Robert M. Stanley Encyclopedia Article

Robert M. Stanley

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American aviator who made the first flight in an American jet-propelled aircraft in 1942. Stanley, Bell Aircraft's chief test pilot, flew the Airacomet on October 1, 1942. This airplane, designated the XP-59A, was the direct ancestor of every subsequent American jet. During its first flights, to maintain security, the Airacomet was disguised by placing a fake propeller on its nose. Most who first saw it fly, however, refused to believe an airplane with no propeller could really fly.