

DIRIGO FLYER

Vol. X, No. 5 May 2002

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 British Are Coming! The History of the U.S. Naval Air Station, Brunswick, Maine — Part I

The following U.S. Navy narrative outlines the use of the Brunswick Naval Air Station from its beginning.

— Leo Boyle, Editor

Originally needed by the Bureau of Aeronautics as a northeastern outpost for anti-submarine patrol, the site of Brunswick, Maine was chosen because not only were there two reasonably good WPA constructed runways already in existence, but their location in respect to the area to be covered and the surrounding terrain made it practical to enlarge the existing facilities by lengthening the existing runways and the addition of a third and the construction of a large building area adjacent to the landing field.

The runway and approach area were the property of the city of Brunswick, having been constructed from public park lands over a period of years, and were purchased with funds authorized by act of Congress Public Law #700 on August 6, 1941. A change order was then issued on October 15, 1942; construction on a cost plus fixed fee contract NOY #5354 was started with

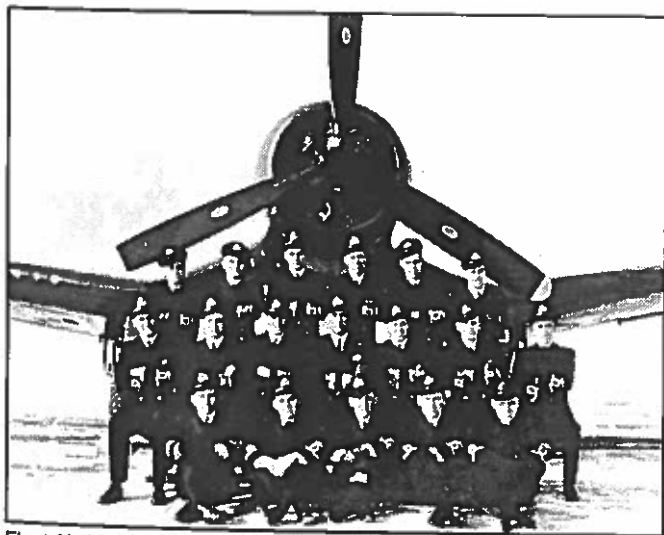
prime contractor Stewart & Williams, Inc. of Augusta, Maine; NLS contract to Wyman & Simpson, Augusta, Maine; John H. Simonds, Portland, Maine; W.H. Hinman, Co., Anson, Maine; and Landers & Griffin, Portsmouth, NH.

Although the original constructions have been long since completed, construction work was still going on as late as January 1945 as new buildings and alterations on existing ones continue. Considerable credit should be given to the contractors and the resident officers in charge of construction for completing such an extensive establishment in such a short time considering the terrific handicap of temperatures reaching minus 45 below zero and extended periods of extreme cold during which time construction in the open proceeded with amazing dispatch.

Place in Chain of Command

1. An aviation activity under FIRST Naval District Aviation Officer.
2. September 1944 included as an aviation activity under Command Naval Air Bases FIRST Naval District.
3. Commissioned April 15, 1943.
4. Commanding Officers:
John Clement Alderman, Commander, USN
From April 15, 1943 to August 30, 1944
Ezra Matthew Ellis, Commander, USN
From August 30, 1944 to present
5. Transferred from an activity under District Aviation Officer FIRST Naval District to component of Naval Air Bases FIRST Naval District on September 15, 1944.
6. Changed from a Patrol Squadron Base to Royal Navy Operational Training Base about May 15, 1943.
7. Number and type of Training Aircraft changed from RN 12 plane Avenger Squadrons to Royal Navy 18 plane Corsair Squadrons on August 25, 1943.

Originally conceived and constructed as the base for in-shore and off-shore patrol squadrons; however, previous to its



Fleet Air Arm Squadron 1835 of the British Royal Navy poses at Brunswick Naval Air Station in early spring 1945. The aircraft is a Vought Corsair used to train these Royal Navy pilots at Brunswick. (Photo via Ed Rohr)

"BNAS" 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)

ASSOCIATION OFFICERS

President

Leslie Shaw (#331L)
 Brewer, ME 04412
 207-989-4168
 e-mail: les_shaw@unit.me.edu

Vice President

Peter Noddin (#295)
 East Millinocket, ME 04430
 207-746-5166
 e-mail: petef86a@midmaine.com

Corresponding Secretary

Alfred Cormier (#196)
 Bangor, ME 04401
 207-941-6474
 e-mail: acorm6H@aol.com

Recording Secretary

William Townsend (#101L)
 Bar Harbor, ME 04609
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 e-mail: townsend@acadia.net

Treasurer

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 Michael Cornett (2002) #321L

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

See calendar for details.

Maine Aviation Historical Society

Board of Directors Report • April 13, 2002

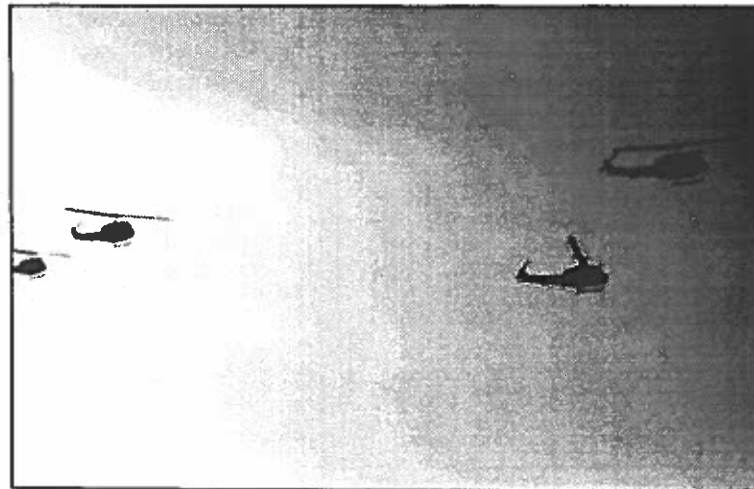
Present for the Board Meeting: Ed Armstrong, Chairman, Les Shaw, Vice Chairman, Leo Boyle, Jim Chichetto, Al Cormier and Mike Cornett. Members present were Carl Sederquist and George Tinker. Ed Armstrong talked about the meeting he had with the City Council about the roof and getting it paid for, which has been done. We discussed the work that Dead River has done on the burner and furnace and getting the necessary information from them to complete the paperwork. The same applies to George Tinker for the two oil tanks that he obtained for us. Ed's next job is to concentrate on the fundraising. After a brief discussion on the amount of work that needs to be done before opening, including all the code work plus getting the lease extended to include land to give us parking space, it was decided to reopen the subject of the Grand Opening on Memorial Day.

Leo pointed out that with all the other activities going on on Memorial Day, and all the best times being taken up, our chances of getting a fair amount of publicity were quite diminished. This problem, along with the pressure on the volunteers to complete the huge amount of work still remaining, made it seem wiser to delay the Grand Opening until later in the season on a day when we would be the major newsworthy event in town. This motion was passed and it was agreed we would be open with no charge on Memorial Day for people to drop in and see how we are doing after the parade. Mike Cornett is in charge of the parade and we will probably use the jet engine and our living history people in uniform.

Leo informed us that the paperwork for the other jet engine should arrive next week from the Navy and we will have to pick it up within sixty days. As more and more people are seeking to donate things to the museum, it is important that we remember who we are and what we are trying to do before accepting donations. As a result, a Donations Committee was formed consisting of Jim Chichetto, Leo Boyle and Bill Cook. All donations need to be reviewed by them and the necessary paperwork done for each item.

Jules Arel's resignation from the Board for personal reasons was accepted. Carl Sederquist volunteered to fill Jules' position for the remainder of 2002, and he was so elected. Carl reported on the bricks and benches that he has been working on for the walkways and a wall. He has ordered samples of the bricks and purchased a bench which should be here in May. A storyboard will be made to show the public how they will be displayed and how to go about purchasing them. The letter to the Air Guard was discussed and it was decided to hold off until the Huey was in hand and that the tone of the letter should be to offer display space for any aircraft that they could get or help us get from the Air Force. As to the Huey, John Garbinski has heard from the Tancom people and they have sent their approval to Washington. The Army Guard should receive the release papers for the Huey to come to us very shortly. Board meeting adjourned to the membership meeting.

— Mike Cornett, Acting Recording Secretary



Four Army Guard
 Hueys over the
 museum.
 (Mike Cornett Photo)

April Meeting Notes

The April meeting of the MAHS/MAM was held at the museum on Saturday, April 13 at 10 a.m. — with heat! The furnace has been installed and hooked up (thanks to Dead River), the oil tanks have been installed (thanks to George Tinker), and enough of the duct work has been installed, and a very comfortable meeting resulted. Since both the Treasurer and Recording Secretary had to be away, neither report was presented. The Secretary's Report of the March meeting was published in the April *Dirigo Flyer*.

We have one new member, John Boyle of Bangor (no relation to your editor). Mike Cornett filled us in on what has been going on at the museum and the progress of that work which should move more rapidly with heat in the building. A painting party is scheduled for next Saturday, April 20.

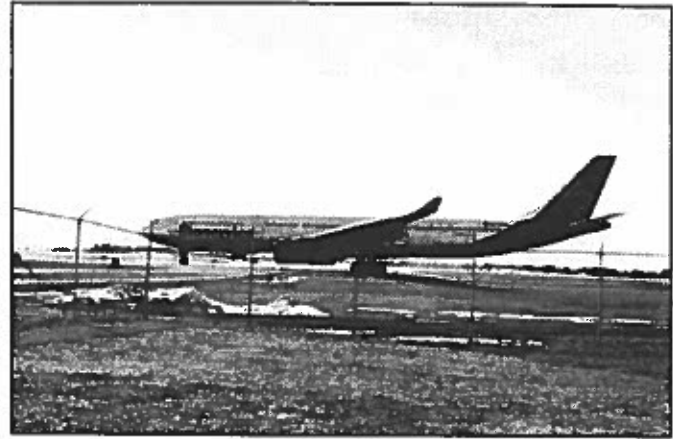
Ed Armstrong reported on his negotiations with the city of Bangor and that the new roof has been paid for by the city. He will be contacting various business and veterans' organizations throughout the city to drum up support for the museum. This is a job that every member can help with by selling the museum to all those we are associated with. Mike Cornett spoke to the Orono American Legion Post and they donated \$100 to the museum.

New Board member Carl Sederquist briefed everyone on the bricks and benches that we will sell to raise money for the museum. Several members, particularly Ken Ferland, noted how other groups had used them successfully.

Pete Noddin noted that he, by chance, had pinned down the site of the KC-97 stabilizer from the B-52/KC-97 mid-air collision. Hikes are on hold due to the wetness from the recent rainfalls.

Les Shaw reported that he had heard from Tancom regarding their visit, and that they had forwarded their approval to Washington. The Air Guard should receive the paperwork to transfer the Huey helicopter to us within a few weeks.

Because of the conflict with so many events on that day, the Grand Opening has been postponed to a future date this summer. In this way, we can get maximum publicity. We will



A Canadian Skyservice Airbus A330-300 C-FBUS outside the museum last month. (Mike Cornett Photo)

be open for free visits over Memorial Day from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. for the public to see our progress. In the meantime, we will be working with the city to comply with all the codes. We are working on expanding our lease from the fence to the road to give us adequate parking.

Les also called for volunteers for the position of Director of Volunteers to make sure the museum is adequately manned when open, and to schedule work parties. If this is for you, let Les know before the next meeting.

Jim Evans then gave a very interesting talk on the highlights and lowlights of the training days in his Air Force career.

Mike Cornett, Acting Recording Secretary



President's Message

Great progress has been made toward our opening of the museum on Memorial Day, but we still have a long way to go. We need some help to get this set up and looking first class for the opening. We are working Tuesday and Thursday nights from 5 p.m. until 7 p.m. and all day Saturdays, 8:00 a.m. until done. Come join us if you can, the more hands, the less work.

We have decided to postpone the gala dedication for the press and dignitaries until later this summer. We are still working out some technical problems with the city and aren't sure when they will be settled. In addition, there are numerous events planned for Memorial Day and we would have to hold the dedication late in the afternoon. Getting press coverage and political people to attend might be difficult. We do plan to open the museum on Memorial Day, if at all possible, and we will schedule the dedication later.

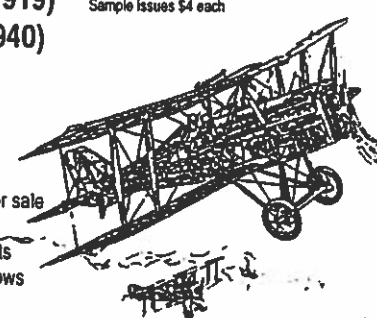
Try to make the May meeting and you will see a lot of changes at the museum. We have come a long way in the past few years and we still have a lot to do, but the opening is in sight and I hope you will be as proud of the result as I know I will be.

Les Shaw, President

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"BNAS," continued from page 1

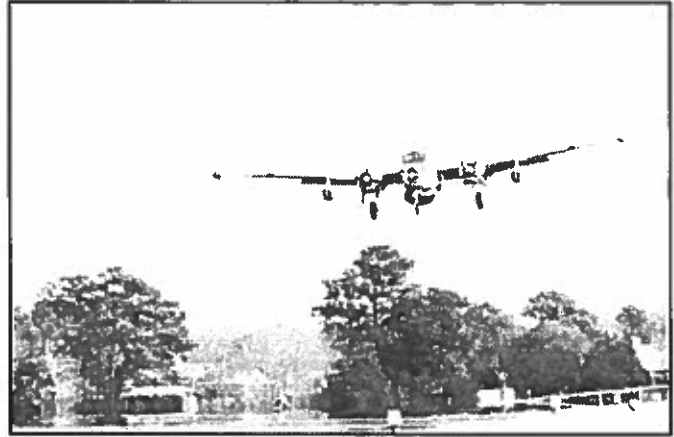
completion the submarine menace was controlled thus eliminating the need for a patrol base in this area. In May 1943 the function was changed to become operation training base for Royal Navy Fleet Air Squadrons. June 4, 1943 Royal Navy Fleet Air Torpedo Squadron 846, 125 men, 50 officers arrived with Avengers. August 25, 1943 first British Corsair Squadron arrived, 18 airplanes, 20 pilots, and 75 men along with Royal Navy Aircraft Service Unit.

In December 1942, the first naval personnel started to arrive and the first officer other than the CEO was, strangely enough, Lt. (jg) H.V. Higgins, (DC) USNR, who not having even one navy building in which to set up his office assisted the civilian inspectors with filing their blueprints in the contractor shacks. The first of January 1943 saw the arrival of additional naval personnel for by that time the operations building was completed sufficiently to be used as a combination operations building, barracks, recreation hall, mess, sick bay, and officer's ready room.

On January 23, a detachment of VS1D1 (now VS31) arrived. This squadron flying OS2Us was to continue the in-shore patrol that had been flying out of the Lewiston Municipal Airport. Along with these came a detachment from Hedron 9 and VB126 flying PV3s. These detachments took up their residence in an old wooden hangar located on the far side of the field from the new building area and purchased by the Navy in its original land-taking. Operations continued using the existing two runways 3-21 and 16-34.

The intense cold experienced during January and February and into March 1943 handicapped patrol operations. The lack of snow removal equipment necessitated the use of the contractors bulldozers and graders to keep the runway clear enough for any kind of operations. However, a certain amount of patrol duty was performed and the accidents with the steep snow banks lining the runways were kept at a minimum.

With the arrival of the prospective Commanding Officer, Commander J.C. Alderman, USN, on March 3, 1943, activity increased and under his drive the administration and other necessary buildings were completed sufficiently to allow the station to be commissioned on April 15, 1943. From that day on progress was exceptional considering the condition under which the contractors were forced to operate. One building after another was completed until ComFairQuonset considered the



A Lockheed P2V-7 Neptune approaches BNAS for a landing. Neptunes graced the skies around Brunswick for many years. (Photo via Leo Boyle)

time had arrived for using the station as an operational training base for the Royal Navy Fleet Air Squadrons. With the completion of the subsistence building on June 1, adequate facilities were available for basing a large number of men and aircraft, therefore, on June 4, 1943 #846 Royal Navy Squadron arrived for operational training. This squadron occupied one half of the south lean-to of hangar #1, the rest of that side being filled by Hedron 9 detachment and the opposite side being occupied by VJ15 which arrived and was commissioned on June 15, 1943.

Considerable handicaps faced the operational training squadron. The lack of parking area for the planes, construction of the east-west runway, difficulty in obtaining operating areas, to say nothing of properly trained tower operators and crash crews. Nevertheless, this squadron finished its training and departed with a minimum of delay and no accidents. Fleet Air Arm TBF Squadron #848 arrived in the first week of July 1943 and shortly thereafter there was experienced the first emergency landing when S/Lt. Potter made an emergency one-wheel landing in a TBF so well executed as to cause slight damage to the plane and no injuries to the pilot. By this time the station force had grown to sufficient size so that the Operations Department was able to cope with the situation and crash crew was available.

During July 1943 work was rushed on hangar #2 in preparation for the Royal Navy Corsair Squadrons scheduled to arrive about September 1, 1943. In addition, the construction on



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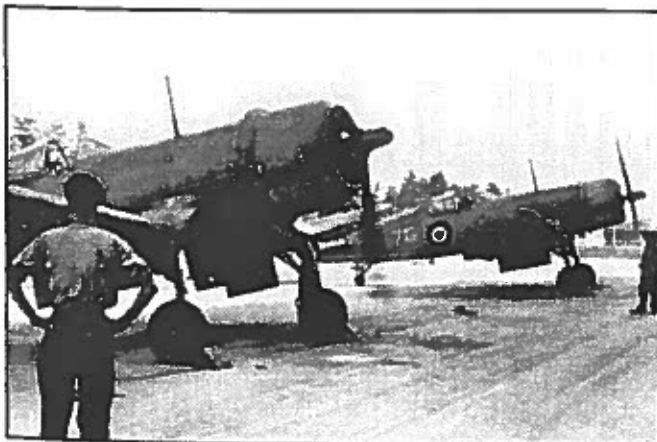
the east-west runway was scheduled in such a way as to make at least two runways available during the period necessary for rebuilding the intersections and installing the underground cables for the runway lighting system. On August 25, 1943, first British Corsair Squadrons arrived. First Squadron 1833 arrived followed in rapid succession by 1831, 1834, 1835, and 1836. With the arrival of these Corsairs piloted by very inexperienced pilots, the runway accident rate took a terrific jump but fortunately no serious injuries or fatalities occurred on the field.

By this time the ground training department had become sufficiently organized to offer recognition, link training, and gunnery training to the British squadrons. Using the old hangar on the opposite side of the field as their headquarters, this department set up a most successful program. The A&R hangar was being rushed to completion in order to properly repair the growing pile of unserviceable Corsairs. Coincidental with the arrival of the first British Corsair Squadron on August 25, 1943 came the Royal Navy Aircraft Service Unit with Lt. Dobbin RNVR as Officer-in-Charge. This unit assumed duties similar to our CASU detachments and shared half of the nearly completed #3 A&R hangar.

The NAS Supply Department had begun to function with part of their storage space completed and the station was beginning to assume its designed appearance. It was during this period that the lack of adequate officers' mess and recreation space became evident and efforts were put forth by the Commanding Officer for the construction of a suitable building for such a necessary adjunct to the station's facilities.

By October 1, 1943 the arrival of so many RN squadrons soon showed the necessity for overall control of these units and consequently Lt. Cmdr. Grant-Sturgis RNVR was ordered here to act as Senior British Naval Officer and to see that the training program was carried out and at the same time to coordinate all British activity with the NAS Brunswick.

The first series of fatal accidents occurred on Sunday, October 5, 1943 when Lt. Cmdr. Sewell, Commanding Officer of 1837 Squadron perished in a mid-air collision with another of his squadron pilots. As a tribute to this fine officer and gentleman, permission was granted to name the avenue adjacent to the officer's mess and BOQ Sewell Avenue.



Fleet Air Arm Corsairs warming up at Brunswick NAS in 1944 for a training mission. (Photo via Leo Boyle)

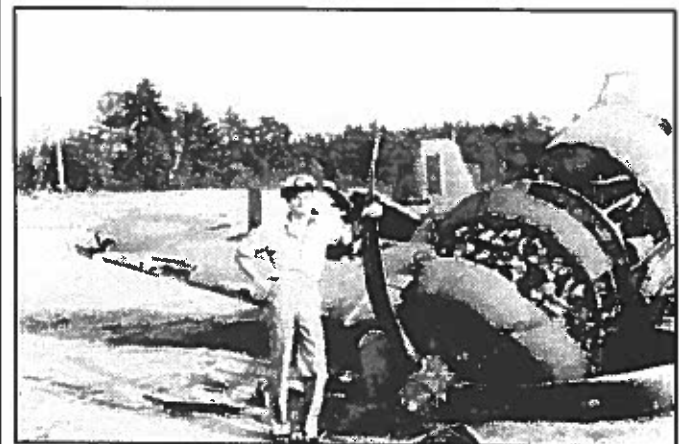


A Fleet Air Arm Corsair practicing carrier deck operations at Brunswick. (Photo via Leo Boyle)

On November 19, 1943 Lt. Cmdr. Grant-Sturgis RNVR was relieved by Lt. Cmdr. Firth RNVR who assumed the duties of SBNO for NAS Brunswick. A short time later Grant-Sturgis was killed in a most unfortunate accident at Jacksonville, Florida. Two snowstorms during the months of November hampered the flight schedules considerably inasmuch as the second storm on November 17 brought more than 20 inches of damp, slushy snow which could not be removed by the then-inadequate snow removal equipment.

The month of December 1943 started off with a serious crash when an F4U from one of the RN squadrons exploded in mid-air spilling debris over the city of Brunswick. Fortunately no civilians were injured although the townspeople were severely shaken by the prospects of similar accidents. During this month the station was visited by such distinguished officers as Vice Admiral Leary, Commander Eastern Sea Frontier and Rear Admiral Fortal, Royal Navy.

Although hampered by extremely cold weather, high winds and runways which were hemmed in by high windows of icy snow, both 1835 and 1836 Royal Navy Squadrons completed their training and left for Norfolk. Total training time for the month amounted to 1081 hours. *To be continued.*



Another Fleet Air Arm Corsair bites the dust. Landing accidents were not uncommon, and in the winter the high snowbanks along the runways were an additional hazard. (Photo via Leo Boyle)

Richard B. Folsom

Greenville — Richard B. Folsom, one of the oldest surviving truly Maine bush pilots, died on April 11, 2002. He was born in Greenville, December 30, 1918, the son of Malcolm L. and Madeline Brett Folsom.

He went to Spartan Aircraft School in Tulsa, Oklahoma. He learned mechanics working for Pratt & Whitney in 1940-1941. He first soloed in 1941 and received his private pilot's license after World War II. In 1942, he joined the Army Air Corps as a mechanic, serving in the Pacific.

In 1946, along with Charles Sawyer and Stanley Wilt, Folsom bought his first plane and shortly thereafter started Folsom's Air Service. Over the years, he and his pilots flew hunters, fishermen and vacationers into the wilderness, along with delivering supplies to sporting camps and woods camps. Dick and his pilots were known to carry anything that could be loaded or tied onto a plane, including refrigerators, stoves, canoes, and lumber.

In 1964, Dick and Charlie Coe started providing water-bombing services using Folsom's DeHaviland Beaver for the State Forestry Department. Dick retired in 1982 and worked as a consultant with his son, Max, until his death.

A party was held at Max and Judy's to celebrate Dick's life at 2 p.m. Sunday, April 14.

Obituary reprinted from the Bangor Daily News

Save These Dates

The 36th Annual Northeast Aero Historians meeting will be held on October 18, 19 and 20, 2002 at the Cradle of Aviation Museum in Garden City, New York.

Having attended many of these meetings in years past, I can assure you that these are very interesting and that the program and banquet will be great. But the best thing about them is the chance to meet and learn from amateur and professional historians from the eastern United States and Canada. Some of my best sources and my best aviation friends have come from these meetings. Maybe we can get a group interested in going together. The chance to visit the Cradle of Aviation Museum alone should be both educational and enjoyable.

The full schedule and registration forms, motels, etc. should be available in September. Let me know if you want to know more.

—Leo Boyle, editor

The 36th Annual Meeting of the
Northeast Aero Historians

October 18, 19 and 20, 2002

Cradle of Aviation Museum
Garden City, New York



George Greene

Kittery — George William Greene, 66, of 2 Tower Road, Kittery Point, died peacefully at his residence Sunday morning, April 21, 2002, after a lengthy and courageous battle with cancer. He was born in Milo on August 27, 1935, the son of Charles C. and Alyce A. (Tumosa) Greene.

Educated in the local schools, he entered the U.S. Army in October 1954, during the Korean War, and was stationed in Fairbanks, Alaska. He served as a cross-country ski trooper and was the recipient of the Good Conduct Medal at discharge in September 1956.

Mr. Greene graduated for Embry Riddle in Florida, class of 1958, as an airline mechanic. Following his graduation, he attended flight school at Gunn Airfield in Georgia, later becoming a flight instructor. He went to work with the one-time Eastern Airlines in October 1961, a career that extended nearly 30 years. As a check airman, he made captain in July of 1970 and later retired in October 1989. In 1990, he went to work with the U.S. Postal Service as an alternative rural letter carrier in South Berwick. This part-time job was something he greatly enjoyed.

He owned and operated Greene's Air Service in Dover-Foxcroft, a seaplane air flying service flying career charter flights in and out of desolate Maine.

A resident of Kittery Point since 1988, he had traveled extensively with the airlines, settling in the Seacoast area in the early 1970s. He especially loved animals, was an avid outdoorsman who loved cross-country skiing, canoeing, camping and most especially, his Cessna 180.

Mr. Greene was a member of the retired Eastern Airlines Pilots Association, the Civil Air Patrol, the Maine Aviation Historical Society, the Sea Plane Pilots Association, the Cessna Pilots Association, the Airline Pilots Association, the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association, the Seacoast Indoor Tennis Club and the Gerrish Island Association.

He is survived by his wife, Barbara J. "Bobbie" (Clawhes) Greene, whom he married on Valentine's Day 1981, of Kittery Point, three children, two step-children, eight grandchildren, and two sisters.

Obituary reprinted from Foster's Online Obituaries

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- May 27, 30, 6/1 .. All Day Maine Air Museum, Bangor, Maine
- July 6-7 10 a.m. '50s and '60s Meet and Antique Acroplane Show, Owls Head Transportation Museum, Maine
- July 13 10 a.m.MAHS Meeting, Maine Air Museum, Bangor, Maine
- August 10..... 10 a.m.MAHS Meeting, Maine Air Museum, Bangor, Maine
- August 10-11 10 a.m. Transportation Spectacular and Aerobatic Air Show, Owls Head Transportation Museum
- Sept. 13, 14, 15 .. All Day International Seaplane Fly-In, Greenville, Maine
- Sept. 14 10 a.m.MAHS Meeting, Maine Air Museum, Bangor, Maine
- October 12 10 a.m.MAHS Meeting, Maine Air Museum, Bangor, Maine
- October 18-20 All Day Northeast Aero Historians Meeting, Cradle of Aviation Museum, Garden City, NY

MAHS meeting sites are flexible and we're always looking for guest speakers and new program ideas. Call Les Shaw at 1-877-280-MAHS if you have any ideas or if you can be of help.

Membership Update

Welcome New Member

425. **John F. Boyle**
 21 Boyd Street, Apt. 1401
 Bangor, ME 04401 207-945-6910

Got E-Mail?

Don't forget to send us your e-mail address if you want it listed in the *Dirigo Flyer*. It's a great way to keep in touch with other members, share information quickly and stay current on aviation issues and happenings.

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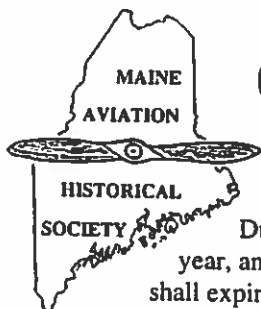
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 Newsletter, Decal, Museum Admission
 Newsletter, Decal, Museum Admission
 Newsletter, Decal, Museum Admission, 4 Free Passes
 Newsletter, Decal, Lifetime Membership Number,
 Museum Admission, 10 Free Passes

Maine Aviation Historical Society
P.O. Box 2641
Bangor, ME 04402

May Meeting

Saturday, May 11, 2002
10 a.m.

Maine Air Museum
Bangor, Maine