



DIRIGO FLYER

Vol. X, No. 9 September 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 — Addendum

The following U.S. Navy addendum concludes our series on the history of the Brunswick Naval Air Station.

— Leo Boyle, Editor

The U.S. Naval Air Station, Brunswick, Maine, originally constructed and occupied in March of 1943, was first commissioned on April 15, 1943 with the primary mission of training British Naval Command (Royal Canadian Air Force) pilots. The station, encompassing 1487 acres, was built on a plot of land which had been willed to the needy people of Brunswick as a public domain for the sole purpose of picking blueberries. It is located two miles east of the town of Brunswick, south of U.S. Route One.

Operating under the motto "Built for Business," the air station carried out a secondary mission during the war years, that of anti-submarine warfare, which its squadrons performed with 'round the clock efficiency.

The first U.S. squadron to arrive at NAS, Brunswick, was a heavier-than-air Scouting Squadron (VS1D1) under the command of Lieutenant John G. Shelley, Wellesley, Maine. When they began operations, there was only a half mile of runway, no hangars or operations tower. The ready room the pilots utilized was also incomplete and the men used packing boxes for seats and a pot-bellied stove to warm the hut. It became better known as the "family room" when the men's wives began to make frequent appearances to see the aviators off on missions.

At the height of its wartime operations, the air station was supporting three auxiliary landing fields: one at Sanford, one at Lewiston, and one at Rockland, Maine.

When the Royal Canadian Air Force crews arrived in 1943, construction was still underway on the runways and various other parts of the station. Soft tar lined the edges of the runways. As the RAF planes neared the air station, they performed a nonchalant style of flight that is still talked about by the old-timers of the area. After they were contacted near Portsmouth, New Hampshire, they were warned of the soft tar on the

runways and instructed to land in single formation using the center of the landing area. As the Canadians soared over the field, they seemed determined to smash the control tower as they made low altitude passes. However, they pulled up at the last instant and barrel-rolled over the tower. Lieutenant Shelley was in the tower at the time and stated that if he had had a rock, he could have tossed it into the cockpits of the Canadian planes.

After performing numerous aerobatics in the air, they resumed formation and started to land, three planes abreast. As the first planes touched down, the two on the tip of the formation hit the soft tar and toppled nose-first, skidding 200 feet on their backs. Fortunately, neither of the pilots were injured except for minor scratches.

Lieutenant Commander Allingham was the commanding officer of the first Royal Canadian Air Force Squadron to be given training at the air station. For the assistance rendered to the Canadian pilots, NAS, Brunswick was presented a plaque by the Royal Navy "in recognition for the training of British Naval pilots during the periods of 1943 through 1945."

After the air station was deactivated in October 1946, the land and buildings were leased jointly to the University of Maine and Bowdoin College as annexes to ease the overcrowded conditions at both colleges caused by the G.I. Bill student influx. When the station facilities were no longer needed, both colleges terminated their leases in 1949 and the base was taken over by the Brunswick Flying Service. At this time, the buildings that had housed men and implements of war were put to uses never included in military design. Hangar one was a skating rink; hangar two housed automobiles; ammunition magazines were mushroom farms; and shrub nursery graced the northern boundary of the reservation. Any resemblance to a Naval Air Station was purely coincidental.

Following this period of caretaker status, the air station was selected by the Navy as a prime center for development. During the development period, the Air Force reached an agreement

"BNAS" continued on page 4

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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

President's Message • August 2002

We are now open on the weekends to the public. We haven't made a big announcement or published the hours as we are trying different things to see how they work. We were open Saturday and Sunday from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. but found that no one came by on Sunday mornings so we have changed the hours on Sunday to 12 noon to 4 p.m. We will see how that works. We have good attendance on Saturday, but Sundays have been very slow. Now is the time to come forward if you have some hours to staff the museum. The work is easy, you meet and greet and answer questions. It is fun and relaxing and you will find that everyone who comes by has a story to tell.

We also need a dedicated Volunteer Coordinator who does nothing more than to call members and schedule them to work on the weekends. This is a great job for someone who wishes to become involved but can't due to health issues. The work can be done from your home, we will get you a prepaid card to cover the cost of the calls and it can be done at your leisure. If interested in this position or if you wish to donate time, please call the museum at 207-941-6757 or e-mail me at Les.Shaw@unit.maine.edu and someone will get back to you.

We have accomplished a lot this last year, let's keep it going strong. To do so we need your help, so volunteer today. Thanks.

— Les Shaw, President

Sneak Peak Inside the Maine Air Museum



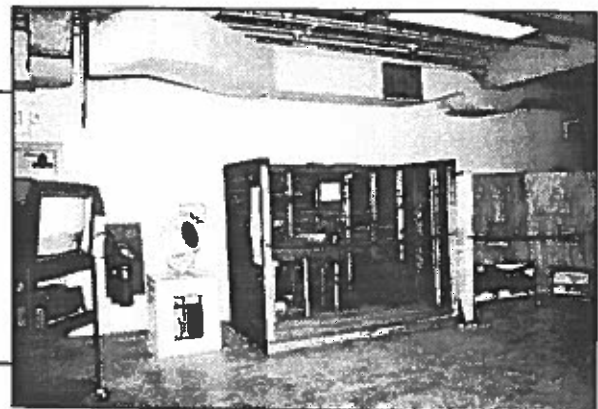
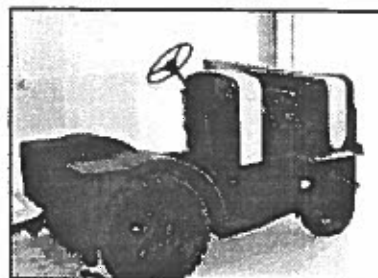
Top: Some of Bob Day's squadron insignia on display.

Left: Ejection seats (used).

Below: A "work in progress." Construction underway for upcoming exhibits.

Below Left: Our airport tug donated by Phil Hall of Scarborough.

(Mike Cornett Photos)



Wings of the Past - A.T.C. #487 Heath "Parasol" LNA-40

By Neal Strange

In spite of national economic woes prevalent during the late 1920s, public interest in aviation continued to rise, and although factory manufactured aircraft were relatively affordable, sales were mostly limited to an affluent minority. However, an alternative for the determined flying enthusiast of limited means was to construct his own aircraft from plans and materials produced in kit form by the Heath Aircraft Corp. of Benton Harbor, Michigan.

The Heath "Parasol," designed and produced by Edward Bayard Heath, pioneer pilot and aircraft designer, was also available factory assembled but gained popularity as a do-it-yourself airplane. Three models were offered with various power plants and all were single place, open cockpit, parasol monoplanes, features appealing to sportsmen pilots of the era.

Early models were powered by a factory converted 25 HP Henderson four-cylinder in-line motorcycle engine which was economical to buy and maintain by the home builder, but performance was later substantially increased with the installation of Continental's new "Flat 4" A-40 of 37 HP.

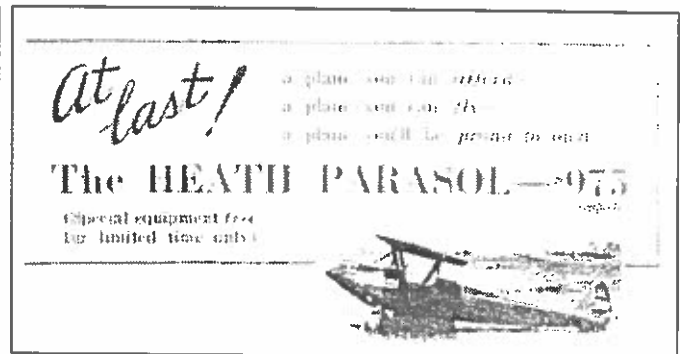
Powered by the Continental engine, the "Parasol" LNA-40 received its Approved Type Certificate #487 from the Department of Commerce on June 3, 1932 and the distinction of the only home assembled aircraft to qualify for federal certification providing each phase of its assembly was inspected, approved and documented by a licensed authority.

The LNA-40 cruised at 68 mph with a maximum of 80 and a docile landing speed of 32. Prices varied with the economy. Kits ranged from \$300 to \$500, and \$975 to \$1200 fully assembled at the factory.

About four hundred LNA-40s were produced, mostly in kit form, under A.T.C. #487 by the Heath Aircraft Corporation before production ceased in 1934. But during the previous decade, prior to receiving federal certification, untold numbers of Heath "Parasols" were assembled in cellars, garages and back yards and successfully flown by amateur pilots and mechanics throughout the United States.

At least two Henderson powered "Parasols" were assembled and flown in Maine. Louis Raymond of Lewiston owned and flew a float-equipped "Parasol" from rivers and lakes in the Lewiston-Auburn area. Clarence Boyle, Portland garage operator and early pilot at the Stroudwater Flying Field, assembled a Heath kit "Parasol" in his garage and flew many hours on both wheels and skis from the Stroudwater Field during the early 1930s.

P.S. Boyle later sold the plane to my father who presented it to me on my ninth birthday! (see photo at right)

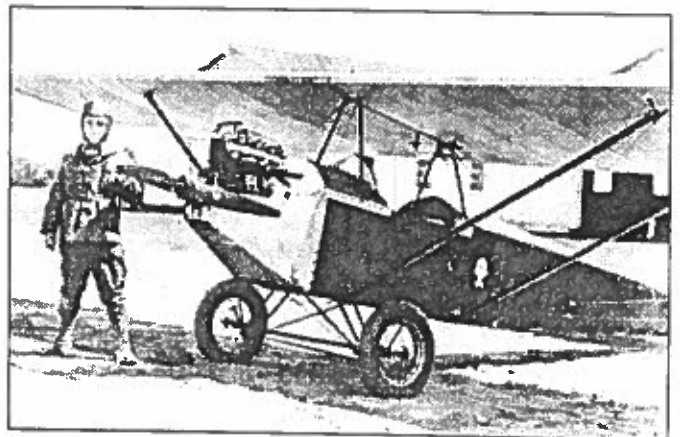


A 1931 ad for the Heath "Parasol," complete for \$975.

After extensive modifications which included the installation of a tailwheel, enlarged rudder, raised seat, a less efficient propeller and limited power setting performed by late MAHS member Sherman L. Tinkham, I learned to taxi and simulate take-off runs on the short grass strip at the Stroudwater Flying Field, always under close supervision by my father and Tinkham.

Heading into the wind at full throttle, the "Parasol" would gain sufficient speed to lift the ail a few inches as it bounced over the rough sod runway but was otherwise (deliberately) incapable of becoming fully airborne.

Passing motorists, attracted by the antics of the small, black and silver airplane and its roaring Henderson engine, would often stop beside the airstrip expecting to see it take off. After watching what appeared to be a series of failed attempts, they would soon become bored and continue on their way.



Portland Press Herald photo, 1932.

Report from the Second Annual Igor Sikorsky Seminar

Vice President Peter Noddin was a guest speaker at member Igor Sikorsky's seminar at his Bradford Camps.

Pete says, "I had a wonderful weekend at Bradford Camps this weekend. They had a full house and three of the four sons were there, adding a special touch. I now have an 8.5 x 11 glossy of Igor flying the VS300 signed by three of his sons and his grandson!

I did a 45 minute presentation on Saturday that went out to about two hours due to questions/discussion. Wanting to stay clear of wrecks (snuck a few in anyway!) and stick to something I knew well, I prepared a presentation on "Military Aviation Firsts in Maine." I stretched "firsts" in a few cases to include truly unique or special, but it went over well.

I started each segment with a map showing the base configuration in Maine at the time, went through World War II with the Houlton Neutrality Act loophole operation, snowball route, and Operation Bolero II. I had a bunch of unit firsts in the Cold War era, including first operational F-84 wing, air refueling wing, F-84F SAC wing, operational BOMARC and SNARK squadrons; a few selective Loring "firsts"; and the Caribou Air Force Station. I wrapped up with Operation High Jump, focusing on the political/PR drive behind it in the USN/USAF competition for funds/jurisdiction and a segment on "Maine's" astronauts. All was well received.

There was a 49th FIS veteran there from the late '60s who was very glad that I went down through his squadron's history from 1946-1984.

Thanks for the opportunity. Igor III and I hit it off fairly well, I think."

Be sure and watch out for next year's seminar — an event worth attending.

"BNAS," continued from page 1

with the Navy authorizing the construction on the station of an Air Force Control and Warning Facility as a part of the continental circumferential radar screen. This Air Force unit was designated the 654th Radar Squadron.

On March 15, 1951, the national ensign was again hoisted to the peak of the flag pole, recommissioning the dormant base as a Naval Air Facility with the established mission of supporting three land-plane patrol squadrons and one Fleet Aircraft Service Squadron, and a planned future mission as a master jet base.

The Navy, in December of 1950, requested \$35 million from Congress to be used for this master jet project. Such a base required dual 8000 foot runways and two outlying fields, one for gunnery and one for carrier practice landings. In June of 1951, the Secretary of Defense submitted a request to Congress for approximately \$20 million for the station. This money was to be

used for additional barracks, officers' quarters, an enlisted men's club, control tower, storage and communication buildings, new galleys and a mess facility to make it a permanent installation.

During the reactivation period in the spring of 1951 there were only a handful of men on the base. Later, the working population had sprouted to several thousand, including the personnel of six patrol squadrons, a Fleet Aircraft Service Squadron, a USAF radar squadron, plus hundreds of Navy and civilian personnel in the station's departments. Reserve Navy air units bring many more men to the central Maine station during the summer months for annual cruises. The squadrons at NAS, Brunswick, flew the PSV "Neptune" patrol bombers, but the station is now designated to accommodate P-3C patrol bombers.

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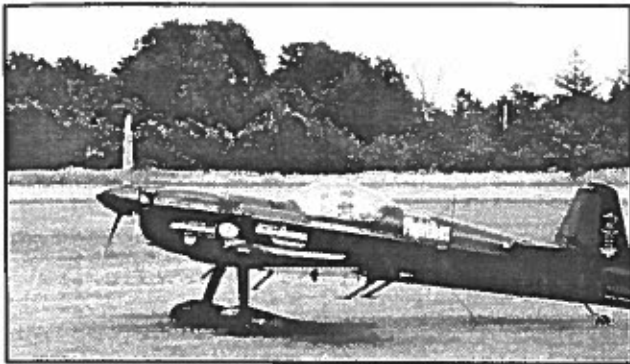
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MAHS Members Gather at Owl's Head

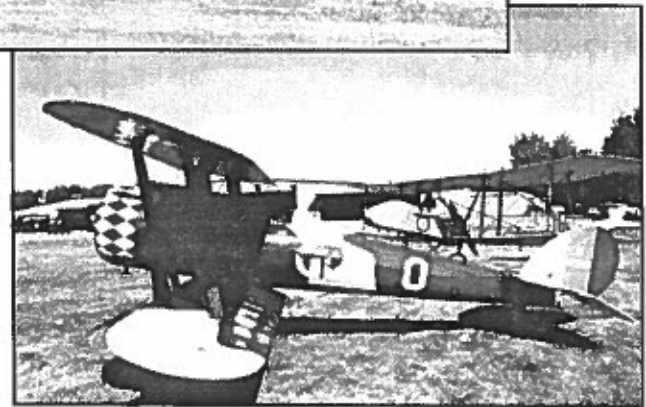
Photos by Mike Cornett



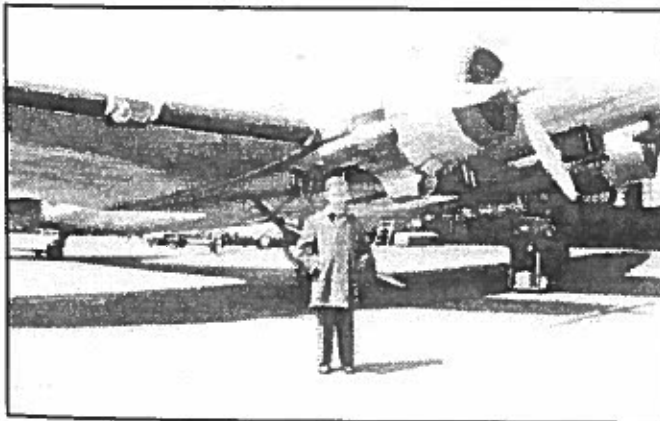
Above: Aerobatic champion Mike Goulian's CAP 232 in which he put on a great display at Owls Head. *Above right:* Leo Boyle and Jim Chichetto talk with Terry Gibbs at the MAHS table. *Right:* Members Dick and Pat Jackson and Bill Thaden flew up to Owls Head in Dick's Navion. *Bottom Right:* Owls Head Nieuport 28 replica painted in the colors of Sumner Sewall's 95th squadron. He was Maine's WWI ace with seven victories.



Owls Head's standard J-1 newly refurbished in the original colors (forest green and white) of Harry Jones of Old Orchard Beach fame.



September Mystery Photo



This picture shows one of our members, then about 11 or 12 years old. Who is the member? What airline does the DC-3 belong to, and where and when was the photo taken?

At the Charleston AFS Reunion



Treasurer Joe Quinn mans our table at the Charleston AFS reunion at the Pilot's Grill. (Mike Cornett Photo)

Buy a Brick and Support the Maine Air Museum

The Maine Air Museum is proud to announce the new memorial Pathway Program. Here's how it works:

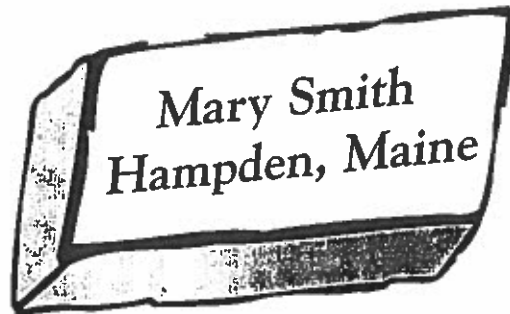
To successfully carry out and reach the museum vision, and to refurbish building 98, the Maine Air Museum needs the financial support of business and public community leaders and individual private citizens. Your interest in preserving the rich Maine aviation history will require funding presently not available to the museum effort. To this end, the museum board has established the following contribution plan for receiving your monetary donation and recognizing your gift permanently in the museum pathway and wall of honor. Remember: your donation is fully tax deductible.

★ Stratocumulus Member — \$100 Donation

Entitles the gift giver to a one-year membership and two-year museum pass and a benefactor's engraved 4"x8"x2.5" red clay brick with up to two lines (14 characters/line, .65" high) of commemorative text in the name of the gift giver or his/her memorial to others. Brick to be installed on the museum grounds, walkway or building facade.

★ Altostratus Member — \$150 Donation

Entitles the gift giver to a two-year membership and three-year museum pass, copy of *The United States Air Force in Maine*, and a benefactor's engraved 4"x8"x2.5" red clay brick with up to two lines (14 characters/line, .65" high) of commemorative text in the name of the gift giver or his/her memorial to others. Brick to be installed on the museum grounds, walkway or building facade.



See Order Form on Page 7

★ Altocumulus Member — \$250 Donation

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★ Cirrus Member — \$2500 Donation

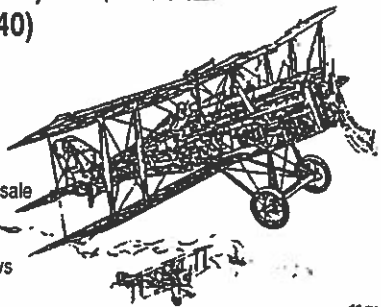
Entitles the gift giver to life membership status and a benefactor's engraved three foot white marble setting bench with one line (27 characters/line, 2" high) of commemorative text in the name of the gift giver or his/her memorial to others. Bench to be installed in the museum building or on the museum grounds.

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Sept. 7-8 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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tlittlefield@aol.com 207-862-3690
430. **Gene Poulin**
87 Falvey Street
Bangor, ME 04401 207-942-4997
431. **John Pierson**
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Got Ideas?

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.

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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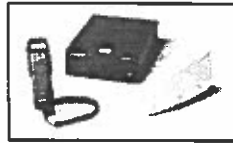
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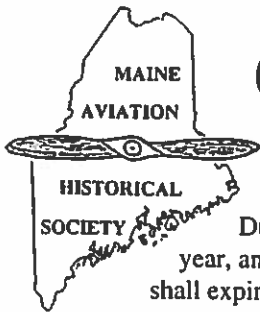
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September Meeting

September 7-8, 2002

Table at Seaplane Fly-In
Greenville, Maine

Monthly Meeting

September 14, 2002 • 10 a.m.

Maine Air Museum
Bangor, Maine