jump from a hydroplane, the first woman to make a water jump (to land on water), and the first person to free-fall from an airplane (to wait before opening the parachute). In 1915 she gave the first demonstration of a parachute jump to the United States Army. Glenn Martin and Tiny Broadwick toured the United States as a popular daredevil team. Tiny made more than 1,100 jumps, including appearances at the 1915 and 1916 San Diego World's Fair.

Tiny made her last jump in 1922. Her fame faded as the years went by. But she received recognition for her achievements later in her life. From the early 1950s until her death on August 25, 1978, she received many awards and honors. She was inducted as an honorary member into the Adventurers' Club of Los Angeles, the Early Birds of Aviation, and

other groups. Tiny Broadwick, a big name in parachuting history, will be remembered for her contributions to aviation.