

DIRIGO FLYER

Vol. VI, No. 2 February 1998

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

F-84F Crash Site Revisted, 40 Years Later

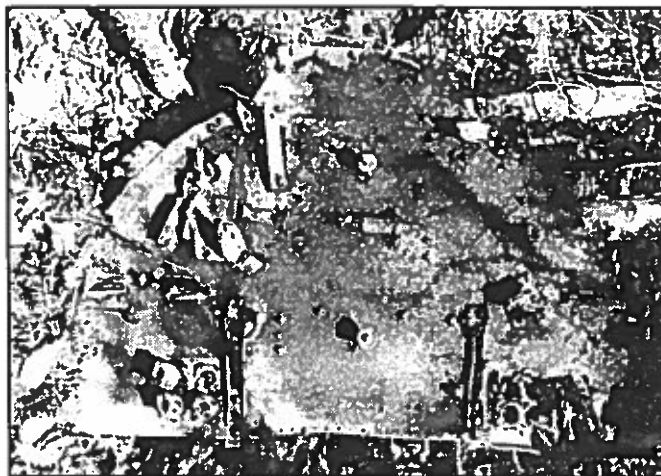
By Jim Chichetto

Spring is the time to hunt for hidden treasures in the Maine woods. The leaves of fall have been flattened by the weight of the winter's snow. There is a short time, after the snow melts and before the leaves and black flies come out, in which the hidden history of Maine's flying past is easily seen. It is the time for searches for old crash sites and rumored wrecks, which still dot the Maine woods, and local folklore. This story of about a successful hunt to track down an F-84F crash site last spring in East Bucksport, Maine.

The F-84F aircraft were redesigned from the early model F-84 series of aircraft. The first F-84s were designed to be fighter-interceptors, the next generation of aircraft, after the WW II F-80 Shooting Stars. First developed in the mid-1940s, their straight wing proved to be a drawback in air to air combat. They proved to be good as ground support aircraft capable of carrying a heavy weapons load and placing it with speed and accuracy on enemy positions. They soon replaced the F-80s in this ground support role and became the prime workhorse used during the Korean conflict.

War is a great expediter of military designs and much progress is made due to battlefield service. The use of aircraft in battle quickly shows their strengths and their weaknesses. The F-84's straight wing design, while faster than the F-80's, still could not compete with the Mig-15 in a dogfight. While these new fighters were still not equal to the continually evolving F-86s and Mig-15s in air to air combat, they did serve in that role with the Air Defense Command in stateside operations for a short time. During the late 1950s and into the 1960s, as faster fighters came on line, these F-84F variants became ground attack fighter bombers, capable of lifting great loads of ordnance, both bombs and missiles. The F-84s and F-84Fs were the first single seat jet aircraft capable of carrying tactical nuclear bombs. Some versions were exported to NATO and SEATO allies for use as fighters, bombers and recon aircraft. Some of these aircraft were still in active use, with our allies, during the 1980s.

On Saturday, August 7th, 1954, 1st Lt. Richard S. Hafenrichtner of Portland, Oregon, had retracted his landing gear after take-off from Dow AFB. The aircraft he was flying, 51-1464, was one of the 458th Strategic Fighter Squadron's



Armored bulkhead from Lt. Hafenrichtner's Republic F-84F still there 40 years later. (Jim Chichetto Photo)

new F-84F-15REs. Not quite eleven months old, this aircraft was one of the Republic fighters assigned to Dow as part of the Air Defense Command. The weather was warm and partly cloudy as he climbed out over Bangor. The Bangor State Fair was in its fifth day at Bass Park as he flew overhead heading towards North Ellsworth, his heading for the first leg of his mission. His aircraft fully fueled and carrying two drop tanks was slowly climbing toward his assigned altitude. Just moments later the 28,000 lb. aircraft experienced a mechanical malfunction on board. Smoke started to seep into the cockpit and the engine didn't seem to be running correctly. Some type of problem was robbing his aircraft of power. The climb became a near stall. Putting the nose down slightly to keep up his airspeed, he checked his gauges and tried to understand and solve the problem. After a quick check of systems and switches it became clear his aircraft was not going to be able to stay airborne. The safety of the runway was more than five miles behind him. His aircraft was losing altitude too fast to turn and make it safely back to base. Suddenly his choices were extremely limited: find a field and try to land gear down, try a wheels up landing or eject.

A quick look around helped him decide which action to take. On the left was Copeland Hill, a wooded hill with a few

"F-84F," continued on page 2

"F-84F," *continued from page 1*

open fields which ran into a series of rocky ridges. Unfortunately the few fields in view were too high up on the hill for his descending aircraft to make it there safely. On his right were a series of swamps surrounded by wooded hills including Kings Mountain. As his aircraft flew toward the center of the valley over swamps and streams, Brewer Lake was dead ahead. Beyond the lake were the wooded hills of East Bucksport. Without power to climb, his aircraft was not going to get out of this valley in one piece. He was down to less than 2000 feet when he decided that the aircraft would probably crash into the lake if it continued on its present flight path. This would prevent a fire and hopefully keep anyone from getting hurt on the ground. Having made his choice, he trimmed up the aircraft as best he could and ejected.

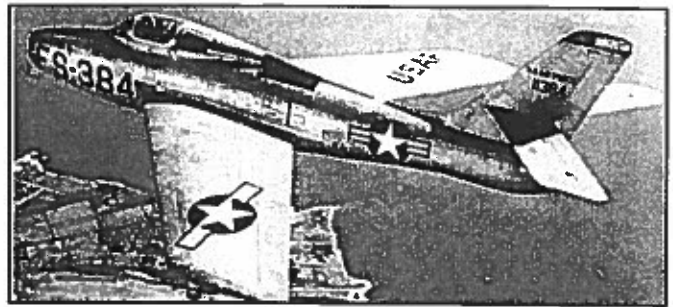
Ejection from any aircraft is a dangerous business. On this day the ejection seat worked as promised and blew the pilot safely clear of the stricken aircraft. His seat parted company as advertised and moments later the pilot was safely floating toward earth under a silk canopy. His landing was good and he scrambled up and quickly removed his chute. He had landed, as luck would have it, in the field of A.B. Crook, the Chief of the Orrington Volunteer Fire Department. He walked to the house and knocked on the back door. Using the Crook's telephone, he called the base and told them where he was and what had happened.

Neighbors, having seen the parachute come down, soon began to converge on the Crook's house. One picked the pilot's helmet from the Crook's front lawn. Another reported that the ejection seat was in a stream just down the road from the house. As people gathered, the telephone rang, a fire was reported. Thick black smoke was rising from the woods at the far end of Brewer Lake. Reports came in of a jet flying low over the lake and crashing into the woods in a huge fireball. Volunteer firemen began grabbing gear and heading toward the crash site to put out the fire before the woods went up in flames.

Raymond Perkins lives on the Kings Mountain Road, in a large old farmhouse, set on the side of a hill overlooking Brewer Lake. From his home he could see the smoke climbing steadily into the sky from the woods. Having had a job driving lumber from a saw mill located near the fire site, he knew which tote roads would lead to the source of the smoke. He was getting ready to leave for the fire when the first pick-up truck came up the hill on the way to the crash. It was then he learned that a jet had crashed and the pilot was safe. No one was sure if there were any other crewmen involved, but Ray offered to guide them to the area.

Taking the old dirt East Bucksport Road down one side of Kings Mountain, they soon came to the tote road they wanted. This was a winter road, used only when the ground was frozen solid. It was passable in the summer but the corduroy logs and wooden log bridges over streams made for slow going. It was at a level but wet spot that they found the aircraft crash site.

The aircraft had flown into the tree tops and crashed downward among the moss-covered rocks which made up the stream bed. A swath had been cut by the aircraft as it crashed,



Republic F-84F of the type that crashed near Brewer Lake on August 17, 1954. (Republic Photo)

first clipping off the tree tops, and then crashing down to the rocky ground, it became a 28,000 lb. bulldozer. The trees were flattened as it crushed into small thickets, the swept wings acted like scythes as they cut and broke down larger trees. The drop tanks were ripped free and smashed into twisted metal. The fuel inside ignited and burned quickly. As the twisted aircraft wreckage came to a halt, only part of one wing was attached to the fuselage and the engine. The rest of the aircraft was spread out over a 300 year path and scattered by exploding fuel into the surrounding underbrush.

Within an hour of the crash, the Air Force had set up a recovery team site and herded the growing number of locals away from the scene. No one would be allowed near the site until the Air Force had cleaned the area and collected all the parts for inspection.

A bulldozer was brought in to punch a road out to the East Bucksport Road. A halftrack was used to haul out the aircraft's engine after it was placed on a sled. An officer directed 18 airmen during the recovery phase. What remained of the radio, radar instruments and guns were recovered. After three and a half days of hard work the job was completed. All the remaining parts were gathered in a pile in the middle of the crash site. A large charge was then prepared and set-off. This explosion twisted the remaining metal into unusable shapes and sent it flying into the trees and woods around the site. Having "cleaned" the site up, the USAF left.

Local people, held back by guards for over three days, quickly arrived to hunt for souvenirs. Some, seeing the twisted metal blown into small chunks, started loading up their pick-up trucks and began hauling it off to be sold for scrap. Before the summer was over most aluminum, copper wire and stainless steel left at the crash site had found its way to a local junkyard. Only a few heavy parts and small scattered wreckage was left at this crash site.

A week or so after the crash, Ray Perkins returned to the site. As he poked around, he came across one of the .50 caliber machine guns overlooked by the Air Force. It was bent but it still looked impressive. He also found one of the manufacturer's data plates near a pile of melted metal. He took his "loot" home. He nailed the data plate to his shed doorframe. The machine gun was later given to Bill Morrison, a well-known Maine gunsmith. Over the years Ray and others picked up other odds and ends at this site, but at nature reclaimed the area, people forgot about this crash site hidden under new bushes and trees.

"F-84F," *continued on page 4*

Two Crash Site Searches Targeted for 1998

Two of our 1998 searches are detailed below. We will set a date for these shortly. If any members have further information on these, or other crash sites worthy of hikes, please call Jim Chichetto at 207-269-3251.

— Possible FB-111A Wreckage Found —

On 12/14/97 I receive a phone call from Mark Preston of Pembroke, Maine. Mark runs a fishing boat out of Machias, Maine. After reading the BDN story this weekend, he gave me a call. He has two divers working from his boat at this time. This last week one of his divers came up and said he had found the tail section of an aircraft on the bottom of the ocean in about 28 feet of water. There was other debris around and he didn't have time to search the area very well. The parts were encrusted with sea life and had been there for a while. The site is on the Ocean side of Libby Islands. The Libby Islands are found just offshore between Starboard and Cross Island in Machias Bay. The diver said that the parts were gray in color and looked like they had crashed into the rocky bottom where they lay. Mark has offered to take me out to this site, but it will be some time before I have a chance to get down there. I have checked the crash data listing and have only the FB-111A missing in this general area. I am going to put together some research on this accident and see if it matches up with what they have found.

Libby Island is found on Map 26 of your DeLorme, at E4. I will keep you updated on this site as I develop more information.

— Richmond F-84 Thunderjet Crash Update —

Late on the evening of June 1st, 1953, an F-84 from Dow AFB in Bangor, Maine suffered control failure during a night flight in the mid-Maine area. The pilot, 2nd Lt. C. P. Duke, age 23, of West Union, Iowa, ejected safely from the stricken aircraft at about 12,000 ft. The aircraft continued to fly for about 15 miles before crashing and exploding in heavy woods about a half mile from Richmond Corners Road in Richmond, Maine at 11:30. Residents who had heard the jet fly into the woods and

crash called the Sheriff's Department and State Police. An officer was dispatched to the area and spotted the crash site easily due to the flames in the woods and the onlookers. The police and fireman stayed at the site during the night and searched for the pilot's body as the fire burned out. Meanwhile the pilot had parachuted safely back to earth, only to land on Westport Island in Sheepscoot Bay. Early the next morning he was brought back to the mainland and driven to the crash site, in time to find the search party still looking for his body among the charred wreckage of his Republic F-84. This party had been sent from Dow AFB during the night after the police had called to inform them they had found a crash site in the woods and one of the recovered parts said Republic on it. Knowing that the 457th flying out of Dow was flying Republic built fighters, they had called the base. The base would not confirm or deny that they had F-84s at Dow, nor would they even acknowledge that one was missing. They instead sent a crash crew to the site to recover whatever was worth salvaging. It was this crew that Lt. Duke met. The story was covered in the BDN on 6/12/53 and 6/3/53.

On Sunday December 7th, 1997, MAHS member Rob Rohr and a friend went to this site after getting detailed instructions from local people. Despite the 4 inches of snow in the woods, they easily found part of the crash site and recovered a panel with numbers on it to use to ID the aircraft. It started snowing then and further discovery will have to wait until spring. This site is only about 100 yds. off the main road and there is a trail of damaged trees and parts which we hope to further explore and map out in the spring. Further research should be done in the *Kennebec Journal* at the library to see how they covered this story. By the time this F-84 crashed they had been by-passed by the newer F-86 and the new F-84F was coming into USAF service. That is why most of the wreckage was left where it lay. Local people have hauled parts off for years, but like every other site, stories and bits will always linger on in local homes and folklore.

"F-84F," continued from page 2

Having heard about the crash for years but never having found the location on my own, I was pleased when Roland Hanscom of Orrington offered to show me the exact location. We headed into the woods in late April before the leaves came out. He had seen the site years ago while hunting and wanted to return someday to get part of a tire for display. Since the crash, many logging operations have taken place and a number of woods roads now surrounded the crash site. Following the one which was closest to the site, we used a compass and survey markers to find the edge of the site.

Shortly after turning off the survey trail we encountered the first parts. A heavy bulkhead was laying on the ground. We moved it and took pictures. It was the armored bulkhead which was behind the pilot. Next came stainless steel engine parts and then the main gear, tires and parts of a wheel. We found wing spars and wires, hoses and metal skin. Roland and my son James spent a while cutting the 17 ply tire to get the winged

emblem molded into it free from the torn tire. I did a brief site map and took pictures. Poking around in the rocks brought all sorts of parts into view. Signs of the fire still showed in the form of burnt stumps and charred wood under the moss-covered rocks. Some of the trees, clipped during the crash, are still standing at one end of the crash site. Like silent sentries, they offer mute evidence of the aircraft's last moments of flight.

After we left the site, Roland took us over to Raymond Perkins' farm. Raymond told us about his experiences on that August day and in the weeks and months since. He had a number of small parts like fuel caps, latches and valves picked up over the years. He also showed us the data plate, still nailed to his shed doorframe where had placed it almost 40 years before.

I returned to the crash site three more times in 1994, twice with interested hikers and once with members of the Portland CAP. On each visit more parts were found and identified. By the end of May, ferns, bushes and the new leaves had again hidden this site.

The Way It Used to Be . . .

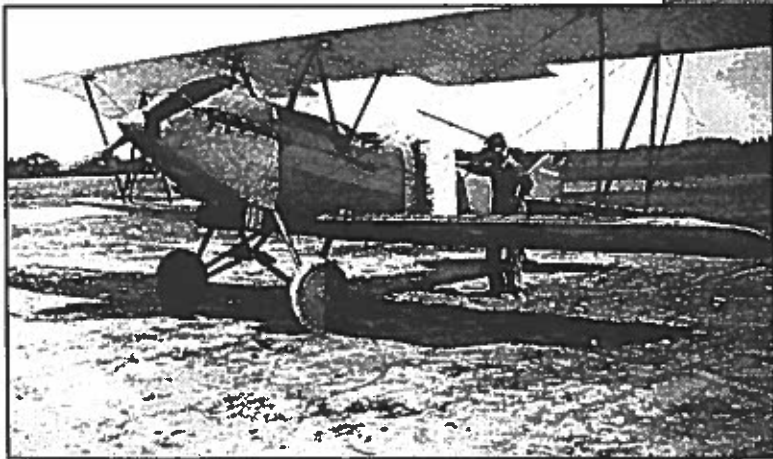


Robin B. Curtiss OX-5 engine, NC-226E. Curtiss Fledgling in back.

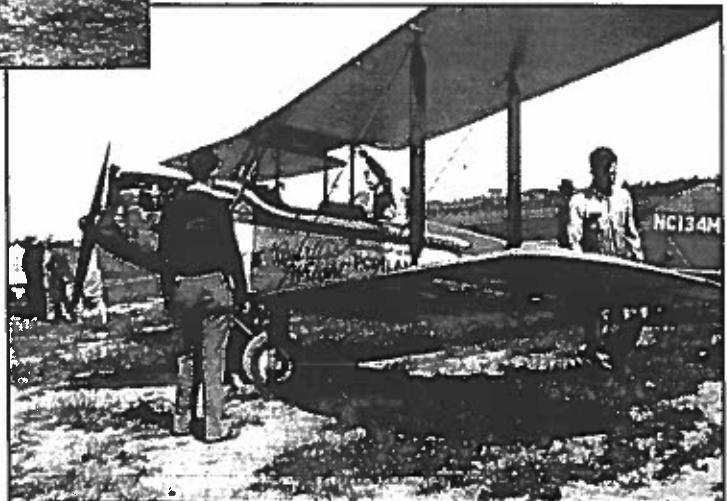
*Oh, to be in Scarborough, Maine
in the 1929-31 period,
at the new Portland Airport
built in 1927-28 . . .*



Stearman C-3B, Wright Whirlwind J-5 engine, NC-6262.
Owned by Skyways, Boston. Olcott Payson, pilot.
Name: Restless II.



Travel Air 2000. Curtiss OX-5 engine, NC-6138.



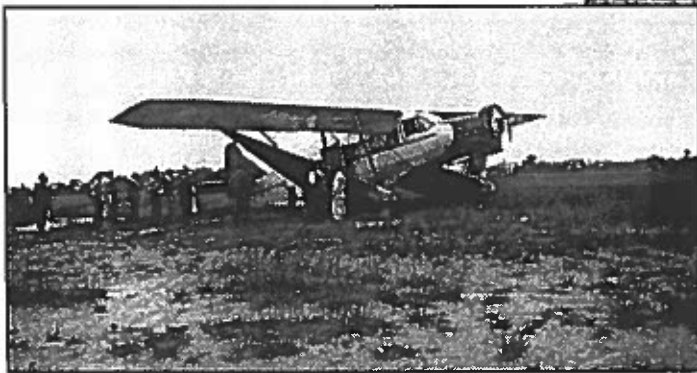
American Moth DeHaviland DH 60 GM.
85 hp DH Gypsy engine, NC-134M.

*Some of the sights to be seen are
pictured on these two pages.*

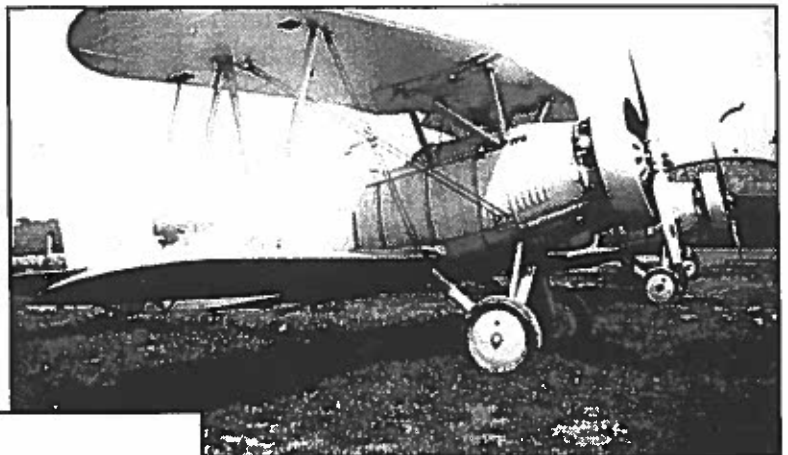
*All photos are by Lawrence Storey
via Rodney Laughton.*



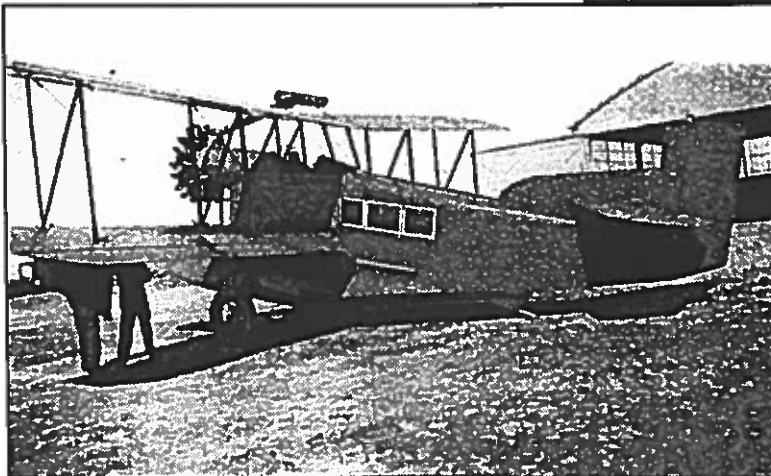
Ireland N2B Neptune Amphibian, 300 hp Wright J6 engine.



Bellanca Airbus P-200, 575 hp Wright Cyclone engine,
R-1820-E. Serial #703 (NC-786W) or #704 (NC-1079L).



Curtiss F8C-5 Helldivers (02C-1),
450 hp Pratt & Whitney engines, R-1340-88. U.S. Navy.



Loening Air Yacht, 500 hp Pratt & Whitney Hornet engine, 7146.

Commitment

As our out-going President said in his farewell message in last month's *Dirigo Flyer*, MAHS has reached a crossroad. Are we to remain a social historical society or are we to become a committed business and build the Maine Air Museum in Bangor? The choice is up to you, the members. Frustrated by Maine's winter weather, having to postpone (twice) the January meeting to February 14th, the current officers are also frustrated by the level of commitment of the membership.

Having perceived a strong desire to build a museum, a few members have worked very hard to bring us to where we are today. We have raised 90% of the funds needed for the feasibility study. We have to have the other 10%, plus a small reserve for contingencies, to go forward. If you can possibly pledge (or increase your pledge), please let us know by the Valentine's Day

meeting in Bangor. Roughly 50% of our membership has renewed for 1998 — if you haven't, please do so now to help us remain strong and go forward. This will be the last *Dirigo Flyer* you will receive unless you renew now.

We need committed people who will work through 1998 to volunteer as officers and members of the Board of Directors, and we need nominations of dedicated people who will serve diligently to help us to continue to move forward in 1998. We've come a long way — let's not stop now! Please make every possible effort to attend the February MAHS meeting at the American Legion Hall in Bangor at 9 a.m. on February 14, 1998. If you can't come to the meeting, please write or call Leo, Jim, Jules Arel, Ed Armstrong or any other members with your ideas, thoughts and commitment. I hope to see you all there.

Maine Aviation Historical Society Treasurer's Report: 12/1/96 to 12/1/97

Balance 12/1/96	\$609.00
Income	
• Dues	4015.00
• Miscellaneous ¹	684.60
• Contributions	435.00
Total Income	5134.60
Expenses	
• Postage ²	841.50
• Print Newsletters	1747.45
• Newsletter Set-up	1354.75
• Misc. Set-up and Typing	93.40
• Miscellaneous ³	132.24
• Patches	776.00
• Non-Profit Status Expenses	170.00
Total Expenses	5115.34
Balance 12/1/96	\$628.26

NOTE: Two complete sets of newsletters from Vol 1, No. 1 to current are preserved. Varying numbers of different issues are on hand to fill needs. Approximately 30 1994, 170 1995 and 220 1996-97 *Flying Down East* calendars, donated by Leo Boyle and Brian Wood, are on hand.

¹ — Includes T-shirt sales, donated calendar sales, patches and ads.

² — Mailing newsletters, calendars, miscellaneous postage.

³ — Includes supplies, projector rental, dues.

Report does not include miscellaneous services donated by Prototype; postage, supplies and telephone expenses donated by Leo Boyle, Jim Chichetto, Norm Houle and many others.

Submitted by Leo Boyle Secretary

Upcoming MAHS Meetings and Calendar of Events

- February 14 9 a.m. MAHS Meeting, American Legion Hall, Bangor, ME.
- March 14 9 a.m. MAHS Meeting, TBA.
- April 11 9 a.m. MAHS Meeting, TBA.
- April 19-25 All Day Sun 'n Fun, Lakeland, FL.
- May 9 9 a.m. MAHS Meeting, TBA.
- May 16 All Day 4th Annual Maine SPA Safety Seminar, Telford Aviation, Waterville, 207-622-7332.
- May 31 10 a.m. Model Show, WWI and Classic Aircraft Exhibition, Owls Head Transportation Museum.
- June 13 9 a.m. MAHS Meeting, TBA.
- June 14 10 a.m. Ford and Chevy Show, Owls Head Transportation Museum.
- June 27-28 10 a.m. Pre-1940s Car Show, Owls Head Transportation Museum.
- July 11 9 a.m. MAHS Meeting, TBA.
- July 12 10 a.m. 1950s-1960s Car Show, Owls Head Transportation Museum.
- July 25-26 10 a.m. Antique Truck Meet, Owls Head Transportation Museum.
- July 29-Aug. 4 All Day EAA Oshkosh Fly-In, Oshkock, WI, 301-695-2083.
- August 8 10 a.m. MAHS Meeting, TBA.
- August 8-9 10 a.m. Annual Transportation Spectacular Aerobatic Show, Owls Head Transportation Museum.
- August 22 10 a.m. 21st Annual New England Auto Auction, Owls Head Transportation Museum.
- September 6 10 a.m. Antique Motorcycle Festival, Owls Head Transportation Museum.
- September 11-13 All Day 25th International Seaplane Fly-In, Greenville, ME, 207-695-2821.
- September 12 10 a.m. MAHS Meeting, TBA.
- September 20 10 a.m. Convertible Meet, Owls Head Transportation Museum.
- October 4 10 a.m. Foreign Car Oktoberfest, Owls Head Transportation Museum.
- October 10 9 a.m. MAHS Meeting, TBA.
- October 25 10 a.m. Great Fall Auction, Owls Head Transportation Museum.
- November 14 9 a.m. MAHS Meeting, TBA.
- December 12 9 a.m. MAHS Meeting, TBA.

Meeting sites are flexible. We are always looking for suggestions on locations, guest speakers, slide shows, etc. Call Scott Grant at 207-775-3404 if you have any ideas or can be of help. In 1998 we will have more hikes to aircraft wrecks, scheduled between meetings, and the "White Bird" search will resume upon the arrival of spring.



Screenprinted Military Aviation T-shirts • 1946-1975
 12 Designs Available: F-8U, F-86, F-89, F-101, F-106,
 C-141, P-2V, B-36, B-47, B-52, HU-16, UH-1
\$18.95 ea. - 2/\$35 - 3/\$50 Sizes M-XXL
 Plus \$3.50 S/H (US); Maine residents add 6% sales tax
 Call or write for free brochure: P.O. Box 232, Carmel, ME 04419
 (207) 848-7290 e-mail: arbia@bangornews.infi.net

Welcome, New Members

- 236. **Michael A. Clark** (*Owls Head, WWI models*)
 2A Bird St., P.O. Box 745
 Houlton, ME 04730
 207-532-7148
- 237. **Frank Clinton Bauer** (*Air America*)
 70 Herricks Rd., c/o General Delivery
 Southwest Harbor, ME 04679
 1-800-474-6144



Aerobat Aviation Gallery

LAWRENCE E. NICKERSON
 2107 CARMEL ROAD NORTH
 NEWBURGH, MAINE 04444
 TEL. 207-234-7125
 E-MAIL: aerobatflyer@uninet.net

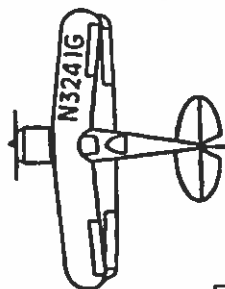
NEW ENGLAND
Wing Waxers
 RFD 4 Box 5735
 Winthrop, ME 04364



Cynthia A. & Marc E. McDannell
 Owners/Operators

- * Aircraft Detailing
- * Mobile Services
- * Teflon Coating

Local (207) 377-6639
 Phone (888) 929-9464
 Call for info or appt.



93 North Road
Newburgh, Maine 04444
Tel/Fax: (207) 234-2777

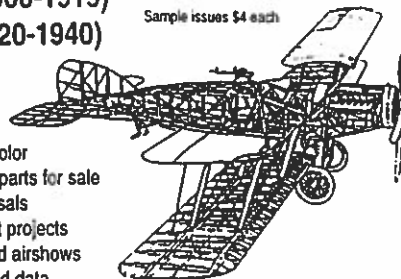
**VINTAGE WINGS
MILLERS FIELD**

- Flight Instruction - Basic, Tailwheel, Skis, Aerobatics
- Photography - Aerial Oblique, Air to Air
- Aircraft and Parts - Bought and Sold
- Aviation Art, Books, Artifacts

JOHN M. MILLER

**WWI AERO (1900-1919)
SKYWAYS (1920-1940)**

Sample issues \$4 each

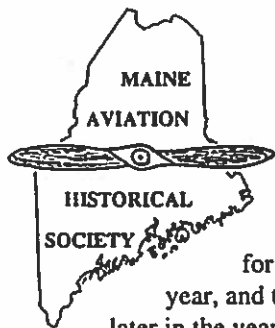


- historical research
- workshop notes
- information on paint/color
- aeroplanes, engines, parts for sale
- your wants and disposals
- information on current projects
- news of museums and airshows
- technical drawings and data
- photographs
- scale modelling material
- news of current publications

BUILD ONE! A REAL ONE!

Sole distributors for P3V, a computer program to generate a 3-view from a photograph.

Published by: **WORLD WAR I Aeroplanes, INC.**
15 Crescent Road, Poughkeepsie, NY 12601 USA (914) 473-3679



1998

**JOIN THE MAINE AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY TODAY
AND HELP ENSURE OUR LEGACY FOR TOMORROW**

Name _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Special Interests _____ Phone _____

Membership	Dues	Benefits
Regular	\$20 annual	Newsletter, Patch, Museum Admission
Family	\$30 annual	Newsletter, Patch, Museum Admission
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)		

Dues will be for the calendar year, and those joining later in the year will receive all newsletters retroactive to January of that year. All renewal of dues shall be due on January 1st.

Annual membership includes *12 monthly newsletters!* Mail payment to: MAHS
101 Monroe Avenue, Westbrook, ME
04092-4020

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

COME JOIN US!
Saturday, February 14, 1998
9 a.m.
American Legion Hall
Bangor, Maine