



# DIRIGO FLYER

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

## Stanley Boynton Rockland's Adopted Air Hero

By Steve Morrison

It was November 9, 1930, and it would have been a typical quiet Sunday afternoon except there was an air of excitement and anticipation which had been building for the past several days. Something was about to happen that would put Rockland, Maine on the map. It was 2:00 p.m. in the afternoon and a large crowd had gathered at the Curtiss-Wright Air Field. By today's standards it was not much of an airport, but in 1930 it was considered one of the best airports in Maine carrying several hundreds of passengers a year to the islands in Penobscot Bay and daily flights to Portland. There was just one runway that ran East/West. On the North side of the runway was a recently constructed hangar.

Flying was still considered somewhat of a novelty but crowds of that size didn't gather on a chilly fall afternoon just to watch airplanes land and take off. They were waiting to celebrate the return of Stanley Boynton from his record breaking trans-continental flight to Los Angeles. Boynton was scheduled to arrive at 2:00 p.m. and he was over due. It was a little after two when the airport manager Capt. Bill Wincapaw came out of his office and announced that Boynton had been delayed in Rutland, Vermont because of bad weather. His new time of arrival in Rockland was 4:00 p.m. Capt. Wincapaw had talked with Boynton on the telephone and advised him that the weather in Rockland was good and that if he flew directly up the coast he could find his way. But it was up to him whether or not he wanted to take the chance. The announcement caused an exodus and some of the organizers feared there would not be enough people for an adequate reception for such an important occasion.

As the afternoon wore on the people dwindled back. By four o'clock an even bigger crowd, estimated to be about 5,000, had gathered. Dusk comes early in November and the race was on. Who would arrive first: Stanley Boynton or darkness? Finally someone shouted and pointed towards the western skies. Off in the distance was the dim, tiny form of an airplane. A roar went



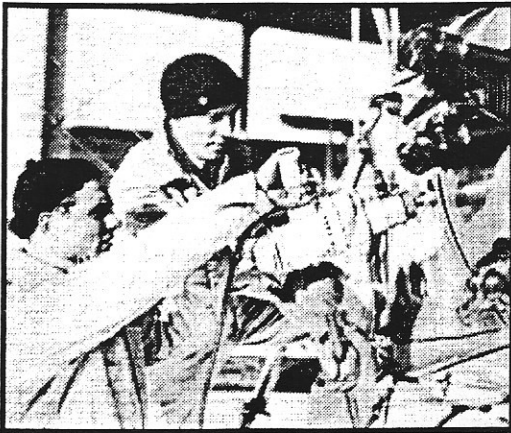
Stanley Boynton with his record-setting plane.

up. All eyes were strained toward the Cessna single engine plane as it circled the airport, turned onto final, and touched down in about the same spot it had taken off from six days before. But what a difference a few days can make. With dawn barely breaking only a few people were at the airport to see him off, including his aunt Mrs. Edward Spear, a Rockland resident whom Boynton stayed with when he was in Rockland. Boynton's mother was a Rockland native but the family now lived in Lexington, Mass. Less than a week ago hardly anyone knew who he was. Now his name was known coast to coast. The media tracked his mishaps and triumphs from the time he took off until he landed back in Rockland.

The field had been roped off and inside of the line were permitted only his relatives, local officials and members of the press. When Boynton climbed out of his plane Capt. Bill Wincapaw, the Airport Manager, presented him with a magnificent bouquet of chrysanthemums. He expected neither the flowers nor the crowd. He was even more startled when a couple of the local pilots hoisted him onto their shoulders and carried him into the hangar. The crowd, which had been model throughout the informal reception, made way for their returning air hero. Once inside the hangar Boynton was deluged with congratulations. Someone suggested that Boynton should say a few words to the crowd but as soon as he appeared at the door another roar went up. It was difficult for most of the people to see him much less hear him so he climbed a ladder in the hangar and told everyone how happy he was to be back in Rockland.

When the airport reception was over he was whisked away in Capt. Wincapaw's car to the local newspaper where he gave a complete account of his air journey. He arrived in Los Angeles at 4:40 p.m. on Saturday, November 1, 1930. From Rockland, Maine, it had taken him 24 hours, 2 minutes. When word of his flying to Los Angeles in record time reached home the telegrams

"Boynton," continued on page 2



## John B. Nichols

It is with regret that we report the passing of John B. Nichols in Brentwood, NH on October 31, 1997.

Mr. Nichols was a fixture in Maine aviation circles for many, many years. He was born in Danvers, Massachusetts and grew up there. As can be seen in the picture, Mr. Nichols was a student at the Curtiss-Wright Flying Service at the old Portland Airport in Scarborough in 1929-1930. He served in the U.S. Navy in WWII and spent most of his career as a pilot for the Maine Aeronautics Commission. In this position, he flew several Maine governors in the 1950s and '60s. He was one of the builders of Sky Haven Airport in Rochester, NH and was a life member of the Quiet Birdmen.

Our sincere regrets to his entire family.

"Boynton," continued from page 1

started pouring in. He later commented that he thought nearly every commercial business in Rockland had sent him their "Best Wishes."

Later he would graphically relate the story of his trip, how he flew blindly for two hours through fog. How he missed the Los Angeles Airport and instead landed at Dyer Airport just outside of L.A. And on his departure from Dyer Airport his engine quit and how he had to struggle with the controls while restarting his engine.

On his return trip leaving from Los Angeles he made Yuma, Arizona in 1 hour and 55 minutes. The flight took him over the San Bernardino mountains. The scenery impressed him. "I would have given a \$1,000 for the camera" he declared. From Yuma he followed the Imperial Valley. His destination was Phoenix, but he encountered two thunder and lightning storms which threw him off course and he lost his way. He spotted some railroad tracks below and realized he missed Phoenix and was approaching Tucson. It was getting dark and he needed to set the plane down somewhere. His first approach was a field but it was too narrow. The wings would not clear the trees. Holding a flashlight out of the window and controlling the throttle with the other hand he set the Cessna down in a rough field. Much to his surprise he learned the next morning that he had brought his plane to a stop within 200 feet of a 60 foot drop-off into a gravel pit.

Next day he flew to Mesa, Arizona, where he spent the night with a friend from Lexington who was attending a ranch school. The other students there treated him like a hero. Airports were few and far between in those days. He had to tie his plane down between two cactus plants.

Tuesday, 11/4/30. "I am here with my friend Phil Tower and will stay until I get a good fair wind," he wrote in a night letter to Capt. Wincapaw. "Landing in the dark last night did not hurt the ship as it happened to be a good field. I have the ship tied down near the school and will wire you when I am ready to start East. My total time from Los Angeles was 3 hours 30 minutes." Next day he flew to Phoenix to get some window glass for his plane. He returned that afternoon to Mesa where he spent the night.

Thursday, 11/6/30. He awoke and took stock of his surroundings. It was pretty country all right, but for the first time he was just a bit uneasy. Mountains seemed to be everywhere. One thing was for sure. He would never make the mistake of flying a single engine plane into this area again. He checked the

weather and plotted a course for Albuquerque, New Mexico. He would land in St. John just long enough to gas his plane up and than on to Albuquerque. It was an 8 hour and 11 minute trip. "I have learned one thing," he later told a friend, "navigation is the key to winning. It's not the fastest plane, but the one that flies the straightest."

Friday, 11/7/30. From the time he left Los Angeles he had been bucking strong headwinds. His average speed was 100 mph but on Friday, when he reached Wichita, he was challenged even more by severe gales. But much to the delight of an important spectator who happened to be at the airport, Boynton made a perfect stalled landing. He stepped out of the Cessna monoplane and was greeted by Clyde M. Cessna, manufacturer of the plane he was flying. Meeting Clyde Cessna wasn't the only fortunate thing that happened to Boynton that day. The wind took a turn for the better. From Wichita to Chicago he had a 55 mph wind in his back and was able to attain speeds of up to 205 mph.

Saturday, 11/8/30. He left Chicago at 11:30 a.m. for Detroit. The 205 mile trip would take him 1 hour and 25 minutes. Topping his tanks off, his next stop would be Rochester, New York, 1 hour and 38 minutes later.

Sunday, 11/9/30. He spent the night in Rochester, leaving the next morning at 11:25 am. "I couldn't see a thing," he would later relate. "It was so murky. All I could see up ahead was mountains which looked so black and fearsome." Someone suggested to him that he could cut 1 1/2 hours off his trip by ending it in New York, but he insisted on ending the journey where it began and he took off again heading South for Canajahorie. He was on the ground 55 minutes, just long enough to take on gasoline. The weather was closing in but he wanted to complete his record making journey that day if possible. He set down in Rutland, Vermont on a rough landing strip. After taking on more gasoline he took off again flying West of Ossipee. The weather had worsened and he was navigating now strictly by compass. "It became so bumpy that I thought the plane was coming apart." Again he found himself headed directly into a mountain. He changed his course and followed the valley finally sighting Ossipee Lake and then Sebago Lake.

As he turned East he knew he was on his final lap and he began to feel better. As he neared the coast the weather was lifting and he could see ahead for several miles. His spirits really

"Boynton," continued on page 4

## November Meeting

The November meeting was held at the General Aviation Terminal in Bangor on Saturday, November 17th. Despite the weather, 24 members showed up. The Treasurer's Report showed \$890.00 in the bank and membership up to 230 members. Jules Arel brought us up-to-date on the Museum Committee's hard work. The city of Bangor is drawing up the lease on the land. It should be ready the week of the 15th, at which time we will be able to review it and negotiate any changes with our attorney that we feel are necessary.

The Fund-raising Committee then briefed the members present about their meeting with three professional fund-raisers the previous Saturday. They outlined their proposals and their evaluation of the three presentations. Two of them recommended a feasibility study and the committee and the members present agreed that this is needed. It will take about three months, cost about \$10,000-12,000 and will tell us what our chances of success are and how the major fund-raising campaign needs to be refined. We are looking to raise about \$1.5 million for our building and an endowment fund to cover annual operating costs.

The members present agreed that the feasibility study was necessary. We then conducted our own feasibility study to see if we would be able to raise the funds necessary for it. A sheet of paper was passed around and all present put down the amount they would give by December 31, 1997 to fund this study. Bill Townsend added up the figures on the sheet and we found that among the 24 members present alone, well over sixty percent of the necessary funds had been pledged. The members then authorized the fund-raising committee to proceed with engaging a fund-raiser to conduct the feasibility study in January.

The meeting came to a delightful conclusion when ex-State Senator Bennett Katz of Augusta, our guest speaker, took over. He recounted his training and his experiences flying all over the world during the second world war. He spoke candidly of many of the types of aircraft he flew, what he thought of them, and he and member Don Strout compared thoughts on some they had both flown. Mr. Katz then recounted some other experiences which were humorous now but hair-raising then. We want to thank Mr. Katz, and Sue Chichetto for inviting him, for a most enjoyable hour.

## Volunteers

Another sheet was passed around for the members to put down their preferences for committees. We realize that at the moment there is not a lot for many of the committees to do, but we need to get organized. Please let us know how you can volunteer to help us as our plans become reality, and we need your help. Museums are built on volunteers and ours can be no different, so please let us know we can count on you when the need arises.

## Aircraft

The Acquisitions Committee has been working hard to have aircraft available when we need them. We have been offered a Lockheed F-104A Starfighter for display. These were based at Westover AFB and rotated duty at Dow Field. The Air National Guard is working on getting Northrop F-89 Scorpion back from Waterville and is receptive to the idea of putting it on display at our location rather than on a pedestal at the base. Other aircraft acquisitions are in the works.

## December Meeting

The December meeting will be held at 9 a.m. Saturday, December 13, 1997 at the American Legion Hall in Bangor, on the third floor of the old National Guard Armory at 647 Main Street. If you are coming on Rt. 95, take the Rt. 395 East exit (#45), get off at Main Street exit (#3). The Hall is on the right, next to the Rt. 395 overpass. Telephone number is 990-2994.

## Dues

The Board of Directors has decided to retain the dues at \$20 for the 1998 calendar year. Your dues will include a free MAHS patch and free museum admission when ready. In response to numerous requests, we have instituted a family membership for \$30 which extends the free museum admission to the family. Corporate membership at \$50 and supporting membership at \$100 include all the above, but supporting gets four free passes to the museum. Lifetime membership includes 10 free passes.

Dues are payable on January 1, 1998 and we hope you will renew early. We would like to ask each member to consider upgrading his or her membership if possible. With upcoming legal, accounting, computer and fund-raising expenses, this will help to give us a small amount to meet these upcoming expenses. We appreciate your thoughtful consideration.

## My Pledge

Enclosed is a pledge form to fund the feasibility study for the Maine Air Museum. We appreciate your attention and thoughtfulness to this pledge. As stated above, our first challenge is to meet our goal of \$10,000 by December 31, 1997. If we do not raise this amount by that date, your pledge will be returned, there will be no feasibility study and, worst of all, there will be no Maine Air Museum. We ask that each of you carefully consider whether you want this museum and give a pledge for what you believe is right and believe you can afford. No pledge is too small, and if someone wishes to fund the entire amount, please call me at 207-854-9972. Remember, we are a non-profit 501(c)3 corporation and your pledge is deductible on your federal and state income taxes. Help us keep the excitement moving forward — mail your pledge/check to MAHS, 101 Monroe Ave., Westbrook, Maine 04092-4020. If anyone has any questions, feel free to call Leo Boyle at the above number.

Note: For those of you who pledged at the Bangor meeting on November 15th, please fill in your pledge/check and mail it in as above. Your pledge there gave us the jump-start to succeed and we appreciate your generosity.

## Oscar Blue

Oscar Blue is most interested in the personalities and adventures of the civilian aviation achievers of the Lindbergh era. Oscar's Franklin is similar to the four Franklins that Charles Lindbergh owned and drove during the '20s and '30s.

As shown in a photo last month, the senior French class taught by Anne Osburne at Sumner Memorial High School in Sullivan, Maine is working on translating into French the stories of the efforts Oscar, Terry Potter, George Lehito, Viola Sargent, MAHS and others have made in investigating the Spruce Mountain wreck story. The students will send the finished translations to MAHS member Laure Leveziel in France to put with the other records she keeps of Charles Nungesser and the "White Bird." (By the way, Laure Leveziel is MAHS member number 211. Number 211 is the tail number of the "Spirit of St. Louis.")

## How the Air Transport Command Put Disney on Ice



*Captain Robert Ward,  
a former Northeast Airlines  
pilot, sent the following to  
Norm Houle for the  
Dirigo Flyer.  
Thank you, Captain Ward.*

When I was flying out of Presque Isle, Maine on the North Atlantic runs I got the idea (for a Disney-designed insigne) when I found that Walt Disney Productions was doing these for various service groups. I wrote to them with a request to do an insigne for our Air Transport Command unit based in Presque Isle. A description of our unit and its duties was sent with the request. All the enclosed was the end result. I presented all of this to the powers in the company and received what I called a rousing vote of "why — what for — we'll think about it." After pursuing the subject I received more excuses and buck passing and the subject was dropped. I could elaborate further but at this point it is all history. As I know that you are interested in Northeast history, I figured that maybe at last someone might be interested enough to see what at least had been attempted. It is over fifty-four years that this has been sitting stored in my files.

*From Walt Disney Productions, Burbank, California  
August 25, 1943  
Captain Robert A. Ward  
Northeast Airlines, Inc. A.T.C.  
Oak Hotel  
Presque Isle, Maine*

Sir:

At long last we are sending you the insigne which you requested months ago. We are sorry that this did not go forward

to you sooner but we have been literally swamped with such requests and feel sure that you appreciate our position.

We submit the enclosed agreement letter with all insignia and we believe you will find it self-explanatory. Will you kindly fill in the official name of your group in the second line of the first paragraph of this letter.

With all good wishes,

Cordially,

Vernon Caldwell, Public Relations

*From Walt Disney Productions, Burbank, California*

August 25, 1943

Captain Robert A. Ward

Northeast Airlines, Inc. A.T.C.

Oak Hotel

Presque Isle, Maine

Sir:

Walt Disney is happy to present this insigne to the \_\_\_\_\_ for unrestricted use within the Armed Forces of the United States, with the stipulation that before you permit any profit-making civilian firms to reproduce this insigne in any form for commercial sale to the service personnel, such firms or individuals must first obtain a license from Kay Kamen, Agent of Walt Disney Productions, at 1270 Sixth Avenue, New York City. This condition applies only to private merchandise for sale, and in no way affects your official use of this insigne on your standard equipment.

We hope that the design will meet your approval.

Cordially,

Walt Disney Productions

Vernon Caldwell, Public Relations

### "Boynton," *continued from page 2*

soared when he spotted two clouds of smoke dead ahead. They were the smokestacks at the Thomaston Cement Plant, sometimes referred to by local pilots as the poor man's omni. He knew he was within just a few miles of his goal. "Those old stacks looked like the gates of Paradise," he would later say.

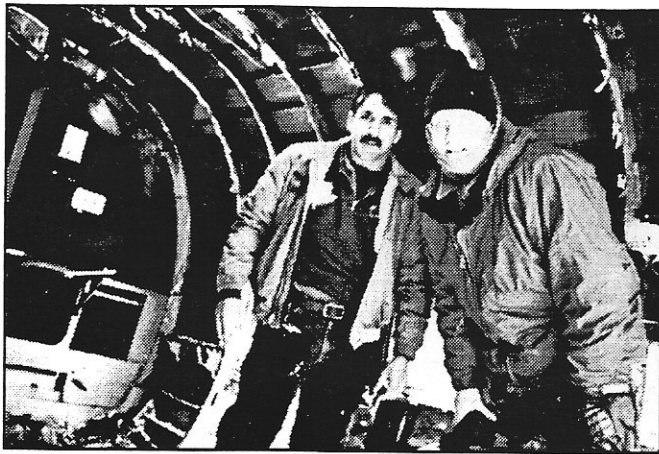
He had carried with him four pounds of chocolates and two gallons of water. This was in the event that he was forced down in a remote area. There were no navigational aids like there are on today's airplanes, not even a two-way radio. His actual time in the air on his coast-to-coast trip was 47 hours, bringing his total flying time to 187 hours, just 13 hours short of the coveted transport license.

At a dinner in his honor Boynton was toasted and praised by the Mayor of Rockland. "We are gathered here on a very joyous occasion," he said. "To honor a young man, a hero of the air. Stanley Boynton, through his wonderful achievement in breaking the flight records from ocean to ocean, from East to West, and from West to East, has won him the admiration of all

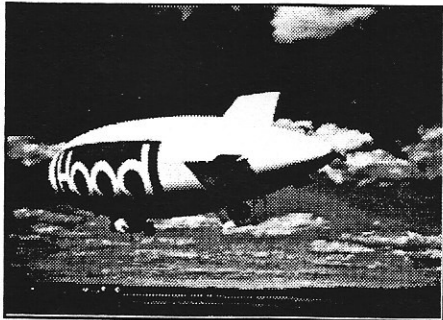
the people of America, and we here in Rockland feel justly proud of him. .... his parents belong to an old and highly respected family and he is loved by all of the citizens of this community — and for another reason. He is the product of our own Curtiss-Wright flying field." When the Mayor finally introduced him there was a standing ovation that lasted for nearly five minutes. At the conclusion of the dinner he was presented with a gold watch. Boynton thanked everyone and said he would always wear the watch wherever he flew.

Stanley Boynton had put Rockland, Maine on the map by beating the old trans-continental record by more than three hours. Many of the long time residents around Rockland still remember the young aviator. As one of the local folks quipped, "Not a bad job for a teenager." Stanley Boynton was 18 years old when he made his record setting journey.

	East to West		West to East	
	Hrs	Min	Hrs	Min
Stanley Boynton	23	56	20	29
Robert Buck	27	40	23	53



New member Mark McGhee with Dave Knapp inside the Northeast Airlines DC-3 crash site on Mt. Mahoosuc in Maine. (Mark McGhee Photo)



The H.P. Hood "Good Milk" blimp landing at the Augusta Airport on July 22, 1997. (Chuck Roundy Photo)

**Welcome, New Members**

- 228. **Clifford J. Huestis**  
P.O. Box 93  
Bridport, VT 05734-0093 802-758-2407
- 229. **Mark McGhee** (Aviation Archeology)  
P.O. Box 335  
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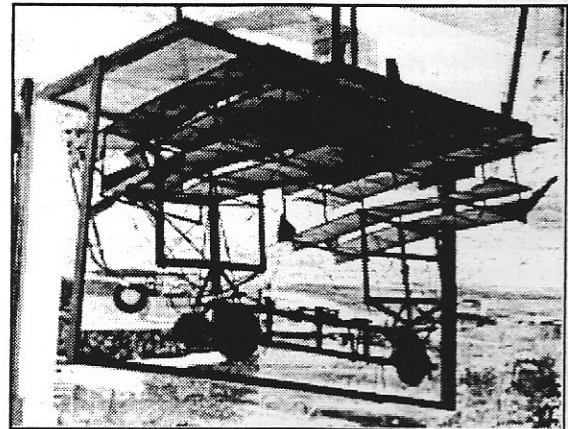
**Scrapbook Souvenirs**



Pioneer Maine aviator Roland Maheu is interviewed by Ed Armstrong at the October 1997 meeting in Lewiston-Auburn. (Jim Chichetto Photo)

**December Mystery Photo**

Member Oscar Blue has uncovered a new mystery for us. This photo shows a model of an airplane built in the Searsport area in the 1900-'13 era. Lanny Smith of Otter Creek currently has this model, plus the blueprints for the plane, which was possibly powered by a Franklin air-cooled automobile engine. Who built it? When? And did it fly? Help! Please call the editor.



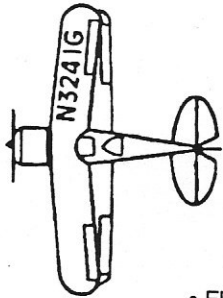
(Oscar Blue Photo) Yes, the photo is upside down.

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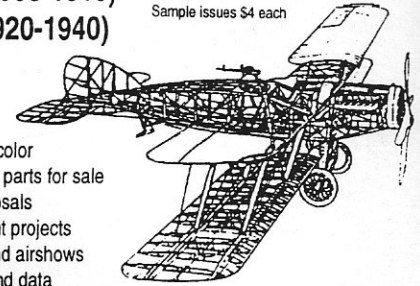
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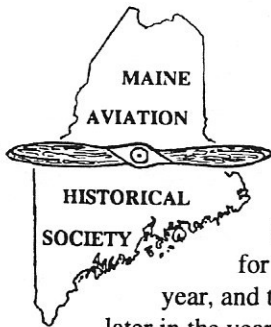
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Regular	\$20 annual	Newsletter, Patch, Museum Admission
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Corporate	\$50 annual	Newsletter, Patch, Museum Admission
Supporting	\$100 annual	Newsletter, Patch, Museum Admission, 4 Free Passes
Lifetime	\$500*	Newsletter, Patch, Lifetime Membership Number, Museum Admission, 10 Free Passes

\* (2 annual \$250 payments)

Maine Aviation Historical Society  
101 Monroe Avenue  
Westbrook, ME 04092-4020

**COME JOIN US!**  
Saturday, December 13, 1997  
9 a.m.  
American Legion Hall  
Bangor, Maine