

Dirigo Flyer

Newsletter of the Maine Aviation Historical Society

PO Box 2641, Bangor, Maine 04402 • 207-941-6757 • 1-877-280-MAHS (in state)

www.maineairmuseum.org mam@maineairmuseum.org

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Nov. – Dec. 2011

Welcome to the final issue of 2011. Publication is running a little late, as usual, but with the holiday season behind us it is time to get back on schedule, catch up with the newsletter and start to think of spring which will be here before we know it. Mother nature tends to make fools of us and we had cancelled our winter meetings due to the uncertainty of traveling in Maine in the winter months. Of course we have had generally bare roads and spring-like weather instead.

In this issue we are going to excerpt an article from John D. Davis' new book *Early Wings Over Maine*.

John D. Davis, author of this wonderful book, is a lifelong Maine resident and a member of the Maine Aviation Historical Society. John's background includes college teaching, professional consulting to government agencies and private industry, as well as being an accomplished writer and author, having published several other interesting books on a variety of topics. John credits his late father, Elwyn L. Davis, with being the driving inspiration for this book and for actually photographing some of Maine's early aviation events. The dedication of *Early Wings Over Maine* to Elwyn L. Davis could not be put more simply: "He inspired John "to look to the skies".

John does an exquisite job of transporting the reader with words and photos from the early days through to a time when Maine-based aviation was the equal of that achieved by many other states. This book will appeal to anyone who has an interest in Maine whether an aviation enthusiast, a student of history or even an inquisitive casual reader.



Maine's First Airplane Flight

John D. Davis

The first airplane flight in Maine took place August 9, 1911, when a young pilot name St. Croix Johnstone – more frequently known as “Stone”, flew his Moissant monoplane some twenty-five miles up and down the Kennebec River Valley in Augusta. The next day, August 10, the *Bangor Daily News* gave this rather brief note about the event:

“Augusta, Me., Aug. 9 –St. Croix Johnstone sailed a Moissant monoplane 25 miles up and down the Kennebec Valley late today and gave Maine People their first glimpse of an aeroplane in action. The ascent was very deep (steep) owing to choppy winds in the valley and Johnstone negotiated it with difficulty. At a height of 1500 feet, he sailed for about half an hour and then returned to the starting point. Ten thousand people saw the exhibition.”



The account for the same event given in the *Bangor Daily Commercial* on August 10 was more informative, a portion of which is quoted here:

“Mgr. Hawks ordered the baseball field cleared at 4:55, announcing that Johnstone needed all the space in starting and landing. The crowd scattered. Out came the machine from the tent and interest in the horse races was at a discount. It was placed in position on the baseball diamond and soon after 5 o’clock the engine was started and down the gradual descent it went, faster than any ballplayer ever sprinted for second base. The machine failed to leave the ground, however, and when well down in centerfield Johnstone shut off the power and came to a standstill. The crowd was kept back and the craft wheeled back to the starting place and at 5:20 another start was made.

“This time it was a success. Down by second base the monoplane was seen to leave the ground and in a few seconds was creeping higher and higher into the air, in a southerly direction, with the crowd cheering...Johnstone shaped his course out over the Kennebec, turning so as to pass over the insane hospital buildings and circle the tall chimney at the institution. Circling and gradually ascending, he re-crossed the river, after having given the eastsiders a view of his craft and back over the trotting park he came. The crowd again cheered him.

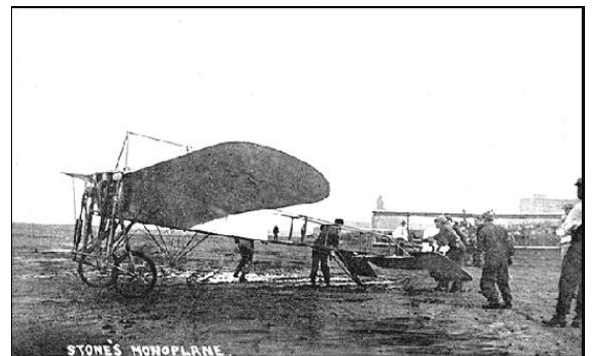
“ Johnstone navigated about in a direction that took him above the city, then turning came down the river and again appeared in view to the people on the track as a mere speck above the trees on the state grounds north of the park and on the west side of the river.

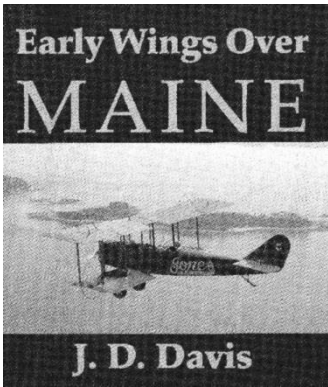
“Nearer and nearer it came until the noise of the engine was again heard and he began his descent. It was a perfect one, Johnstone judging his distance nicely and striking the ground within a few feet of where he started on the ball diamond. The velocity of the machine carried it into the field, but ready hands were there and it was soon at a standstill.”

It is difficult today to imagine the full impact of the event. Conceivably, nearly everyone attending the affair had probably never seen an airplane fly before. It was a truly fascinating moment and with it the aviation age came to Maine.

Johnstone had learned to fly in France, then went to Havana, Cuba, where he was the first to fly around the wreck of the battleship Maine. After returning to the United States, he joined a group of travelling French aviators maintained by Alfred Moissant and participated in demonstration tours around the United States. Two weeks after making the inspiring airplane demonstration in Augusta, Maine, St. Croix Johnstone drowned when his aircraft crashed in Lake Michigan while performing at the 1911 Chicago International Aviation Meet.

...Photos from Library of Congress and *Ancient Aviators*.





Early wings over Maine by John Davis

Price \$24.95 (includes sales tax)

Shipping \$4.00

In stock and ready for delivery

Send check payable to MAHS to:

MAHS

P.O.Box2641

Bangor, Maine 04402-2641

Also available through the museum:

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Another exclusive book from the Maine Aviation Historical Society. Softbound, 134 pages, 151 illustrations.

\$20.00 (plus \$4.00 postage and handling). To order, call or email the museum.

President's Message

This month of January is the release of Red Tails about the Tuskegee Airmen. The first all Black Squadron of the Army Air Corp. We in Maine are lucky to have one of those men. His name is James Sheppard. If you ever get a chance to see his speech, I must say I recommend it. He will be doing a couple talks this month throughout Maine.

Happy New Year to all the members of the Maine Aviation Historical Society / Maine Air Museum. I hope this year I can bring new life back to the Museum and group. I have been working on a couple of items. First of all I have been in talks with the person working for Pinkfoot.com about a SBS box. This person is willing to help us get it set up at the museum and pay for all the fee's to get it running. He is also willing to make a link for the museum, so people could go to our website and track flights going over Maine. I will let people know when this will take place & will start running.

The facebook page is starting to bring more people's attention to the museum. I am sending three membership forms this week to people who are interested in joining the museum. We should add pictures of aircraft and little bits of history to the site. I do post the membership link, and the Brick Link often.

We need more people to join the MAM. I am asking to see if everyone can try to get one person to join or rejoin, If we do this we could double our membership this year. If you talk with people share the website. If you know people that like aviation history, direct them toward the facebook page or share with them the mission of the MAM. Membership to the museum also makes a great gift year around.

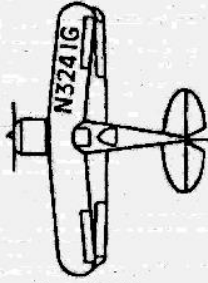
I would like to thank Mike Cornett, Les Shaw, Jim Nelligan & Hank Marois for all the hard work each summer. This year Les, Mike & Jim are taking more time for themselves. We are asking members to donate their time and come help out at the museum. The more people we have willing to help out, the less each individual will have to do. I know we all want to keep the museum open to the public, and the only way to be sure this happens is with volunteers. Anything helps whether it's one day or an entire weekend. Please email Les Shaw with dates and times you can help. We will add you to the list. There are so many different ways to help out also, running the counter, building new displays, redesigning old displays, and helping with fund raising. We need your help. I will be going over more ways to help the museum in upcoming newsletters. Stay tuned!

Mike Cornett told us something at the meeting. If you happen to go into places for old stuff and see aviation items, think about the museum, take a picture of it and send it to me at targete2007@yahoo.com. I will get someone to see what it is and if it is anything the museum would want. For example, I went to a place near

Hollis & Buxton. I would ride by on the way to my sister's house, and I would see this item leaning up against other things. It caught my eye so I stopped in and looked at it. I found out it is a drop tank for some kind of fighter. I went to the man and ask how much it was, and he told me \$700. I told him that I work with the Maine Aviation Museum and would he be interested in donating it. He said not right now as he would like to see but come spring, if it's still there we can talk about donation or lower cost. I will take a couple of pictures of it next time I go out that way.

Again I hope everyone had a great New Year so far and I am looking forward to talking with many of our members soon.

Scott Grant, President



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JOHN M. MILLER

Election of Officers 2012

The following were elected:

Scott Grant...President

Board of Directors: Al Cormier, Robert Littlefield, Hank Marois, Jim Nelligan, Pete Noddin.

Seen around the Museum

If you have visited the museum then you know it sits right beside the taxiway and runway at Bangor International Airport. It has become a favorite spot for locals to stop during lunch hours and to bring kids to sit and watch the flights coming and going. With Bangor being a first stop in the U.S. after coming across the Atlantic it is possible to see a good array of civilian and military, including foreign military, aircraft.

Here is a photo taken from the museum recently:



This is a Brazilian P-3 parked behind the museum. It looks pretty well used if you consider the paint job.

Follow-up

As a follow-up to the lead story, perhaps you are wondering what became of St. Croix Johnstone...This being from the *Bangor Daily Commercial* of August 16, 1911

“Two young aviators, of Pittsburg and St. Croix Johnstone of Chicago lost their lives at the international aviation meet at

Chicago, Tuesday. In dying, both revealed the frailty of the craft in which two more aviators were curving and gliding about in the air with scarcely a pause for the deaths of their contemporaries.

Death in both cases was due to unexpected accidents, probably the result of unsuspected defects in the mechanism of the machines and was in no way caused by the carelessness or lack of responsibility of the drivers. Badger, a wealthy youth, careened to his death in a pit in the aviation field. There had been a flaw in one of the wings of the propeller of the Baldwin machine he drove. Centrifugal force broke the propeller, upset the delicate equilibrium of the machine and Badger dashed 100 feet to the bottom of the pit, his neck being broken.

Johnstone fell 500 feet under his engine and was drowned as a result an equally unsuspected defect. Caught under the heavy engine in the Moissant monoplane, he was carried deep into Lake Michigan and his body was not brought to the surface until an hour later. Badger lived for three-quarters of an hour after he had been extracted from the remains of his engine. He did not recover consciousness and died almost at once after he had reached a hospital. His death was the first serious accident of the meet although 35 flyers have dipped and glided in Chicago for three days, and experts say several similar accidents have been narrowly averted.

Johnstone's accident was due, according to expert aviators, to a similar unsuspected flaw in the mechanism of his aeroplane. Just what it was probably will never be known as the engine is deep in the lake, and the wood and canvas of the plane were scattered by the tremendous impact with the surface of the water. Johnstone's actual fall was witnessed by his young wife, although it was not until a half hour later, that she was informed of his death. As the monoplane faltered in mid-air, then crashed downward to the surface of the lake, the young aviator's wife, who had been following his flight closely, grasped a mechanic's arm and exclaimed in fear: "Oh! Oh! Pity, he's falling. My boy will be killed."

Wives of half a dozen aviators whose attention had been diverted on the plunging machine that was to carry the second victim of the day to his death, rushed to Mrs. Johnstone's aide and as the machine hurled into the lake and out of sight, they tried to assure her that Johnstone would suffer nothing worse than a ducking.

"Possibly not!" exclaimed the fear-stricken wife, "but you could see the way the machine plunged, that St. Croix had completely lost control of it. Oh! Why don't they hurry up and get him out. Some of you men must take me to a boat so I can get out and help him."

Reassured by this information which had been deliberately invented to calm the fears of the aviator's wife, she went back to her hotel and hurriedly laid out dry apparel for her husband. For half an hour or more, she waited, and then a member of the Johnstone family took her word of the aviator's death. The young wife was prostrated.

Here is a shot of jetBlue's Embraer 190-100 named "Blue Warrior" landing at KPWM (Portland)



Meetings:

The February and March meetings have been cancelled due to the likelihood of inclement weather and difficult traveling.

Check our website for up-to-date information about upcoming meetings and occasional field trips.

www.maineairmuseum.org

Maine Air Museum staffing

As always, volunteers are needed. Can you spare a few hours to help us out? If so, drop me a note via email mam@maineairmuseum.org or call the museum and leave a message. We do need your help.

Association Officers

President: Scott Grant targete2007@yahoo.com

Vice President: John Miller, Newburgh, ME vintagewings@cs.com

Recording Secretary: Les Shaw les989@yahoo.com

Corresponding Secretary: Al Cormier acormier3@roadrunner.com

Treasurer: Joe Quinn, Levant, ME, 1966corvair@gmail.com

. The Maine Air Museum is located at the 98 Maine Avenue adjacent to the Bangor International Airport

44° 48' 2.10" North 68° 48' 36.02" West



Maine Aviation Historical Society Maine Air Museum * Membership Form

Name: _____

Address: _____

City, State, Zip: _____

Special Interests: _____

Phone: _____ Email: _____

**All dues expire on
June 30th of each year.
If joining mid-year,
pay \$2.00 for each
remaining month**

Annual membership
includes six newsletters!

Mail payment to:
Maine Aviation
Historical Society
PO Box 2641
Bangor, ME 04402-
2641

Membership	Dues	Benefits
Regular	\$25 annual	Newsletter, Museum Admission
Family	\$35 annual	Newsletter, Museum Admission
Corporate	\$100 annual	Newsletter, Museum Admission
Supporting	\$100 annual	Newsletter, Museum Admission,
Lifetime	\$500*	Newsletter, Lifetime Membership Number, Museum Admission,
	* 2 annual \$250 payments	

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
BANGOR, ME 04402-2641