OREGON'S FIRST HOMEBUILT AIRCRAFT

The first aircraft to be built and flown in the state was undoubtedly the heavier-than-air machine built and flown by John Burkhart of Albany. Early in 1910 there was a lot of interest in heavier-than-air flight and while many had seen balloon ascensions and dirigibles fly, most Oregonians had to be satisfied with newspaper accounts of the Wright Brothers, Glenn Curtiss, and other foreign aviators. Knowing it would be only a matter of time before a flight would be accomplished within the state, one ambitious individual, E. Henry Wemme, a Portland businessman, set in motion a most unusual set of circumstances that would bring Oregon into the new age of aviation.

With very little publicity or fanfare John Burkhart, a Cornell University graduate in aeronautical engineering, began building a heavier-than-air ship in Portland. When Mr. Wemme heard of this he immediately attempted to secure an "aeroplane" of his own -- he had boasted of having owned the first automobile in the state (1898), and would not be outdone by Burkhart to have the first aeroplane. Thus, in January, 1910, Wemme purchased a Curtiss machine in Los Angeles and had it sent to Portland. It, along with the incomplete Burkhart machine, was put on display at the Portland Armoury the last week of January. While Wemme satisfied himself with the thought of owning the first aeroplane, Burkhart and his machine received the attention. Mr. Burkhart was a professional engineer, was acquainted with the Wrights and Curtiss and personally built a successful machine while still in college. He envisioned that: "....before long aeroplanes carrying 20 persons and capable of travelling at a rate of 100 miles an hour will not be uncommon."

Nonetheless, Oregonians were impatient to see one of these machines fly. A separate group of businessmen began negotiations with a Curtiss factory pilot, Charles Hamilton to bring a ship to Portland and give a public demonstration. Wemme tried to hire and train an "aviator" to fly his aeroplane with little success, while Burkhart, choosing to not get involved with the Portland situation, removed himself to Albany and secured Goltra Park as a testing grounds. He was not going to be drawn into any race to be first. Thus, on March 5, 1910 Oregonians were privileged to see the first flight of a Curtiss-built aeroplane, piloted by Charles Hamilton.

It was only a month later when Burkhart, with his mechanic William Crawford, pronounced that all was in readiness. On April 9, 1910 Burkhart successfully flew his aeroplane from Goltra Park in Albany and became the first Oregonian to build and fly his own aeroplane in the state.

In succeeding years, Burkhart designed and flew improved aircraft throughout the state -- choosing a scientific approach to aviation -- usually avoiding the limelight. He was also the editor of an aeronautics magazine in 1911 and during WW1, served as a Navy flight instructor. He died in 1926.

And what of Wemme and his machine? He fell ill in late February and left for Arkansas to recover, missing all the activities and only later recovered his losses by allowing a beginning Oregon aviator, Eugene Ely, to fly his machine successfully. Ely went on to become a nationally famous exhibition pilot -- his most famous accomplishment that of landing on board a ship for the Navy.
(cont. from Page 1)

The Oregon Aviation Museum has several pictures of the Burkhart machine which were part of the Eyerly photo collection. Little is known about the Burkhart craft, though it appears to have a 4-cylinder Kemp watercooled engine which was reportedly in the State Museum in Salem. Efforts to locate this engine have been futile -- can anyone help? Also, the OAM would appreciate any information on the Burkhart machine.

EDITOR'S NOTE: Much of the original research for this article is contained in the Master's Thesis "The Coming of the Birdman, the Aviator's Image in Oregon: 1905-1915" by Patrick John Harris, Portland State University, 1981.

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MUSEUM SETS CONTEST FOR NEWSLETTER NAME

The OAM NEWSLETTER is only a temporary name...we need a better identifier for the Museum newspaper. So, how about a contest to name the paper!! Suggested names will be accepted from all OAM members through December 31, 1988. The winning name will be announced at the annual meeting in January. The winner will receive a full year's membership in the Oregon Aviation Museum, with 2nd and 3rd place each receiving a Museum T-shirt. Send your entries to: Oregon Aviation Museum, P.O. Box 11684, Eugene, OR 97440.

** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** ** **

OREGON AVIATION MUSEUM BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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GUEST EDITORIAL

On a sunny summer day in 1983, some members of the Oregon Antique & Classic Aircraft Club (OACAC), decided it was time to do something to preserve the aircraft, history, and artifacts of Oregon's aviation heritage. From that initial discussion, the Oregon Aviation Museum was formed as a non-profit corporation in Oregon to: ...establish facilities to collect, preserve, restore, and provide for the public exhibition of Oregon aviation artifacts and related objects, and establish a resource center for Oregon aviation historical research.

The last five years have seen the development of an active ten member Board of Directors, the production of a Museum brochure sent to over 7600 registered pilots in the state, and enrollment of over 100 members of the Museum. An impressive list of acquisitions elsewhere in this newsletter attests to the interest in the museum concept and the generosity of its donors. As the initial sponsor of the museum concept, OACAC is very proud that it has come so far since 1983...yet much remains to be done. A special Realty Board Task Force in Cottage Grove is committed to helping the Museum acquire land, the Governor and Oregon Aeronautics Division are actively supportive of Museum objectives, contacts have been established with other museums throughout the United States, and work is underway to cause OAM to be affiliated with the Oregon Historical Society.

This issue of the newsletter is being sent to all registered pilots in the State, to raise the awareness of museum activities, and remind all aviation enthusiasts that OAM needs broad financial support if it is to meet established goals. All active members of the Museum will soon be receiving details of the Annual Meeting to be held in Cottage Grove in January for fellowship, information and election of directors. A membership application is included elsewhere in this issue so if you are not already a member, please sit down right now, complete the application and mail it with your check to OAM, P.O. Box 11684, Eugene, OR 97440. DO IT NOW! As the man says "...we thank you for your support."

Elwood Hedberg, President
Oregon Antique & Classic Aircraft Club
Holly Fletcher was among the most avid supporters of the homebuilt movement in Oregon. For 30+ years Holly was active in designing, building and flying homebuilt aircraft. Following his death in 1987 from Lou Gehrig's disease, many of his friends in the flying community looked for some tangible way to honor his memory. Fellow members of EAA Chapter 105 in Portland have set a goal to purchase Holly's pride and joy, the "Holly Hawk", his modified version of Mr. America which he built and flew to events all over the northwest, and to donate this aircraft to the Oregon Aviation Museum as a classic example of the Homebuilt Art.

The Chapter has, to date, collected pledges from Holly's everyday flying friends of about $2,000 toward a $5,000 goal. Holly's many business associates and others who knew and loved his Grand Old Man of Homebuilts are also being contacted to support this fine project. Until such time as the Oregon Aviation Museum has a suitable facility to exhibit this unique flying machine, temporary storage for the Hawk has been arranged. Pledges for contributions toward the acquisition should be directed to: Donald J. Larson, 13870 S.W. 121st, Tigard, OR 97223.

** ACQUISITIONS **

The Museum has been accepting the contributions of certain properties that meet our mission. We would invite your considering the Oregon Aviation Museum as a worthy place for your collections. A list of acquisitions and their status includes:

** Aircraft:**
- 1930's vintage homebuilt Fike
- Model A fuselage - awaiting refurbishing
- 1935 Stinson SRSE - under restoration by OACAC and volunteers
- 1984 Benson Gyrocotper - display
- 1920 Anzani Longster Replica - Display

** Engines:**
- 1935 Scott Flying Squirrel - complete
- 200HP R680 Lycoming - status unknown
- 225HP R680 Lycoming - status unknown

** Display:**
- WWII Link Trainer complete - operating

** Collections:**
- Historic aviation interviews of 1190 audio tapes and 2447 35mm slides
- 30 minute video of early Oregon aviation
- 2 500' reels of 35mm film of aviation and misc. footage
- Approx 100 1930-1940 aviation magazines
- Approx 50 1910-1950 Oregon aviation photos

** Propellers:**
- Macauley - metal
- HUR-Jacuzzi Bros. X5 type

** Parachutes:**
- WWII Training - seat pack

** Memorabilia:**
- 1930 Oregon Air Tour beret

** Miscellaneous:** Parts and supplies for aircraft restoration

Look for more acquisitions in future newsletters.

** ANNUAL MEETING **

The first Annual Meeting of members of the Oregon Aviation Museum will be held at the Village Green in Cottage Grove on Saturday, January 21. This will be a dinner meeting and will include a special speaker, election of directors, and a state of the Museum report. Museum members will receive more detailed information shortly after January 1. In the meantime, mark the date of January 21, 1989 on your calendar and plan to attend this historic event.

YES...I WANT TO HELP!

*Name(s)*

(Please print)

*Mailing Address* __________________________________________________________________________

I wish to be a Museum contributor:

$1,000 $500 $100 $50 $25 $10 $5 Other ______

I wish to become a Museum member:

$10 Annual Associate $25 Annual Family $50 Annual Sustaining

$250 Lifetime $500 & Up Patron

Send to: OREGON AVIATION MUSEUM, INC., P.O. Box 11684, Eugene, OR 97440
OUR NEWEST MEMBERS AND CONTRIBUTORS! THROUGH SEPTEMBER 1988

Don Abraham, Individual
Air Power Museum, Contributor

Allan Alising, Individual
Lebaron Amacker, Contributor

Albert (Bud) Anderson, Lifetime

Bill Barrett, Contributor

Margaret & Ronald Bartley, Family

James Bean, Jr., Contributor

Royce Beaty, Family

Jay & Nora Beck, Family

Max Bibby, Individual
Harold Blank, Individual

Chris Billings, Family

Blue Mt. Medical Ass’n, Contributor

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EAA Chapter 31, Contributor

Ronald Ebel, Family

Shirley Eyrely, Contributor

Carl Falk, Family

Pamela Farris, Individual

Robert Ferguson, Family

Percy Freeman, Jr., Family

Dick Fronczak, Lifetime

Paul Gehlhar, Individual

Mary Lou Gentry, Individual

William Gerst, Individual

Burt Gwalt, Contributer

James Golden, Family

Albert Grell, Lifetime

Dee Grell, Lifetime

Christopher Griffin, Individual

Robert Hall, Family

Garry B. Hawkins, Contributor

Wilbur Heath, Lifetime

Heath Logging Co., Contributor

Elwood Hedberg, Lifetime

Judith Hedberg Duff, Contributor

Rex Heide, Lifetime

Patrick Henry, Individual

Merle Hennigh, Individual

Joel Hernandez, Individual

Wilfred Holce, Lifetime

Bob Hollowell, Individual

Rex Hume, Family

Emery Ingham, Individual

Herb & Barbara Jenkins, Family

Elgeon Johnson, Individual

Lloyd Jones, Individual

Roy & Wanda Joyner, Sustaining

Frank Lamotte, Individual

Donald Larson, Contributor

John Lawrence, Individual

Edward Lott, Family

Donald Lutes, Contributor

Fred Natick, Individual & Contributor

Linda & Gary Mayfield, Family

Don Miller, Contributor

John Miner, Lifetime

Larry Munson, Individual

Roy L. Niederer, Contributor

Geri Nyman, Contributor

OACAC, Contributor

Robert O’Renick, Family

Fergus O’Scaillain, Individual

John Patton, Contributor

Earl’s Perry, Individual

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Joseph Ricke, Family

Robertson/Sherwood, PC, Contributor

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Hal Skinner, Lifetime

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Smith-Lund-Mills Funeral Home, Contributor

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Tim Talen, Lifetime

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Theodora Malikup, Individual

Terry Wathers, Lifetime

Elton Welch, Family

Russ & Betty Wittmer, Family

Doug & Joy Tarborough, Family

A very special thanks to each and everyone of you. Your annual Individual and Family Associate memberships will pay the costs of sending quarterly newsletters to you and to those who have contributed property and money to the Museum. We hope you will consider the newsletter a worthwhile investment by renewing your membership each year and encouraging others to associate with the Museum.

It is certainly humbling to receive investments of Lifetime and Patron memberships. Your commitment to the Oregon Aviation Museum has enabled us to “get out the word.” Both the OAM brochures and this newsletter, our second, will go to all pilots who are registered in the State of Oregon! So thanks very much to you.

OREGON AVIATION MUSEUM, INC.
P.O. BOX 11684
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