

# *Dirigo Flyer*

Newsletter of the Maine Aviation Historical Society  
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**Volume XVI No. 1**

**January-February 2008**

Welcome to the 16th year of the Dirigo Flyer. This issue will begin with an article that has been waiting in our files for quite some time so the editor thought it should be appropriate to use it to start a new year. It was included in the older Flyer files when they were transferred to the current editor. As you read it note that it speaks of this and other clubs in the present tense, something which certainly dates this article.

## *A Brief History of the Aero Club of Maine*



CAPTAIN BURTIS F. FOWLER  
President  
Aero Club of Maine

There are a great many people, including perhaps, members of the Club, who think that the Aero Club of Maine is just another one of those numerous aviation clubs which have sprung up all over the country during the past few years as a result of the tremendous boom in aviation and increased interest in flying.

This however, is not the case. The Aero Club of Maine is one of the oldest state flying clubs in the country. Its organization dates back almost a generation.

The Aero Club was founded by real pioneers in aviation in Maine. These were men, who, in days when airports were few and far between, and airplanes were still looked upon with a bit of skepticism, believed that some day flying would be our national pastime and scheduled airlines would run into every principal city. That their beliefs were sound is evidenced by aviation today.

On an airport that was scarcely more than a hayfield, and boasting two post-war ships, the Aero Club was conceived. The airport was Stroudwater, now known as the Portland City Airport, and the ships were a Jenny owned by Kipp Strange and Doc Johnson and a Canuk owned by Bill Turgeon and Palmer King, and the time was 1924.

Johnson and Strange bought one of the Jennys left over from the war and kept it on Strange's field.

Turgeon and King, flying from Lewiston on Sunday in their Canuk, had landed at Stroudwater and carried passengers with the other two. Between the four men a warm friendship sprung up during the course of the summer. In the fall, the Canuk was hangared in Strange's barn and a new motor was installed.

Working at night by the dim light of a lantern, the possibilities of organizing an aero club were discussed at length and a temporary committee chosen to make arrangements for the first meeting.

The first meeting of the Aero Club of Maine was held in Portland, at the Congress Square Hotel, October 11, 1924. The speaker at the meeting was Porter H. Adams, who predicted the establishment of a scheduled airline between Boston and Bangor. Adams was at that time President of the N.A.A. and with Hon. William H. Gannett of Augusta, also present at the meeting, had just returned from a tour of the middle west to study the development and possibilities of aviation. Among the "early birds" present at this first meeting were Herbert Horne, owner of an MF boat, Phil Loveitt, who flew a H2S boat, and Bill Alexander, one of Maine's outstanding pilots at time, all of Portland.

Officers elected were Bill Turgeon of Lewiston, President, Herbert Horne, Vice President, Albert Johnson, Secretary-Treasurer, and a Board of Directors consisting of Clifford Strange, Phil Loveitt, Palmer King, and Ernest Johnson.

Another well-known pilot at that time was Merle Fogg, one of the first members of the Club, who was killed during the twenties. Fogg spent much of his time in Florida, and an airport at Fort Lauderdale, Fl. Had recently been dedicated in his honor.

For the first five or six years, the Club was made up almost exclusively of Portland and Auburn-Lewiston men. Meetings were held at irregular intervals at the Elks Club in Portland, and many time in the hangar at Stroudwater were the members themselves put on a fish chowder. The average yearly membership up to 1934 was about 100.

Throughout the depression years, when flying slumped a little, and money for ships and airport improvements were scarce, the Club waned a little in its enthusiasm, but in 1934 it took a new lease on life after the Federal Government started to develop the airports in Maine.

Senator Arthur Spear was elected President in 1934 and membership in the Club increased. Membership applications began to come from all over the state as more and more people became interested in aviation. At the present time there are nearly five hundred members scattered all over the state, although Portland and Auburn-Lewiston groups still hold the lead. Several local chapters have also been formed.

On two occasions the Club has shown its strength by defeating bills introduced in the State Legislature to control flying in Maine. The Club believes in government only with the consent of the governed.

The idea of a Maine Aero Rendezvous was original with Capt. Burtis Fowler, now President of the Club, and was received with great enthusiasm by every member. Everyone on the general committee has given generously of time and money to make the occasion a success.



DR. ALBERT JOHNSON  
Secretary-Treasurer  
Aero Club of Maine



*As mentioned, this article had to have been written when the club was active. Whether of not it is active today could not be determined. A search of Maine aviation organizations, and organizations in general in the state found no mention of the Aero Club of Maine. One would suspect that it was active through the 1930s and probably ceased to exist during the WWII years.*

*Perhaps some of our members can shed some light on the fate of the Aero Club of Maine*

# President's Message

By the time this issue of the *Dirigo Flyer* lands on your doorstep the new officers will have assumed their positions, we will have had most of our off-season meetings at airports around the state, and will be fast approaching the sixth season of the Maine Air Museum. On behalf of all the membership I want to thank the outgoing officers for their tireless stewardship, and especially their willingness to run for other positions and/or re-election.

We are now five years beyond the 100th anniversary of flight and looking back a century. March 1908 marked the flight of the Red Wing from the surface of a frozen lake, the first U.S. plane designed and built by someone other than the Wrights. The designer/builder was none other than Glenn Curtis, and some of his early aircraft and engines represent part of Maine's earliest aviation experience. The stiff competition between Curtiss and the Wright brothers further accelerated the public's interest in aviation here and throughout the country. It was just a couple of years later that the first known flight in Maine was to have taken place. It is also interesting to note, more than one historian professes the public's fascination with these early aviators centered as much around witnessing a crash as for any other reason. Thankfully, aviation remains a thrill for most people but for different reasons!

Well, 2008 is shaping up as another challenging year for MAHS/MAM, as well as a busy one. A few very dedicated members have brought stability to the organization, in particular through their efforts year after year to make the museum a success. However, no organization can thrive for long on the backs of only a handful of members. As a group, this brings us to the reality that we must now place greater emphasis on getting more member participation in operating, maintaining and expand the museum, by helping with other activities such as representing MAHS/MAM at several aviation events held throughout the State each year, as well as providing articles, photos, and other interesting information for inclusion in the *Dirigo Flyer*.

Partly because of its humble beginnings was and the museum are still not as well known as one might suspect and many people continue to be surprised to find out about the existence of MAHS and MAM. The newspaper and television coverage of last year are examples of efforts to bring greater awareness of our organization, and the new website being launched this year will surely expand interest in our mission of preserving Maine's rich aviation heritage.

Besides all you faithful members, numbering around 140, we need to expand the ranks of our membership with some new faces and age groups, especially recognizing that portion of our members reside afar. One initiative now getting serious attention, which could renew the energy of past and present members, and bring in new members, would be to acquire a project aircraft for outside static display. The obvious publicity and the opportunity for volunteers to play a role in working on a vintage aircraft as it is prepared for display in a former Maine unit's paint scheme could be the impetus that helps us grow, while having the added benefit of becoming more financially sound.

I encourage all members to express your thought and ideas for: 1) growing our membership, 2) fund raising activities, or 3) other initiatives that would benefit the museum and/or MAHS near term. As for members unable to attend our monthly meetings, just forward any ideas to me or any Board Member. Through the efforts of all of you can make this a memorable and fun year, and remember what we are able to accomplish will become our contribution to Maine's Early Aviation history of the 21st Century.

## Officers

<b>President:</b> Robert Umberger, Jr.	<a href="mailto:rumberger@maine.rr.com">rumberger@maine.rr.com</a>
<b>Vice President:</b> John Miller	<a href="http://Vintagewings.cs.com">Vintagewings.cs.com</a>
<b>Treasurer:</b> Joe Quinn	<a href="mailto:1966corvair@gmail.com">1966corvair@gmail.com</a>
<b>Recording Secretary:</b> Bill Townsend	<a href="mailto:townsend10@verizon.net">townsend10@verizon.net</a>
<b>Corresponding Secretary:</b> Al Cormier	<a href="mailto:acormier3@roadrunner.com">acormier3@roadrunner.com</a>

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Check our new web page at:

**www.maineairmuseum.org**

Maine Aviation Archaeology at:

**www.mewreckchasers.com**

Greenville Fly-In at:

**www.seaplanefly-in.org**

The Great State of Maine Air Show does not have their site up at this time but info can be found at:

**www.machiasimprint.com**

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## Buy a Brick and Support the Maine Air Museum

The Maine Air Museum is proud to announce the new Memorial Pathway Program. To successfully carry out and reach the museum vision, and to help refurbish Building 98, the Maine Air Museum needs the financial support of businesses and public community leaders and individual private citizens. To this end, the museum board has established a means for receiving your monetary donation and recognizing your gift permanently in the museum pathway and wall of honor. These donations are fully deductible.

Details available on our web site: [www.maineairmuseum.org](http://www.maineairmuseum.org) or from the museum by request.

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### Now available:

***Memoirs: With an Angel By My Side*** by member Alfred Cormier.

His flying life as told by Al and available exclusively from the Maine Air Museum.

\$16.00 at the museum, \$20.00 via mail. To order, call or email the museum.

*"...a great story by a member of the Greatest Generation. Exceptionally good reading, riveting to the end."* Bill Townsend  
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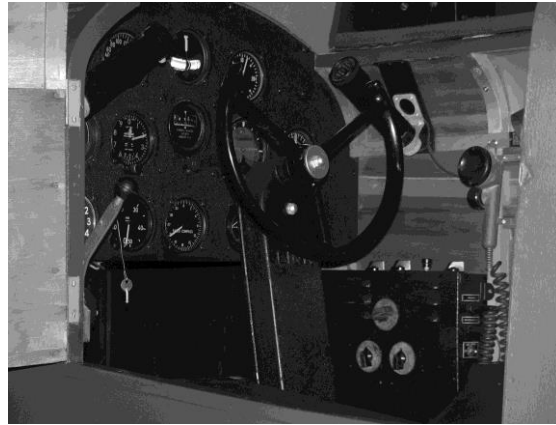
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**From the museum photo files:**

**P-47s at Dow Field, Bangor**

## AT THE MUSEUM

# THE LINK TRAINER



In the early days of aviation most flying was done during daylight hours and when the weather was good. Pilots could see the ground and fly accordingly.

Problems arose when the weather was bad and when they attempted to fly at night. After losing sight of the ground they often became disoriented and many accidents occurred. Flying by the seat of your pants became hazardous.

Pilots such as Jimmy Doolittle pioneered flying relying on instruments and he performed the first take off in an aircraft relying solely on the aircraft's instruments.

There was a need to develop a training device to sharpen those skills. To fill this need, in 1927, Mr. Link, who owned a piano and organ factory in Binghamton, NY developed the first Link Trainer and similar, but more sophisticated versions are still used today. He patented his first trainer in 1929.

This is a 1944 Army Air Forces Model AN-T-18. Later versions did away with the wings and tail assembly.

The Instructor directs the student pilot over the intercom and after the session the "track" the student pilot "flew" would be printed on a map by the triangular "Bug" at the far end of the instructor's table

After a particularly taxing session in the "Link", many a student pilot would emerge exhausted and perspiring heavily, especially if he or she had "crashed".

Pilots, in order to obtain an "Instrument Rating" spend many hours in trainers such as this and then "graduate" to perform similar exercises under the watchful eye of a flight instructor in an aircraft.

In the cockpit can be seen a white card which is the instrument landing procedure for Dow Air Force Base near the end of WW II.

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## UPCOMING AIR SHOWS AND FLY-INS

The annual Greenville Seaplane Fly-In. September 4-7

The Great State of Maine Air Show at the Brunswick Naval Air Station September 15-16

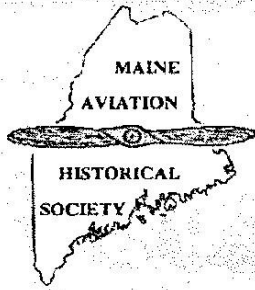
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## NEXT MEETING

The March meeting at Sanford was cancelled due to the predicted bad weather. The April meeting will be held at the same location: At the Southern Maine Aviation's hangar located on the West Ramp side of the Sanford Airport. The agenda includes a tour of the WWII PBV stored in the hangar.

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**NEWSLETTER: We are just about out of articles for the Dirigo Flyer. We have a few short items but are now in need of actual historical articles. Bill Townsend, Editor. [townsend10@verizon.net](mailto:townsend10@verizon.net) or via mail at 12 Spring St. Bar Harbor, ME 04609-1330**



## Maine Aviation Historical Society Maine Air Museum \* Membership Form

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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Family	\$35 annual	Newsletter, Museum Admission
Corporate	\$100 annual	Newsletter, Museum Admission
Supporting	\$100 annual	Newsletter, Museum Admission, .
Lifetime	\$500* * 2 annual \$250 payments	Newsletter, Lifetime Membership Number, Museum Admission,

We need volunteers-docents, mechanics, maintenance, librarians and exhibit specialists, etc.

Please call me. I want to be active in the organization.

I cannot join now, but would like to help. I am enclosing a check for \$\_\_\_\_\_.

Contributions over \$20 are tax deductible within the limits of the law.

I wish to support and obtain membership by purchasing a memorial brick.

**DIRIGO FLYER**  
**MAINE AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY**  
**PO BOX 2641**  
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