



Dirigo Flyer

Newsletter of the Maine Aviation Historical Society
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Volume XXII No. 2

APRIL - JUNE 2014

MUSEUM HISTORY MADE

When you receive this *DIRIGO FLYER* you will be a part of a new era
In Maine Aviation Historical Society member communications.

This is the introductory issue of your new and improved newsletter. No more licking stamps or waiting for the letter carrier to bring you the latest news from the Maine Air Museum. Your newsletter will arrive at the speed of light and will be in color. This, along with the new website, brings your organization directly into the 21st century.

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FEATURE STORY

DOANE'S / BREWER AIRPORT

A History of Doane's/Brewer Airport by David Hanna

An area of land that is off Elm Street in South Brewer that was once owned by George and Gordon Doane, has been used as a flying field since before World War II. It is through the vision of George and Gordon Doane that airplanes are still flying into Brewer Airport and engaging the passion of today's pilots.

(Right) George Doane pre-flying his Piper (PA-20) Pacer at the airport. (1950 photo)



George Doane had returned to school out west in the 1930's to build airplanes. During WWII he worked as a mechanic at Dow Air Force Base in Bangor. As a civilian, he worked for Eastern Manufacturing Company in the garage as a mechanic. He then became a plumber in the area until retirement.

George's brother, Gordon, was a WWII veteran in the India, Burma, and China theatre of operations. He was a member of the Army Air Corps. In civilian life, Gordon was also an employee of Eastern Manufacturing Company.

A third brother, Stanley, helped George assemble planes during the 1930's. During that time the family had a home on Elm Street, but in the mid-1930's, Stanley left Maine for Colorado and was not instrumental in the development of the airport.

Before WWII, George and Gordon cleared some of their land to be used as an airfield. They also built an office building. The site has been operational since 1935; however, the realization of an incorporated airport would have to wait until the end of the war.

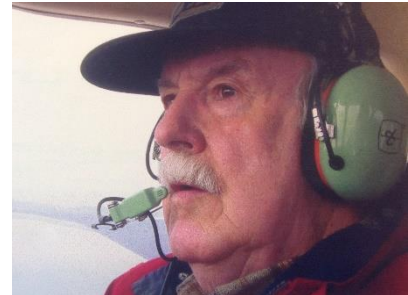
Doane's Airport, later Brewer Airport, was originally created as a partnership between George Doane and Gordon Doane. They named the operation "Doane's Airport, Incorporated" and had the name painted on the airport hangar. Later, they were joined in ownership by George Sailor, an Orono businessman. Around 1949, Gordon Doane sold his share of the partnership to George Sailor, so at that time, Mr. Sailor had controlling interest in the airport.

George Sailor changed the name of the site from Doane's Airport to Brewer Airport and the business name of the company to Penobscot Aviation. During this period, the airport offered flight instruction and had a series of airport managers. By 1951, the manager was Harris Matthews. At that time there were two runways, a hanger, a "T" hanger, a maintenance building, an operations building and gas pumps. "Brewer" was painted on the "T" hanger roof and red checks on the maintenance building.

After WWII, the military GI Bill was developed to help returning veterans find careers through education. Many soldiers used the GI bill to take flying lessons which were theoretically provided to lead to jobs in the aircraft industry. However, many returning soldiers used the opportunity to learn to fly simply as an avocation.

During this time, George Sailor sold the airport to Angelo Pasquini. In 1952, Mr. Pasquini was the circulation manager of the "Bangor Commercial" and had been a glider pilot in WWII. Mr. Pasquini leased the shop area to a mechanic and used the building now occupied by the building contractor "Nickerson and O'Day," as a home. In 1953, the "Bangor Commercial" ceased publishing and Mr. Pasquini decided to sell the airport property to "Nickerson and O'Day," with that company's president, Louis Nickerson, signing the deed.

With "Nickerson and O'Day" as the new owner, the airport became incorporated as "Brewer Airport." Angelo Pasquini's house was turned into the "Nickerson and O'Day" contractor office and in 1954, Norm Houle (pictured here) returned. Norm managed the airport, sold gasoline, acted as a night watchman and continued as a free-lance flight instructor until he left to become a commercial pilot in 1957. Many people in Brewer have stories to tell about flying the area with Norm Houle, and he was a major influence in Brewer flying.



In 1976, "Nickerson and O'Day" decided to split the property, maintaining their construction offices area, and selling the rest of the property to Wesley E. Leighton. Mr. Leighton was a United Airlines pilot and owned the property for over thirty years.

A 1977 Bangor Daily News article notes that the privately owned field had a flying service known as "Home Aviation." Steve Graham and his partner Harry Hopkins were both industrial arts teachers at Brewer High School. While the aviation school was a part-time affair, Mr. Graham admitted "that it gets pretty full-time." "Home Aviation" was responsible

for maintaining and operating the field lights (turned on by request), the day-to-day operation of the field itself, and a small shop. The runway, which had been surfaced in 1970, was being resurfaced. The resurfacing was paid for by owner Wesley Leighton. There were plans to increase the length of the runway to 2200 feet, but those plans never materialized.

Brewer Airport's existence is protected by a so-called "grandfather right" according to then owner Mr. Leighton. At the time, "Godfrey Field" in Bangor became Dow Air Force facility. The Air Force wanted to close Brewer, because the field was in the flight path. The Air Force was unsuccessful and the airport is protected by a clause in the legislation that created Dow Base.

The 1977 article continued with the observation that Brewer Airport is too small to be FAA-approved, but has a state license. Its income comes from "tie-down fees, fuel sales and the rental of its buildings to 'Home Aviation'." According to Mr. Leighton, "It is really a non-profit operation now."

The City of Brewer decided to name the driveway to the airport off Elm Street, Airport Drive and the airport now has an Airport Drive address. The runway that was paved in the 1970's and the field lights that were maintained as late as the 1980's are now gone. The runways reverted to sod in 1995.

During its period of operation, Doane's Airport/Brewer Airport provided service to charter planes, acted as a flight school, rented space to private planes, offered mechanical services and sold aircraft. At one point in 1949-1950, the airport had 23 airplanes, some private and some owned by Penobscot Aviation. Airplanes could be rented, chartered or used for flight instruction. Since 1944, the site has always been maintained as a small private community airport. Of the two original crossing runways, only the main runway is available. Today, the runways are composed of sod and maintained by mowing.

Brewer Airport has never had a tower or ongoing radio facilities. In 1993, a proposed change in regulations threatened to curtail operations because it would have required all private airplanes using Brewer Airport to have equipment to communicate

with Bangor International Airport. The approach to Bangor International is over the Brewer Airport airspace, so there needed to be a method of insuring safety. For years, Brewer Airport private planes without such electrical equipment have had a designated approach and flight requirements that would prevent airspace problems. If the proposed regulations were enacted, then the high cost of installing the equipment would be prohibitive to many local pilots. However, a compromise was worked out, and if a pilot communicates with Bangor and there is no incoming aircraft, the private pilot has more options in his flight pattern. If the pilot does not have equipment, the restrictive flight pattern takes precedence.

During the airport's history there have been many "fly-in" events. Pilots would fly to the airport from all over the area for a day of food and talk. The wives would provide breakfast and lunch and there would be souvenirs such as t-shirts and hats. On one "fly-in" there was a tethered hot-air balloon for rides. The last "fly-in" was some years ago.

A "fly-in" during August of 1990 promoted a column by Bob Haskell, assistant city editor of the Bangor Daily News, entitled "Secret Airfield." In the article, Mr. Haskell queried the reading public with some facts that they might not have known about Brewer Airport, including the fact that many people did not realize that Brewer had an airport. He noted that the FAA refers to it as a non-towered airport since it does not have a tower or FAA office. Pilots do not have to file a flight plan. The ceiling of flight into the airport is only 600 feet, while the planes that fly in and out of Bangor are 1,000-2,000 feet above the field. "So it seems," he wrote, "there is plenty of room for everyone."

Mr. Haskell notes that even though it is called Brewer Airport, it is not a municipal airport, but is privately owned (by Wesley Leighton) and is maintained by a (then) 21 member Brewer Flying Club (with Wanda Leighton as the president). Member Harry Hopkins indicated that the city plowed the runway during the winter.

The column quoted Harry Hopkins, who had been teaching others to fly for 31 years and acted as a spokesman for the airport. Mr. Hopkins owned a few acres of blueberry barrens in Brooklin and

stopped by the airfield a few days each week to give flying lessons or “tinker on an airplane.” He was an outspoken supporter of the airport and the people who use it. “It provides a home for those who want to fly without paying through the nose,” he told Mr. Haskell. “You and a lot of people have the misconception that no one but the affluent can afford to fly. A lot of people who fly out of this airport carry lunch pails to work eight hours a day.”

Mr. Haskell reported that flying had become more expensive because of FAA regulations and the fact that companies such as Piper and Cessna could no longer afford the product liability of building inexpensive light airplanes.

Mr. Haskell continued, “And that is why last Saturday’s fly-in was important. The club needed the \$533 it raised from 16 visiting pilots and a couple of hundred spectators to maintain the patchwork runway. And it needed the publicity to inform people that the airport serves a purpose in the world of general aviation.”

A Bangor Daily News article from August 28, 1995, described the reported “fly-in” as “an event which draws connoisseurs and helps keep the small grass strip operating.” A reporter interviewed Barbara Doane, Gordon Doane’s wife. She held many memories, enjoyed meeting old friends and remembering the airport she knew. Barbara recalled the day her five-year old son decided to offer a young chum a ride. The pair climbed into an airplane before grownups interceded.

A 2010 description of the property (through a Bangor real estate company listing the property for sale), indicated that the property had 75 acres, an office building, two airplane hangars, a storage building and two runways [one not in operation]. The runway measures 1730 feet x 30 feet. The facilities at that time accommodated six aircraft, five single engine planes and one “ultra light” aircraft. The airport had been operated by the Brewer Airport Association, an organization of flying enthusiasts, for years.

Today, the Brewer Airport is in need of much maintenance and rejuvenation although the 1944 structures still remain. The paint of the original “Doane’s Airport” sign that fronted the metal

hangar is almost worn away, its faded letters covered with rust. One can see just the barest outline of an advertisement for “sales and service” which had been part of George and Gordon Doane’s original vision. But, the hangar has well maintained doors and is still being used.

The “T” hangar which had “Brewer” painted on the roof in 1949 is still there and small planes could still be protected from the elements, but the name “Brewer” has long been gone and a new metal roof installed. Alongside of the hangar are the concrete pads that once supported the fuel pumps. The fuel pumps are now gone and a tank beside the present “operations room” provides fuel for the planes. The original operations building includes the offices of Nickerson and O’Day, and are several feet away on the split away property.

The storage and maintenance building that once sported a red and white checkerboard roof is still used for airplane maintenance and repair. There are new doors and siding but the gable end needs paint. A wind sock flies over the peak. There is an added-on “operations” room that is attached to one end.

The area for the runway is maintained by the aircraft owners and airport friends, on lawnmower riders, and kept closely clipped for the 30 feet by 1730 feet available runway. Once a year, the field from the runway to the trees that rim the runway, is trimmed by a bush hog. A blue runway sign is partially covered with brush, but gives the heading of the runway, the elevation, and a radio frequency. A second runway location can be seen, but that would be unusable at this time.

The airport is scenic and the pilots that are now volunteering their time and passion, dream of the resources that it would take to bring the airport back to its historic roots. They spend their time there because it is what they want to do. Aircraft pilots are passionate about their sport. A recent article by the Aircraft Owners and Pilots Association stated that ten years ago there were 1500 private pilots in the state of Maine and today there are only 1005. That is a decrease of 30%. Declining interest, regulations and cost are influences in this loss. Let us hope that there is resurgence in those individuals that follow their quest for the freedom of flight.

You can't help wondering, as you walk through the almost 70-year-old airport site, if there wasn't a way to bring it back. It's all still there. You believe that it could be "Doane's Airport" again, for this airport is a part of Brewer history and heritage. No planes."

matter what the outcome of its future, you can't be there without feeling a small part of what the pilots, mechanics, operation managers and kids feel who "just want to hang around"



Doane's Airport, 1947.
(Courtesy of Norm Houle)

PICTURES FROM THE PAST – Courtesy of the Bangor Daily News



(Left) At Dow Air Force Base in Bangor, Maine, Gen. Jimmy Doolittle (right) shows Lt. Col. James Wiley the size of the salmon that Doolittle caught at the Miramichi River at Blackville, New Brunswick. Doolittle stopped over at Dow before heading for Grand Lake for more fishing.

(Below) The first B-52G Stratofortress eight-engine jet bomber to arrive at Dow Air Force Base landed at 5:30 p.m. on Friday, May 27, 1960.



LORING ALUMNI GIFT



THE LEGACY LIVES ON

Loring Air Force Base and the 42nd Bombardment Wing were activated in January of 1953 and were deactivated in September of 1994. The KC-135's and B-52's are long gone but the spirit of the aircrews and of all the supporting personnel lives on. After the closure of the base a group, Loring Reunion, has been holding 42BW / Loring reunions about every five years in various locations in the country. The last reunion was in September of 2012 in Dayton, Ohio at the Museum of the United States Air Force. At that time the leaders of the group determined that this would be our last reunion. We toasted our departed comrades and promised to meet again where we will never have to wait for an ARTC clearance and enjoy smooth landings. The Executive Committee determined that the funds remaining in the accounts would be evenly divided between the Loring Military Heritage Museum and the Maine Air Museum. Each museum would receive \$1,300. Several years ago the group donated the Maine Air Museum \$2,000 towards the construction of the Loring AFB display which can be seen in Bay #1 of our museum.

A part of the original Loring 42nd Bombardment Wing still lives on at Minot Air Force Base in North Dakota where the 69th Bomb Squadron flies the B-52H model.

STINSON TRI-MOTOR



Amelia's Grand Tour of Maine:

An Interesting Footnote by Hank Marois

While doing research for designing and constructing the display commemorating Amelia Earhart's grand tour of Maine during August of 1934, we learned that she flew a Stinson "DETROITER" airliner that belonged to Boston Maine Airways. This was the "state of the art" passenger airliner of the day carrying a pilot and ten passengers in a heated cabin and with toilet facilities including hot and cold running water. The aircraft was powered by three Lycoming R-680 (225 h.p.) engines and had a top speed of 125 m.p.h. The fuselage was made of welded steel while the wings were made of wood. All were covered in fabric.

Fortunately, we were able to see and enter one of the two remaining Stinson tri-motor aircraft at Kermit Week's "FANTASY OF FLIGHT" museum in Polk City, Florida. One very interesting feature was that three of the engine instruments were actually on the engine cowls. The pilot had to look outside his side window to view the cylinder head temperature gage, the oil pressure gage and the tachometer gages mounted on the Port engine cowl. The right seat passenger had to look out the right side window to read the gages on the starboard engine.

We thank Mr. Weeks and his staff for their cooperation in obtaining this photo as well as the others on the display commemorating Amelia's tour of Maine.

(Right) Stinson cockpit



"HUEY" IS BACK

The Maine Air Museum wishes to thank Colonel Brian Veneziano and the troops of the U.S. Army Reserve Aviation Support Facility for allowing their prized UH-1 "Huey" helicopter to "visit" with us for the summer months. For those of us who served in 'Nam, this aircraft is truly an old Comrade-in-Arms and is welcomed, especially sporting its patriotic color scheme. These exceptional helicopters were used for general support, air assault, cargo transport, aeromedical evacuation, search and rescue, electronic warfare, and ground attack. "Huey" was retired from the U.S. Army in 2005, but hundreds of them still grace the sky.



VIDEO VIEWING BOOTH



What do these companies and gents have in common?

WHO BROUGHT THE POPCORN?

What do Frank Acoustics, Will Brown Electric, Computer Essentials, Time Warner Cable, Home Depot (Ellsworth), Staples (Airport Mall) The Curtain Shop, Matt Watkins, Bob Littlefield and Hank Marois all have in common? These were all contributors to the construction and outfitting of our VIDEO VIEWING BOOTH that recently opened in the museum. This major project was constructed completely from donated talent, equipment and time.

In the past, the museum had several video players scattered around the museum and when more than one was in operation at a time, the museum became a giant echo chamber with sound waves bouncing off the steel and concrete parts of the structure. The booth brought peace and tranquility to the back display room. The fare is posted on the white board near the entry. We have some excellent videos for our guests to watch. My favorite is the story about the "White Bird" and where the experts claim it came to earth- or to sea.

We had grandiose plans to serve *Cracker Jacks* to the viewers but this brought the museum under the restaurant and food handlers licensing and inspection compliance operations of the city. You can bring your own, but don't offer any to others- they may be allergic to peanuts!

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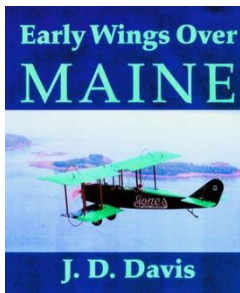
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Another exclusive book from the Maine Aviation Historical Society. Softbound, 134 pages, 151 illustrations.
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UPCOMING EVENTS

- May 10, 2014 Monthly meeting of the Maine Aviation Historical Society. 10:00 a.m. at the museum.
(Meetings are held the second Saturday of each month)
- May 24, 2014 Season opening of the Maine Air Museum. All veterans get in FREE this weekend only.

The *Dirigo Flyer* is published quarterly by the Maine Aviation Historical Society, a non-profit (501c3) corporation. P.O. Box 2641, Bangor, Maine 04402-2641.

Web site: www.maineairmuseum.com email: maineairmuseum@gmail.com
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. The Maine Air Museum is located at the 98 Maine Avenue adjacent to the Bangor International Airport
44° 48' 2.10" North 68° 48' 36.02" West



Maine Air Museum

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- We need volunteers-docents, mechanics, maintenance, librarians and exhibit specialists, etc.
- Please call me. I want to be active in the organization.
- I cannot join now, but would like to help. I am enclosing a check for \$_____.
- Contributions over \$20 are tax deductible within the limits of the law.
- I wish to support and obtain membership by purchasing a memorial brick.

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