

DIRIGO FLYER

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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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Adventures of a Yellowbird

An excerpt from the book of the same name.

By Bob Mudge

Just one year before Pan American had begun flight operations for the Boston and Maine, an airline had sprung up in Philadelphia. The Ludington brothers, from a wealthy Philadelphia family, felt that their city should be linked by air to New York and Washington.

Much like the Boston and Maine officials, the Ludingtons knew little of aviation. They too sought outside help from the professionals. While the Ludington brothers occupied the two top spots in management of Ludington Airways, President and Chairman of the Board, they brought in Paul F. Collins, Vice-President of Operations, as the man who would really run the airline. Along with Collins came Eugene Vidal as Chief Organizer and General Manager.

The Ludingtons had picked a good pair to run their airline. Collins had been one of the original airmail pilots hired by the U. S. Postal Service. He had participated in flying the first night transcontinental mail into New York. He was one of the very few original airmail pilots to survive, although on one flight he had been forced to bail out leaving his plane to crash. Leaving the airmail service he decided to try his hand at the executive end of flying. He had no difficulty finding a spot he liked, as experienced airmail pilots were in short supply.

Collins became General Superintendent for Transcontinental Air Transport (T.A.T.), the predecessor of Trans World Airlines, one of the major airline efforts in the early days.

With T.A.T., Collins found his long experience hauling the mails invaluable. In those days, there really wasn't too much difference between carrying mail and passengers. In either case, the pilot wanted to get through safely; it mattered little to him whether he had a load of mail behind him or a bunch of passengers — if the pilot got there, so did the payload, be it mail or people. Collins was perhaps typical of the airline operations man of the period: a "seat of the pants" pilot who knew what to demand from his pilots in the way of performance because he could do it himself. Not much in the way of business training or experience, but a big bark that demanded the attention of his underlings.

While with T.A.T., Collins had become acquainted with Eugene Vidal, who served as Assistant General Manager for the line. They made a good team. Collins had the technical knowledge necessary for the mission; Vidal, ex-West Point,

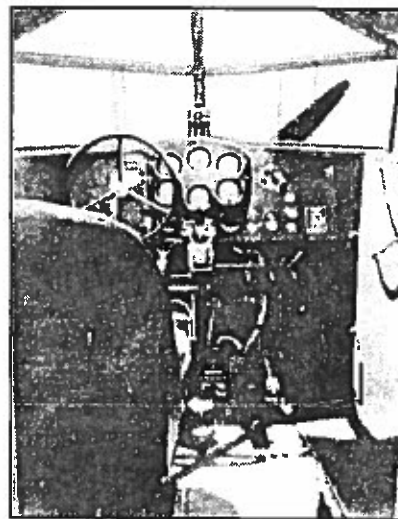
son of Senator Vidal of Oklahoma, had the polish and sophistication of the public relations man. He was well acquainted with traffic, advertising, and general administration.

From their experience with T.A.T., Collins and Vidal had come to the conclusion that for an airline between two large cities to be successful, it was essential to develop a high frequency schedule: the "Every Hour on the Hour" concept. The more they discussed it, the more eager they both became to try it out. T.A.T., involved in the long-haul transcontinental market, could not do this.

When the Ludington brothers came along, it seemed like a golden opportunity. They had little difficulty in selling the new airline entrepreneurs on the concept. To put the Collins-Vidal philosophy into effect on the New York-Philadelphia-Washington run, a sizeable fleet of aircraft was necessary. The Ludingtons had put up \$250,000 to start operations; and much of this was used in the purchase of six brand new Stinson Trimotors with an option for four more. The new planes cost \$22,500 each.

Service was started in September, 1930. From the start, things went well. Collins knew how to get things done and get them done fast. The high frequency service proved popular as the airline set up an "Every Hour on the Hour" service, frequently called the first air shuttle. The advertising slogans posted along the highways to the effect that "Your Watch is Your Timetable" or "You'd be There Now if You'd Flown Ludington" appealed to the public. Load factors soared to sixty percent of seats sold — better than most airlines can do today.

See more photos and related story on page 4.



Cockpit of Stinson Trimotor flown by National Airways and Boston & Maine Airways, 1933-1940. (Courtesy of Smithsonian Institution)

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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 Special Monthly Meeting • Saturday, January 11, 2003

December Meeting Cancelled

Due to a very inclement weather forecast, the December 14, 2002 meeting of the MAHS at the Maine Air Museum was called off. Because of the proximity of Christmas and the New Year, the meeting was cancelled until the next regularly scheduled meeting on January 11, 2003. The importance of the meeting is spelled out below and in the reprinted editorial on page 3. It becomes even more so now because we have one month less to get ready for our Grand Opening, so please make every effort to attend, participate, and contribute to making the Maine Air Museum fly in 2003!

Special Monthly Meeting • Saturday, January 11, 2003

We issue a special invitation to all of you to attend the January meeting and meet your newly-elected officers and directors. They are a great group of dedicated and hard-working people who believe in the future flight of the Maine Air Museum. Come see for yourself how far we have come and how much we have accomplished. View the material we now have available for exciting displays and get involved in making these displays a reality. Bring your ideas and your talents and join us in making the Maine Air Museum an enjoyable and educational experience for our visitors. Volunteer to be a part of making the Maine Air Museum fly in 2003.

Renewal Time •

For many of you, it's renewal time again. Please check your label for the expiration date of your membership. If your label has a red star next to the date, it's that time for you. Please mail your renewal dues to MAHS, 101 Monroe Avenue, Westbrook, ME 04092-4020 (or bring to the next meeting).

At this time, also think about upgrading your membership: life members never have to worry about when their dues are up. This is also the best time to consider making a donation or pledge to the museum. The Maine Aviation Historical Society / Maine Air Museum is a non-profit educational 501(c)3 corporation and all donations are tax-deductible within the limits of the law. For a major donation or gift, please see one of the officers or directors.

50 Years Ago in Boston



A Northeast Airlines DC-3, with two Convair 240s in the background, in Boston in the early 1950s. (Photo via Bill Armstrong)

Editorial

This coming year marks the 100th anniversary of the Wright brothers' first flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina on December 17, 1903. The year 2003 promises to be a most exciting year in the field of aviation with all the celebrations planned throughout the nation. It can also be a most exciting year in the history of aviation in the state of Maine as the Maine Air Museum opens its doors to the public with a Grand Opening scheduled for mid-year. What a way to celebrate that first flight with the first flight of Maine's newest and most exciting museum!

A lot of work still needs to be done to prepare for this grand event. As an original founding member of the Maine Aviation Historical Society, parent of the Maine Air Museum, I can take pride with the rest of you in how far we have come and how much we have accomplished in the past ten years. I know this goes for all the other founding members who are still with us, and for those who can no longer be with us. Many have joined our efforts along the way, and their enthusiasm and work ethic have been major factors in getting us to where we are today.

We are now at one of those turning points in our history where we have the opportunity to move forward and become a great museum. In the next six months, there is much work to be done by all to ensure that when the Grand Opening is held, we present the state of Maine and those who visit us with a first-class facility.

It must be one that the world will say "Wow!" when they see what we have done, will want to revisit, and will tell all the world about it. Like all volunteer organizations, we have had our downs as well as our highs, people who have come aboard, flamed briefly and gone out. Now is the time when we must have a concerted effort by a number of people who will volunteer in the next six months and after to ***MAKE THE MAINE AIR MUSEUM FLY!***

Whether you are an original member, newly joined or not yet one of us, we ask you to seriously consider what you can do in 2003 to make this museum become a reality. Working with our dedicated newly-elected officers and our Board of Directors, we ask you to volunteer to make 2003 one of your most exciting years. Enjoy the camaraderie of your fellow aviation enthusiasts in putting your best talents to their best use in accomplishing something we can all be proud of in the years to come. As we drive by the Maine Air Museum in the future, we can point with pride as we tell our children, grandchildren and friends, "I helped to build that!"

Among the people we need to take charge and make sure things are run and done right are the following: Museum Manager, Gift Shop Manager, Physical Plant Maintenance, Groundskeeper, Public Relations Manager, Volunteer Coordinator, Membership Manager, Fundraising Manager, Program Chairman, Activities Chairman, and Record Keeper. Look over this list carefully and choose where you would best fit in. Make a statement, make your mark in 2003 and do something you will enjoy and will be proud of. Want to run your own store? Be the Gift Shop Manager. Like to mow grass and plow snow? Be the Groundskeeper.

There is a home away from home for you at the Maine Air Museum, where *you* can be someone *important*. Enjoy your life more in the company of your fellow enthusiasts. Add something more to your life in 2003 — ***VOLUNTEER!***

Leo Boyle, Life Member #2

Editor, *Dirigo Flyer*, 1992-present

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→ → → → → → → → → → Save Maine's Aviation History for Tomorrow

Wings of the Past

A.T.C. #335 · Stinson "Airliner" SM-6000

By Neal Strange

When scheduled airmail delivery began in the late 1920s, aerial hitchhikers would often coax a reluctant mail plane pilot for a ride to some destination along his route, providing there was sufficient room to squeeze in among the sacks of mail.

Most early mail planes were war surplus DeHaviland or Curtiss biplanes, modified for cargo and mail but little room for passengers.

As air routes expanded, hard pressed, independent mail carriers, relying solely on government contracts for their survival, soon realized that transporting paying passengers to points along the mail routes could substantially bolster their revenue.

Requests for larger mail planes encouraged manufacturers to produce a variety of aircraft capable of transporting several passengers at a time in an enclosed compartment separate from the cargo of mail. The pilot, however, in most designs continued to apply his expertise facing the elements in an open cockpit.

As the network of airways continued to expand, public interest and confidence in air travel increased likewise, creating a need for larger and more sophisticated combination passenger-mail planes with greater seating capacity.

Heavier payloads required increased power, resulting in the development of multi-engine airliners by various contemporary manufacturers in the 1930s.

Edward "Eddie" Stinson, renowned pilot and designer, amazed the aircraft industry by producing a 10-passenger, tri-motor airliner for \$18,000, half the cost of similar designs offered by competitive manufacturers. Stinson's bargain price was based on volume sales to new, aspiring airlines with limited capital to invest.

The Stinson, model SM-6000 "Air Liner" was a high wing, fabric covered, fully enclosed, cabin monoplane; powered with three Lycoming R-680 engines of 215 h.p. each.; length overall 42' 10"; wing span 60'; seating capacity 10 passengers, one pilot; max. speed 138 MPH; cruising 115; landing 60. Initial



Boston & Maine Airways Stinson SM-6000 Trimotor, 1933. (l to r) Paul Collins, Jack Sheehan, Amelia Earhart, Captain Milton Anderson, Laurence G. Whittemore and Phillip Payson. (MCRP Photo via Norm Houle)

price at the factory was \$18,000. (It later increased to \$23,000.) About 170 SM-6000 and 6000-As were manufactured under A.T.C. # 335 before production ceased, but at least five were known to be still flying after WWII.

Designed primarily for short runs, the Stinson's crew was limited to one pilot and he was required to do everything. Take tickets at the plane's door, see that passengers were seated properly, fly the ship to its destination, supervise the loading and unloading, then repeat this routine for the return trip.

It's interesting to note regarding the recent controversy over weapons in the cockpit that airline pilots and terminal dispatchers of the 1930s were required to wear side arms at all times while on duty; a federal policy carried over from the days when trains and other U.S. Mail carriers were often robbed while enroute. This practice was discontinued in late 1940s.

Perhaps the first airplane to become commonplace in the skies over Maine during the mid-1930s was the Boston & Maine Airways, black and orange, Stinson Trimotor on its daily round trip between Boston and Bangor with stops at Portland and Waterville.

Unlike today's airliners which are rarely visible in the sky, the Stinson Trimotors cruised at altitudes where they could readily be seen and heard by ground observers.

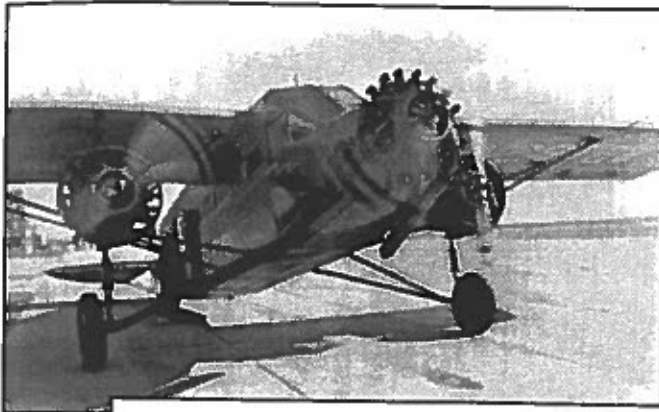
With only limited navigational aids, B&M flights were confined to daylight operations but rarely cancelled due to adverse weather. Runways north of Boston were unpaved and often ice covered in winter. Under such conditions the unheated trimotors frequently arrived at Maine airports equipped with skid chains on the main wheels to aid in braking and ground control.

Boston and Maine Airways, later to become Northeast Airlines, now a division of Delta, paved the air routes in Maine and New Hampshire with the Stinson Trimotors from August 1933 until November 1936 when the last fabric covered airliner was retired and replaced with a fleet of new, all metal, twin engine Lockheed Electras.

Read Down		MAINE LINE			Read Up	
Daily A.M.	Miles	Schedules—Airport to Airport Eastern Standard Time			Daily P.M.	
10.30		Lv. BOSTON		Ar.	6.30	
11.30	90	Ar. PORTLAND, ME.		Lv.	5.40	
11.30		Lv. PORTLAND, ME.		Ar.	5.30	
12.15	165	Ar. WATERVILLE, ME.		Lv.	4.45	
12.20		Lv. WATERVILLE, ME.		Ar.	4.40	
12.45	215	Ar. BANGOR, ME.		Lv.	4.15	

FARES—AIRPORT TO AIRPORT				
		Boston	Port-land	Water-ville
PORTLAND	One Way	\$5.50		
	Round Trip	9.50		
WATERVILLE	One Way	9.50	\$4.50	
	Round Trip	17.00	8.00	
BANGOR	One Way	13.00	7.50	\$4.00
	Round Trip	23.00	13.50	7.50

Wings of the Past — A Closer Look



(Above) Captain Hazen R. Bean in front of a Boston & Maine Airways SM-6000, showing the chains used in winter.

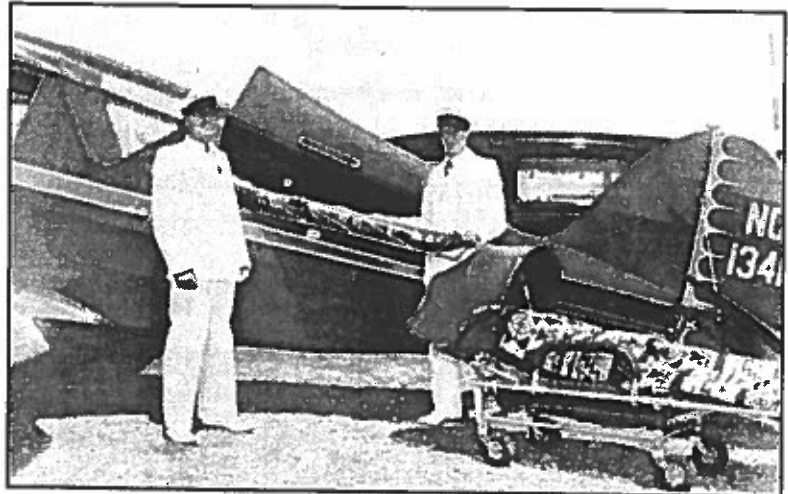
(Left) Boston & Maine Airways Stinson SM-6000 landing at Burlington, VT.

(Above Left) A Stinson SM-6000 warming up at Boston.

Aerial Ambulance

The cabin Waco is owned and operated (quite successfully, we understand) by a Lewiston, Maine, undertaker. He is Donat Fortin (*right*) shown here with his assistant, Roger Roderick. Although Fortin's particular use of the airplane is an unusual one, it is nonetheless a highly practical one, especially in the territory in which he operates. He owns a chain of five undertaking establishments throughout the state of Maine. The majority of his clientele is French-Canadian, hence he does a good deal of business in Canada as well as in the United States. Many Canadian ships are used this way.

(Story and photo via Bill Dean)



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

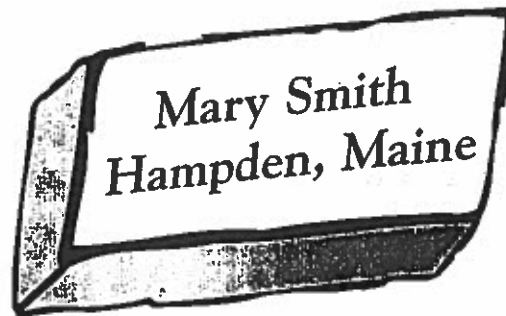
To successfully carry out and reach the museum vision, and to refurbish building 98, the Maine Air Museum needs the financial support of business and public community leaders and individual private citizens. Your interest in preserving the rich Maine aviation history will require funding presently not 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 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

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See Order Form on Page 7

★ Altocumulus Member — \$250 Donation

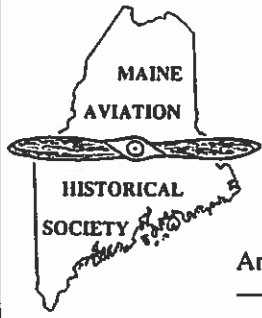
Entitles the gift giver to a five-year membership and five-year museum pass and a benefactor's engraved 4"x8"x2.5" pearl gray marble brick with up to two lines (14 characters/line, .65" high) of commemorative text in the name of the gift giver or his/her memorial to others. Brick to be installed on the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

★ 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.

The Maine Air Museum is wholly owned and operated by the Maine Aviation Historical Society.

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Upcoming MAHS Meetings

✈ ✈ ✈ 2003 — 2003 — 2003 — 2003 — 2003 ✈ ✈ ✈

December 14 10 a.m.MAHS Meeting, Maine Air Museum, Bangor, Maine

January 11 10 a.m.MAHS Meeting, Maine Air Museum, Bangor, Maine

February 8 10 a.m.MAHS Meeting, Maine Air Museum, Bangor, Maine

March 8 10 a.m.MAHS Meeting, Maine Air Museum, Bangor, Maine

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

435. **Robert C. Umberger Jr. (Life)**
855 Pool Road
Biddeford, ME 04005



★ Remember: if there's a red star on your address label, it's time to send in your 2003 dues. While you're at it, why not consider an upgrade? Membership levels are on the back cover.

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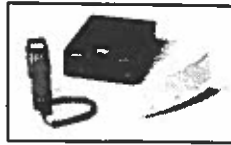
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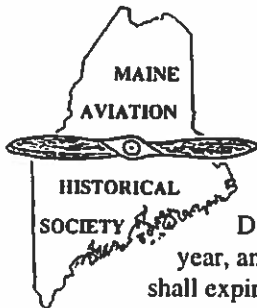
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Maine Aviation Historical Society
P.O. Box 2641
Bangor, ME 04402

January Meeting

January 11, 2003
10 a.m.

Board Meeting, 9 a.m.
Maine Air Museum
Bangor, Maine