

# DIRIGO FLYER

Vol. VIII, No.3 March 2000

Newsletter of the Maine Aviation Historical Society  
P.O. Box 2641, Bangor, Maine 04402 • 207-941-6757 • 1-877-280-MAHS (in state)  
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## The Making of an Airport

By Frank P. Covie, Captain (retired)

It was like it must have been in the 1920s, 75 years ago, when airports were springing up all over the place. Men with rakes and shovels smoothing out bumps, filling in holes, and looking up to see airplanes circling around, waiting to be the first to land.

This was the case recently in Acton, Maine, when the Old Acton Airfield was coming back to life. It was and is the brainchild of John Nadeau of Arlington, Massachusetts. Well, not exactly like the '20s because a modern backhoe and loader were doing the heavy work and the field was being resurrected from the dead and not newly built.

The idea came two years ago when John Nadeau, who has a physical therapy practice in Massachusetts and a summer residence on Wilson Lake in Maine, got tired of driving up every weekend. He had recently achieved his life long dream of getting a pilot's license and then became the proud owner of a Piper Tri Pacer.

Near his Wilson Lake home there was an overgrown and unused airstrip hidden in the woods. It was carved out years ago by a private pilot from New York and was used by him and the Maine Forest Patrol pilots to land, rest, refuel and replenish fire fighting water from a nearby pond. It was abandoned shortly thereafter. It fell into disuse and became, in part, a driveway for gravel mining in the hills nearby.

John got his idea into motion when he found four other airplane owners in the area who yearned for a handy airport. He and a business partner bought the property at an auction for minimum cost. Its base of operation in mining soil continued as a financial backing to the plan. By mid-1998, the project was a "go" and work started to upgrade the place as a usable grass strip. The gravel road was rerouted, trees were cut or trimmed, dirt was moved and grass planted. Large plastic soda containers were painted yellow and stuck upside down in plywood bases (2'x2' with center holes) and the runway was outlined.

*"You build an airport by taking a big fortune and making it into a little one."*

*— John Nadeau*



John Nadeau (right) and Frank Covie helping restore the Old Acton Airfield in Acton, Maine. (Photo courtesy of Frank Covie)

The field now measures some 2400' end to end and is between 125' and 150' wide. The lat/long for you GPS fans is 43-32/14.28N and 070-55/45.72W. The runways are 14-32 with left traffic pattern on 14 and right pattern on 32, due to a hill south of the airfield. High trees are at both ends, so short field expertise is prudent. Field elevation is 705'. Common traffic advisory frequency is 122.75 "in the blind" with no Unicom pattern; altitude is 1500' MSL. Day VFR only, and use caution for trucks and other vehicles crossing the runway at approximately mid-field. Some old charts show it as Melon Field. The FAA inspected it and OK'd it as a private use airport. The first airplane landed with John Nadeau at the controls. A new age began at Old Acton Airfield.

"You build an airport by taking a big fortune and making it into a little one," John jokes. Thus far, that's what is happening. But John is happy and he's living his dream. And so are many others. With six charter members, including myself, the Old Acton Airfield Flying Club (OAAFC) was formed. Ideas developed and plans were made. More people interested in hanging out at an airport joined in and there are now 14 members in the club.

*"Old Acton Airport," continued on page 4*

*Dirigo Flyer* is published monthly by the Maine Aviation Historical Society, a non-profit (501c3) corp. P.O. Box 2641, Bangor, ME 04402 web site: acadia.net/mahs/ telephone: 207-941-6757 1-877-280-MAHS (in state only)

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Monthly meetings  
are held at 10 a.m.  
on the second Saturday  
of each month  
at various locations.  
See schedule for details.

## MAINE AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Monthly Meeting — 12 February 2000

**Call to Order.** The monthly meeting of the Maine Aviation Historical Society was called to order at 1024 on 12 February 2000 at the Maine Air Museum. President Jim Chichetto presiding, with 21 members present.

**Secretary's Report.** After a welcome by Chichetto, Secretary Leo Boyle reported an additional life member, Carroll Leland of Bar Harbor. Regular renewals are behind with 108 unpaid members at this time. The report was accepted as presented.

**Treasurer's Report.** Treasurer Brantner was absent but sent the following information to Secretary Boyle: General Fund:

- cash received \$3,518
- cash expended \$2,456
- cash balance \$3,656

Restricted Fund Balance (as of 1/31/00): \$16,292

Cost of Building Renovations (as of 1/31/00): \$4,600

The Treasurer's Report was accepted as presented.

**Museum Report.** None.

**President's Report.** President Chichetto reported on the contract signed with Gary Friedmann Associates for fundraising. The next campaign committee meeting with be February 19 at 10 a.m. at the Pilot's Conference Room at the Bangor International Airport Dispatch Center.

It was reported that John Miller and Ron Saunders had resigned from the Board of Directors.

The Cooks were appointed co-directors of the Maine Air Museum and will act as our "point of contact" for museum business.

John Garbinski has rewritten his book. The MAHS will have it published for use in fundraising and for sale.

The March meeting of the MAHS will be held at the Portland Jetport. (Programs for monthly meetings are needed.)

**New Business.** Leo Boyle read a letter from Treasurer Brantner concerning cash flow and the need for an additional \$10-12K by May. It was suggested that an appeal be made to members for \$20-25 donations. It was noted that one can sponsor an issue of the *Dirigo Flyer*.

**Adjournment.** The business meeting was adjourned at 1037 hrs. The meeting was turned over to John Miller who presented an illustrated program of his visit to the 1991 Paris Airshow.

William Townsend  
Recording

### SPECIAL APPEAL

To help fund the heating, lighting and running of the Museum Building, we are making a Special Appeal to members for a donation of \$25 or \$50 or more to pay these expenses until the fundraising monies come in.

The first 25 donations of \$50 or more will receive one of our new hats plus a patch and bumper sticker. Donations of \$25 or more will receive a patch and bumper sticker. Please send all donations to:

**Secretary, MAHS**

**101 Monroe Avenue, Westbrook, ME 04092-4020**

*Thank You For Your Generosity*

**We Remember . . .**

**Local Man Pilots First Flight Into Bangor**



The first northbound flight of the new Boston and Maine/Pan American venture brought forth an interesting Maine connection. Captain George W. Snow, a native of Rockport, Maine, was a pilot in command of the first BOS departure for Bangor. By this time he was a veteran Pan Am pilot and continued to be so until his retirement in 1951.

Snow's career took him to many places around the world with his Bangor trips being followed by service in Central and South America. He lived in Trinidad for three years flying Pan Am's clippers to all parts of the southern continent. He also spent much time flying between San Francisco and the Orient. His daughter, Mrs. Barbara Fillmore of Freeport, Maine, reported that he was supposed to be the pilot with the most flight time upon his retirement.

One recent flight was memorable to Captain Snow. During the World War II period, Captain Snow flew many Pan Am flights for the military. On one trip a very special co-pilot was assigned to fly a trip with him. The new man was his son, George D. Snow. The younger airman also became a Pan Am captain and remained so until 1983 when he was killed in an auto accident.

BY AIR

TO from

<b>PORTLAND</b> 55 mins. \$6.50	<b>ROCKLAND</b> 1 hr 35 mins \$11.50
<b>BANGOR</b> 2 hrs 25 mins \$15	<b>CALAIS</b> 3 hrs 15 mins \$21
<b>ST. JOHN</b> 4 hrs 15 mins \$25	<b>HALIFAX</b> 6 hrs \$35

Schedule Daily except Sunday 4 Round trips to Portland; 3 to Bangor; 1 to Rockland; 1 to the Maritimes; 1 Round trip on Sundays to Portland. Phone any Maritime Central Ticket Agent for reservations

PAN AMERICAN AIRWAYS CO.

An advertisement for Pan Am flights in Maine during the time Capt. Snow was a pilot here. Check those prices!

**Louise Ashby Chamberlin, 92**

Fort Myers Beach, FL — Louise Ashby Chamberlin, 92, of Fort Myers Beach, wife of the late noted aviation pioneer, Clarence Duncan Chamberlin, passed away on Monday, February 14, 2000. She was born March 30, 1907 in Fort Fairfield and had been a resident of Fort Myers Beach since 1978 when she moved from Huntington, CT.

As a young woman, Lousie taught for one year in a lumber camp in the woods of Somerset Junction on the northwest side of Moosehead Lake as well as several one room school houses in Aroostook County. She met Chamberlin at the Northern Maine Fair in 1935 when she applied for a hostess job on his plane. He was in the area giving local people the experience of flying. They married in 1936. She became his P.R. person getting publicity for his barnstorming appearances and it was at this time that she learned to fly. During World War II, she managed a ground school in New York City.

She is survived by her three children, Clarisse Hodkins of Perham, Cathy Lynn Firth of Gardiner and R. Philip Chamberlin and his wife, Dolores Fuller of Las Vegas, NV; eight grandchildren and nine great-grandchildren.

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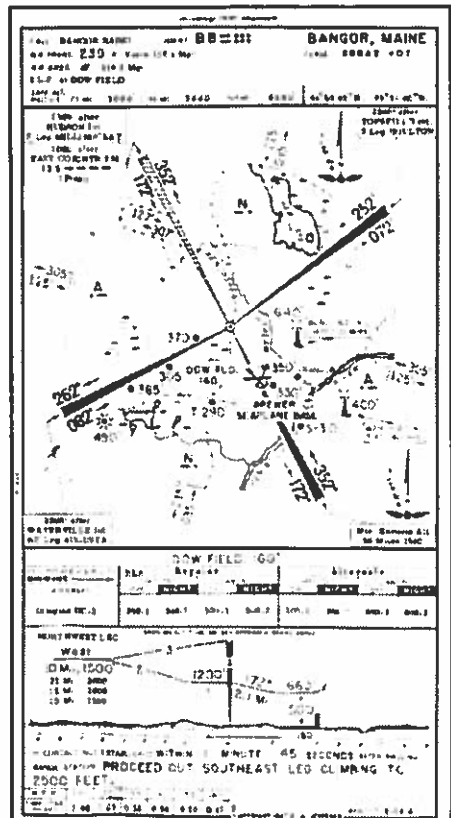
*In our February 2000 Dirigo Flyer, Neal Strange wrote a great story of Clarence Chamberlin's barnstorming in Maine.*

**Do You Remember This?**

Pilots flying in and out of Dow Field in Bangor in 1947 (now Bangor International Airport) always checked the Airways Manual first to double check their routes.

This is what they saw. This page specifies the aircraft (Douglas DC-3) and advises, "If (radio) contact not established within 1 minute 45 seconds after passing range station, proceed out southeast leg climbing to 2500 feet."

Things have changed a lot since then!



*"Old Acton Airport," continued from page 1*

On weekends, club members form work parties with rakes, shovels and hoes. Numerous planes take off and land, from tail draggers to sleek new low wing models. A note of interest is that the tractor used for mowing the grass and keeping the airfield open was purchased from Tew Mac Airport in Tewksbury, MA when that airport closed in 1998. Another rebirth of sorts.



Doug Wick with some new "Young Eagles." Moms waving at runway's edge. (Photos courtesy of Frank Covie)

Our first Open House Family Day was held on August 14, 1999 and, to put it mildly, it was a resounding and rewarding success. Volunteer pilots flew 42 "Young Eagles" and 58 adults on brief sightseeing rides over the Maine and New Hampshire lakes region near the resurrected airfield. Hundreds of hot dogs and hamburgers were served gratis, along with roast turkey, ham, salads, cake and ice cream brought in pot luck by the members. Take-offs and landings thrilled all comers. Attendance was over 350 and included town selectmen and many nearby residents. And all this with only minimum promotion. Imagine the interest if more public relations were pursued. The next one, planned for this summer, should be even bigger.

This type of program benefits aviation literally at the grass roots level and will pay dividends for our industry well into the future, especially with the enthusiasm and bright eyes of the new "Young Eagles" taken aloft for the first time. Think about it for your own community. Plan for aviation's future by returning to its past. We did, and it's truly rewarding and fun, much like a Flying Circus-type Aerodrome.

...

As for me, I can't wait to fly into the Old Acton Airfield, to dream of the past and look to the future of hearing about others building their airstrips. Having a career covering some 47 years in aviation — from J-3 Cubs, Colts, Musketeers, Comanches, Bonanzas, Barons, Queen Airs, then AA with the Electra, BAC-111, 727, 707, DC-10, 757 & 767-300 — then that wonderful mandate: *You're 60? You're out!* Well, it's back down the slide through Barons, then a Bonanza, Warrior, Tomahawk and, you guessed it, either a J-3 Cub or Beech Musketeer. See you at the airfield!

John Nadeau can be reached at 781-648-2610 (MA). The club address is P.O. Box 911, Acton, Maine 04001.

The following was a handout distributed by the club at the Open House Field Day. It sums up our story nicely.

### What is the Old Acton Airfield Flying Club?

Old Acton Airfield Flying Club was established to maintain and operate Old Acton Airfield in Acton, Maine in the former tradition of aviation. Not all of our aircraft are old, as in a museum, but our attitude is from a by-gone era when a kid could get an airplane ride for sweeping out a hangar. Today at most airports kids cannot even get inside the airport fence, never mind near a hangar. We promote our sport of aviation by keeping the airfield, aircraft and airplane rides accessible to children and adults who are curious and enthusiastic about flight.

OAAFC is a private, not-for-profit club open to anyone interested in aviation and aviation activities. We have pilots, non-pilots, former pilots and future pilots as members. Some members just like to watch airplanes. Some like to go for rides. Some build and fly radio controlled aircraft. Some have flown big airplanes for the big airlines and some have flown in military combat.

You can see that our members represent a tremendous cross section of backgrounds in aviation and aviation interests. And we strive to keep aviation at Old Acton Airfield safe, yet truly within the reach of anyone who shares our love of aircraft and flight — the way it used to be in the old days.

Thank you for joining us at our Open House Field Day. We hope you had a pleasant time.

### Two More Views: The Club Work Party and The Work Accomplished



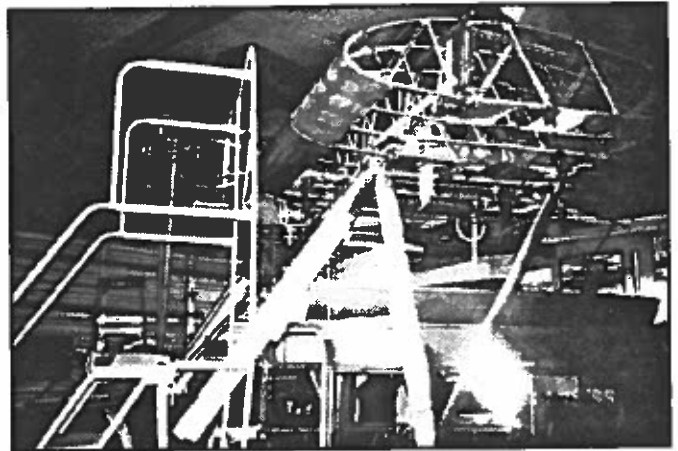
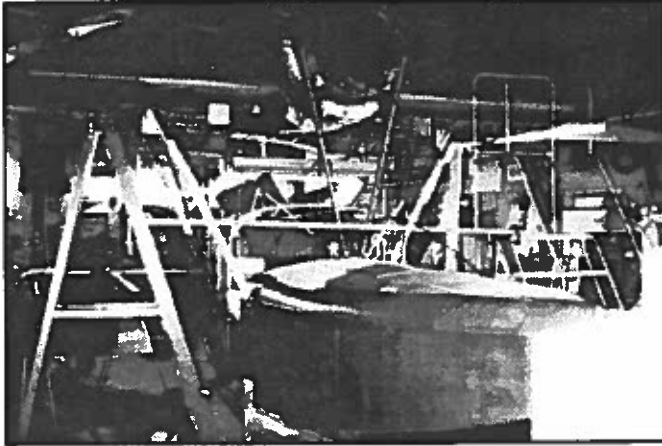
Seeding some filled-in bare spots . . .

... and looking NW on partially restored Runway 32.



## A Work in Progress: The Rebuilding of a Sikorsky S-39

Two views of member Dick Jackson's Sikorsky S-39 undergoing pre-fabric assembly for fit and running of cables prior to covering, which has now started.



If you ask, Dick will tell you it will be ready "Thursday."  
*Dick Jackson Photo*

### March Meeting

The March meeting of the MAHS/MAM will be held on Saturday, March 11, 2000 at 10 a.m. in the Conference Room, second floor of the Portland International Jetport Terminal.

An interesting program is planned that all should enjoy. Please, all you southern Maine members, make a special effort to attend and hear what's happening on the museum and fundraising fronts. Many Bangor area members are coming, so let's make a good showing for this meeting in the south.

A Board of Directors meeting will follow the conclusion of the regular meeting.

### Maine Ace Camp

The 2000 Maine Ace Camp for youths 13-17 will be held this year from June 24-30. It will be at the Maine Air National Guard facility in Bangor and will offer an exciting program for the participants. This very important aviation and aerospace program is sponsored by the Maine Education Council for Aviation and Aerospace and the FAA.

Tuition is \$275, scholarships are available, and anyone interested can sponsor a youth for this program. For more information and an application, write to Malcolm Brydon, MECAA, 198 Maine Avenue, Bangor, ME 04401.

### Maine Aviation Historical Society Statement of Cash Receipts and Expenditures for January 2000

#### GENERAL FUND

Cash received	
Dues .....	1445
Lifetime Memberships .....	2000
Donations .....	40
Product Sales .....	33
Total receipts .....	<u>3,518</u>
Cash expended	
<i>Dirigo Flyer</i> .....	376
Postage .....	6
Web Page .....	30
Utilities .....	188
Heat .....	240
Dues .....	170
Building Renovations .....	1446
Total expended .....	<u>2456</u>
Excess of income .....	1062
Cash balance	
beginning of month .....	<u>2594</u>
end of month .....	<u>3656</u>

#### RESTRICTED FUND

Fundraising	
Balance, November 30, 1999 ....	8209
Donations received	
Quest/Carl Sederquest .....	5000
Alfred Cormier .....	1000
Leo Boyle .....	1000
Donald Godfrey .....	1000
Interest .....	83
Balance, January 31, 2000 .....	<u>16,292</u>

#### COST OF BUILDING TO DATE

Cash .....	3652
Donated sign .....	948
Total .....	<u>4600</u>

#### *A Note from the Treasurer:*

In August \$5,000 was transferred to the General Fund from the Fundraising Fund. This amount constitutes an inter-fund loan which should be repaid. The value of additional items that have been donated and accepted by the museum has not yet been determined and is not included in this report.

*Charles B. Braniner*  
Treasurer  
February 10, 2000

## Mystery Photo of the Month for March 2000

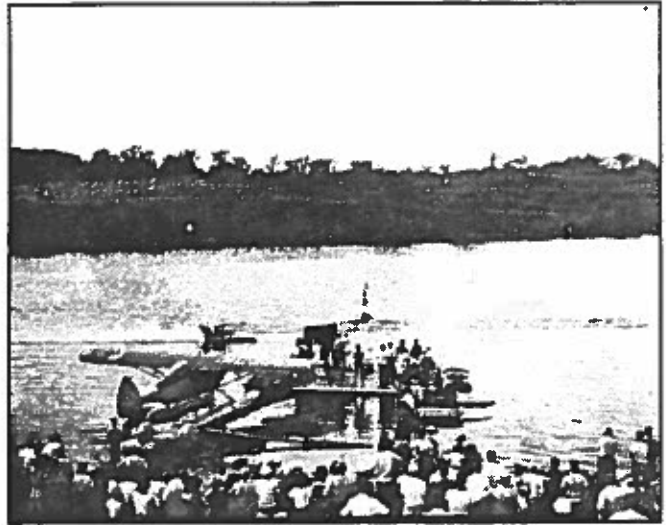
This 1953 picture shows a Piper Super Cruiser on floats at the dock where speedboat races were taking place.

Does anyone know the location and occasion?

And who owned the Piper?

*Send us your best recollections on this month's mystery photo and you could be a winner! Winners receive an MAHS t-shirt — and the due respect and admiration of their peers.*

*(Photo via Norm Houle)*



### Lindbergh Crate Day

Member Larry Ross has scheduled his annual Lindbergh Crate Day for Friday, June 9 this year. This is an event well worth attending, especially if you haven't seen the crate.

Larry obtained the original crate that brought the "Spirit of St. Louis" home from Europe in 1927 and moved it to Canaan. He has collected all kinds of Lindbergh memorabilia which is on display in the restored crate. Larry uses the example of Lindbergh to teach children not only the story of Lindbergh but to inspire them that you can do what you want to do if you put your mind to it, and if you prepare yourself for it.

One of the features of Larry's Crate Day is a fly-by, and Larry would be interested in hearing from any of our members who would be interested in participating, particularly any with war birds or older airplanes.

You can contact Larry at 207-474-9841. We hope to see lots of you there.

### Greater Bangor Millenium Air Show

Saturday, May 27, 2000 will be a busy day at the Bangor International Airport, and a fun-filled one as well.

On this date, the Maine Air National Guard is putting on the Greater Bangor Millenium Air Show, co-sponsored by the city of Bangor, the airport and the Maine Air Museum. The Maine Aviation Historical Society will be helping, too.

Make plans to join us in the fun as we help to make this another gret day in Bangor's aviation history!

### Luscombe 8A Update

Our Luscombe 8A, generously donated to us by Avemco Insurance Company and member Dan Bilodeau, is on the way to good health again.

Thanks to donations by Dan for the restoration of an appropriate display area at the museum and for repair and upkeep of the aircraft itself, we may have it back on a flying schedule again sooner rather than later. Dan has made contact with an A&E who would spend the summer working on the plane and bringing it back to A-1 condition earlier than we expected.

Anyone who can work in the Luscombe as warmer weather approaches should contact Dan or your editor. Also, any donations earmarked for its restoration will be greatly appreciated.

### Fundraising Campaign

The officers and Board of Directors have been burning the midnight oil lately working on our major fundraising effort.

As you know, we have hired the well-known firm of Gary Friedman and Associates to master mind this drive and educate and guide us to our goal. We have been busy working on a case statement, a brochure, logos and stationery. We have also been working on a budget, restoration of the building expenses, layout of exhibits and a library, and planning for an opening date.

We are going to need help from all of our members as we move forward in our campaign, so plan now to be aboard when we are ready for take-off.

→ → → Join the Maine Aviation Historical Society Today

Help Preserve Maine's Aviation History for Tomorrow → → →



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Miller's Field

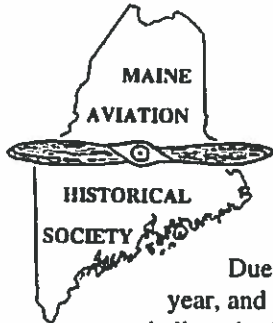
store open  
by appointment

vintagewings@cs.com



John Miller

115 North Rd.  
Newburgh, ME 04444  
(207) 234-2777



2000

**MAINE AIR MUSEUM  
MAINE AVIATION HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERSHIP  
FORM**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City, State, Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Special Interests \_\_\_\_\_

E-mail  
Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Dues are for one year, and membership shall expire in the month you joined.

Annual membership includes  
*12 monthly newsletters!*

Mail payment to:  
**Maine Aviation Historical Society**  
101 Monroe Avenue,  
Westbrook, ME 04092-4020

Membership	Dues	Benefits
Student	\$12 annual	Newsletter, Museum Admission
Regular	\$25 annual	Newsletter, Patch, Museum Admission
Family	\$35 annual	Newsletter, Patch, Museum Admission
Corporate	\$100 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  
P.O. Box 2641  
Bangor, ME 04402



John Garbinski # 245  
1229 Broadway - Suite 444  
Bangor, ME 04401

**March Meeting**  
Saturday, March 11, 2000  
10 a.m. — Conference Room  
Portland International Jetport  
Portland, Maine

