



DIRIGO FLYER

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Newsletter of the Maine Aviation Historical Society
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The British Are Coming! The History of the U.S. Naval Air Station, Brunswick, Maine — Part II

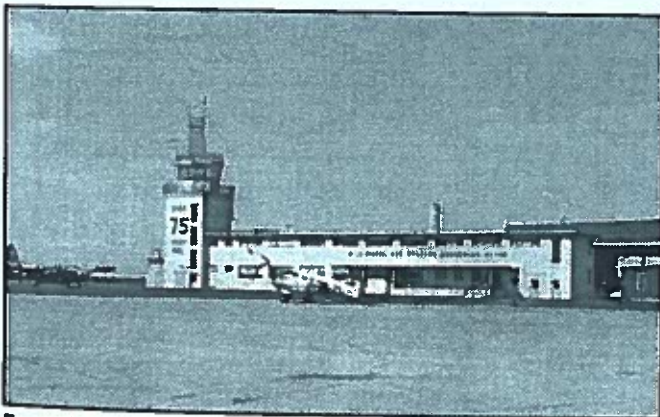
The following U.S. Navy narrative outlines the use of the Brunswick Naval Air Station from its beginning.

— Leo Boyle, Editor

January 1944 brought forth increasing operational problems when a record 23 inch snowfall tied up the runways. However, by terrific effort Runway 24 was opened on January 8 to permit 1837 and 1838 Squadrons to depart for Norfolk at the completion of their training.

On January 8, 1944, Lt. James Sands, USNR, station Ordnance and Gunnery Officer was presented the Navy and Marine Corps medal for heroism displayed during the fire which razed the NOB *Argentia* BOQ on January 12, 1943. Also at this time Radio Electrician A. A. Lucero, USN, recieved the Presidential Unit Citation for his service aboard the *USS Yorktown*.

Two serious crashes occurred at this time. The first of these was at North Windham, Maine when an F4F attached to 738 Squadron, NAAF Lewiston, crashed and burned, the pilot losing his life. The second one occurred two days later when Ens. J.A. Andrew of VS31 crashed and burned at Georgetown Island on the East Bank of the Kennebec River, both pilot and passenger were killed.



Brunswick Naval Air Station control tower and operations building, date unknown, but postcards took a 7¢ stamp. A Beech SNB and a Lockheed P2V Neptune are shown. (via Leo Boyle)

RN Squadrons 898 and 882 with F4Fs arrived from Quonset on January 11 for a short training period along with the Corsair Squadrons already aboard. This boosted the training time during January to 676 hours.

All during these past months VJ15 had been operating for Commander Destroyers Atlantic Fleet out of Casco Bay. Their PB5As had been replaced by JRs. Tracking, towing, and picture taking were but a few of the jobs they had been doing. Commander Destroyers Atlantic Fleet planes and pilots were attached to this outfit.

The month of February 1944 carried on the New England winter tradition by dropping 48 inches of snow on the long suffering safety strips. This brought to a head the difficult problem of how to get rid of the dangerous shoulders of snow which were left over from the sloppy storm of November 17. The use of bulldozers and "sheep's foot" rollers was finally resorted to in an effort to flatten out these ridges. Continuous work over a period of several weeks finally showed some results and the danger from these banks was considerably averted.

Early in February the War Manpower Commission visited this station and after spending several days making a comprehensive study came forth with many pertinent suggestions for consolidating departments and reducing the number of service personnel by civilians. Many attempts were made to carry out these suggestions, but the critical labor area in which this station is located made it impossible to hire enough civilians to do all the necessary jobs.

Captain Baker from Commander Eastern Sea Frontier paid a visit to this station on February 2, 1944 making a quick inspection of Hedron 9 Maintenance and Operating Squadrons. This group had been carrying on here at Brunswick since the very beginning when the maintenance unit under Lt. Gluck came here from Lewiston with VS1D1. Now, Hedron Operating had been formed under Lt. G.B. Taylor, USNR, and this unit took over the patrols formerly flown by VB126. Piloting old PV-3s, it was a constant struggle between the ground crews and the elements to keep these planes in the air and much credit

"BNAS" continued on page 3

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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

Monthly Meeting • May 11, 2002

Peter Noddin called the meeting to order at 1000 hours at the Maine Air Museum in Bangor, Maine. There were eleven members present. A printed Treasurer's Report was distributed. There was a net income of \$6894.53 with a balance of \$9292.76 as of 4/30/02. There was no discussion, report accepted. Only web page communications were received. We currently have 178 members. New members are needed, as usual.

Noddin summarized what has been done in recent weeks in preparation for summer operations. Painting, electrical work, furnace installation have been done. Display areas have been delineated and materials for construction of display cases has been received. A memorial bench as been ordered. Ed Armstrong has the information on the memorial brick concept and will have his people sketch out some display concepts. It was noted that we need an electrician to wire up exit signs and emergency lighting so we can meet city codes.

Most crash site visits are on hold until the museum is up and running. There are some late summer and fall visits planned. It is hoped to locate and visit a 1942 B-25 site and a 1975 F-111B site.

All paperwork for the Huey has been approved and we should have it by Memorial Day. We are opening on Saturday, May 25. A training session for people who will be working the opening is planned. An 8x13 foot painting has been offered by an anonymous donor. It appears to be of a Lancaster bomber. There was some discussion as to what to do with it if accepted. No consensus was reached.

We need exit lights, push bars for doors and a solution to a parking problem. The city code officer will not let us park on the grass. At this time we will just have a general open house with a grand opening later in the summer or early fall. In the Memorial Day parade, we will have a truck carrying our J-57 engine and people dressed in period flight clothing. We are looking for a volunteer coordinator. There has been another proposal concerning the Luscombe. This latter will be taken up by the Board of Directors.

Adjournment at 1052 hours. There was no program to follow the business meeting as members decided to work on the museum.

— William Townsend, Recording Secretary



The President (Les Shaw) gets the top job in the painting department.
(Mike Cornett Photo)



Members Pauline Sodermark and brother Jim helping to improve the interior looks. Why not join them and others and volunteer a few hours to help make the museum fly?
(Mike Cornett Photo)

"BNAS," continued from page 1

should go to the night crews who worked at first under most miserable conditions in the old Red Hangar and later who fought to keep up with the disintegration of these old airplanes.

On February 3, 1944, Royal Navy Squadrons 882 and 898 departed for Norfolk after their month of training. This left only the RN Fighter Pool Squadron 732 on board for training. This unit had been formed several months before to supply pilots to the various operational squadrons based here and to assist in the transition from F4Fs to Corsairs.

The Parachute Loft, the Synthetic Training Building, and most important the railroad spur were completed during this month. The latter, a most important adjunct to the NAS Brunswick, and would now permit the receiving of carload lots of material and fuel directly into the station's warehouses and tanks.

Despite the heavy snowfall during the month of February, 379 hours of training flights were made and VJ15 ran up 539 hours of flying for Commander Destroyers Atlantic Fleet.

For the past few months, rumors had been rife about the increasing activity for this command, and on Friday, March 10, at the weekly department head meeting the word was passed to prepare for a VOF Squadron at Rockland and a CVL Group at Sanford to arrive about April 15. All departments were geared up to take care of the extra work involved to support these new units as well as increased RN training here at Brunswick. Lack of personnel to send to these facilities was a serious problem and insufficient gas and oil trucks bothered the Transportation Department.

VJ5 arrived from Cape May on March 1, 1944 to operate their remarkable Culver Drones with Commander Destroyers Atlantic Fleet's DDs and DEs. Always a fascinating view, these pilotless low wing planes were becoming more and more valuable to Fleet Training. VJ5 had been perhaps the oldest veterans of this field. Way back in 1942 when NAS Brunswick was only a set of plans in the Bureau of Yards and Docks, VJ5 used to operate their old F4Bs from the VPA runways and the old Curtiss Flying Service hangar on the far side of the field.

Another fatal mid-air collision occurred when two F4Us attached to 732 Squadron crashed and burned near Waldoboro,



The specially equipped Lockheed EP-3J Orion which was engaged in electronically mapping the state of Maine. It operates out of Brunswick Naval Air Station. (Rob Rohr Photo)

Maine. Both pilots were lost. This crash pointed out to our Operations Department the need for a more efficient Search and Rescue Bill with extensive lists of responsible observers who can be called upon to furnish accurate valuable information and be used to guide the ground parties by the best route to the scene of a crash.

On March 26, dirty gasoline was found in some planes and immediate remedial steps were taken. Extra straining at the gas farm was used, all trucks were thoroughly cleaned and a rigid inspection of gasoline was instituted. Lt. Butler from the First Naval District came to Brunswick offering several suggestions about cleaning the pipe lines and pits.

On March 27 and 28, this station was visited by Rear Admiral Durgin, ComFairQuonset and Rear Admiral Jones, ComDesLant. Admial Durgin also inspected the NAAFs at Sanford and Rockland in order to determine their fitness for supporting the coming fleet units.

The weather during this month of March 1944 was considerably better, only 17 inches of snow falling and 70% contact conditions prevailing. This allowed 857 hours of training flights and 631 hours by VJ-15.

To be continued ...



Lockheed P-3C Orion based at BNAS. (Leo Boyle Photo)



Lockheed P2V-5FS (SP-2E) Neptune, now a gate guard there, was for years the main aircraft at BNAS. Serial #5238, Bureau #128392. (Leo Boyle Photo)

Wings of the Past

A.T.C. #19 K-R 31 "Challenger"

By Neal Strange

As public interest in aviation gained momentum during the mid-1920s, open cockpit biplanes, produced in quantity by numerous independent aircraft manufacturers, dominated the flight line on early budding airports and flying fields.

The biplane's general configuration, two passengers in front cockpit, pilot in rear, was the basic concept followed by engineers of the time and although similar in outward appearance, not all gained popularity due to variations in design and safety factors and many manufacturers, confronted with increasing competition, failed to survive on their own.

In the shadow of the already famous line of "Waco" aircraft, Amos H. Kreider and L.E. Reisner, both former associates with "Waco" and co-founders of Kreider-Reisner Aircraft Co., entered their bid for a share of the expanding market with a contemporary biplane called the KR-31 "Challenger" and received its A.T.C. #19 December, 1927.

While closely resembling the popular "Waco 9" some variations were obvious. Coolant for the renowned Curtis "OX-5" engine of 90 HP was supplied from a vertically mounted radiator directly ahead of the front cockpit and unlike the "Waco", ailerons were standard on both upper and lower wings.

Performance with the OX-5 was comparable to companion aircraft of the period, cruising at 85 MPH and landing at 35 to 40, depending on payload. Price at the factory in Md. was just \$2240 less engine which provided the customer an option to select his own power plant. Price increased to \$2740 with factory installed OX-5.

About thirty "Challengers" were delivered under A.T.C. #19 before Kreider-Reisner, like several other fledgling manufacturers, merged with a larger corporation. In the spring of 1929, K-R became a subsidiary of Fairchild Aircraft and continued to produce a series of quality K-R designs within that affiliation.


In the summer of 1930, Senator Arthur Spear, Maine aviation enthusiast and owner of a popular confectionery store in Portland, purchased two K-R 31 "Challengers" for the purpose of establishing a "Flight Service" at the Stroudwater Flying Field. He also obtained distributor authorization from K-R in hopes of marketing "Challenger" aircraft in Maine.

Not a flyer himself, Spear engaged Louis Carney and Charles Treat, early "Jenny" pilots at the Stroudwater Field, to maintain the aircraft, carry passengers, provide flight instruction and demonstrate the "Challengers" to prospective buyers.

In the first few months of operation Carney and Treat were moderately successful carrying passengers on hot Sunday afternoons, but few applied for flying lessons and no additional "Challengers" were acquired or sold. In spite of extensive advertising and other promotional efforts, the venture proved unprofitable, due perhaps in no small part to the depressed national economy then in existence.

By the end of 1932 the "Flight Service" was abandoned and the fate of two "Challenger" biplanes in Maine remains unknown.





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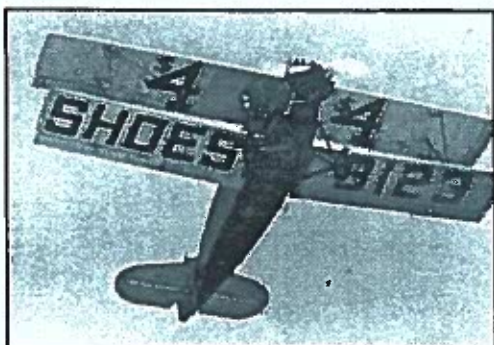
Wings of the Past

A.T.C. #24 Stinson SB-1 "Detroitter"

By Neal Strange

Whenever the word "Stinson" enters the conversation, the name is usually associated with deluxe, cabin "monoplanes" as in the famous "Reliant" series, produced in quantity during the 1930s or the later "Voyager" in various configurations for civil and military application. However, the forerunner of these renowned single wing aircraft made its initial debut as a state-of-the-art, cabin enclosed "biplane."

Though not formally educated in aeronautical engineering, Edward A. "Eddie" Stinson, aided by Alfred Verille, designer of A.T.C #1 Buhl-Verille "Airster," introduced the Stinson SB-1 "Detroitter" in 1926 which, after minor modifications, received its Approved Type Certificate #24 on January 1, 1928.



A radical departure from three passenger, open cockpit, contemporary biplanes of the era, the SB-1 "Detroitter," powered by the popular Wright J5 Whirlwind engine of 220

HP, seated four in an enclosed, "heated" cabin including the pilot who enjoyed such additional luxuries as individual wheel brakes, emergency parking brake, electric starter to eliminate hand cranking and wind-driven generator to maintain battery voltage; uncommon features to be found in 1920s aircraft.

With four passenger capability, the SB-1 "Detroitter," priced at about \$10,000, cruised a respectable speed (for the time) of 100 MPH, landing at 45. Stinson's emphasis on passenger comfort and pilot convenience proved attractive to early airline and scenic flight operators. Only twenty-two SB-1 models were delivered under A.T.C. # 24 prior to production of the more conventional SM-1 "Detroitter" monoplane, but at least one original SB-1 played a significant role in Maine aviation history.

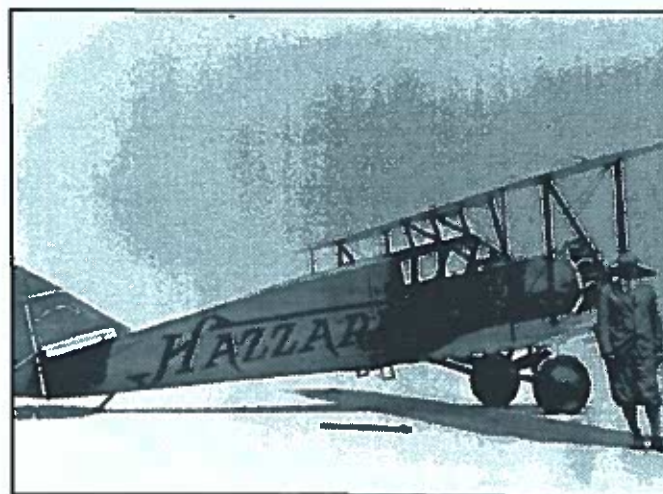


Harry Jones, popular Old Orchard Beach, Maine pilot and his Stinson "Detroitter" airplane used to advertise the four dollar a pair men's shoes of the H.P. Hazzard Shoe Co., of Gardiner, Maine. (1927 Photo)
(Photo: Norm Houle via Leo Boyle)

Capt. Harry Jones, famed pioneer in Maine aviation, initiated hundreds of beach-goers and summer tourists to the adventure of flight from the sands of Old Orchard Beach in a Stinson SB-1 "Detroitter" which he also used for aerial advertising.

During the mid 1920s, Capt. Jones and his unique "cabin biplane" with promotional advertisements in bold letters for Hazzard Shoes clearly visible on its wings, was a familiar attraction in the sky over Old Orchard and neighboring towns and a major contributor to the advancement of aviation in southern Maine.

Eventually, Harry's "Detroitter" suffered from corrosion, exposed as it was to the salt air and water. He gave it to his mechanic, Joe Snow, who was restoring it in Harry's hangar when it was destroyed in a hangar fire in 1931. Today only the rudder fabric still exists in the Old Orchard Beach Historical Society.



Harry Jones and his Stinson SB-1B cabin biplane in 1927. Note Hazzard Shoe name on fuselage and, above left, "\$4 Shoes" advertising.
(Photo: HJS, OOBHS via MAHS)

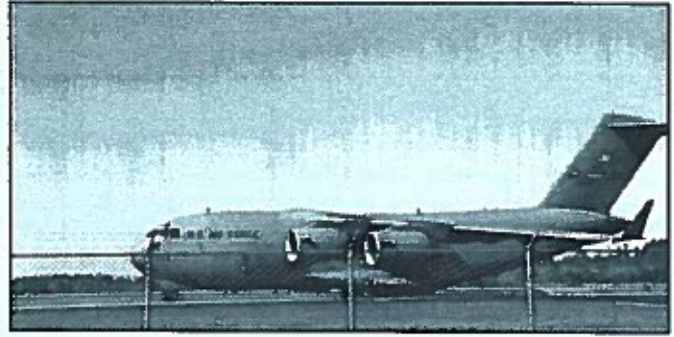
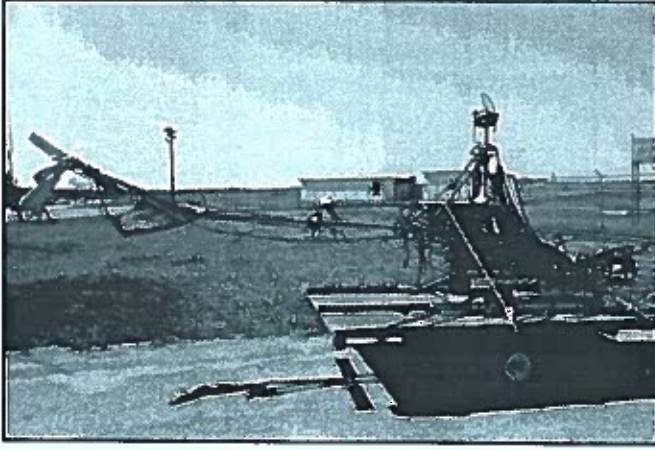
The 36th Annual Meeting of the
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Cradle of Aviation Museum
Garden City, New York

The View from Here ...



Above: A Douglas (Boeing) C-17 from McChord AFB, Air Material Command, passes the museum this month. *Left:* Our Scorpion helicopter in the process of restoration. (Mike Cornett Photos)

More on the Mystery Ship

The photo of Frank Hawks landing the Travel Air mystery ship in Lewiston brought back a memory to member Lloyd Gates of Norway ... he was there!

Dear Leo:

The photo and write-up on Frank Hawks and NR1313 (April 2002 *Dirigo Flyer*) took me back — I was there — and what an event for a 16-year-old who had only read about the "mystery ship."

The landing doesn't look as though it would be a three-pointer, does it? About all I remember about the event was that the "runway" had been (apparently) just carved out of the sod and was dusty.

After landing, Hawks came right by us and patted my six-year-old brother on the head on his way with the dignitaries.

Thirty years later I saw the "mystery ship" again, hanging quite desolately in a Chicago museum.

Lloyd Gates

From Coast to Coast

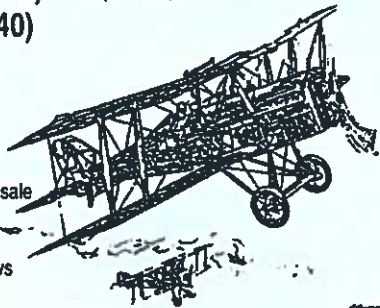


This McDonnell F-101B Voodoo flew with the 101st Fighter Group (ANG) at Dow AFB from November 1969 until August 1978. It is now in the museum at Sacramento, California.

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- June 8 10 a.m. MAHS Meeting, Maine Air Museum, Bangor, Maine
- July 6-7 10 a.m. '50s and '60s Meet and Antique Aeroplane 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 Members

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 Hermon, ME 04401 207-848-2595
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427. Stanley S. Smith
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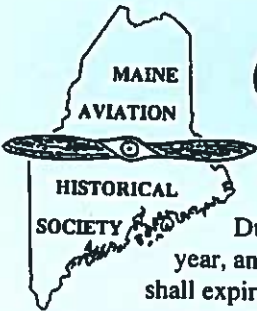
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June Meeting

Saturday, June 8, 2002
10 a.m.

Maine Air Museum
Bangor, Maine