

DIRIGO FLYER

Vol. III, No. 3 March 1995

Newsletter of the Maine Aviation Historical Society • 101 Monroe Avenue, Westbrook, Maine 04092 • 207-854-9972

February Meeting Highlights

Among those attending the March 11th meeting at the Portland International Jetport were Paul Strout, Scott Grant, Jim and James Chichetto, T.K. Dudley, Rob Rohr, Butch Beaver, Norm Houle, Leo Boyle, Jack Denison, Cliff Haines, Neal Strange, Wayne Briggs and Clay Carkin.

MEETING HIGHLIGHTS

Naturally, most members brought interesting items to show or to donate to the Society. Butch Beaver from Pittsfield donated four 1942 issues of *Collier's Magazine*, which brought back the old days for some of us. Aviation stories and ads filled the magazine, which seemed to be supported by cigarette and tobacco ads. Norm Houle had the life story of a Great Lakes from the FAA. Neal Strange had a great EAA book, *Yesterday's Wings*. Wayne Briggs brought some great photos of Navy aircraft which will form the basis for a display board for our display at the Great State O' Maine Air Show this summer.

Leo Boyle passed around a picture of a seaplane float, the first in the nation, built at Norway, Maine. Consensus seemed to locate it on Lake Penneesseewassee on Route 117. Max Calderwood had sent information on Glider pick-ups (loaded with lobsters) from Old Orchard Beach shortly after World War II. Does anyone have any information or pictures on this unique operation?

There is nothing new to report on Sanford. T-shirts will be available in June, more details later on sizes and prices.

INFORMATION, PLEASE

Norm Houle asked about the Austin Airport, no longer existing, in West Washington. Supposedly, three or four airplanes burned up in a hangar fire there. If anyone has more information, please let us know.

Leo gave a slide show on early aviation at Old Orchard Beach, and the Trans-Atlantic attempts that were made from there. Next time, I promise to get the slide in right side to (and up)! Hope you enjoyed it.

FINANCIAL NEWS

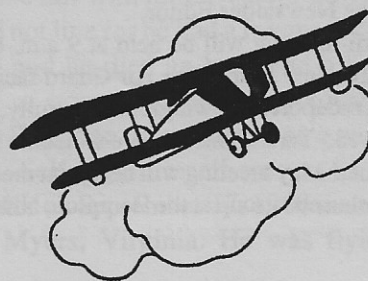
The Treasurer's Report shows over \$800.00 in the bank. We keep gaining new members, and over two-thirds of the members have paid their 1995 dues. If you had a red dot on your address label for the last *Dirigo Flyer*, you will not be receiving this issue. Your check for \$20.00 will reinstate your membership and continue your subscription to the *Dirigo Flyer*, including this issue as well. We need your continuing support to improve the *Dirigo Flyer* and pursue our upcoming searches, exciting expeditions, support of air shows and finding a suitable home for our growing collection of books, magazines, photos and aviation artifacts.

We especially need new members who live here in Maine. Out-of-staters seem to appreciate the value of what we are doing and the reading in the *Dirigo Flyer*. If everyone will try to get one new member, we can double our membership to 200 in 1996.

SHARE YOUR NEWS AND VIEWS

Have a great story, an interesting anecdote or a different photo? Send them along or give me a call. We need these items to make your *Dirigo Flyer* more interesting. We also still need photos for the 1996 edition of the *Flying Down East* calendar. Photo selection has already begun, so get them in soon.

You should be receiving a ballot soon from the Maine Pilots Association. One of the questions is about *Windsock* and its format. We favor the current improved magazine format, but be sure and vote for your choice.



IMPORTANT APRIL MEETING!

The April meeting will be held on Saturday, April 8th at 9 a.m. at the Congregational Church in Pittsfield. Take Exit 38 from Rt. 95. Turn right into town if coming from the south; turn left if from the north. The church is one mile from the exit on the right. You can't miss it.

This will be a most important meeting at which we will try to finalize our plans for the Big Spruce Mountain expedition. As most of you know, Oscar Blue and Leo Boyle have taken photos on three flights over the mountain in May, September and October 1994. We have identified what appears to be a man-made object on the eastern slope of the mountain. Oscar has been able to pick out the same object in the 1955 photos kindly supplied to us by the Sewall Co. of Old Town, via Clark Thompson. We are currently awaiting an enlarged stereo copy of the appropriate photo. These photos were taken in 1955 (40 years ago) from an altitude of 1320 feet. Oscar will be there on the 8th with the photos and the topographical marks, and he will fill us in on the history of the flight, why he thinks it might be there, and what we may expect to possibly find. This should be a most exciting subject — and an even more exciting expedition. Jim Chichetto will also update us on the Staceyville expedition to the *Sea Fury* crash and when it might take place.

JOINT MAY MEETING AT AIRPORT FLEA MARKET

The May meeting will be held on May 20th and 21st at the Hampton, NH Airport Flea Market. Mike Hart, the airport owner, has kindly invited us, along with the New Hampshire and Massachusetts Aviation Historical Societies, to set up a display together. This is the 50th anniversary of the Hampton Airport and the 19th Annual Flea Market. If you enjoy airplane people, a chance to meet very interesting people, take pictures of great antique airplanes and just have a great old time, be sure to put this on your schedule. Volunteers are needed to help man the booth for us. Let Leo or Norm Houle know.

NHAHS NEWS

Norm Houle, Leo Boyle and Jack Denison attended the second meeting of the New Hampshire Aviation Historical Society in Concord, NH on March 18th. They seem to have the nucleus of a great organization. Harold Buker, New Hampshire Aeronautics Director, will be the President, John Wherrall of North Hampton will be Secretary, and Dick Harrington of Hancock will be Newsletter Editor.

Their April meeting will be held at 9 a.m. on Saturday, April 15th at the New Hampshire Air Guard facility at Pease International Tradeport in Newington. Hopefully, there will be a tour of a KC-135 Tanker. MAHS are welcome to attend. As noted above, their May meeting will be a joint meeting with us and the Massachusetts group at the Hampton, NH Airport Flea Market.

MAHS MEMBERSHIP HITS 100!

We have five more new members and have now reached the magical number of 100. Every member get a member and let's see how fast we can get to 200.

- 96. **Richard N. Pann** (PWM '30s-'50s, Port 'o Maine Airport)
2447 Yates Dr., Augusta, GA 30906
- 97. **George P. Cantara** (Maine Aviation)
8 Evanthia Dr., Biddeford, ME 04005 207-284-5758
- 98. **Robert "Butch" Beaver** (Building Viewport)
52 Hunnewell Ave., Pittsfield, ME 04967 207-487-5709
- 99. **Karen A. Baldauski** (Becoming Pilot)
Hammonds Grove, RR 2, #586, Manchester, ME 04351
43 Sewall St., Augusta, ME 04330 (207) 621-1980 (B)
- 100. **Dick Jackson** (Antiques)
156 Rochester Hill Rd., Rochester, NH 03867
(603) 332-7115

THANK YOU!

We want to thank the following for their donations to the MAHS. These items are for everyone to use, and if you want to borrow a book, photo, etc., contact Leo Boyle at (207) 854-9972.

- Butch Beaver** 4 1942 issues of Collier's Magazine
- Wayne Briggs** 8x10 U.S. Navy photos for BNAS display
- Neal Strange** 1935-36 membership list for the Maine Aero Club
Anyone who wants a copy, let me know.
Great for checking to see if any are still alive or have descendants.
- Max Calderwood** Max has sent me sample copies of the WWII indices mentioned in the last *Dirigo Flyer*. These are great and should ease your research job.
- Lyndon Fletcher Papers** I have been through one box out of six crammed with Lyndon's notes plus newspaper and magazine clippings. Since these were just thrown in boxes, I am trying to file them by years, and then we can sort them out by subjects. Luckily, almost all of them are dated, so they can be correctly filed — a massive (but fun!) task!



The First Fatalities

by Leo Boyle

The dubious honor of becoming the first aviation fatality in the state of Maine was to fall to Charles Oliver Jones of New York. Originally from Cincinnati, he came to Hammondsport, New York to join Alexander Graham Bell and Glenn Curtiss of the Aerial Experiment Association. They built various aeroplanes to the designs of the different members with varying degrees of success. Among the most successful was the June Bug, usually flown by Glenn Curtiss. Evolved from Jones' ideas, it made record flights of short distances, finally winning the Scientific American prize for the first plane to fly 30 miles per hour into the wind.

Jones was also interested in lighter-than-air flight and built a Strobel airship which he named Boomerang. On June 16, 1908, he made his first ascension at Hammondsport. This airship was 95 feet long and 20 feet in diameter. A second bag in the rear was designed to carry refill hydrogen gas. Hanging beneath the bag was a bamboo frame designed to carry up to three people and a 40 h.p. motor driving a propellor. It was claimed that it could make 75 miles per hour.

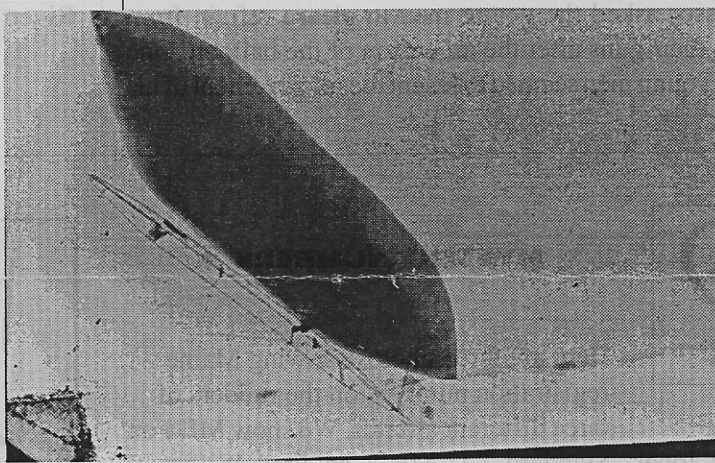
On his first flight, he flew over the County Farm to Watkins, 26 miles away. He circled to Monterey and flew to Savanna, six miles from Bath. Here the flight ended when he hit a tree and tore a six foot gash in the gas bag. In July, he moved to Palisades Park to give exhibitions near New York City. Scarcely a week went by in which he did not have some new hair-raising adventure. In one trip this daring sky pilot fell into the Hudson River from his airship and had to be rescued. His friends cautioned him about his utter fearlessness, but he was determined to continue.

Soon he landed his airship on highly charged electric wires but escaped without injury. On another occasion he was attempting a flight from Palisades Park and his air bag broke away prematurely. Narrowly escaping being dashed to pieces, he rode his airship across country toward Long Island Sound, finally making a safe landing at Throgg's Neck. Four days later, he made a successful flight to Hackensack, New Jersey. Adventures continued, for on July 26th, in the evening, he hit the trees again, punctured his gas bag and broke the frame.

In August, he loaded his airship on the Portland boat

and arrived here to fulfill an engagement at the Central Maine Fair in Waterville. He called on the newspaper of fices and explained how his airship, unlike others that had fallen, was perfectly safe. He was at the fairgrounds on Monday, August 31st, the opening day of the fair. On Wednesday, September 2nd, he planned to make a flight at 3 PM. High winds prevented this flight, but by 4:30 PM the wind had moderated and he was ready. A very cold night Monday night had caused his air bag to contract and a number of leaks had developed. These were repaired on Tuesday, but high winds had prevented his ascension.

Twenty-five thousand spectators at the fair thrilled when the airship rose slowly into the air and climbed to 500 feet. The airship had just passed out of the fairgrounds when a gasp arose from the crowd as a small



*Charles Oliver Jones' Airship "Boomerang"
at Waterville, Maine just before the fire
that caused his death.*

tongue of flame issued from under the gas bag in front of the motor. Many in the crowd tried to warn Jones of the danger but it was some time before he noticed the flames. He immediately pulled the rip cord on the gas bag to let the gas escape and enable him to get to earth. Too late, a burst of flame separated the frame from the gas bag.

Jones fell to the earth, the frame and motor landing on top of him, about a quarter mile from the fairgrounds. Among the first to reach him were his wife and child who were at the fair with him. Doctors at the scene were sure he could not live for he had a fractured spine and internal injuries, and he died an hour and a half later. He had planned to go on to Buddeck, Nova Scotia with Lt. Thomas Selfridge to work on a new aeroplane with Dr. Bell. Lt. Selfridge himself was to be killed only two weeks later on September 17, 1908 in an aeroplane crash at Fort Myers, Virginia. He was flying with Orville

Wright who was demonstrating his plane for the U.S. Army.

Less than a year later Maine was to record its second aviation fatality in Portland. A favorite sport at celebrations in those days was to ascend in a balloon and drop from it in a parachute. Professor Joseph LaRoux of Portland, a well-known aeronaut, had been hired to give two parachute drops on the Eastern Promenade to celebrate the Fourth of July in 1909. (The Fourth was on a Sunday, so the celebration was held on Monday, the fifth.)

LaRoux in turn had hired James Corcoran, 28, of New Bedford, Massachusetts to make the afternoon jump. A huge crowd had gathered on the Promenade and some young fellows had been firing off revolvers to frighten the girls. Since the arranged signal for Corcoran to jump was to be LaRoux's firing of two shots, the professor asked the young men to please refrain from firing their guns after the ascension of the balloon. One of the young men seemed to resent the infringement of his

rights, especially on the Fourth.

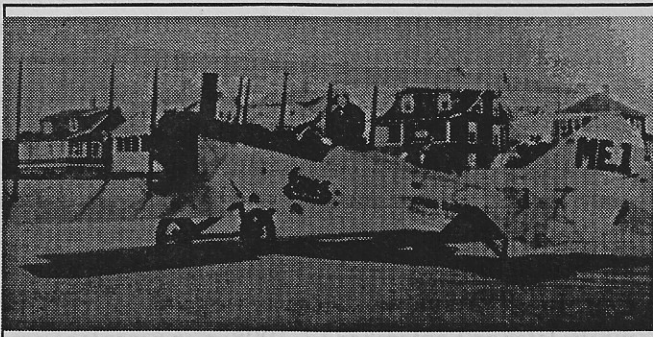
Shortly after Corcoran ascended, and while at a height of only 300 feet, the young man fired off his six-shooter. Corcoran was seen to look down in surprise at the crowd, and then he released his parachute. Needless to say, because of the low height, the parachute did not have time to deploy and Corcoran fell in a heap to the ground. A horse-drawn ambulance rushed him to the Maine General Hospital where he was dead on arrival. It would have been his fifteenth parachute jump. The pistol shooter was never apprehended.

Undeterred by this catastrophe, Professor LaRoux attempted an ascension later in the day. Almost as unlucky, his balloon drifted low over the trees and houses of Munjoy Hill, hit a tree and fell to the ground. LaRoux was injured, but he recovered. He was well-known in the area, he and his wife making many successful jumps from Riverton Park as early as 1896.

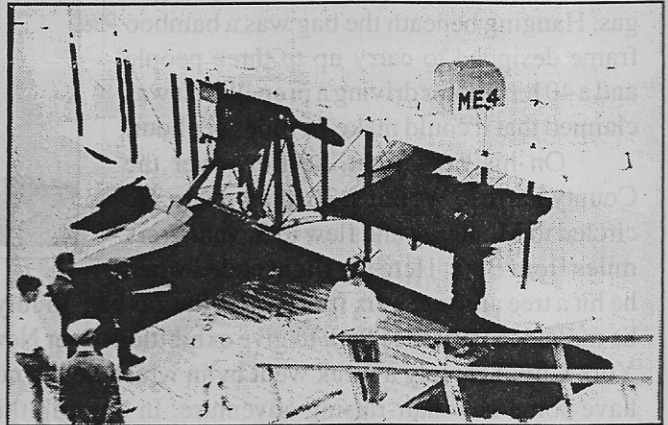


MYSTERY NUMBERS

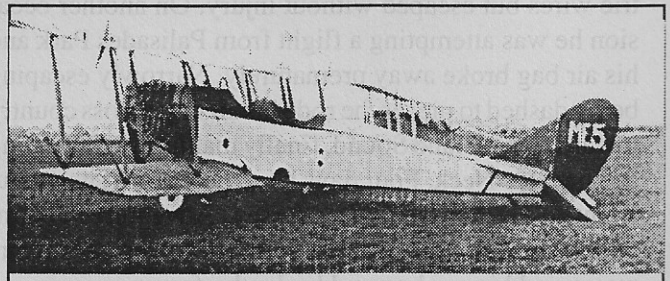
Here are three photos showing Maine registration numbers on the rudders of three different aircraft. We show ME 1 on Harry Jones' Standard J-1; ME 4 on Fred Williams' Curtiss MF-2 Seagull, and ME 5 on a Curtiss JN-4C Canuck. All of these pictures were probably taken about 1924-25. Does anyone know about these Maine registrations, and what other ones there were (there must have been an ME 2 and ME 3). How long did this system last, and was there a list of all the numbers? *Help!*



Harry Jones' Standard J-1, ME 1, 1925.



Fred Williams' Curtiss MF-2, Seagull, ME 4.



Curtiss JN-4C Canuck, ME 5, c. 1929.

Upcoming MAHS Meetings

April 8	9 a.m.	Pittsfield-Augusta Area
May 20, 21		Hampton (NH) Airport Flea Market *
June 10	9 a.m.	TBA
July 1, 2	9 a.m.	Military Air Show, Owls Head Transportation Museum *
July 22, 23	9 a.m.	Great State o' Maine Air Show, Brunswick Naval Air Station *
August 12	9 a.m.	TBA
September 9, 10	9 a.m.	Greenville Seaplane Fly-In, Greenville, Maine *
October 19	9 a.m.	TBA
November 11	9 a.m.	TBA
December 9	9 a.m.	TBA

* Indicates that we will have a table and display at these events.

All these upcoming Maine Aviation Historical Society meetings are tentative and subject to change. The definite ones are July 1 & 2 at Owls Head, July 22 & 23 at Brunswick, and September 9 & 10 at Greenville.

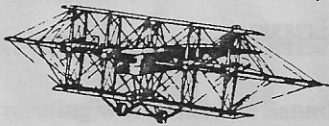
Calendar of Events

April 2		Flea Market & Swap Meet, Quonset Air Museum, North Kingston, RI
April 8		Annual Meeting, New England Air Museum, Chris Terry, Canada, Speaker
April 9-15		Sun 'n Fun, Lakeland, Florida
April 15	9 a.m.	NHAHS Meeting, Pease IT, Newington, NH
May 20		Walter J. Boyne Lecture, New England Air Museum
May 20-21		Hampton Flea Market, Hampton (NH) Airport - ME, MA, NHAHS Joint Meeting
May 28	10 a.m.	Air Show and Ford Festival, Owls Head
June 3-4		Mid-Atlantic Air Museum WWII Weekend, Gabreski and Morgan
June 4	10 a.m.	Air Show, Convertible and Custom Show, Owls Head
June 10		1st MPA Fly-In, Belfast Airport
June 10-11		Hanscom AFB Open House, Thunderbirds, Bedford, MA
June 17-18	10 a.m.	Maine State Soap Box Derby, Owls Head
July 1-2	10 a.m.	Military Air Show, Owls Head
July 9	10 a.m.	Air Show and 50s-60s, Owls Head
July 22-23	9 a.m.	Great State o' Maine Air Show, Brunswick Naval Air Station, Thunderbirds
July 22-23	10 a.m.	Air Show and Truck and Tractor Meet, Owls Head
July 27-Aug. 2		EAA Fly-In Convention, Oshkosh, WI
August 5-6	10 a.m.	Aerobatic Show and Transportation Rally, Owls Head
August 10-13		Sentimental Journey, Lock Haven, PA
August 12		Waterville, N.S. Fly-In
August 18-20		Great Falls Balloon Festival, Lewiston-Auburn, ME
August 18-20		Wings of Eagles Air Show, Batavia, NY
September 9-10		Greenville, ME Seaplane Fly-In
October 8		Fall Flying Finale, Owls Head
October 13-15		31st Northeast Aero Historians Convention, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada
October 22		Great Fall Auction, Owls Head

As we get dates, other events will be added. Let us know what *you* know.

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Renewal

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Maine Aviation Historical Society

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NEXT MEETING:
Sat., April 8th - 9 a.m.
Congregational Church
Pittsfield, ME