The history of aeronautics, the operation of aircraft, in Lancaster County covers a span of one hundred and fifty years. Lancaster has long been an air-minded community. Certainly, the feats of our famous native, John Wise, were followed with interest by his fellow citizens. Civic pride of our newspapermen and other businessmen resulted in efforts to bring to Lancaster County whatever was new in technology. As aviation, the operation of heavier-than-air aircraft, was emerging as an important means of transportation, the legendary Jesse P. Jones settled in Lancaster and established the first real airport. Since that time, Lancaster has continued to have one of the best airports in this part of the United States.

From the early balloon ascensions, to the present status of private and commercial air transportation, Lancaster has been among the leaders. The fascinating story of this century and a half, is the story of the foresight, the courage, the skills, the diligence, sacrifices, and successes of hundreds of people.

Early Aeronauts

The first aeronaut to make a flight from Lancaster County was probably James Mills of Baltimore, in 1834. Although the Montgolfier flight — the first manned aerial voyage, occurred in France in 1783, it was 1793 before the first successful flight was made in America, from Philadelphia, by Jean
Pierre Blanchard of France. There was not a great deal of aeronautical activ-
ity for the next forty years. Balloon flights were not as profitable in
America as they had been in Europe. Although Blanchard had hoped to sell
thousands of five dollar tickets to spectators, he realized only four hundred
and five dollars. Although they were interested, Americans seemed to prefer
watching balloon ascensions from a distance rather than to pay to visit the
launching site.

Soon after 1830, a number of aeronauts, often calling themselves “pro-
fessors”, began building balloons and entertaining the public at ex-
travagantly advertized exhibitions. Lancastrians witnessed ascensions by
the aforementioned James Mills in November 1834, and by Richard
Clayton of Cincinnati in April 1835. Lancaster native John Wise made his
first successful Lancaster ascension in May 1836. This was Wise’s seventh
“experiment”, he having made six attempts, with mixed success, the
previous year, to make ascensions in Philadelphia, Lebanon, Reading, and
Lancaster.

The John Wise Era

John Wise, America’s most famous aeronaut, was born in Lancaster in
1808, and was a resident of Lancaster for many of his seventy-one years. As
a boy, he experimented with kites and tissue paper parachutes, and Mont-
golfier “fire balloons.” He was trained as a cabinetmaker and later
specialized in pianoforte making in Philadelphia. He had never ceased
studying and experimenting in the science of aeronautics, and in 1835, he
became a professional balloonist. He made his first ascent in May 1835 in
Philadelphia in his aerostat (balloon) which he had made from muslin shir-
ting, and varnished.

That first balloon was lost in attempting his sixth ascent — his first in
Lancaster — on October 1, 1835. The balloon was filled with gas and ready
for the ascent when the tie-down ropes were cut. Due to a brisk wind and in-
ept helpers, the balloon rose too slowly and dashed the car against a nearby
house. Wise was thrown from the basket, which was only two-and-half feet
deep and two-and-a-half feet in diameter. When he came to his senses, he
saw his aircraft “plunging furiously into a chasm of dense, black clouds.”
The remains of the balloon landed seventy-five miles away in New Jersey.

During the winter of 1835 and 1836, Wise constructed a new balloon of
silk. On a Saturday afternoon in May of 1836, Wise made a well advertised
ascent from Lancaster. The flight was made from “the common near the
head of West Orange and Chestnut.” The five o’clock ascension was
perfect and the wind carried him toward Maryland. Three and a half hours
later, he landed near Port Deposit. He was welcomed by many excited peo-
ple carrying candles and lanterns, who came to see the balloon. Unfor-
unately, the gas escaping from the balloon exploded, destroying the
balloon and its instruments, and severely burning John Wise.

Following his recovery from the accident, Wise built a new balloon. This
aircraft was a failure, and on the third unsuccessful attempt to launch it, he let the balloon go off by itself, "glad to get rid of the machine." Wise now described himself as "pecuniarily bankrupt in the business." He returned to Philadelphia and got employment at "philosophical instrument making." That, he said, afforded him the opportunity for further study and the gradual acquirement of means with which to resume the balloon business.

In August 1840, Wise made an ascent from the Lancaster Prison Yard. When he was a mile and a half high, he dropped two parachutes — each with a cat — both of which landed safely. When releasing gas to descend to a lower altitude, the valve at the top of the balloon broke, causing a rapid descent and a landing at Dillerville. He had been in the air less than twenty minutes, although plans and provisions had been made for a much longer flight.

Wise’s thirty-sixth ascension was in York in his black aerial ship "United States." There was a strong wind which carried him across the Susquehanna into Lancaster County. It had been a stormy day, and Wise wrote that when he descended through the clouds he viewed "as beautiful a prospect as the eye ever gazed on — the fertile landscape of Lancaster County — my spirits became somewhat revived. Besides, I was now viewing the place of my birth, the town, the street, the pleasure grounds of my youthful days." Sailing eastward parallel with the Pennsylvania Railroad, he overtook and passed a train. He finally landed on a farm near New Holland, completing the voyage of thirty-nine miles with an average speed of fifty miles per hour.

Wise’s first flight in the spring of 1843 was on a beautiful Saturday in May, from Carlisle. He had long ago discovered that the upper winds were westerly, and he had told friends in Lancaster that he intended to be carried eastward and land in Lancaster on this flight. In a little over two hours after leaving Carlisle, he landed just southwest of Lancaster. Later, about five o’clock, he made a triumphal entry into town standing in the car of his balloon, being guided through the streets at slight elevation above the ground by a group of young men who had grasped the ropes of his balloon. In this way, hat in hand, acknowledging the cheers of the crowds, Wise in his balloon was taken through West King Street to Center Square. By this time, much of the gas in the balloon had escaped, reducing its lifting power. But John Wise, crowd pleaser that he was, had an encore. He removed the car from the balloon, and placed a narrow board in its place. After removing much of his clothing and his shoes to reduce his weight, he sat on the board, and ascended again from Center Square. After alighting a few blocks away, he was escorted to his residence amid the cheers and congratulations of his fellow citizens. Newspaper accounts of the feat reported that a "handsome collection had been taken and turned over to Mr. Wise."

Gas pipes were laid in the southwest corner of Lancaster’s Center Square to supply gas for Wise’s balloon ascensions in the 1840’s.

Wise was sure that the prevailing West to East upper winds would carry a properly designed aerostat across the Atlantic ocean to Europe. He designed a balloon one hundred feet in diameter with "a sea-boat capable of enduring the ocean for a car." Wise believed such an aerostat capable of an
In the summer of 1843, he notified the Lancaster Intelligencer that he planned to cross the Atlantic in the summer of 1844. In December 1843, he petitioned Congress for an appropriation to build such a balloon. The petition was referred to the Committee on Naval Affairs, which took no action. In 1851, he made a similar attempt, with the same discouraging result.

During the Mexican War, Wise suggested a method of dropping bombs from a strategically located tethered balloon, but had no response from the Federal government. He was convinced that balloons could assist the Union Army during the Civil War. He did construct a balloon to Army order. However, it was damaged when it became entangled in trees while being hauled on a wagon at night. Later, after being repaired, the balloon was blown into telegraph wires. The aircraft drifted away and was shot down to prevent its falling into enemy hands.

John Wise was a showman — he had to be, to make a living as a professional balloonist. But he was also a scientist. He meticulously recorded data on temperatures, winds, cloud formations, and storms. He exchanged data with Professor Joseph Henry, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution, and Professor James Espy, meteorologist for the United States government.
Wise built a balloon especially for experiments with thunderstorms and other atmospheric phenomena to be conducted under the auspices of Professor Henry. In May, 1859, Wise made an ascension with this balloon, named "Smithsonian," from Center Square in Lancaster.

John Wise had a son, Charles, who made his first solo flight in 1853 at the age of seventeen. Charles flew with his father in his exhibition tours around the country. Many times they used two balloons. Charles and his wife, Louisa, had a son John, who also became an aeronaut. Grandson John made his first solo flight in 1870, when he was just nine years old. During the three years from 1876 to 1879, the three Wises made ascensions from the Centennial Grounds in Philadelphia.

Charles' wife, Louisa, in 1869, may have been the first woman to make an aerial voyage from Lancaster. Mrs. John Wise made flights with her husband as she travelled about the country with him. For instance, Wise writes, "September 5, 1851: I ascended from Columbus, Ohio... the car containing Mrs. Wise, Master Charles, and myself." But Wise does not mention her having made a voyage (a free flight, as opposed to a tethered ascension in a captive balloon) from Lancaster.

Charles Wise had advertised an ascension from Lancaster on September 18, 1869 in the balloon "Jupiter." He offered the vacant seat in the car to the highest bidder. Louisa wrote later, "...believing that the proper time had come to gratify my woman's curiosity upon this subject of an aerial voyage, when my husband announced that he would sell the vacant seat in his balloon chariot 'Jupiter,' I accordingly resolved to be the highest bidder, though it should be a thousand dollars; when he very gravely suggested to me about the pay, having, as he said, two cash offers of fifty dollars each. I told him mine was a hundred dollars, paid in advance by numerous charges against him for darning stockings and sewing on his buttons for ten years past. From this he made no appeal, but said, "All right, you shall go." She was delighted with the flight which ended one hour and ten minutes later nine miles northwest of the city. She said, "I shall dream of this all my lifetime," and later wrote a detailed account of her aerial voyage for the local newspaper.

Over a period of forty years, John Wise made about four hundred and sixty aerial voyages and many hundreds of ascents in tethered balloons. He gained international recognition for his many contributions to aeronautics and meteorology. His famous flight in 1859 from St. Louis to Henderson, New York covered twelve hundred miles in less than twenty hours, setting a record that was not surpassed until 1910. Wise was lost in Lake Michigan on a flight from St. Louis on September 19, 1879 at the age of seventy-one. His body was never found. A bronze tablet to his memory was dedicated by the Lancaster County Historical Society in 1955 on a site on North Lime Street in Lancaster close to where Wise had lived most of his life.

Much has been written elsewhere about John Wise and his influence on aeronautics. We have mentioned here only a few incidents involving Lancaster County. Wise authored three books which are important to the study of nineteenth century aeronautics and meteorology.
John Wise’s influence was perpetuated for a time by his son Charles. Scrapbooks of William Nicholson Jennings, early aerial photographer, mention consulting with “Professor” Charles Wise, and contain a photograph of the Wise balloon “Independence” preparing for a flight in Philadelphia in July, 1890.

Demonstrations of balloons, and later blimps and small dirigibles, were popular features at holiday celebrations and fairs well into the twentieth century. Jupiter, “The Balloon Horse” was a feature of the Barnum and Bailey Circus which showed in Lancaster in June, 1909. The Lancaster County Agricultural Fair featured balloon flights in 1909, and dirigible demonstrations at the 1910 Fair.

**Early Aviation**

Aviation, the navigation of the air in a heavier-than air machine, is essentially an achievement of the twentieth century. Although Lilienthal,
Langley, Chanute, and others were successfully building and testing gliders in the last decade of the nineteenth century, the layman usually measures progress in aviation from the Wright Brothers’ first powered flight at Kitty Hawk in 1903.

Although we have no confirmed record of aviation in Lancaster County in the first decade of the twentieth century, the news was full of the accomplishments of aviators in the United States and in Europe.

As the Board of Trade was overseeing the work on the Lancaster Fair Grounds as it neared completion in the summer of 1909, they announced that an airplane would be “the star attraction in the amusement line” at their first fair. No further mention of an airplane was made, however, and as thousands of Lancastrians went out to see the grounds and the newly completed grandstand, their aerial entertainment was “Professor” John Mack and his aeronauts in balloon ascensions and parachute drops. Lancaster County had a “real fair” at last and the Pennsylvania Railroad carried tens of thousands of passengers from the city to the fair grounds. The round trip fare was ten cents. Admission to the Fair was twenty-five cents. Schools were closed on Tuesday so the children could attend, and shops and factories closed on Thursday, resulting in an attendance of 50,000 people on that day. Newspaper accounts reported that a double parachute drop was made on one day, with the jumpers landing on the Country Club grounds. Another day it was reported that “the Macks made another fine ascension and drop, with the parachutist landing near Fulton and Market Streets, and the balloon landing back of Penn Iron Works”.

In 1910, there was news almost daily on the conquest of the air. Records for altitude, distance, duration, or speed were being set in balloons, dirigibles, and airplanes in the United States and Europe.

The Lancaster Intelligencer ran, in serial form, “Virginia of the Air Lanes, The Romance of Flying”. The Pennsylvania Railroad ran excursions from Lancaster and nearby points to the air meet in Asbury Park, New Jersey, where from August tenth to twentieth was scheduled “the greatest meeting of aviators held in the United States”.

The Brinkman-Keiser-Todd Airplane

An interesting, but inaccurate, story has been told and retold of three young Lancaster men who spent a year building a large glider, and flying it in the summer of 1909. In an interview reported in the Lancaster Intelligencer in May, 1926, Mr. E. Allen Brinkman recounted how he and two friends, E. C. Keiser, and Aaron Todd built the plane. They began building the 1,800 pound biplane in 1908 in a garage at the J. E. Snyder residence on South Queen Street in Lancaster. When the big, 30 foot wingspan craft was completed, Brinkman said, it was dismantled, loaded on a wagon, and taken to a farm field in Paradise Township for a test flight. It was hoped that if the test flight were successful, their financial backers, Mr. Snyder and Brinkman’s older brother, would purchase an engine for the aircraft.
Several hundred curious spectators were present, Brinkman said, as Keiser took the controls of the glider, and Brinkman drove the auto which towed the craft. The flight was short — the craft gained an altitude of about fifteen feet, flew over the fence at the end of the field and landed with one wing hitting the ground. Although the wing was damaged, the young builders considered the flight a success. However, they decided to build another aircraft, a monoplane, rather than repair the damaged biplane. They never got the engine to complete the airplane. Mr. Brinkman said he left Lancaster shortly thereafter to begin a career in the confectionery business. Both Keiser and Todd were carpenters. Brinkman, a piano tuner in 1909, said he had worked for a short time at the Farman airplane factory at Ft. George, N.Y.

This writer found no mention of the glider or the test flight in Lancaster newspapers of 1909, nor any record of a Farman airplane factory in this country. Henri Farman was a famous French pilot, who built his first airplane in 1909.

The family of Aaron Todd has a picture of the aircraft built by the three young men; actually, it was still under construction in the summer of 1911. It was an airplane, not a glider, but they never got an engine to enable the craft to fly, according to Milton Todd, son of Aaron Todd.

Although no mention of the aircraft was found in Lancaster newspapers, The Strasburg Weekly News of August 19, 1911 carried a brief report on a
test of the machine. "The first flying machine ever seen in this immediate section was tested at Fairview on Friday evening of last week."

"E. Allen Brinkman, a young man of Lancaster," the report continued, "constructed the machine, which is an aeroplane with some inventions of his own. The inventor desired to make some tests during construction and arrangements were made to do this on the farm of John E. Snyder, Esq., at Fairview, occupied by George Metzger. Mr. Metzger brought the machine from Lancaster with his team, and while it was intended to make the trials with as little publicity as possible, quite a number of neighbors and others got wind of it, and assembled to see it tried. As the trial was only to test the steering and some other features of the machine, its motor was not attached, but was drawn by long ropes hitched to a large automobile, the machine rising in the air as the automobile drew it forward. A few trials showed that by this means of propelling it there was danger of it rising too high for the ropes, but the tests were satisfactory and the motor, which is all ready will be attached for future trials."

**Aeroplanes Visit Lancaster County**

It was 1911 when Lancaster County residents first were visited by a "bird man" in a heavier-than-air powered flying machine. In July and August of that year, Lancaster's Daily New Era carried front page news reports of daring aviators and their deeds an average of three times a week. The flight of Harry N. Atwood from New London, Connecticut to New York City circling the Singer Tower and "crossing and recrossing the island of Manhattan" was described as "the most spectacular flight in the history of American aviation." Nine of fifty who began a circuit tour of Europe on June 18, finished the tour on July 7. Atwood completed a flight from Atlantic City to Washington after losing his airplane in an ocean landing, by joining Charles Hamilton in Hamilton's airplane. New record flights were occurring every week.

Interest was high when the directors of the Lancaster Fair announced that the biggest attraction of the Fair in September would be "twice daily aeroplane flights by an experienced aviator," in the "first aeroplane to be brought to this city." They said contracts had been signed with Strobel of Ohio, a professional of high standing who pleased the Fair crowds last year with his dirigible exhibitions.

Strobel's aircraft arrived, piloted by Howard LeVan "the youngest aviator living" and the large crowds at the Fair were entertained with "spectacular flights" and a "pretty exhibition" on September 27 and 28, 1911. Between flights, the plane was kept in a tent, and for a small fee, the public could enter the tent for a close look. Harris C. Arnold, a Lancaster attorney, remembers the plane. His father, I. C. Arnold, was Secretary of the Board managing the Fair. The elder Mr. Arnold spent a great deal of time at the Fair, as did his 11 year old son, Harris. One day, for "something to do", young Harris, at the suggestion of his father, stood at the entrance to the tent and "did some shouting" to encourage people to "see the aeroplane".

However, LeVan was not to be the first aviator to fly an airplane in Lancaster County. Two weeks earlier, aviator Sam A. Tickell made several
flights from Grand View Farms to various points in Lancaster County. Tickell and the Curtiss biplane owned by M. B. Cumber of Harrisburg, drew large crowds as he made test flights from Grand View Farms at Rossmere for a few weeks. Although he left Lancaster for Harrisburg on September 20, he did not fly directly. He made a flight from Rossmere to Mount Joy on September 20.

The Mount Joy Weekly Bulletin of September 21, 1911 reported that “public schools and all industries in Mount Joy closed for a time so that all should see close up the first aviation event in Lancaster County. A Curtiss biplane owned by M. B. Cumber’s Interstate Aviation Company of Harrisburg and flown by Samuel A. Tickell of New York, landed one-half hour later in a grass field beyond the trolley tracks south of town. With a 10-cent
admission ticket, you could get a close-up look at the plane, but not touch. When the flying machine landed, the aviator was taken to the Exchange Hotel, where he spent one-half hour before taking off for Harrisburg.” He later visited Florin and Bainbridge in Lancaster County. With many exhibitions and bad weather, the trip to Harrisburg took fifteen days.

Mr. Cumbler had made arrangements with Richard P. McGrann of Grand View Farms to use one of his fields. The field was described as being “on the east side of the trolley tracks between the Country Club grounds and Mr. McGrann’s residence, easily reached by trolley”. Cumbler had arranged for a letter from the editor of the Lancaster Intelligencer to the editor of the Harrisburg Telegraph to be carried by pilot Tickell on his flight from Lancaster to Harrisburg.

All over the United States, many experimenters were building one-of-a-kind gliders and airplanes in the next several years just prior to World War I. Lancaster was no exception. Numerous attempts were made to fly, and some were successful. One report stated a young man who had built an airplane equipped with a motorcycle engine was able to get it off the ground at Buchanan Park.

In May, 1917, Samuel F. Perkins of Boston was in Lancaster demonstrating large kites which were used for Navy anti-aircraft practice. He stayed for several days before resuming his cross country travels on an advertising campaign. He rode on the kites in demonstrations. Most of his rides were on a group of “anywhere from seven to thirty” six foot high kites harnessed together. However, he said he would also undertake a more dangerous flight on a single kite which was eighteen feet tall. He said every noon and afternoon when weather permitted, he would be flying over Penn Square, making his demonstrations from the roof of the Watt and Shand Building.

With the United States now in the War, there were many promotions and rallies to promote the sale of Liberty Bonds. In Philadelphia, in early October 1917, war planes had dropped promotional material on the Liberty Loan. Jay N. Schroeder, chairman of the publicity committee for Lancaster’s Liberty Loan Drive, went to the Third Federal Reserve District headquarters in Philadelphia to request that literature be dropped from planes over Lancaster. The idea was accepted, and the Lancaster Daily Intelligencer of October 13 proclaimed “Lancaster to be bombed by aeroplanes next Saturday”. The same paper, on October 20, carried the headline “Many disappointed when birdmen are warned to stay on ground”. The War Department had banned the flight over the city, but enthusiasm for the Liberty Loan Drive remained high, and a “huge parade” was held a few days later.

Later in the same month, rumors were circulating in Lancaster that the government was seeking to take over the Fair Grounds and an adjoining farm to establish a flying field. However, the rumors proved to be unfounded.

The Follmer, Clogg & Co. factory in Lancaster produced nearly all the parachutes used by the army and navy during the war. In addition to the
personnel parachutes, the company also made "handkerchief chutes" and flare chutes at the rate of 1,000 to 2,000 per day.

During the World War, Lancaster County contributed 240 men to the air services of the army and navy, according to Hugh W. Nevin who prepared a list of names of all Lancaster men so connected during the War. Few of these men did actual flying, but were attached to air detachments.

Nevin reported that 1st Lt. George H. Zellers, attached to the 20th Squadron, Royal Air Force, was killed in action July 20, 1918 after bringing down two German airplanes. 2nd Lt. Benjamin Hiestand was killed in an airplane accident at Door Field, Florida, on June 10, 1918 while in training.

Roy Musselman of New Holland was a flying instructor in Texas and California during the War. He had started flying in Ohio in 1915.

Another World War I pilot from Lancaster County was William D. Grant of Christiana. He was with the 10th Aero Squadron, and later was commanding officer of the 304th Observation Squadron of the 79th Division. He was credited with 2,190 flights during the war, and many of the War Department's official pictures were made from planes he piloted over enemy lines. He remained in the Reserves and held the rank of Lieutenant Colonel when he died in an auto crash at the age of 38 in December 1929. He was also very active in the promotion of civilian aviation during the 1920's.

In October 1918, three airplanes visited Lancaster to participate in the Fourth Liberty Loan campaign. Frederic S. Klein described the throngs who gathered in Buchanan Park as a "circus-day crowd"). "Factory whistles were blown, and bells rung as soon as the hum of the motors was heard, and schools, plants and business houses were closed to give everyone a chance to see what was for many their first airplane." They flew from a field in the rear of the Henry G. Long Asylum for Aged and Indigent Women.

On Sunday, April 27, 1919, a "flying circus" visited Lancaster to promote the Victory Loan Drive. The six Curtiss airplanes, equipped with 150 horsepower engines and capable of cruising at 85 to 90 miles per hour were under the command of Major A. H. Gilkerson. They operated from a field west of Franklin and Marshall College along Race Avenue. Dr. H. H. Apple, president of the College, was scheduled for a ride, but cancelled. In his place, Sumner Brown, Secretary of the Manufacturers Association, and a member of the Victory Loan Committee, took the ride and threw out thousands of copies of Victory Loan literature. Thousands of people came to Buchanan Park to watch the demonstrations.

A few months later, the Lancaster Intelligencer brought Eddie Stinson and his flying circus to town. Newspapers were delivered to towns in the County by being dropped from airplanes. Editor Charles S. Foltz and Robert Waddell accompanied the aviators to drop the newspapers. Storms caused some difficulty in locating the towns for delivery. The June 27 Lancaster Intelligencer carried a front page editorial on the "Age of Flying." Stinson, known as the "king of the loopers," and his aviators stunted over downtown Lancaster. Eddie did forty loops and then buzzed the Intelligencer.
building just south of Penn Square, pulling up with just ten feet to spare!

One of Stinson’s spectacular exhibitions was accomplished with his fellow pilot, Lieutenant Murphy. While Murphy piloted the airplane, Stinson left his seat, crawled out on a wing and danced a jig. Then Murphy got out on a wing and stood on his head. Stinson and his group flew an estimated 250 passengers at rates of $15 for straight flying, and $25 for stunt flying. The newspapers printed the names and addresses of many of the passengers and recorded their impressions of their flights. Mrs. C. G. Sauer was pictured in the newspaper as the first woman to fly in an airplane over Lancaster County. Passenger business was so good that Stinson stayed several days longer than planned, and brought in extra pilots to meet the demand for rides. Many prominent Lancastrians flew with Colonel Stinson, and his visit had a great impact on the development of aviation in Lancaster County.

Stinson said several local people would be buying airplanes soon, and suggested that an Aero Club be formed to aid flyers. He said Lancaster should seek to establish a permanent aero field and try to get transient business. A committee was formed for this purpose, consisting of John F. Steinman, Charles B. Long, Edgar McC. Ulman, Ray Hall, Frederick S. Foltz, and A. B. Dodge.

A preliminary meeting at the Stevens House on July 4, 1919 developed much enthusiasm. John F. Steinman was elected to head the committee. Col. Stinson addressed the group. He said Lancaster is the ideal aerial stop between Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, and is an ideal spot for the new air postal delivery service. He stated, “You have the enthusiasm, ground for a field, and the location on the route which entitles you to the honor of being made a station on this route.”

Stinson said the “ideal field measures 2,500 feet by 1,200 feet, but could be smaller. Both the Buchanan Park field they have been using, and the field at Lancaster Country Club would be satisfactory. A Curtiss plane can be bought for $2,200.” He told at the meeting, how he became an aviator. His two sisters flew before he did. He finally got up courage to fly with them, and he liked it. One sister, Miss Marjorie Stinson, came to Lancaster July 5 to fly to York with her brother.

Eddie Stinson remarked that no town of its size gave nearly the warm reception to the Stinson flyers that Lancaster did. The Lancaster enthusiasts considered themselves fortunate to have the help of Col. Stinson.

**Early Commercial Air Fields**

The Aero Club Committee met on July 29, 1919 at the Intelligencer’s executive offices. They arranged for a public meeting on the evening of July 31 at the Manufacturers’ Association office in the Woolworth Building. The Lancaster Intelligencer carried the headline, “Lancaster men stung by the Intelligencer-Stinson bug will gather tonight.” It was announced that
the Committee had taken an option to lease the large field known as the Country Club Heights, belonging to the John Hiemenz estate. They also announced that another air circus was coming to town very soon.

The “Traymore Flyers” with five pilots arrived in the city on August 16 and stayed several days. They showed “new stunts” including “startling gyrations over the square.” Of course, they also carried passengers, including Mrs. Laura Hiemenz, with the newspapers listing names and addresses of passengers.

At the height of Lancaster’s enthusiasm in 1919, Roy Musselman, a young New Holland native, brought his airplane to Lancaster County. Musselman, who had been a government airplane tester and flight instruc-
tor during the war, flew his new Curtiss plane from Hatboro to New Holland, and announced that he would go from town to town carrying passengers and giving exhibitions. In a few weeks, a hangar had been erected on “the Aero Club field opposite the Country Club” and Musselman was operating from there. On October 11, he reported that he had already carried over 100 residents on short flights. He announced the start of passenger plane service between Lancaster and Philadelphia. He would be the pilot in the first line of its kind touching Lancaster. His Philadelphia passengers would be landed at the Philadelphia Air Service Corporation field near Hatboro.

The Lancaster Aero Club was granted its charter by the Lancaster County Court on September 30, 1919, formed for “the promotion of a social organization or club, composed in whole or in part of persons owning aeronautic inventions for personal or private use, for the development of the science of aeronautics and kindred sciences, and for the encouragement of aerial navigation, conferences, expositions, congresses and contests.” Arthur B. Dodge was president, Sumner L. Brown, Secretary, and the other directors were Charles B. Long, William S. Raub, and John F. Steinman. On October 11, Secretary Brown announced the Club had 25 members, and that anyone interested should contact him at the Lancaster Manufacturers Association office.

On June 10, 1920, a tragedy occurred which dampened the enthusiasm of air-minded Lancastrians for some time. Ever since the ground conditions and weather became favorable to flying in the spring of 1920, Roy Musselman had made daily trips to the “Lancaster Aero Club field at Rossmere,” where he had been granted permission to erect the first hangar on the field. Nearby residents had become accustomed to the sight and sound of his airplane. On this June afternoon, Musselman was on an instruction flight with his student, Robert Behmer of Lititz, when his Curtiss aircraft stalled and crashed from an altitude of 1,500 feet. Musselman received fatal injuries, and Behmer was hospitalized briefly.

Some weeks later, Lancaster County experienced another air fatality. An Army flier was on a flight from Middletown to Marietta when his airplane crashed near Bainbridge.

Behmer continued flying, and with brothers John and Ivan and several pilots, formed Behmer Air Service. They used a field at the Lancaster Gun Club along the Oregon Pike. The field was dubbed “Behmer Air Service Station,” and at times there were as many as ten planes on the field. They planned to establish a complete air service, including aerial photography and advertising, as well as the carrying of passengers.

Robert Behmer was fatally injured, and three others were killed in a crash near the Gun Club on July 10, 1924. He and his employee of four months, Edward Bowman, were preparing for an air carnival at Schaefferstown later in the summer. On the fatal flight, they were testing a parachute, and two men from Reading went along for the ride. Their plane was described as a “mammoth ship” with the pilot’s cockpit in the rear and two double seats in the forward cockpit. An examination showed a pin was missing from the
elevator control.

The next day, the Lancaster New Era ran an editorial on the “Risks of Aviation.” They urged government regulation of all commercial aviation, saying pilots should not be allowed to take passengers in planes without safety tests and regular inspections.

Behmer Air Service employees immediately made plans for an air circus on the following Saturday for the benefit of the widow of young Edward Bowman. Until four months before, Bowman had been a barber at the Stevens House. M. K. Riddick was in charge, with a dozen planes participating, with stunting, wing walks, and parachuting. On July 19, the show was held, with 1,600 spectators on the Gun Club grounds and many more sitting in automobiles on nearby roads. The star of the show was Behmer Air Service pilot R. M. Haynes, who parachuted and also performed acrobatics in a large LWF type plane, the same type of airplane in which his employer had lost his life nine days previously.

About a week later, another incident occurred at this field, which happily did not involve any personal injuries, although there was considerable damage to property. An eighteen year old student pilot, Roy Geltz, who had been flying only two weeks, was warned by George Kamm, custodian of the Gun Club, that he was flying too low. Kamm insisted that Geltz stay away from buildings while flying. Two hours later when approaching the airfield, Geltz swerved to avoid a “wireless aerial,” lost control and crashed into the roof of Kamm’s house nearby! Edna Kamm, who was alone in the house at the time, escaped injury, as did Geltz and his passenger Clarence Rudy. The airplane ended up with one wing on a porch roof and the other wing in a large tree, with the fuselage suspended between. Geltz went on to become a well known pilot and instructor, managing the Lancaster Airport on the Manheim Pike for a time, and later starting and operating the Garden Spot Airport near Mountville.

The Gun Club field continued in use for occasional visits from barnstormers. At least one night landing is recorded, when a York pilot came into the field with the aid of flares, “thrilling many spectators.”

The Jones Era

About 1922, J. Harry (Happy) Jones acquired a Curtiss JN4 which he flew from a grass strip on the family walnut tree farm on Kendig Road in Willow Street. He planned to give instructions and do barnstorming exhibitions, but died in May, 1926 in an airplane crash near Coatesville before he could become well established. A neighbor and schoolmate, Mark H. Ryder, vividly recalls having his first airplane ride with Harry Jones at that field. Ryder later became a pilot and was an active Aero Club member in the mid-1930’s.

Happy Jones’ most famous student was Jesse P. Jones (no relation), whose name, more than any other person’s, has been associated with the development of aviation in Lancaster County. More than sixty years later,
in 1985, Jesse (Pappy) Jones is still an active pilot on the local aviation scene, as are two of his daughters, two sons-in-law and a grandson.

Jesse operated a garage in Pughtown, Chester County, Pennsylvania and raced autos as a hobby. About 1922, he became interested in flying. Stored under the grandstand at the Pottstown racetrack was a JN 4D “Jenny” airplane which had been used the previous summer by a barnstormer who “went broke”. Jones bought the airplane “as is” for $200. With the help of Chick Soule, an aircraft mechanic, the engine was overhauled, the fabric replaced, all control cables and tires were replaced. A new propeller was acquired, since the old one had been stolen. The only instruments were an oil pressure gauge, tachometer, altimeter, and a temperature gauge for the water cooled OX-5 engine. The previous owner told Jesse about Harry Jones in Lancaster County. Jesse contacted Harry several times during the reconstruction. All of the work was done at the Pottstown racetrack. When the job was finished, Harry Jones came to the racetrack and flew the plane to his airfield at Willow Street. Jesse then drove to the Willow Street field for flying instruction. On a Saturday, after about three and a half hours of instruction in his own airplane, Jesse was told by Harry Jones, “Now you know as much about it as I do; go ahead and fly!”. The next day, Sunday, Jesse had a boy drive him to Willow Street to get his plane. On his way home, Jesse saw a nice field near New Holland. Having had only a few solo landings, he thought he should practice a few take offs and landings. Soon the road was lined up with cars. Someone wanted to go for a ride, so Jesse took him for a ride for $2.00. When the boy, returning the car to Pughtown came by, Jesse sent him to New Holland with a couple of 5 gallon cans for gasoline. Jesse was kept busy for hours hauling passengers, two at a time, and the trip for gasoline was repeated several times. As the sun sank low in the sky, Jesse discontinued the passenger hopping, and flew to his father’s farm at Harmonyville, where he left the plane for the night. The next day, he got the plane back to Pughtown.

Jesse dismantled his plane for the winter, but the next spring he began “barnstorming”. His airplane had the pilot’s cockpit in the rear and the front cockpit held two passengers. He later barnstormed with Harry Jones as the “Jones and Jones Flying Circus”. They were flying at the Antler’s Club field along the Lincoln Highway just west of Coatesville on May 21, 1926, when Harry was killed flying Jesse’s plane. Harry had taken an Upper Darby man for a “stunt ride” in Jesse’s airplane while his own plane was being refueled. During a loop, Jesse related, “the wings folded, and the plane came straight down. Both Harry and the passenger were killed”.

Jones still owned and operated the garage, now with a landing strip behind it, and spent the weekends in barnstorming adventures, with his “No-Nox Flying Circus.” As with other barnstormers, he did this for the love of flying — not for the money in it. In fact, Jesse says, in those days, when fliers were asked the greatest danger they faced, the response was “starvation.”

In late May, 1927, a tour of Good Will Flyers passed over Lancaster but did not land because there was no adequate field; Major Dargue dropped a
message in passing. The next day the Lancaster Intelligencer ran an editorial deploring the lack of an adequate field. Mayor Frank C. Musser observed that "aviation is here to stay" and that a landing field should be a community proposition. A number of fields were being considered, including the Lancaster Fair Grounds, and Federal authorities would be consulted.

The Lancaster Shrine Club sponsored an air circus on Saturday and Sunday, June 18 and 19, 1927, at the "Flying Field — Lancaster Gun Club." This field was at Oregon Manor on the Oregon Pike just north of the city. Among the pilots performing was Jesse P. Jones. The promoter failed to carry out his contract, and left town without checking out of his hotel, eluding three constables. The Shriners contacted Jesse at his flying field at Pughtown, near Pottstown, and arranged for the Jones pilots to do the show. Jones said the NoNox Circus of Pottstown would remain until Friday, June 24.

A community-wide meeting to advance a flying field project was held at the Chamber of Commerce rooms on June 22. Air circus pilots Jones and A. M. Banks attended the meeting. The land at Oregon Manor was offered as a temporary landing field by Willis C. Kendig and Charles F. Bowman, who controlled it. A. B. Dodge and J. F. Steinman presented a plan for the reorganization of the Lancaster Aero Club, which would provide backing for an airport. Jesse P. Jones, part owner of the Pottstown flying organization, said if a field were established his company would move their operation to Lancaster, and have at least one plane and an instructor on the field at all times.

Jones had been barnstorming in the coal regions of Pennsylvania. Landing sites there were few and far between. In those days of frequent engine failures, emergency landings were commonplace. Jesse said he had always admired Lancaster County for the many farms, where almost every field was an emergency landing site.

The Chamber of Commerce endorsed the movement for a municipal flying field. A. D. Howry, who presided at the Chamber of Commerce meeting, reported there was a suitable field located between the Fruitville and Manheim Pikes one mile from the City. A large part of this tract was owned by A. B. Hess, which with two adjoining properties, would be over one hundred acres — a boundary of one-half mile on each side. It was said this could accommodate huge planes approaching from any angle. However, plans for acquiring this or another field for a municipal air field did not materialize in 1927.

A public meeting was set for July 21, at which Major William Grant, Christiana business man and former Army airman, would speak on the benefits of flying, and several local men would discuss methods of financing a field. J. P. Jones flew up from New Jersey to attend the meeting and repeat his offer to operate the field. He said if a field is procured, he will locate here and engage in instruction, and the passenger and express business. Prior to the meeting, J. P. Jones performed stunts over the City shortly after 6:00 P.M., and a plane from the Middletown Army Depot dropped circulars announcing the meeting. At the meeting, Major Grant
said a good field would bring plane manufacturers to Lancaster. He said the
War Department is swamped with applications from people who want to
fly, and they cannot possibly take care of them. He added, “If a man like J.
P. Jones were located here, many youths would come to him for instruc-
tion.”

Jones and his associates soon afterwards arranged to use a field along the
Manheim Pike on the Elmer Esbenshade farm. This field became Lancaster
Airport, and was an active airport for more than 25 years.

Beginning the next month, in August of 1927, newspapers carried fre-
quent headlines on the activities of Jones and the airport on the Manheim
Pike. “J. P. Jones, pilot at the Lancaster Airport, will try to talk to people
on the streets from several thousand feet up.” J. P. Mathiot of radio station
W GAL provided four giant horns for the plane. Two days later, “Music
and voices from the sky heard by Lancastrians” was the headline of the
story which said a woman thought the world was coming to an end when she
heard a voice from the sky saying he was flying at 3,100 feet. Jones said he
had to climb very carefully with the extra 400 pounds of equipment.

A week later, a front page picture and story told of two local people who
elope to Bel Air, Maryland aboard the J. P. Jones plane at the airport. The
couple, Casper Dickel and Alma Hatz had taken an airplane ride on Sunday
with Jones, and enjoyed the ride. They arranged to elope in the plane, and
swore Jones to secrecy. A few days later, they flew with Jesse to a field near
Bel Air, borrowed a farmer’s auto, and drove to a justice of the peace where
they were married with Jesse as their best man. They had not notified
parents or employers. A newspaper the next day reported that Mrs. Dickel’s
employer called her to congratulate her on her marriage, but added that her services were no longer required, and that she should not return to her job!

On September 21, Roscoe Turner landed at the new field in his twin engine Sikorsky, which he had christened “The Virginian”. The 18 passenger airplane was said to be the largest in the United States, and its two 680 horsepower engines burned a gallon of gasoline each minute. Turner had come here at the invitation of the Chamber of Commerce Aviation Committee, who presented him with a Hamilton watch. On Friday evening, September 23, the Committee was “Shanghied into the air” by Turner. The Committee had been invited to board the plane for an inspection. When Turner asked “How many of you have ever been up?”, nine of the ten replied negatively. Thereupon, the doors were slammed, and Turner took them aloft. That day’s newspaper carried the following ad: “Giant Air Liner — Half Hour Flights — Parties of Ten — $10 Per Passenger. Short Passenger Flights In Little Plane — $3 Per Passenger.” Turner remained in Lancaster several more days.

A few days later, the Chamber’s Aviation Committee was pictured with Lt. Albert F. Hegenberger, the navigator on the first non-stop flight from San Francisco to Honolulu, who visited the local airport. Hegenberger inspected the field, calling it a wonderful field which can be converted into a first class airport. While in Lancaster, Hegenberger was the guest of Capt. George Luckey, head of the airplane instrument division of the Hamilton Watch Company.

On October 6, 1927 an Army blimp circled downtown Lancaster three times over the crowds on West King Street, who were assembled in front of the newspaper building watching bulletins on the progress of a World Series baseball game.

That fall, Jones spoke to the American Business Club to promote flying. He said our airport ranks with the best in the East. He also stressed the safety and convenience of flying, adding that one could now travel in the same comfort as on a train, and go faster. On November 15, Jones took off in the “North Pole Special” to bring Santa to Lancaster for the Watt and Shand toy store, which preceded a great parade from the airport to Watt and Shand.

The final aeronautical news in this significant year in the history of aerial navigation in Lancaster County, came in December when it was announced that Lancaster would get an airplane engine manufacturing plant and also air freight service. Charter applications were filed for two corporations. Lancaster Aviation, Inc. was formed “for the manufacturing and exploitation of airplane engines and parts.” Lancaster Airways Inc. would handle commercial and passenger flying. J. P. Jones would handle the latter company. Although Lancaster Airways, Inc. will be headquartered here because of Lancaster’s strategic location, they announced, the group will also service Philadelphia, Baltimore, Washington, York, Hagerstown, Pittsburgh, Frederick, Altoona, Harrisburg, Williamsport, Erie, Buffalo, Rochester, Wilkes Barre, Pottsville, Reading, Allentown, Easton, and Bethlehem!

With the Spring of 1928, flight activities resumed at the air field on
Manheim Pike. Students were being instructed, and plans were being made for the dedication of the airport on Memorial Day.

At the formalities on May 30, 1928, an estimated 5,000 people heard Dr. H. H. Apple, president of Franklin and Marshall College, and Mayor Frank C. Musser praise the backers of the airport. Apple said the airport "helped place Lancaster among the first cities of the land to be prepared for the air exploits of the future." Edward Weaver, Clair McCollough, Louis Hartman, and Robert Rohrer were members of the Dedication Committee of the American Business Club. Twenty miniature parachutes were dropped, one containing a $5.00 gold piece, and another containing a ticket for an airplane ride. Flying demonstrations were given by Jesse P. Jones, Major William D. Grant, and Rupert E. Herr, and rides were given to Mayor Musser and other officials. During the afternoon, the Navy dirigible "Los Angeles" circled the City on its way back to Lakehurst, N.J., and was saluted by the three pilots, who upon sighting the dirigible, immediately took off and escorted the huge aircraft.

Several days later, the Lancaster Intelligencer had a feature article on the young pilot Rupert Herr. Herr, a 20-year-old Lancaster native, was the first pilot trained by Lancaster Airways. Obtaining his license was the fulfillment of a dream of a year and a half. He had a Waco Model 10, which carried two passengers and the pilot, which had been bought for him by his grandfather, L. B. Herr. The article stated that when he gained more experience, Lancaster Airways planned to take him in as a partner. Herr made aviation his career, becoming an Air Force Colonel, and later serving with the Civil Aeronautics Authority. He also served six years as aviation advisor to Ecuador for the building of its airports.

The second pilot trained by Lancaster Airways was Charles Hastings. After a stint as a flight instructor, he left Lancaster to pursue a career in aviation.

Jesse Jones also started quite a few other pilots on the way to important careers in aviation. Among his students were Stanley Keck, who became manager of the Bethlehem Airport, Marion Gilbert, who built Millersburg Airport, Richard Beckley, future airline inspector for the C.A.A., Oscar Hostetter, who started the York Airport, and Maurice Bowman, who was instrumental in starting the Penn-Harris field. These are just a few of the nearly 2,000 students trained by Jones.

A hangar had been built at the field. On the end was painted:
AVIATION SCHOOL
PASSENGER RIDES $3 AND $5
WACO AND FAIRCHILD AIRPLANES
LANCASTER AIRWAYS

The big event of the year 1928 at the Airport was the Air Meet held Saturday and Sunday, July 21 and 22. The meet was planned by a joint committee of the Chamber of Commerce and the American Business Club. The Junior League was in charge of Booster Tags to encourage donations to a fund to provide lighting for the field, which was estimated to cost $5,000. One purpose of the meet was to put Lancaster on the proposed route for air
traffic from New York to Pittsburgh. Mayor Musser issued a proclamation, and dozens of pilots from surrounding states participated in the meet. Ten loving cups were presented to winners of the various air races. Forty airplanes circled the city to signal the start of the program. The Conestoga Traction Company ran special buses, and special parking areas for thousands of autos were arranged in the vicinity of the Airport. Newspapers reported that tens of thousands of people went to attend the program. There was editorial comment on the air-mindedness of Lancastrians, and at the same time a call for a municipal airport. They cited the need for public ownership of an airport instead of depending on a leased field.

Although there was still a lot of excitement about airplanes a year after Lindbergh’s famous flight from New York to Paris in May, 1927, it was still hard to make a living in the aviation business. In August, 1928, Jesse Jones had six students enrolled in flying and parachute jumping instruction. Most of the barnstormers of the early 1920’s had settled down to running airports, becoming “fixed base operators.” Aviation was maturing from the daredevil era to the commercial era. However, there were still many air shows to promote aviation and provide extra income to aviators. Many instructors and airport helpers were unpaid, because there was “just no money in the business.” Richard N. Bomberger tells how he worked for years at the airport without being paid. Dick says, “we had no money, but we had an awful lot of fun.” He relates how he drove a laundry truck for seven years to support his aviation career. As a youth, he had earned $15 per week, paid $5 board, and spent the rest at the airport.

Lancaster was unsuccessful in getting the airplane engine factory which had been announced in December, 1927. Instead, the Jacobs Engine Co.
located at Pottstown. Lancaster Airways was successful in starting airports at Bethlehem and Coatesville.

In January, 1929, more than 46,000 people visited Lancaster’s First Aviation Show in the Keystone Furniture Building in center city. The show, at 2 West King Street, was held under the auspices of The Keystone Furniture Co., Inc. and the Lancaster Airways, Inc.. The Souvenir Program listed 29 exhibitors, whose products, including complete airplanes, were on display from January 14th to January 19th.

There was a lot of interest in news from the airport. In May, 1929, it was front page news when Lancaster was visited by Harry Culver, President of the American Association of Real Estate Boards, who flew his plane to Lancaster from Wilmington. Intelligencer Journal’s Earl Keyser had travelled to Wilmington to fly to Lancaster with Culver. Mayor Musser, who already had ten flights to his credit, accepted Mr. Culver’s invitation to fly to Reading, Mr. Culver’s next stop on his tour. On Sunday, June 16, Jesse Jones thrilled a crowd of 12,000 at the airport, by flying upside down for two miles. He also won the “bombing contest” by dropping his flour bag “bombs” on the target four out of five times. Jones announced the same day that he was flying William S. Raub to Wilkes Barre on Monday, and would fly two passengers to Detroit on Thursday!

At this time, people in the aviation business were trying very hard to sell the airplane as a practical means of transportation. James D. Condon and Theodore Taney of Pittsburgh had bought a Travel Air and a Lockheed Orion to transport passengers from Pittsburgh to New York. Lancaster was a flag stop on that route. Braniff International Airways began operations in 1928 with a single 5 passenger Stinson airplane flying the 116 mile route between Oklahoma City and Tulsa. Many experts believed that the airplane was practical only for flights of less than 500 miles, and that long range transportation, especially trans-ocean voyages would use lighter-than-air craft. They noted that the only successful airplane crossings of the Atlantic had been in dangerously overloaded planes in unusually good weather, by very courageous pilots, without pay load. Engine trouble, or fuel exhaustion due to headwinds, could cause a forced landing on the ocean. Former Navy Commander J. C. Hunsaker, speaking in New York, said that building larger airplanes would not increase their endurance. He wisely observed that “in general, a forced landing on the high seas cannot be tolerated by a commercial enterprise”.

Lancastrians had their first opportunity to see a practical lighter-than-air craft on the ground when the Goodyear blimp “Vigilant” paid a visit to the city on August 13, 1929. A number of local dignitaries were given rides. Only one slight mishap was reported. Mayor Musser, Charles Lebzelter, and Robert Renninger were riding in the blimp when Mr. Renninger, wearing a straw hat, thrust his head out the window for a better view. His hat blew off, tearing a two foot hole in the outer covering. Since the helium was contained in inner bags, the repair job was a minor one, which did not affect the airworthiness of the aircraft.

Another “first” was recorded in the same month, when the first airplane
for business transportation use was bought by a local company. The R. L. Gerhart Company ordered a Ryan monoplane, a sister ship to the “Spirit of St. Louis.” It was reported that 91 airplanes had stopped at the Lancaster Airport in the last two and a half weeks, and that nearly half of the 200 pilots or passengers were in the County to transact business. Again, the need for a municipal airport with larger facilities was emphasized.

The popularity of endurance flights around the nation hit Lancaster in July 1929. The Airport Committee of the Chamber of Commerce felt that an endurance flight would result in valuable advertising for Lancaster County businesses. William E. Alexander was appointed chairman of “The Lancaster County Endurance Flight Committee.” The committee set a goal of $30,000 in contributions from business and industry to buy a Stinson Junior airplane and underwrite the costs of breaking the current record of 246 hours aloft without landing. The plan was to drop a relief pilot and fuel onto the endurance airplane from another plane above. The relieved pilot of the endurance plane would then parachute to earth, to rest until his turn to fly came around again. Colonel William Grant, the “popular war ace” was very enthusiastic about the project, saying it would put Lancaster “on the front pages throughout the Country.” He volunteered to fly one of the two refueling planes and take care of all the ground work.

The Aero Club had been dormant, and the Endurance Flight Committee called for its revival to aid the Committee. Aero Club president A. B. Dodge announced he was “100% in favor of the project”, and called a meeting of the Club the next evening at the Lancaster Airways, Inc. hangar at the airport. The Club endorsed the endurance flight, although at one point Mr. Dodge questioned whether $30,000 could not be better used toward getting a permanent airport. Mayor Musser said our airport should be owned by the City and County, instead of being leased from a private land owner. The Intelligencer Journal responded with an editorial “Why not have both?” suggesting the community go ahead with the endurance flight and also get a permanent airport. A “Flying Squadron” was named to secure funds, consisting of William S. Raub, Howard Hersh, J. A. Roehm, Charles Goodman, Dr. H. J. Roddy, Jr., Samuel Fraim, Col. Grant, Jesse Jones, Emory Greek, Rupert Herr, and Charles Hastings.

Although nearly $12,000 had been pledged, before final arrangements could be made for the local flight, in Missouri the St. Louis Robin landed after setting an endurance record of 420 hours.

The revived Aero Club, at its July 16th meeting to discuss the endurance flight, also voted to act as hosts to visiting pilots during the Bicentennial Air Meet scheduled for July 27 and 28, 1929. Samuel E. Fraim, Chairman, Howard Hersh, and A. B. Dodge were the committee to arrange a banquet at the Brunswick Hotel for flyers and visiting dignitaries. The Mayor had invited officials from nearby counties to the meet.

The Bicentennial Air Meet got off to an exciting start on Friday night, with Jesse Jones, “crack pilot at the local airport” proving that he could “bomb” the city of Lancaster. Two National Guard anti aircraft units, each with a powerful searchlight, were unable to keep Jones in sight as he...
flew over the city. Jones even teased the anti aircraft units’ men by turning on lights on his plane from time to time, then disappearing. When he landed, he was greeted by cheers and auto horns from an estimated 15,000 people. Large crowds were at the airport on Saturday, and the Sunday crowds were estimated at 20,000!

The Meet had been well publicized. Many well known pilots were participating, and the announcer was Graham McNamee, a famous radio announcer. Cups and other awards had been contributed by the Bicentennial Committee, Mayor Musser, Chamber of Commerce, Armstrong Cork Co., Follmer Cogg, Hamilton Watch Co., General Tire, Inc., Lancaster Newspapers, Watt and Shand, Manufacturer’s Association, American Business Club, Exchange Club, Kiwanis Club, Lion’s Club, Rotary Club, Monarch Club, and the Knights of Columbus.

An optimistic and enthusiastic group attended the Saturday night banquet. Mayor Musser said it was the duty of every citizen to give his support to a municipal commercial airport. Col. Grant predicted that Lancaster would be a strategic point on many airways. William S. Raub, chairman of the Aviation Committee of the Chamber of Commerce, predicted that a year hence at such a banquet “we will be celebrating the dedication of a municipal airport”.

The Aero Club announced they would seek many new members to boost flying. They said hundreds of letters would be sent to prominent citizens requesting them to become members. The committee for that project was Club president A. B. Dodge, Sumner Brown, John F. Steinman, and William S. Raub. The July 29th Intelligencer Journal ran another editorial about the need for a municipal airport. They added, “the Aero Club has a big job, but has the nth degree support of the Intelligencer”.

Lancaster Airways was instructing a number of students both in Lancaster and Bethlehem in 1929. On September 10, Gladys Hickey, 17 year old high school student was soloed by instructor Rupert Herr after only nine hours of instruction, making her Lancaster’s first female pilot. The following month, the Bethlehem Airport was dedicated, and Rupert Herr was made manager and chief instructor. A new Ryan Brougham, sister ship of the Spirit of St. Louis, arrived in Lancaster, after having been picked up at the factory in St. Louis by Jesse Jones. A newspaper advertisement offering rides in the six passenger plane stated that all passengers would get a Lindbergh commemorative medal. Lancaster Airways announced the start of a ground school with three evening sessions each week.

The Aero Club of Lancaster held a reorganization meeting October 16, 1929, at which Howard Hersh was elected president, Col. Grant and John I. Hartman vice presidents, and Sumner Brown, secretary. Four charter members of the club were still active: Brown, A. B. Dodge, W. S. Raub, and J. F. Steinman.

Lancaster County aviation suffered a great loss in December 1929, with the death of Lieut. Col. William D. Grant of Christiana. The 38 year old World War flyer was killed in an auto crash when returning home from Philadelphia after giving a speech on aviation. The prominent Christiana
Lancaster Airport on Manheim Pike, as it looked in 1931.

business man had been active in all local aviation matters since 1919, and was president of Lancaster Airways, Inc. at the time of his death.

The Aero Club of Pennsylvania sponsored the “First Pennsylvania Goodwill Tour” in 1930. Lancaster was a stop on the one week tour which began on Memorial Day, at a field near Pittsburgh. An average of about 20 airplanes, some pilots joining the flights for just a few days, visited about 20 cities from Pittsburgh to Philadelphia. While in Lancaster, visiting pilots were the guests of the Aero Club and the Chamber of Commerce at Hotel Brunswick. Total attendance at all stops on this event to promote aviation, was estimated at over 100,000 Pennsylvanians. Lancaster-Bethlehem Airways’ participant was the Ryan monoplane piloted by Jesse Jones.

In these years, there was an air meet somewhere in nearby states nearly every weekend in the summer. Every program had races, contests, and usually parachute jumps, with plenty of time between events for passenger rides. Lancaster’s pilots, especially Jesse Jones, were frequent participants. New and unusual acts were always in demand.

One of Jones’ unique acts was “Eddie” the goose parachute jumper. Jesse won the goose in a shooting match a few weeks before Thanksgiving. The Depression years were especially lean for airport operators, and Jesse was very happy with this prize which would be the family’s Thanksgiving dinner. Since Mrs. Jones did not want the goose in her basement for several weeks, he was taken to the airport and housed in a wooden crate in the hangar. Before long, he was Eddie, the airport mascot, and he escaped the
axe for the holiday feast. At this time, “Pappy” (he has been called that since he was 25 years old) Jones was pilot for parachute testing for Follmer Clogg Company. Someone made a miniature parachute for Eddie, and his jumps were a star attraction at air meets throughout the East. Eddie seemed to love the jumps and the attention he got. His final, and fatal, jump was made at the dedication of the Harrisburg State airport in October 1932. Eddie was released at about 2,000 feet. When his chute failed to open, he began to fly. Unfortunately, at about 200 feet, his wings became entangled in the cords and he fell to the ground. The Harrisburg newspaper published an article about Eddie, and Jesse received quite a few letters from ladies in Humane Societies. The Lancaster New Era the next month contained an article with the headline “Humane Society to Ban Parachute Jumps By Geese”. The Society had reviewed Eddie’s accident in Harrisburg, and threatened that any future jumps by geese would “land Jesse Jones in jail”.

![Jesse Jones poses with Eddie, the Parachute Jumping Goose, 1932](image)

About 1930, glider flying became popular in the United States and Europe, especially in Germany. Edward Terry tells of experiences with an early glider at Lancaster Airport at this time. The Detroit Gull was damaged and repaired and changed owners several times, and is, at this writing, in the possession of Elmer Zimmerman in Intercourse, Pennsylvania.
Zimmerman was a prime mover in forming the Intercourse Glider Club in 1931. There was a club in Lancaster, and others, but none had the success of the Intercourse group. One of their members was Harold Huber who became an engineer at Lockheed, and also was prominent as a long distance sailplane pilot in California. Another member who later achieved prominence in aviation was Daniel R. Zuck. After graduating from a school of aeronautics, he went to California for a lifetime career at Consolidated Aircraft. He worked on the “Black Widow”, the U-2, the C130, PBY-3, and other important airplanes. He has always been interested in folding wing airplanes, and is the author of “An Airplane in Every Garage”, published in 1958. Elmer Zook became a good sailplane pilot and instructor; one of his students currently holds the altitude record for sailplanes. Elmer Zimmerman recalls other members of the Intercourse club as Harold Kaufman, Belty Moyer, Harold Eshleman, John Bernard, and Kendrick and Donald Esbenshade. Zimmerman himself, a successful Intercourse businessman, became an airplane pilot, and will be mentioned later in connection with the start of an airport at New Holland.

Their first glider was home built which they towed with a 7/8 inch hay rope. They later acquired the Gull which had been used earlier by the glider group at Lancaster Airport. In 1934, they bought a Pruefling, a German glider.

According to the Lancaster New Era of March 8, 1935, Zimmerman was the first pilot to be licensed at the new Municipal Airport. A Department of Commerce Inspector had come by train from Newark, N.J. to administer glider pilot flight tests to Zimmerman and Harold Huber. Zimmerman was examined first, hence has the distinction to be first licensed. Elmer recalls that earlier, he and Huber had an appointment to be examined at the Washington Hoover Airport in Washington. They trailerd their glider to Washington, and found the airport manager would not permit a glider flight there. In view of this, the Department of Commerce promised to send an examiner to Lancaster if they would pick him up at the railroad station, which they did.

The airport on the Manheim Pike was the only real airport in Lancaster County in the early 1930’s. When flying events were scheduled for groups in County towns, farm fields were used. To improve revenue from passenger hopping, on weekends, Jones or some of his pilots would fly over the city, perhaps doing a few loops, to entice people to the airport. There was some business in student instruction, but those were depression years. Although there were some accidents, the safety record at the airport was good for that time. The first fatality was in October 1932, when student solo pilot William Hart flying his own Fairchild went into a spin at Belmont Manor. The 45 year old business man had been flying only a few months. Charter flights were few and unpredictable.

Jesse Jones remembers well one of his charter flights of this period. One morning, a well dressed man carrying a black valise, came to the airport and said he had to get to Philadelphia as soon as possible, and wanted Jesse to fly him there. Jones explained that the weather was bad, with very low...
clouds. This, of course, was long before the routine flying by instruments in the airplanes of the 1980's. The prospective passenger was not deterred by the weather, and urged Jesse to attempt the flight, indicating price was of no concern to him. Such charter flights were rare, and Jesse agreed to start out and see how far they could go. As they flew East, they encountered lower and lower ceilings. When Jones indicated they would have to terminate the flight, the passenger waved another $20 bill, and they continued a little further. The passenger appeared to be a professional man, probably a doctor. When it finally became absolutely necessary to land, they still had not reached Philadelphia, and the man with the black valise headed down the road. When Jesse got back to Lancaster and read the afternoon newspaper, he read of a daring bank robbery that morning. Police officials were certain the robber was still in the area, since they had been watching the railroad station and all the major highways. The description of the robber was also a good description of Jesse’s impatient passenger!

Lancaster Airways was dissolved in 1932, and from then on Elmer Esbenshade leased the Manheim Pike field to individuals. An autogiro, a rotary wing aircraft, was acquired and was demonstrated to a Memorial Day crowd at the airport in May 1933. Newspapers said the crowd of 4,000 got an extra thrill when Corporal Cross of the State Highway Police commandeered the autogiro and pilot Jones to look for a hit and run driver. The traffic was so dense in the vicinity of the airport that the police cars could not move.

A large air meet was held at the airport on Sunday, June 25, 1933. Thirty airplanes participated, and the crowd of 15,000 was considered one of the largest ever at the airport. The usual races and parachuting were preceded by an aerial parade over the city by nearly all the planes. Of course, a large number of the spectators made passenger flights during breaks in the program. As usual at many meets throughout the Middle Atlantic states, Jesse Jones took four of the prizes. Field events were in charge of Rupert Herr, assisted by George Dietrich, Charles Tanger, Charles Hastings, and Sumner Brown.

Three months later, the autogiro was destroyed but pilot Dick Beckley and his brother escaped injury in a crash in Glen Moore Circle during a rainstorm. The mishap occurred when the pilot was returning to Lancaster from southern Lancaster County where the Quarryville American Legion had sponsored an aviation program. Other local pilots participating in the program were Richard Bomberger, Charles Brandt, George Dietrich, George Ritnour, and of course, Jesse Jones.

A Municipally Owned Commercial Airport

Far sighted business and civic leaders in Lancaster County continued to talk of the need for a permanent, municipally owned airport to serve the community’s needs for airline service as air transportation developed. Although the Manheim Pike field was popular, and adequate for most
airplanes of the day, it was on leased ground, and had to be considered temporary. E. George Siedle, General Traffic Manager of Armstrong Cork Company, was also president of the Lancaster Traffic Club. A committee was appointed “to get an airport for Lancaster and to stay on the job until it is finished”, consisting of H. H. Brenneman, Daniel Weinhold, C. B. Weiss, and Mr. Siedle. They decided to work with the Manufacturers’ Association, the Chamber of Commerce, and the Aero Club. The Manufacturers’ Association appointed S. E. Fraim, Bruce A. Boggs, and R. F. Stauffer. Chamber of Commerce representatives were A. C. Darmstaetter, W. R. Atkinson, and John H. Carter. The Aero Club was represented by president Jesse Jones, Sumner L. Brown, Howard Hersh, and Richard Beckley. These were consolidated into one large committee with Siedle as chairman.

The Traffic Club sponsored an “Aviation Night” dinner in November 1933. The dinner was held in the Young Women's Christian Association, and speakers included Laura Ingalls, famous woman flyer, and Gladys Hickey, Lancaster’s first woman flyer. Other speakers were T. Park Hay of TWA, and Jesse Jones. At this meeting, plans were announced to proceed with getting a municipal airport. City and County government officials agreed to cooperate, and the newspapers were enthusiastically supportive of the project.

In selecting a site, officials sought the help of the U.S. Department of Commerce and of Transcontinental and Western Air whose planes would serve Lancaster when an adequate airport was available. Because of lack of room for expansion and drainage difficulties, no attempt was made to purchase the Manheim Pike airport property. The Committee finally selected a site north of the City, near Kissel Hill, after viewing more than ten other possible sites.

Mr. Siedle, chairman of the “Lancaster Joint Aviation Committee”, popularly known as the Citizens’ Airport Committee, said the time was right to proceed immediately, because:
1. A municipally owned commercial airport was needed.
2. There would be a minimal direct cost to the community because federal W.R.A. funds were available. (Works Relief Act)
3. The construction of an airport would alleviate the unemployment problem in Lancaster City and County.

The City and County governments agreed on a division of the costs, and 121 acres were purchased at Kissel Hill: 97 acres on the Shenk farm and 24 acres on the adjacent Rhoads property. The adjacent Lefever property of 60 acres would make a total of 181 acres available. Ground was broken on March 15, 1934. About 1,000 people were present for the ceremony on the muddy farm land. A barn door was used for a speakers’ platform.

Mayor James H. Ross and County Commissioner Albert H. Fritz turned the first earth. George Siedle spoke briefly, commenting that Lancaster had always been a leader in transportation, and it was just a few days short of 100 years ago that the first train ran from Lancaster to Columbia. Lt. Col. Daniel B. Strickler, spokesman for the County government said “fifty years
from now, airdromes will rise where these farm buildings stand, graded run-ways will reach across the fields, and great ships will be docking in the hangars”. Preceding the ceremony, a “flying squadron” directed by Jesse Jones flew over the site. He was accompanied by planes piloted by Richard Beckley, Jason Moore, and Virginio Marchetti. The Lancaster Boys High School Band played during the program. Gladys Hickey, Lancaster’s first woman pilot, and pilot Roy Geltz were on the field. After Jones landed, Mayor Ross spotted him in the crowd and asked that “special tribute be paid to that fellow in the goggles and helmet, Jesse Jones, who has worked unceasingly in the interest of aeronautics and for its progress in the community”. Following the ceremony, Geltz and Marchetti took off and did some stunt flying over the field.

Geltz had won the Bricker Baking Company award in 1932 for having flown the most hours among the local pilots entered in the contest. He had flown 57 hours. For 1933, the cup was won by Marchetti who had a total of 140 hours that year. Runner up for 1933 was William F. Slaymaker with 125 hours.

As work on the new airport got underway in March of 1934, the Lancaster Municipal Airport Commission was formed. Mayor Ross and City Commissioner Harry J. Stumpf represented the City, G. Graybill Diehm, Chairman of the Board of County Commissioners, and County Commissioner Albert H. Fritz represented the County, and E. George Siedle was ap-
pointed Secretary. Mayor Ross was chosen Chairman of the five member Municipal Airport Commission.

In May, when the new Municipal Airport Commission had occasion to attend a conference in Middletown, Jones flew Mayor Ross and engineering supervisor Edward Edgerley to the meeting. It was the first airplane flight for both men. Commissioners Diehm and Stumpf would not fly, Diehm commenting that he would rather go on roller skates than in an airplane.

Jones, of course, continued to run the Manheim Pike airport, operating as the Jesse Jones Flying Service. He continued to supplement his income and his renown as a pilot by appearing in dozens of air shows each summer. Of course, he and his pilots were always available for charter flights.

One charter flight in the summer of 1934 turned into a hair-raising experience for Jesse and his passenger. With the elementary and unreliable instruments of the day, and the lack of wind direction and velocity information, it was easy to get lost when the pilot could not see landmarks on the ground. They were returning from southern New Jersey near midnight when Jesse spotted a row of lights in the darkness which he believed to be a bridge. Swooping lower to try to identify the “bridge”, he found it to be a ship at sea! Finally, with fuel running low, he was forced to make a landing. He spotted an area which seemed to be a little lighter than the surrounding area, so it was probably not a forest, and selected it for his landing. He landed safely in what turned out to be a strawberry patch only feet away from a fence, with only very minor damage to the airplane. Despite the late hour, Jones and his passenger were welcomed by the farmer and his family. The farmer’s wife prepared them a dinner of ham and eggs, and put them up for the night. The next morning, after a good breakfast, Jones straightened a bent stabilizer on the plane, removed part of the fence, and moved the airplane to a larger field. After getting gasoline from a service station down the road, Jesse and his passenger had an uneventful trip back to Lancaster.

Work proceeded rapidly on the new airport site in 1934. Although just a few days after the ground breaking, the Civil Works Administration workers demanded an increase from their current rate of 40 cents per hour to 50 cents per hour on the CWA projects in Lancaster County, there was no work stoppage. Later, the labor was furnished by the Works Progress Administration.

By the Spring of 1935, the new Lancaster Municipal Airport was in operation. Jesse Jones had been appointed Manager, and had moved his Jesse Jones Air Service to the new airport. A newspaper report stated that four planes were located at the new airport, and another plane owned by Yale student William Slaymaker would be moved there. Six planes remained at the old field, operating as “Lancaster Airport”, and two more were expected. They would “continue to operate for repairs, storage, exhibition flying, etc. in friendly competition with the new Municipal field”.

Volume I, Number 1 of “Airstream” published by the Jesse Jones Air Service at Lancaster Municipal Airport offered flight instruction at $5.00 per lesson or $10 per hour for dual instruction, with a $75.00 maximum for
instruction leading to a solo flight. The license requirements at the time were for Student Pilot a minimum age of 16 years and a physical examination; Amateur Pilot, 25 hours solo; Private Pilot, 50 hours solo. A Limited Commercial license also required 50 hours solo, and a Transport Pilot license required 200 hours solo.

The Jesse Jones Air Service also offered crop dusting, charter flights, and airplane sales and service.

In the Spring of 1935, there were a number of local pilots who were performing at air shows, and of course providing passenger rides for the people who attended the shows. One of the early pilots was Larry Jones. Larry was a Lancaster electrician, no relation to Jesse Jones. Larry recalls one Saturday afternoon in 1927, when he was on his way to Manheim. Just north of the city, he saw an airplane had landed and the pilot was trying to turn it around. Larry stopped to help the pilot, who was Jesse Jones. Jesse was in Lancaster to perform at the Shrine Club Air Circus, and was looking for a place for an airfield. It was Jesse Jones’ first landing on the Elmer Esbenshade farm which was to become Lancaster’s first real airport. Jesse got Esbenshade’s permission to land planes there. Larry immediately became interested in flying, and was one of Jesse’s first students, and later participated in air shows done by a group of local pilots. A parachute jump was usually a feature on an air show program. One day when Jesse Jones had advertised a parachute jump, the jumper arrived late and with his leg in a cast as the result of an accident. Larry Jones was there and heard Jesse’s concern over disappointing the crowd who had come to the airport. Larry, who had no training or experience with parachutes, volunteered to make the jump. With just a few minutes of instruction, Larry was taken aloft and made his first jump. For several years, Larry’s parachute jumps were featured in air shows throughout the Middle Atlantic states. He also became a parachute tester and consultant for Follmer Clogg Company.

Another local pilot in the early 1930’s was Arthur Lamparter. Art was an electrician who bought his own plane, and for a time tried to make a living in aviation. With long spells of bad weather, especially in the winter, Art decided to take a job in industry but continued to fly on weekends. Lamparter’s Waco cabin biplane was considered the classiest airplane around the area at that time. Just a few days before the dedication of the Municipal Airport, Art and some other members of the Aero Club pushed his Waco from the Manheim Pike airport to Penn Square in downtown Lancaster. The job was completed about 3:00 A.M. and the plane was on exhibit in the southeast corner of the Square in front of the Watt & Shand department store. The trip downtown over the Lititz Pike bridge was difficult, so Art and his cohorts chose a different route in leaving the exhibit site. They pushed the plane east on King Street to Franklin, then north to the future site of McCaskey high school. Art flew the plane out of that field. He still has the loving cup presented to him by the Aero Club in recognition of the “longest distance travelled by a Waco being pushed”.

William F. Slaymaker was a student at Yale University in this era, but was a regular visitor and participant in all air activities in Lancaster when he
Art Lamparter sits on the propeller of his Waco biplane in Lancaster Penn Square, August 1935.

was home from school on holidays and summers. At the Airport dedication, Bill was the air traffic controller, signaling to arriving and departing pilots with a light gun. Red or green lights from the tower atop the new terminal was the only way to communicate with the pilots in these days before the use of radios. This was the method used at the large airports, and newspaper accounts indicated this traffic control at Lancaster was the first use outside of the large metropolitan airports.

The Municipal Airport was dedicated on Saturday, August 17, 1935 before an audience estimated at 10,000 people. Mayor James H. Ross spoke for the City of Lancaster, and Col. Daniel B. Strickler was the spokesman for Lancaster County. The principal address was delivered by Major J. Carroll Cone, Assistant Director of Air Commerce, Washington D.C. Miss Laura Ingalls, one of the most famous woman flyers, christened a TWA Douglas “Skyliner” the “City of Lancaster”. There were flying demonstrations by the Pennsylvania National Guard and by Major E. E. Aldrin flying a Douglas Dolphin. The Dolphin was an amphibian, and Major Aldrin later landed the plane on the Susquehanna River at Safe Harbor. There were many visiting airplanes, and Saturday evening the Aero Club held a dinner dance at Moose Hall for Club members and visiting pilots. Al Williams, a well known aerobatic pilot was scheduled to perform, but did not arrive. He later wrote to Mayor Ross, explaining that mechanical trouble with his plane had forced him to cancel, but expressing the hope that he could visit Lancaster soon.

The next day, Sunday, August 18, 15,000 people attended a giant air meet. Larry Jones won the “bombing contest”, dropping his bag of flour nearest the target, and received a Hamilton Watch. He also made two parachute jumps that day. There was a minor accident in which a Coatesville pilot was slightly injured when he hit a telephone pole on a farm just north of the airport. Ironically, the pole was on the property of a farmer who had a disagreement with airport management, and a court suit
was pending. Over 500 people took airplane rides during the air meet.

More than 3,200 special cachets of the airport dedication were received by the Lancaster Stamp Club during the ceremonies. They went out from the local post office to every state in the union, and several foreign countries.

The Aero Club handled most of the arrangements for the dedication and air meet, and did most of the work, from publicity to judging contests, crowd control, and parking of airplanes. Members were always concerned with safety, and did a good job of protecting spectators, as well as the safe handling of aircraft in the air and on the ground. A silver trophy was presented by Jesse Jones, on behalf of the Aero Club, to Mayor Ross for the great cooperation of the City and County in the completion and dedication of the Municipal Airport.

Monday’s newspaper carried the headline “Garden Spot Lands On Skyways with $350,000 field. The 184 acre airport was considered one of the finest in the East. The United States Bureau of Air Commerce Directory issued January 1, 1936 described the Municipal airport as having “Beacon, Boundary, Approach, and Obstruction Lights. . . . Two hard surface runways each 3,000 feet long, and a 3,200 foot sod strip. . . . Facilities for servicing day and night”. There was only one other airport in Pennsylvania (Pittsburgh-Allegheny County) listed as having both hard surface runways.
and facilities for both day and night operations! The airport was designated "Department of Commerce intermediate field, site 35, Columbus-Philadelphia Airway".

The year 1935 saw the death of two well known local pilots who flew from the old Lancaster Airport on the Manheim Pike. Virginio Marchetti was in a fatal crash while performing in a July fourth air show at Elizabethtown. He was substituting for Jason Moore whose plane was damaged a week earlier while Moore was checking out the field to be used for the air show. Aero Club members paid a final tribute to Marchetti by flying over the P.R.R. station at 7:00 A.M. on July 6, as Marchetti's body left on a train for Massachusetts. There were seven airplanes carrying Aero Club members in the early morning parade, piloted by Jesse Jones, Arthur Lamparter, Richard Dommel, William Slaymaker, Larry Jones, Roy Geltz, and Edward Reese. Jason Moore died on October 1, after having been injured in a crash the day before, while flying with a student pilot at the old Lancaster Airport.

In the late 1930's, most of the aviation business in Lancaster County was centered at the Municipal Airport. Jesse Jones handled much of the flying and mechanical work personally, while his wife Reba handled the office. Jesse and his wife Reba had three daughters. Reba was not a pilot, saying someone had to stay on the ground and try to keep track of what was going on. Each of the three daughters was required to solo an airplane before she was allowed to drive an automobile. Jesse thought that would make them safer auto drivers.
The first Jones daughter to fly was Helen, who soloed in a Taylor Cub at the Municipal Airport in October 1935 at the age of 15. She soon became known as “Lancaster’s renowned aviatrix”. In the late 1930’s, she was frequently in the national news as she flew about the country to air meets or races, or demonstrating flight with the one bladed propeller which her father was helping to develop. She was often the youngest pilot at an event, and her being an attractive young girl added to her newsworthiness. Her scrapbooks contain clippings from newspapers from Boston to New York to Philadelphia, and all the way to Miami. At Cleveland, in 1938, she was “the youngest aviatrix participating in the National Air Races”. By this time, she had more than 160 hours in her log book.

The next of “the Jones girls” to solo was Jessie, whose nickname was “Junior”. Jessie had been flying with her father from the time she was so young that she had to sit on several cushions to see out the window. She recalls that it was “a big deal” whenever she grew enough to discard one of the cushions. She made her solo flight on her sixteenth birthday, in 1940. Two years later, the youngest daughter, Carolyn, soloed on her sixteenth birthday.

The Pittsburgh Post Gazette, in August 1942, had a story on the flying Jones family. Pictured were Helen, with 1,000 hours, a Naval Air Cadets instructor, Jessie with 500 hours, a ferry pilot for the Army and a “Civil Air Patrol veteran”, and Carolyn, age 16, “who is piling up hours”. In that same month, “The three Jones sisters from Lancaster, Pennsylvania” appeared on Gulf’s “We The People” radio program broadcast from New York City. Jessie told of her Civil Air Patrol duties. Helen related that she was teaching some Naval Air Cadets the fundamentals of flying . . . “they always call me sir”.

Carolyn married and moved to Florida with her husband. Helen, now Mrs. William T. Carter, and Jessie, now Mrs. Howard D. Eckhart, have both instructed hundreds of student pilots and both have amassed thousands of hours in the air. At this writing, Helen and Jessie both live in Lancaster, are both married to husbands who are experienced pilots, own family airplanes, and are prominent figures on the Lancaster County aviation scene of 1985.

Pilots who spent some time around the airport in the 30’s and early 1940’s remember Jesse Jones not only as a good “airplane driver”, but also as an uncommonly resourceful mechanic who could repair or rebuild almost anything. James W. Farmer, one of those pilots, recalls an incident when Jones was crop dusting. This activity required many low passes over a farmer’s field to dispense the chemical, with a sharp pull up after each pass, to avoid the fences and trees bordering the fields. Farmer remembers the Gypsy Moth airplane that Jones had converted into a crop duster. One day, Jesse did not pull up soon enough, and hit a fence, knocking off part of his landing gear. He returned to the airport and made an expert landing on one wheel in a field, doing little further damage to the airplane. He worked all that night to repair the damage, and the next morning went crop dusting again in the same airplane.
Experimentation on single blade airplane propellers which was done at Lancaster Municipal Airport received national notice. On a rainy Sunday afternoon in early January, 1937 Mr. Jones recalled, he was toying with theories of propeller efficiency. If two blade propellers are more efficient than three blades, then would not a one blade propeller be more efficient than two blades? His associates were sure it would not work.

Later that very week, Jones was contacted by Harry Sensenich of the Sensenich Brothers Propeller Company and asked if he would be interested in test flying a single-bladed propeller. Sensenich explained that they were working with Messrs. Walter Everts and Frank Ellington of Baltimore, on such a development. They wanted to use Jones' airplane for the test, and develop the propeller at Sensenich Brothers plant which was located at the Municipal Airport. Jones agreed, and was immediately taken into the confidence of these men, and worked with them for many years.

In the interest of secrecy, it was nearly midnight when the first propeller was installed on Jesse's 40 H.P. Continental Cub. As soon as the engine was started, the plane began to vibrate, and soon some of the cowling vibrated off the plane, and all the engine tubes except one were broken. During the next two weeks, Mr. Everts worked seven days a week, eighteen to twenty hours a day. Finally a new blade and a new hub were designed, and on January 25, 1937, a new propeller was installed on the “Cub”, and ground tests proved satisfactory. This was still a secret at the airport, so at dawn the following morning, the airplane was rolled out on the field. After some tests on the ground, Jones took off for a test flight. The flight was uneventful, and several more were made that day and during the next two days. On the
morning of January 29, Jesse set out on a cross country flight to Floyd Bennett Field in New York, where Everts and Ellington were to meet him. Ellington said while he was waiting for Jesse to arrive, he went up into the control tower. When Jesse’s plane appeared on the horizon, Ellington told the operator that the plane was coming in with only one blade on his propeller. The operator exclaimed, “Oh My God”, and cleared the field, stopped all flying, called the crash truck out, and prepared for the worst. When Jones taxied in, to the amazement of all, there was only one blade on his propeller.

The propeller was removed from the plane, and taken to the Sensenich Brother's booth at the New York Aviation Show in Grand Central Palace. It became one of the curios of the Show, but at first no one would believe it could be flown. Finally, they got verification from airport officials that it was actually flown there. The propeller was named the “Everel”, derived from the names of the inventors, Everts and Ellington.

Work was begun immediately on propellers for more powerful engines. In March, 1937, Jones and the two inventors set out on a transcontinental flight to California — the first ever with a single blade propeller. One of the bolts failed in Greensboro, North Carolina, and it was replaced with a stove bolt. That bolt failed as they were taking off at Dallas, and was replaced. A third bolt was replaced at Palm Springs, and the remainder of the trip was uneventful!

Many local air races and one national meet were won with the single blade propeller. Jones left Lancaster in 1943 to move to Baltimore to work for the Everel Company. That company was bought out by the Koppers Company. After years of work, they were unable to develop a single blade propeller which could be used with the more powerful engines needed in larger and faster airplanes. However, much of the research on the single blade propeller proved valuable in the development of the constant speed, variable pitch propellers which became common on higher performance airplanes. When the Koppers Company discontinued research on the single blade propellers, Jesse Jones became a pilot for Koppers' corporate aircraft, continuing in that position until his retirement in 1961 at the age of 65.

The Lancaster Aero Club organized The John Wise Centennial Air Meet held May 17, 1936 commemorating Wise's celebrated balloon flight just 100 years earlier. A guest at the Meet was Zebulon Wise of Lancaster, the eighty-two year old nephew of John Wise. Zebulon Wise was given his first airplane ride. He said of the airplane “It beats an automobile, it does . . . the airplane beats everything”. About 50 airplanes visited the Meet. One surprise visitor was Pennsylvania's Governor, George H. Earle, who arrived in an autogyro which he piloted himself.

There were still a few hot air balloonists who appeared at air meets in the 1930's. Two who visited Lancaster were Walter Kuhnert and Larry Potteiger, both of Steelton, Pennsylvania. Their balloons did not have baskets for crew and passengers. The aeronauts sat on a trapeze bar during the ascent. When they reached their desired altitude, they parachuted to earth. Without the weight of the aeronaut, the balloon would turn over, dump out
the hot air, and fall to the ground. Kuhnert advertised his 94 foot high aircraft as “The World’s Largest Hot Air Balloon”. It required eight men to hold it down during inflation, and carried two parachute jumpers. One of the Kuhnert’s flights from Lancaster Municipal Airport resulted in an argument with a neighboring farmer over the retrieval of the balloon. The fisticuffs which followed required Mr. Kuhnert to return to Lancaster at a later date to appear before an alderman.

The Aero Club continued to be very active through the 1930’s promoting skill contests and sociability among local pilots. Mark H. Ryder won the E. George Siedle Trophy for 1937, emblematic of the most consistent flying record turned in by a member of the Lancaster Aero Club that year. Awards were based on the number of points gained by flyers in local meets, with two points added for each flying hour during the year. Ryder amassed a total of 935 points, while James W. Farmer won the second place James H. Ross trophy with 740 points. Miss Helen E. Jones, 17 year old daughter of Municipal Airport manager Jesse Jones, was third with 690 points.

The Jones’ continued their winning ways in 1937, with Jesse winning a race for stock airplanes at the All-America Air Maneuvers in Miami in January, and Helen setting a women’s altitude record for the area by flying to 14,500 feet over Lancaster.

In May, 1938, Lancastrians observed the twentieth anniversary of air mail. Five aircraft flew mail from Lancaster Municipal Airport to Harrisburg. By the evening before the celebration, more than 11,000 new 6¢ air-mail stamps had been sold by the Lancaster Post Office. Frank C. Beckwith, president of Hamilton Watch Company, participated in the airport ceremony. He had been at Belmont, Long Island on May 15, 1918 where Hamilton watches were presented to two pilots just before they took off on the first air mail flight in the United States.

In the same month, the Army Air Corps stationed a group of fighter planes at the Municipal Airport for a short time. Evening and weekend visitors to the airport were thrilled by the formation takeoffs and maneuvers. The first group of seventeen planes arrived at Municipal Airport on May 2, 1938, and two days later twenty eight planes were temporarily based here. The squadron was under the command of Major Lester Maitland, who in 1927, was one of the two pilots of the “Bird of Paradise”, the first plane to cross the Pacific, flying from Oakland, California to Honolulu in a little less than 26 hours.

The squadron, which was normally based at Barkdale Field in Louisiana, flew practice attack missions from Lancaster all over the East from the Canadian border to North Carolina, in coordination with other units based elsewhere. On Wednesday night, May 11, an estimated 15,000 people tried to get to the airport to observe night maneuvers of the squadron, jamming the Lititz Pike with a solid line of cars from Lancaster to the airport. The squadron remained in Lancaster for two weeks.

In this period, many Lancastrians were being introduced to flying by taking brief passenger flights at the two local airports. Business was especially brisk on weekends and holidays. A May, 1938 advertisement in Lancaster
U.S. Army airplanes at Municipal Airport, May 1938.

newspapers offered rides in a tri-motor ten passenger airplane which was visiting at the Municipal Airport from May 26 through May 31. The fare was $1.00, with a flight over the city for $1.50.

Many famous aviators visited Lancaster in the 1930's; among them were several who had crossed the Atlantic soon after Lindbergh's record flight. Clarence Chamberlin, Richard E. Byrd, Bernt Balchen, and Douglas "Wrong Way" Corrigan, all visited Lancaster. If they flew into Municipal Airport, they were likely to be met by little Jessie "Junior" Jones with autograph book in hand. Jessie was too young to pilot a plane herself, but was a constant "mascot" at the airfield.

Jessie could talk flying with any of the pilots, but she was awed by the unexpected visit of Eleanor Roosevelt on Sunday, June 26, 1938. As she looked up at the tall lady with the pointy black shoes and black stockings, Jessie gave her autograph book to one of the pilots to ask for an autograph. The President’s wife graciously obliged. Mrs. Roosevelt’s plane landed at Lancaster because of a bad storm. She was accompanied by Bernard Baruch, and Dr. Lytle S. Adams, head of Tri State Aviation, who had provided the plane for a round trip flight from Hyde Park to Morgantown, West Virginia, and back. Col. J. Hale Steinman provided an automobile to take the party to Philadelphia to get a train for the rest of the journey to Hyde Park, New York. Dr. Adams, a dentist from Irwin, Pennsylvania, was also a pilot, and had invented the system for non-stop air mail pick up which was being manufactured by Tri State Aviation.

About this time, Jones developed a comedy flying routine which proved to be a popular feature on the program of many air shows throughout the east. He called it "How Not To Fly". Jesse would dress up as an Amishman, and daughter Helen as an Amish girl. They would drive an
Amish farm wagon up beside the airplane. They'd climb from the wagon and start looking at the airplane, with Helen finally climbing into the pilot's seat. Jesse would examine the control surfaces, kick the tires, and finally run his hand over the propeller. As he tugged on the propeller, the engine would start and the plane would start to move. Jesse chased the plane, caught up to it, and managed to climb aboard as police and fire engines on the field began to chase the airplane. Suddenly the airplane would lurch into the air, weave and dive at the fire truck, land on one wheel momentarily, and so forth before finally landing and Jesse's being "arrested" by police on duty at the field.

After the dedication of the airport in 1935, E. George Siedle, Secretary of the Airport Commission, approached TWA with the suggestion that the airline make a stop in Lancaster. After many conferences, and preparation of surveys of both freight and passenger transportation needs of Lancaster County, TWA filed the necessary application with the Civil Aeronautics Board on July 15, 1941. Before action was taken on the application, the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor and we were in a war. The Civil Aeronautics Board froze all schedules and postponed all applications. Finally, on November 9, 1943, TWA was authorized to serve Lancaster, but because of the war, service did not begin for some years.

War Clouds

Aviation training at Franklin and Marshall College was important to the nation's war effort and to the aviation business in Lancaster County in the period of World War II. About 1937, a flying club was organized as one of the extra-curricular activities at the College. Professor Frederic S. Klein, who had been doing some personal flying, was the faculty advisor to the club. The membership averaged about twenty students, only two of whom had actually experienced some pilot training. They were all interested in aviation as an important factor in the world of their future, but few could afford flight instruction. Richard N. Bomberger, a flying instructor with the Jesse Jones Air Service at the Municipal Airport, and a friend of Professor Klein's also was an advisor to the club.

In January, 1939, Klein and Bomberger read a small item in a local newspaper which stated that President Franklin D. Roosevelt had approved a plan of the Civil Aeronautics Authority to provide for the training of 20,000 pilots. It was said that flight training was to be paid for by the government and that colleges would participate in the training in conjunction with airports in their vicinity. No other details were given.

Many years later, Professor Klein recalls how he and Dick Bomberger flew a little Taylorcraft to Washington to find out more about the program. With no appointment, they dropped in at the Department of Commerce. Apparently, there had not been a lot of interest exhibited in this program up to that time, at least in the Department's Washington office. Klein and
Bomberger soon found themselves in the office of the Secretary of Commerce. After a couple of hours of conversation, they left with an approval for a program to train 40 pilots in the next year, at Franklin and Marshall College and the Municipal Airport!

Then began the task of getting the College authorities and the Board of Trustees to approve the program and make the formal application. Up to this time the activities of the flying club had been an extra-curricular activity, with no official connection with the College. Klein says many questions were asked by the administration and faculty. With the war in Europe constantly in the news, some were asking whether this program would be military training in disguise. Would this lead to governmental control of educational policies? Would students be obligated to enter military service?

The purpose of the Civilian Pilot Training Program was to interest students in aviation as a significant phase of American life. It was sponsored by the Department of Commerce to give students their first start in flying, through government scholarships. Franklin and Marshall was a church related college, with a certain amount of pacifistic feeling, but finally the Synod, the Trustees, and the administration agreed that the College could participate in this program without any change in its traditional policies. Professor Klein said “The College officially approved and applied for the program, but kept it somewhat on the unofficial side by turning administration of the program over to the Flying Club as an extra-curricular activity.” Civil Aeronautics Authority approval for the program was granted.

The CAA required a standardized program of student instruction. Most flight training up to this time, except for the military flight schools, had been very informal, with such a thing as a “flight instructor’s manual” virtually unknown to the “seat of the pants” instructors at most airports. Ground school subjects were learned only by experience, and after the student had begun flight instruction. The first ground school sessions at Franklin and Marshall were conducted by Klein, Bomberger, and William Reber, president of the Flying Club, and a licensed pilot. Flight instructors at local airports also attended these sessions to learn about this new process of learning to fly by following a standardized process, and learning about aerodynamics and navigation from textbooks.

The CAA paid local airport operators $320 per student for the 35 hours of flight training leading to a Private Pilot’s license. The only cost to the student was about $40 for a physical examination and insurance. The course was conducted on a non-military basis, to promote private flying and commercial air transportation.

The ground school program at the College was rated as one of the best in the nation. Flying Club president William Reber was a photographer, and he and Professor Klein made a moving picture, in color, of the complete training program from ground school through flight training. The 800-foot film included many scenes taken at the Municipal Airport, including the popular Jesse Jones’ “How Not To Fly” sequence which he performed at many air shows around the United States. The CAA was interested in this.
first documentary on the Civilian Pilot Training Program. A preview showing was scheduled for C A A and other officials in the Little Theatre on the campus in March, 1940. Bad weather prevented the C A A and other officials from attending, but the movie was shown to an appreciative audience of local officials and professors. The production, three months in the making, was entitled “Classroom in the Sky.” Klein said, “after the showing, we all went out to dinner. Before we returned, the projector and film had been stolen.” In spite of monetary rewards offered on a “no questions asked” basis for the return of the film, “Classroom in the Sky” was never seen again.

The third floor of the Liberal Arts building on the campus was made into an aeronautics laboratory, and aircraft engines and partially dismantled airplanes were located there for ground school study. In the spring of 1940, the Navy contributed a two-seat Vought Corsair to the College. It was flown to the Municipal Airport and formally turned over to Professor Klein to be dismantled and taken to the campus for study, and never to be flown again. Rumor has it that Jesse Jones, when taxiing the plane to the hangar, decided that they “may as well use up some of the gas in it,” and one more flight was logged on the airplane before it was dismantled.

Professor Klein recalls the problems in getting the plane to the third floor of the Liberal Arts building. The wings were removed at the airport, and with the fuselage, were trucked to the campus. The engine was removed and dismantled, and everything possible was removed from the fuselage. All the pieces found their way to the third floor aeronautics laboratory except the fuselage — that got stuck in the stairway. After much pushing, pulling, and perspiring by Flying Club members, the stairway remained blocked, and other students could not get to their classes. Finally, a cross-cut saw was put into play for the final disassembly operation.

The reassembled plane, with one side left open for inspection, was one of the most popular features at the public open house presented at the aeronautics laboratory by the students of the Civilian Pilot Training Program on May 31 and June 1, 1940. A newspaper account said hundreds of people clambered over the plane, and Professor Klein, advisor to the group, “became somewhat exhausted pulling youngsters in and out of the cockpits.” The same weekend, a contest to select the best student pilot was held at Municipal Airport. The contest was won by Lancaster student Herbert Schell. Lancaster pilots James Farmer and David Binkley were the judges. A trophy donated by the Lancaster Aero Club was presented to Schell by Jesse Jones.

Franklin and Marshall’s flying club became affiliated with the National Association of Collegiate Flying Clubs. The first class of C P T Program, 24 pilots, finished in May 1940, 30 more were trained in the summer, and by fall, six Taylorcrafts at Lancaster Municipal Airport were in use for training the students in the College program. Soon thereafter, secondary training was begun, and two Waco F’s and a Myers OTW were added to the fleet. The first female student was accepted in the program; she was Jane Elizabeth Lamparter, a student at Linden Hall in Lititz. Franklin and Mar-
shall was still an all male college at the time.

In October, the CAA approved the College’s program for advanced commercial flying courses. On November 26, 1940, representatives of the flying club met with the Lancaster Defense Committee in Mayor Dale Cary’s office to offer the cooperation of the 74-member club in any defense plans.

The civilian flight training program continued at Franklin and Marshall in 1941. Many of the graduates of the program had entered the military air services. With the inevitability of America’s entering the War apparent to many, there was a great deal of interest in an organization for civil defense. In October 1941, Professor Klein announced that the campus’ flyers had sponsored the organization of the Civil Air Defense Service in Pennsylvania, and had enrolled 50 pilots and 24 airplanes available for emergency or civil defense. He said they had already participated in a number of air maneuvers with the United States Army Aircraft Warning Service.

After Pearl Harbor, personal flying came to a standstill. On December 1, 1941, just a few days before Pearl Harbor, the Office of Civilian Defense created the Civil Air Patrol as a volunteer civil organization. Many individuals, in order to keep flying, joined the CAP. Many Lancaster County people were active in the CAP, which was taken over by the Army Air Force in April 1943.

In 1942, F & M’s aviation training program was greatly expanded. After completion of primary training, three other courses were available to train as flight instructors, ferry service pilots and other military assignments. Advanced classes in aerobatics in 125 horse-power biplanes were begun at the two local airports. The College, in March of 1942, was sponsoring instruction in aeronautics mechanics for 88 men who were interested in aviation, but could not pass the physical examination required for flying. Enlistments in the Army Air Corps Reserve and the Navy Air Corps Reserve were available to those passing the physical and mental examinations, allowing them to finish college before going on active service. The cadets were paid $75 per month, with subsistence, quarters, medical care, uniforms, and equipment. However, by 1943, the Air Corps cadets and the Army Enlisted Reserve Corps were being called to active duty.

In April, 1943, 50 Naval Aviation cadets arrived on the campus for secondary training. They had already had three months training in Texas. A 1937 Packard custom built sedan, contributed by Dr. Leon Levy, president of radio station WCAU in Philadelphia, was used for transporting cadets to local airports. It was promptly dubbed “The Black PBY” by the Naval cadets. The Navy V5 and V12 programs were actual military operations and followed daily military routines and regulations. At the airports, the cadets posted guard with the morning flight groups, and continued throughout the day.

A Philadelphia area pilot, Ernest Buehl, “The Flying Dutchman” had come to Lancaster to participate in the pilot training program, with his Flying Dutchman Air Service. He was one of three operators involved in the Naval Aviation Cadet training, the other two being the Jones Flying Service
at the Lancaster Municipal Airport, and the Geltz Flying Service which shared operations with Buehl at the old Lancaster Airport on the Manheim Pike.

In March, 1943, the Lancaster Airport Commission agreed to lease the Municipal Airport to a new corporation to be formed to consolidate the three airport operators for future handling of Naval Aviation Cadet flight training. The new corporation, Lancaster Air Service, had as its president and general manager, Ernest Buehl. Roy Geltz was put in charge of all maintenance, and George Ritnour, representing the Jones Flying Service, was named Flight Operations Supervisor. All flight operations would be handled at the municipal airport, with the interior of the hangar undergoing a face lifting and the lobby being transformed to a study hall and ready room. The old Lancaster airport would be used only as a secondary field to practice landings.

The Franklin and Marshall Navy program was rated highest of all War Training Schools in the United States in April 1943. Lt. (jg) J.T. Connolly was officer in charge at the time.

By the time the pilot training program expired on July 1, 1944, many hundreds of airmen had been trained in the Lancaster area with ground instruction at Franklin and Marshall, and flight training at the two airports. In February 1944, Professor Klein and Dr. Theodore A. Distler, F & M’s president, appeared at a hearing before a U.S. Senate Sub-Committee supporting the continuance of the Civilian Pilot Training Program. They were part of a large group of college presidents and representatives of trade and civic groups who attended the hearing. Klein said if the program were cancelled it
would force discontinuance of training at about 1,000 airports and colleges including F & M, where 150 Naval Aviation Cadets were then in training. Senator McCarran was not optimistic for the continuance, stating that the War Department had calculated that United States now has “a superabundance of trained flyers.”

H. Clifford Kreisle, Director of Parks and Public Properties of the City of Lancaster, and a member of the Airport Commission, handled relationships between local city and county government and the federal government in the operations at the Municipal Airport during the war years. Mr. Kreisle, a Lancaster architect, had been cleared by the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and was the one person who had access to all buildings on the airport. He was listed in government records as airport manager. Several decades later, he told this writer of experimental work at the airport, beginning about 1943, and secret at the time.

Fleetwings, Inc. of Bristol, Pennsylvania, was primarily a maker of aircraft components, although they did make a small number of complete airplanes. They rented at Lancaster Municipal Airport, a hangar which was under armed guard twenty four hours a day. One of their developmental projects was called the R. A. T. program, to develop a radio controlled unmanned aircraft to be used for target practice, to train combat pilots in “dog fighting” or to carry a 500 pound bomb. The aircraft, made of plywood, had an eighteen foot wingspan and was dubbed “The Rat” by the two pilots and the others working on the project. Later, experimental work was done with a larger two engine aircraft. That plane was too large to fit in the hangar, and was housed in a circus tent. Although these aircraft were seen flying near the airport from time to time, few Lancastrians were aware that work of this kind was going on at the airport.

One Lancaster County industry greatly affected by the surge in aviation activity in World War II, was Sensenich Brothers, manufacturers of propellers for light airplanes. Harry and Martin Sensenich built themselves a vehicle powered by a propeller driven by a motorcycle engine. The contraption was on runners and was used during the heavy snows of 1929 to go back and forth to the family’s mail box, which was a two mile trip. In the summer, they put the vehicle on floats to navigate the Conestoga River. When their propeller broke, the brothers made a replacement. Soon, they were making propellers for others, including the fledgeling Piper Aircraft company, in the family barn. By 1939, they had a growing business and moved into a new plant adjacent to the municipal airport. They received orders for so many propellers that they were required to add to their manufacturing facilities locally, and open a plant in Glendale, California. Richard N. Bomberger, Vice President of Sensenich Corporation, was one of the early presidents of the Aviation Distributors and Manufacturers Association which was started in 1942. That organization went to the War Production Board to get priorities for materials needed for their members’ products used in the war effort. Bomberger, a pilot since the late 1920’s, has been a prominent figure in the development of Lancaster County aviation, served many years on the Lancaster Airport Authority, and in 1985 is still
assistant secretary and assistant treasurer of that body.

Sensenich’s employment in Lancaster County reached a peak of 427 workers in July, 1943. Their advertisement in “FLYING” magazine in that same year stated that a Sensenich propeller could be found on the nose of the PT-19, the PT-22, the PT-23, the PT-26, and the N2S-3. They gave their address as “adjacent to the Lancaster Municipal Airport, Lititz, Pa., and Glendale, California”.

A post war Sensenich “ad”, in 1948, shows Sensenich propellers on two of the new models of Piper personal type single engine airplanes. Sensenich Corporation described themselves as “the world’s largest, most experienced of all manufacturers of wood propellers for aircraft powered under 250 horsepower”.

The Post War Years

Although the wartime expansion of aviation was of a temporary nature, intended for military needs, a foundation had been laid for a great expansion of commercial aviation. Great strides had been made in the design and equipment of aircraft, and great numbers of trained pilots were available to fly them.

Interest in private flying was extremely high in the years immediately following World War II. Former military pilots wanted to continue flying and many other veterans were taking flight instruction paid for by the government under the “G I Bill.” Many businessmen were beginning to see advantages in air transportation in their own personal or corporate aircraft.

The Lancaster Aero Club, which had been inactive during the war years, was reorganized in 1947, with John W. Beyer as president. The Aero Club, during its inactive war years, suffered the loss of its long time secretary Sumner L. Brown, who died in 1944. Brown had been the secretary of the Club since its founding in 1919. Although not a pilot himself, he was always active in any aviation related project or event in the community. His files included information on that historic period which was irreplaceable. Unfortunately, when club officials Fred Klein and Dick Bomberger visited Brown’s home a week after the funeral, they were told that all of the Aero Club records had been thrown out with the trash.

The reorganized Club immediately became active in the promotion of personal and business travel by air from the several airports in Lancaster County. Their weekend group flights to various airports in Lancaster and nearby counties were well publicized, and brought many spectators to the airports. Frequently, “breakfast flights” were scheduled, when various courses of the meal were served at Lancaster Municipal Airport, Lancaster Airport on the Manheim Pike, Garden Spot Airport, New Holland Airport, and Donegal Airport.

The Aero Club’s “First Post War Aerial Breakfast Flight” was held on July 20, 1947, with 277 people in 159 airplanes participating. Silver colored
paper plates imprinted “A Flying Saucer! — To remind you that the Lancaster Aero Club has open house Sunday, July 20th at all Lancaster Airports” had been dropped from airplanes over the City the previous Saturday. The 99’s, the women pilots’ association, met in Lancaster the same day. Displays were available to pilots and the public at Municipal Airport, Lancaster Airport, and Garden Spot Airport, and the Aero Club provided visiting pilots ground transportation from the airports to an open house at Sensenich’s propeller plant and Brookside Swim Club.

Jessie Jones Eckhart (center) photographed with other women pilots at old Lancaster Airport, Manheim Pike, in 1945.

Lancastrians were kept well informed on happenings at all of the local airports. Violette Delp, who was Secretary of the Aero Club from 1947 to 1952, wrote a weekly column “Chatter from the Airports” with news on people and events. Jessie Jones Eckhart, who had spent many hours instructing students in loops and chandelles, wrote an occasional feature story under the pen name “Lupe Chandelle.”

By 1949, there were seven airports in Lancaster County, plus a number of private airstrips.

The old Lancaster Airport on the Manheim Pike which was started by Jesse Jones in 1927 was still in operation after World War II. The Baker Engineers’ “Comprehensive Municipal Plan for Lancaster, Pennsylvania” in 1945, said this: “Continued use of Lancaster Airport as a flying field for small planes seems justified. Improvements in maneuverability of planes, the location in the industrial district of Lancaster only two miles from Penn Square, plus accessibility to highway and railroad transportation facilities
give this airfield interesting possibilities for nonscheduled commercial and private flights.” However, the industrial expansion north of Lancaster eventually forced its closing on March 26, 1953. Rowland E. Carter, manager of Lancaster Aviation Service at the time, said ten planes were based there. He said high tension power lines were being erected across the airport to service the new Alcoa plant. He also said that in recent years, circuses showing in Lancaster had used a portion of the airport to pitch the “Big Top”. For several summers, the Reverend George R. Brunk of Harrisonburg, Virginia held revival meetings in a large tent in the corner of the airport. Reverend Brunk was also a pilot. He was a large man, and flew a Swift, a very small plane. Other pilots around the airport remember that he donned a football helmet as he settled into the small cockpit of the Swift, preparing to take a flight.

George G. McGinness, a physical education instructor at Franklin and Marshall College, built an airport at Columbia soon after World War II. He had no help from any government funding, receiving assistance only from family and friends. An August 1947 newspaper report on his progress said the Airport was already serving as the Columbia station for air mail pickup four times daily. This airport still exists in 1985.

Phares Landis operated Donegal Airport near Marietta from 1946 to 1961, when he moved his operations to Lancaster. Land owner Harold Ends slow continued operation of the airport with different fixed base operators. The airport has changed hands several times, and has also been known as Elizabethtown-Marietta Airport, and is still in operation. More will be said about this successful airport in a later chapter.

An airport just north of Ephrata, on Pennsylvania Route 272 was open about five years from 1947 to 1952. This was a short grass strip, only 1,200 feet long, on land owned by Elmer Zimmerman, a farmer and machine shop operator who owned a Piper J-3 Cub. Only a few planes were ever based there.

The Ephrata airport apparently was not popular with some of its neighbors. Widespread news coverage was given to an incident there on August 1, 1950. A plane operating from the field was hit by rifle fire. A Baltimore man who was a former resident of Ephrata, another Baltimore man, and Ray Gockley of Ephrata, reported shots fired at them while flying. A special meeting of the Aero Club the next day resulted in a call for immediate and full prosecution of the person who fired the shots, denouncing the action as attempted murder. Three weeks later an Ephrata man was arrested on the complaint of Hilbert Umbelly of Baltimore.

Ground was broken in August 1947, for the first hangar on the airport at New Holland. The airport was the outgrowth of efforts of the Conestoga Aero Corporation, a flying club. Among the 14 members of the Club, was Elmer Zimmerman of Intercourse, one of the founders of the Intercourse Glider Club. At this writing, he still has the books and records of the Conestoga Aero Corporation, which has been inactive for many years. Twenty eight acres of ground on the farm of Ross Esbenshade were leased initially to Charles N. Butler. After changes in operators, Alfred W. Stover manag-
New Holland Fair Parade, 1958. Seated in “airplane”.
(1. to r.) Gladys Stover, Al Stover, and son Fred. This entry won a $25 prize.

ed the field from 1953 until his death in 1971. Al Stover was a popular and able pilot and instructor, and the airport in the 1950’s and 1960’s was a favorite stopover for pilots of small airplanes, and a number of corporate aircraft were based there.

Stover and his wife Gladys formed the Dutch Country Aero Club, a social club for the pilots and their families who flew from the New Holland Airport. The New Holland Fair parades usually included an entry by the airport operators. The annual air show and barbeque was an event attended by several thousand people from eastern Lancaster County. Air shows were advertised by airplanes with loud speakers carrying the message “Hey you down there! Come to the New Holland Air Show!” The message was carried for several days in advance of the show over New Holland, Ephrata, Honeybrook, Paradise, Intercourse, and other towns in the eastern end of the County. There were thirteen annual shows from 1958 to 1970. The last show in 1970 attracted 6,000 people, and 11 airplanes were used for passenger rides.

Following Al Stover’s death in January, 1971, his widow and their son Fred ran the airport for about five years, but the field was closed in August, 1976.
Another airport which opened soon after the war was the Garden Spot Airport. Roy K. Geltz, who had operated a flying service at the Manheim Pike airport, bought the Brunswick Farms just east of Mountville along Pennsylvania Route 462 and established an air field. This was another very popular airfield for pilots of light airplanes, and a customary stop on "breakfast flights." Geltz died in 1954. A later fixed base operator at this field was Henry Weber. Weber moved his operation to Lancaster Airport in 1963. Garden Spot Airport has since been closed.

Several private airstrips, usually on farms, were built in the county by owners of light airplanes who wanted the convenience of keeping their airplanes at their homes.

The immediate post-war years were boom years for airport operators. In Lancaster County, flight instruction under the "G I Bill" was available at five airports. A survey in May 1948 of the managers of the various airports indicated Roy Geltz at Garden Spot had 75 students, Rowland Carter at the old Lancaster Airport (by now, one of the oldest in the state — 21 years) had 95 students, George Ritnour at Lancaster Municipal reported 85, Phares Landis, Donegal 35, and Charles Butler at the relatively new Conestoga Valley Airport at New Holland reported 50 students. Nearly half the students were enrolling in the commercial pilot's course in addition to the private pilot course. All of the ground school instruction was given at Franklin and Marshall College's Department of Aeronautics which was headed by Frederic S. Klein. The C.A.A. licensed ground school had three Link Trainers (for teaching flying solely by reference to instruments —
“blind flying”), ten aircraft engines, aircraft radio equipment, and weather station equipment.

Many of these new pilots purchased their own airplanes for personal or business transportation, either by themselves, or in partnership with others. A number of non-profit corporations were established in the post-war years to own and operate one or more airplanes for their members. At least two of these, the Century Flying Club and the Chicques Aero Club, and probably more, still exist in 1985.

A number of businesses had bought corporate aircraft and were basing them at Lancaster Municipal Airport. In November, 1948, Armstrong Cork Company broke ground for a new hangar at Municipal Airport to house their DC 3 aircraft which was then hangared at Reading.

The “New Enlarged Lancaster Municipal Airport”

The great progress in aviation during World War II had made Lancaster’s Municipal Airport obsolete for the larger and faster planes which were then operating. The airport would have to be enlarged and modernized if Lancaster were to get airline service. George H. Ritnour had become manager of the airport when Jesse Jones resigned to devote full time to research and development of propellers. Ritnour had been an instructor for Jesse Jones Air Service. In 1944, it was learned that federal and state funds might be available for building or improving of airports. At a meeting of the Traffic Club, a committee consisting of E. George Siedle, S. Robert Posey, and Bruce A. Boggs was named to secure aid for the enlargement of the airport. Together with the Chamber of Commerce and the Manufacturers Association, a Joint Air Facilities Committee was formed. Mr. Siedle was chairman, and others on the Committee were Arthur B. Dodge, Mr. Posey, Mr. Boggs, James H. Ross, Richard N. Bomberger, H. M. Sensenich, and Robert J. Gunder.

There was some skepticism as to the need for enlargement of the airport, which at its dedication only a decade before, had been hailed as one of the best airports in the East. The Joint Air Facilities Committee got the necessary information on availability of additional land, costs, and available federal and state aid. Earl F. Rebman, B. W. Luttenberger, Clair R. McCollough, Walter C. Miller, Lester W. Newcomer, Daniel Rhoads, George F. Hostetter, D. R. Long, and Henry J. Marshall were added to the Committee. A campaign for funds was begun in March, 1947.

The General Committee for the Airport Development Project included 126 of the business, professional, political, and religious leaders of the county. The theme of the drive for funds was “Say yes to a 22¢ dollar”. Total costs for the purchase of additional land and the construction of longer and wider runways were projected at $1,320,000. The federal government would give $622,500, the State would contribute $292,500, and the City and County governments would supply the $112,500 estimated as the
cost of the additional land. The total from those three sources came to 
$1,027,500, leaving $292,500 or 22% of the total to be raised by public 
subscription. A 24 page booklet explaining the importance of improvement 
of the airport was prepared with the help of the advertising department of 
Armstrong Cork Company. Scores of volunteers armed with 12" by 15" flip 
charts of enlarged pages of the booklet called on prospective donors 
throughout the County.

There were 416 contributions to the drive, for a total of $212,852. The 
city and county governments contributed $160,795, and the state and 
federal governments a total of $769,015. The grand total of $1,142,662 met 
the cost of the project. Mayor Dale E. Cary broke ground for the airport 
enlargement on October 23, 1947, using the same shovel which Mayor 
James H. Ross had used at the original ground-breaking ceremony at the 
airport site on March 15, 1934.

Nearly 300 acres of additional land had been acquired, to meet not only 
current needs, but also to allow for expansion. Much of the land was pur-
chased by the personal negotiations of G. Graybill Diehm and H. C. Kreisle 
of the Municipal Airport Commission, directly with the land owners.

The new enlarged Municipal Airport covered 474 acres, with two paved 
4,100 foot runways, with clear approaches from all directions, and up-to-
date lighting complying with all federal and state regulations.

Airline service to Lancaster was inaugurated by All American Airways on 
March 28, 1949. Mayor Cary and about 500 citizens were on hand. The first 
passenger on the DC 3 airliner was three-year-old Barbara Beyer, the 
daughter of John W. Beyer, president of the Lancaster Aero Club.

All American Airways, which later became Allegheny Airlines, was 
organized as All American Aviation by dentist and inventor L. S. Adams 
and aviation enthusiast Richard C. duPont, in 1937. The company 
developed and manufactured a device for an airplane to pick up cargo while 
in flight. In July, 1940, the Civil Aeronautics Board granted All American a 
certificate to operate scheduled air mail pick up in 98 cities in Pennsylvania, 
New York and West Virginia. The crimson Stinson cabin monoplanes were 
a familiar sight to Lancaster County residents as they swooped down to pick 
up mail bags at Columbia and Lancaster airports. All American operated 
this system until 1949, but no passengers were carried. Dick duPont was 
well known in Lancaster as a skilled glider pilot. Local pilots recall that in 
one of his flights from Elmira, New York, in a sail plane, he landed close to 
Lancaster Municipal Airport, and a number of people from the airport 
helped him disassemble his aircraft and hauled it to the airport. DuPont 
resigned as president of All American in 1943 to work in the military glider 
program, and later met death in a glider accident. In 1949, All American 
ceased its mail pick up program, and won certification for passenger airline 
service. They used the twin engined Douglas DC-3 as did most other airlines 
of the time, but they advertised their luxurious interiors, with a color 
scheme “worked out by duPont color experts”. All American began service 
on their first segment, between Pittsburgh and Washington, on March 7, 
1949, and inaugurated service to Lancaster three weeks later.
TWA began service to Lancaster on April 24, 1949, also using the Douglas DC-3 aircraft.

The new Lancaster Municipal Airport was dedicated on Saturday, June 18, 1949. Col. J. Hale Steinman was general chairman of the event. In addition to an address by Dr. H. M. J. Klein, there was a presentation of a citation to E. George Siedle who “through two decades, has fought a never-surrender fight for realization of a modern airport, served by commercial airlines.” Other features on the program were the arrival of air visitors participat-
courtesy of Lancaster members of the American Federation of Musicians. Pennsylvania State Commerce Secretary, Theodore Roosevelt III attended the ceremony and said the airport was now in the top eleven in the State. Dr. Klein in his address, said the dedication is “one of the epoch-making events in the Greater Lancaster Community of the future.” He said also, that the airport is a testimonial to Lancaster’s transportation leadership through the years.

The following day there was an air show including demonstrations of military flying, and an aerobatics exhibition by international champion Bevo Howard. The air show program also included the entertaining “How Not To Fly” demonstration by Jesse P. Jones, former manager of the airport. Newspaper reports stated that 40,000 people viewed the show — 25,000 on the Airport grounds, and another 15,000 watched from nearby hills and house tops.

On both days, hundreds of people took $2.50 passenger rides in DC 3 airliners all day until midnight.

The Fabulous Fifties

The phenomenal growth in personal flying after World War II continued into the 1950’s. For many new pilots, the last hour flown was the last hour paid for by the G I Bill. At the same time, many pilots and business executives were discovering the value of small aircraft as a business tool. Whereas, light plane flying before the war had been largely short distance pleasure flying, more and more small airplanes were now being used for practical personal and business transportation.

With the growing sophistication and all weather flying capabilities of personal and business airplanes, much of the air transportation business gravitated to the Municipal Airport, which in 1951, became officially “Lancaster Airport”. That airport had long paved runways, lighting for night operations, clear approaches, and electronic navigation equipment.

However, not all flying had to be all weather instrument navigation capability aviation. Many Lancaster County men and women were learning to fly, and were buying single engine airplanes for personal transportation in good weather. There was a lot of activity at all the airports in the County. The Lancaster Aero Club was very active in sponsoring social events and contests among the county airports, and arranging group flights to New Jersey shore points and other resorts.

Jet airplanes were introduced in this decade for passenger travel between large cities. Regional airports like Lancaster were being served by piston powered smaller aircraft such as the DC-3. Lancaster had adequate airline service for east-west travel, but did not have north-south service in the early 1950’s.

Colonial Airlines inaugurated air service from Lancaster to Washington, D.C., and other cities on their north-south route, on June 9, 1953. Lan...
castrians had been seeking this service for a long time. Local newspapers were very supportive of the effort, and Earl Keyser, editor of the Intelligencer Journal, early in 1953 conceived the idea of sending a Conestoga Wagon to Washington to dramatize the need for this air service. The Lancaster Newspapers and the New Holland Machine Company financed the trip. A large banner on the side of the wagon read ‘LANCASTER NEEDS WASHINGTON AIR SERVICE NOW NOT CONESTOGA WAGONS’. It attracted a lot of attention as the Conestoga Wagon with its teams of horses made the 120 mile trip to Washington, and parked outside the building where the Civil Aeronautics Board held its hearings, in January 1953. Lancaster’s case was ably presented to the Board by John W. Beyer, a Lancaster attorney, who was a pilot and a past president of the Lancaster Aero Club. Mayor Kendig C. Bare and Col. J. Hale Steinman made the trip to Washington with Mr. Beyer.

Mr. Beyer remembers an incident which occurred in Washington while the Lancaster delegation was presenting its case before the Civil Aeronautics Board. A Pennsylvania Railroad train was pulling into the station, when its brakes failed. The train crashed through the end of the sta-

Delegation from Lancaster at Civil Aeronautics Board in Washington, D.C., January 1953. Pictured (l. to r.) with the two men who drove the Conestoga Wagon are Mayor Kendig C. Bare, John W. Beyer, Attorney, Congressman Paul B. Dague, Senator Edward Martin and Col. J. Hale Steinman.
Members of the Lancaster Airport Authority and many friends greet Colonial Airlines personnel on their first stop in Lancaster on the “North-South” passenger service in June 9, 1933.

tion, causing considerable damage. Shortly thereafter, Beyer received a telegram from Owen P. Bricker, his law partner in Lancaster, suggesting he “stop sabotaging your competition, and confine your efforts to pleading your client’s case before the C. A. B.”.

The proceedings were successful, and Lancaster got north-south air service a few months later. Subsequently, Eastern Air Lines took over Colonial Airlines and for a while, provided local travelers with service into Washington and on to Bermuda. About the same time, TWA was forced to drop Lancaster from their east-west flights because of a lack of business.

George H. Ritnour, well known and highly respected manager of Lancaster Airport died in 1952. He flew as a hobby when he came to Lancaster as a salesman in 1930. He was a part time flight instructor at the old airport on the Manheim Pike, and later became a full time instructor for the Jesse Jones Air Service at the Municipal Airport. He bought that operation when Jones resigned as airport manager to devote full time to research and development of the Everel propeller. He had served as manager of Municipal Airport from 1944 until his death. During the war, he had been operations manager for the Navy flight training program at the airport. Ritnour was succeeded as airport manager by L. L. Blackwell.

Dudley J. Hill came to Lancaster Airport in 1954, and opened Hill Aviation Service. He is still in business at this writing in 1985, making his tenure of over thirty years the longest at that airport.

By 1955, Malcolm T. Wordell had become manager of Lancaster Airport. The name had been changed from Lancaster Municipal Airport in 1951, but it was April 1955 before the sign across the north end of the ter-
The terminal building was repainted, eliminating the word “Municipal”, thus completing the changeover of name. Louise Bright Beltz, Wordell’s secretary, wrote a news column “Airport Notes” for a local newspaper. The public was urged to visit the airport, the management saying they were always glad to welcome visitors from the surrounding territory. The Lancaster Junior Chamber of Commerce provided 23 markers showing the direction to the airport from various locations around the city.

A TVOR, a navigational instrument was installed on the airport to guide pilots to the field. The $12,000 instrument was financed half by the State and half by local business men, making it the first privately financed TVOR in the nation.

About 500 passengers per month were using airline service provided by Allegheny and Colonial Airlines.

On Armed Forces Day in May 1955, five different types of military aircraft were on public display at Lancaster Airport, including a C-119 “Flying Box Car”. Also on display was a Civil Air Patrol communications base. The CAP, which started as a volunteer pilots’ organization during the war, now had a cadet program for teenagers. The cadets had an opportunity to get aviation training, and were available for communication or guard duty in emergencies. They frequently helped with crowd control and auto and aircraft parking at air meets.

There continued to be a great deal of comaraderie among the pilots at the various Lancaster County airports. When Dudley Hill, Aero Club president, announced the activity schedule for the summer of 1958, he listed progressive fly in breakfasts at local airports, and group flights to nearby resorts in New Jersey and Maryland, picnics, and in the fall, banquets and a dance.

Lancaster County had a number of members in the International Association of Flying Farmers. Some of them owned airplanes which they based at their farms. One of the early members was Kenneth Habecker, who joined the group in 1948. His landing strip west of Lancaster is licensed by the Federal Aviation Agency as a “personal use airport”, as are several others in Lancaster County.

Air Traffic Is Controlled

The great increase in air traffic during the ’50’s resulted in increased federal controls in the 1960’s. The Lancaster Airport, because of the high volume of traffic, was selected by the Federal Aviation Agency as a site for a “control tower”. All pilots landing or taking off from the airport, or flying in the vicinity at a low altitude, would be required to maintain two way radio contact with the air traffic controllers in the tower and follow their directions. The five story pentagonal shaped building was erected on airport property by the federal government.

Ground was broken in a public ceremony in July 1964, and the $350,000 facility was put into operation on September 17, 1965. The commissioning
Traffic control tower at Lancaster Airport at its dedication, October 3, 1965.

of this facility greatly enhanced the safety of operations in the vicinity of the airport. Unfortunately, a tragedy occurred less than three months before the tower was put into operation, when two planes collided while approaching the same runway, taking the life of one of the pilots.

The tower was formally dedicated on Sunday, October 3, 1965. About 2,000 people heard an address by Oscar Baake, eastern region director of the Federal Aviation Agency, and later climbed the stairs to the cab of the tower to watch the controllers at work. Elsewhere at the airport, there was a band concert, airplanes on display, and airplane rides for the public at a price of a penny a pound. Hundreds of people stood in long lines waiting to step on a simple bathroom scale as they neared the gate, to determine the cost of their rides in the small single engine airplanes.

Six FAA controllers, under the direction of Joseph Adelman, facility chief, manned the tower, two at a time, each day from 7:00 A.M. until 11:00 P.M.

An editorial in the Lancaster Intelligencer Journal the day after the dedication described the ceremony as “indeed a significant event in the Community’s transportation history”. They further commented, “the thousands of Lancastrians who visited the airport Sunday are an indication of the interest our people have in air commerce and transportation”.

In addition to controlling air traffic in the vicinity of Lancaster Airport, the Tower Chief was responsible for the establishment, review, and administration of traffic patterns at 25 other airports in Lancaster, Chester, and Montgomery counties. Nine of these airports were in Lancaster County. The three public airports were Garden Spot airport, New Holland airport, and McGinness airport at Columbia. (Elizabethtown-Marietta airport
remained under the supervision of Harrisburg). The six private airports were Glick airport in Smoketown, Habecker airport in Lancaster, Mount Joy airport in Mount Joy, Noll airport in Lancaster, Shenk airport in Lititz, and WGAL-TV heliport, Lancaster.

Tower personnel were friendly and helpful, and were well received by the local pilots. They invited all pilots to visit the tower, and sponsored several pilot-controller forums.

Lancaster Airport, of course, was publicly owned and was eligible for federal improvements. The government provided electronic navigation equipment which more and more aircraft were being equipped to use. First, a very high frequency radio omnirange was installed on the field, enabling a pilot to obtain a heading to the airport simply by turning a radio navigation receiver in his plane to a designated frequency. Later, this equipment was upgraded to measure also the distance to the airport. Still later, an instrument landing system was installed, which gives the pilot not only precise direction to the given runway, but also an electronic glide path on which to descend through clouds to approach the runway.

Many Lancaster County men and women were learning to fly, and were buying airplanes. The rising popularity of private flying led to the establishment of a new general aviation airport in the 1960’s, and improvements at several others.

Tanglewood Airport, located south of Lancaster on Pennsylvania Route 272, near “The Buck”, was established as a “recreational Airport”. It is adjacent to a golf course, and has a single grass runway about 3,400 feet long. The runway is lighted to accommodate night takeoffs and landings, and there is a published instrument approach procedure which enables pilots to find the airport when weather conditions limit visibility.

Donegal Airport, near Maytown, was started by Phares Landis in 1946, on land owned by Harold Endslow. On Easter Sunday, 1946, Endslow, with his wife and three sons, had visited Lancaster Municipal Airport, where they took airplane rides. While at the Airport, they met Phares Landis who was flying his own small airplane. Landis had farmed a farm near the Endslows, and had recently learned to fly. Shortly after their Easter Sunday visit to Municipal Airport, Landis landed on a recently harvested field at the Endslow farm. He told Mr. Endslow that he wanted to start an airport, and proposed renting land from Endslow. Endslow’s three sons were all interested in airplanes, and urged their father to accept the Landis proposal. It was agreed, and by the fall of 1946, Phares Landis was operating from a 1,700 foot grass strip which he had named Donegal Airport. Landis bought some of the land, on which he erected a house and some hangars. He formed Donegal Airways, which operated the field until 1961 when he moved his operation to Lancaster Airport.

After Landis’ departure, Donegal Airport was run by the Endslows and several different operators. In May, 1968, the operation was bought by Ken Hershey, of Manheim, and the name was changed to Elizabethtown-Marietta Airport. The runway was lengthened to 2,300 feet, and paved. Sailplanes were being flown there, and there was a great deal of sport.
Elizabethtown-Marietta Airport as it appeared in 1980.

parachuting activity there. On September 21, 1969, there was a public dedication of the new facilities, with the program including “stunt flying, parachuting, and sailplane demonstrations”.

In early 1983, a number of ultra-light aircraft, essentially hang gliders with small engines, were using the Elizabethtown-Marietta Airport. Owner Bob Trainer, who had bought the operation from Ken Hershey in 1976, said ultra-light sales and instruction would be expanded in 1983. Parachuting became very popular at the airport, and its popularity has continued. There has also been a growing interest in aerobatic flying at the field, and a local chapter of the International Aerobatic Club was formed in 1981. The Susquehanna Chapter, number 58 of the I A C, named Bob Jones as its 1981 president.

In July, 1984, the Lancaster Industrial Development Authority approved a $350,000 loan to finance the enlargement of the airport. Plans were announced to lengthen the runway to 3,400 feet. In mid 1985, operations were moved into a new building with modern shop facilities and housing offices and flight operations headquarters. At that time, the present manager, Gil Stout, said 60 airplanes were based at the airport, and several dozen students were taking flight instructions in single engine or twin engine airplanes. He also said the name of the airport would soon be changed from Elizabethtown-Marietta Airport to Donegal Springs Airpark.

The Garden Spot Airport closed in 1967. In April, 1968, William Strube announced plans for the Hilltop Airport at Klinesville, near Columbia, citing the need for a general aviation airport in the western part of the county since the closing of Garden Spot. He said the airport would have a 2,300
foot paved runway and a paved parking area. However, a commercial airport at that site did not become a reality.

By 1969, there were 19 industrial aircraft and 80 personal airplanes based at Lancaster Airport. The control tower reported nearly 107,000 takeoffs and landings, a 20% increase over 1968. Four air carriers, Allegheny, Eastern, Pennsylvania Commuter, and Suburban Airlines handled a total of 39,730 passengers during the year.

By the mid 1960's, it became obvious that Lancaster Airport's passenger terminal building was obsolete and inadequate. A move for a new terminal was begun in December 1966. Lancaster Airport Authority members visited airports in other cities, and planned for expected needs for terminal facilities in the future. An appeal was made to the business community and individuals to finance a new terminal. In 1970, the Authority unveiled plans for a new terminal costing $500,000. Financing was arranged and construction got underway. It was attached to the original 1935 terminal building. The new passenger terminal was put in use in March 1975. The formal dedication ceremony was held on August 17, 1975, exactly 40 years after the dedication of the airport on August 17, 1935.

The body responsible for the airport and its operation was originally the Lancaster Municipal Airport Commission. The Commission consisted of two representatives of the City government, two representatives of the County government, and one citizen-at-large. The first Commission included Lancaster Mayor James H. Ross, as Chairman, G. Graybill Diehm, Chairman of the Lancaster County Commissioners, County Commissioner Albert H. Fritz, City Commissioner Harry J. Stumpf, and businessman E. George Siedle, as Secretary. Siedle, as President of the Lancaster Traffic Club, had initiated and led the final drive for a municipal airport beginning in 1933.

At the dedication of the enlarged Municipal Airport in 1949, Siedle was honored for efforts over many years to secure a modern airport for Lancaster. In his remarks on that occasion, Siedle said an Authority was needed to assure continuity of airport management. He said an authority of private citizens would provide continuity regardless of changes in political offices. He added that long-range planning was essential to the continued success of the airport.

The Lancaster Airport Authority was formed in 1951. Richard N. Bomberger and George C. Delp represented the City, and Bruce A. Boggs and J. Hale Steinman represented the County. Walter F. Kaufman was a member at large, and was elected the First Chairman. One member, Bomberger, has served on the Authority since its inception. Delp served for many years, many of them as Chairman, before resigning in 1977. The present members of the Lancaster Airport Authority are Warren L. Swartz, Chairman, John F. Garber, Jr., Vice Chairman, C. Paul Myers, Secretary, M. William Jones, Treasurer, and Richard N. Bomberger, Assistant Secretary and Assistant Treasurer.

The Lancaster Aero Club, which since its chartering in 1919, has been promoting aviation, sponsored Aviation Day at the Lancaster Airport for a
number of years. Thousands of Lancaster County citizens, many of whom were unfamiliar with air transportation, visited Lancaster Airport and saw modern airplanes on the ground. Many of them experienced their first airplane rides. Aviation Day was set for the first or second Sunday in May, and was so proclaimed by the Mayor and County Commissioners. The programs, held each year from 1966 through 1969, provided interesting and informative displays and demonstrations of personal and business aircraft, as well as airlines and military equipment. On several occasions, as many as 15,000 Lancaster County residents came out to see their airport in action.

Millersville State College students in the 1960's were also interested in aviation. A new aviation club was formed in 1965. One goal was to help members earn their private pilots' licenses. Lee Krow, an Air Force veteran, was president of the club. The "Flying Marauders" demonstrated flight maneuvers before football games and other college events.
Millersville's Industrial Arts Department, in 1975, was selected as an aviation resource center by the General Aviation Manufacturers Association as part of a national program to promote aviation education. Of 125 colleges which offered courses in aviation, Millersville was one of only three nationwide which were named as aviation resource centers. The Professor of Industrial Arts directed the center which stored educational materials and offered advice and information to teachers, administrators, and students. Each summer, the Industrial Arts Department offers an aviation workshop to teachers and education majors interested in teaching high school aviation courses. Participants get ground school instruction, flight simulator experience, and four hours in the air. In the 70's, students built an airplane in the Industrial Arts shop on the campus.

During the 60's, some Lancaster County pilots became interested in building their own airplanes while others restored old airplanes. They joined local chapters of the Experimental Aircraft Association. The home built aircraft were usually built from plans purchased from airplane designers. They were inspected at various stages of completion by Federal Aviation Agency inspectors. When they were finished, usually after a year or two of concentrated work, they were licensed as "Experimental" aircraft. A 1967 newspaper report on John Benjamin's "Tailwind" said it was believed to be Lancaster County's only home built plane. Benjamin is a past president of Chapter 122 of the Experimental Aircraft Association, Harrisburg. In the next fifteen years, EAA chapters were formed in Lancaster County, and are still very active. There are now more than twenty home built aircraft based in the county.

In 1961, Jesse Jones moved back to Lancaster and immediately began instructing local pilots. His developmental work on the single blade, and later, the variable pitch propeller, had taken him to Baltimore in 1944. When the propeller project was finished, he became a corporate pilot for the company's airplane. Upon his retirement Jesse and his wife, Reba, moved back to Lancaster. Among his students were the three sons of Dr. Howard and Jessie Jones Eckhart. "Pappy" Jones soloed each of his three grandsons on each boy's sixteenth birthday.

Jones also spent some of his "retirement" years in meticulously restoring an early Taylorcraft, a Luscombe, and a Piper Pacer. He sold the Luscombe to his grandson, Howard Eckhart, Jr., and he still owns and flies the Pacer. At 89, Jones is the oldest active pilot in Pennsylvania, and the summer of 1985 still sees him flying his plane to small airports in the area to visit his many pilot friends or "just to have breakfast". One of his projects was the building, with his son-in-law, William Carter, of an amphibian airplane from a set of plans. The two men took three years, with an estimated 3,500 hours to complete the plane. It was christened "Jonathon Livingston Seagull" and was first flown in May, 1973.

Among the many honors Jesse Jones has received was a surprise party in Lancaster in October, 1976, celebrating his 55 years of flying. Over 350 friends from five states, and the Aviation Council of Pennsylvania paid tribute to this pioneer aviator.
In November 1972, many Lancastrians got their first look at a hot air balloon. The Montgolfier brothers used a hot air balloon in man’s first flight in November 1783. They heated the air inside the balloon by burning such things as straw and wool, and the craft became buoyant as the air inside was heated. The inability to carry much fuel limited the time that a hot air balloon could remain airborne. As the air in the bag cooled, the aircraft descended. A short time later, the gas balloon was invented. The gas inside the bag was always lighter than the surrounding air, so no airborne heater was required to keep the balloon aloft. In Europe, hydrogen was commonly used, but American aeronauts in John Wise’s day generally used illuminating gas from municipal gas works. Later, helium was used.

Hot air ballooning lay dormant for 180 years. In the 1960’s, airborne propane heaters were found to be a safe and efficient means of maintaining hot air in a balloon. Sport flying of hot air balloons became popular. John R. Hager, manager of one of the department stores in the Park City shopping...
mall learned of the use of balloons in shopping mall promotions. Hager was president of the Park City Merchants' Association, and arranged to have a balloon brought to Lancaster. On Saturday morning, November 4, 1972, a balloonist from North Carolina, with Hager aboard, made a short flight from the mall's parking lot to Sinking Springs. From there, a local newspaper photographer was taken on a flight. That afternoon, Hager went on another flight, from the Fruitville Pike to the Media Heights Golf Course. That was the date of Hager's first lesson, and about eight months later, he was one of about 200 licensed balloon pilots in the United States.

In May, 1973, the '73 Americana Cup Balloon Races' were scheduled in Lancaster as a promotion by the merchants in Park City. Forty six colorful balloons and pilots were scheduled to compete on May 24, 25, and 26. The weather was extremely unfavorable for flying, and most of the aeronauts went home without having even inflated their balloons.

However, seven pilots remained over the weekend, determined to fly here, just for the fun of it. They finally got aloft on May 29, and continued flying for a few days from the grounds of the Host Farm Resort. A number of local people received their first balloon rides in this period.

Jack Hager got his pilot's license, became an instructor, and later was designated a Federal Aviation Agency pilot flight examiner. He bought his first balloon, and sold passenger rides and flight instruction to help pay for his flying, just as the aviators had done fifty years before when they flew their airplanes at the Lancaster Airport on the Manheim Pike in the late 1920's. Jack participated in balloon meets and races all over the United States. He did some flying in gas (helium) balloons in western United States, and twice flew across the Alps in gas (hydrogen) balloons.

Because of Hager's Lancaster County flights, many local people became interested in balloons, either as passengers or as prospective pilots. In the late 1970's, there was a greater concentration of balloons and pilots in the Lancaster area than anywhere else in Pennsylvania. Hager personally trained more than a score of pilots, known as "aeronauts" since they pilot lighter-than-air aircraft, and his students have trained many more. On many clear mornings, soon after sunrise when the winds are calm, the colorful seventy foot high balloons are seen floating over the rural areas of Lancaster County. One of Hager's students was Richard F. Hess, a local stock broker. Hess took his first ride in 1976, and his aeronautical interests promptly turned from flying airplanes to flying hot air balloons. Hess organized "The Great American Balloon Club" which is very active in commercial promotion work as well as pilot instruction and passenger flying. At this writing, Hager is no longer involved in passenger flying or other commercial work, but is doing some "fun" flying and teaching. His former student and commercial ballooning associate, James Willauer, continued in business as "Lancaster Hot Air Balloons, Inc."

For several years, Franklin and Marshall College offered a non credit course in hot air ballooning as part of their "Et Cetera" evening program. This course, originally organized by Jack Hager, was an introduction to ballooning and included enough 'ground school' instruction to enable most
students to pass the first "written exam" of the Federal Aviation Agency for balloon pilots. One of the graduates of this course became Lancaster County’s first woman balloon pilot. On January 1, 1980, Nancy Pfahler, a 39 year old Paradise school teacher, and mother of three, made a solo flight, was administered a flight examination and certified by FAA examiner Jack Hager. Since that time a number of other women have earned their licenses as balloon pilots. In December, 1982 Jean Shields became Lancaster County’s first woman to be licensed to pilot a balloon for hire.

Hot air balloon meets are scheduled annually at Strasburg, which attract balloon pilots from all over the state.

Central Manor Airport, near Washington Boro, was opened in 1974. A few small planes have been based there, but the field is perhaps best known for the sales and instructions in ultra-light aircraft in the last few years. Scott Burd, the operator for the last three years, has designed a plane which can be flown by handicapped people, called the "Burd Craft". Chapter 46 of the Experimental Aircraft Association is based there. Although, no instruction is given in fixed wing aircraft, there are usually two or three airplanes based there.

Smoketown Airport became a public airport in 1982. Owner Mel Glick had been using the field as a private landing strip since 1962. He said, "After three and one half years of red tape", it became a public airport on May 29, 1982. Initially, there were many ultra-lights based there, but the number has since been reduced to two or three. A flight school has been established, and a twin engine airplane is available for charter. An airshow celebrated the public opening in 1982, and this popular event has been held annually. The fourth annual show was held at the field in May, 1985. The shows are now being run by the very active Chapter 540 of the Experimental Aircraft Association, which is based at the airport. The 1985 show attracted 150 airplanes, many of them home-builts and restored antiques. The 2,000 paying customers saw demonstrations of parachuting, various pilot competitions, and flights of radio controlled model airplanes. A high point of the show was aerobatic flying by local pilot Dr. Cynthia Harrison in her tiny Pitts biplane.

A notable event in the aeronautical history of Lancaster County is the celebration of the fiftieth birthday of Lancaster Airport in August, 1985. The airport has had seven managers in its 50 year history. Jesse Jones was the first manager. Others were George Ritnour, L. L. Blackwell, Malcolm Wordell, O. A. DeCroce, Joseph Williams, and Norman D. Lamar, Jr. The present manager, Norman Lamar, came to the airport as Assistant Manager in 1974, and was named Manager when Williams retired in 1979.

Improvements in runways, taxiways, hangar space, and maintenance equipment have continued to be made, and the Lancaster Airport today remains one of the best equipped and maintained airports in the country. Although Lancaster Airport is served by air carriers, it is predominately a "general aviation" airport. General aviation is all civil aircraft operation except airlines and air commuter operations. The Federal Aviation Administration operated 494 Air Traffic Control Towers in 1983, the latest
year for which statistics have been published. In that year, the Lancaster Tower ranked 87th in the nation in the number of general aviation operations (takeoffs and landings). Nearby FAA towers in Reading and Harrisburg ranked 178th and 186th respectively.

In 1984, Lancaster Airport recorded a total of all aircraft operations, including military of 148,412. At year end, 153 airplanes were based there.

The Lancaster Airport 50th Anniversary Open House was held on August 10 and 11, 1985. Thousands of Lancaster County residents visited the Airport each day to view displays of antique and modern airplanes, both civilian and military. Home built airplanes were on display and were flown by their owners during both days. Several local aerobatic pilots thrilled the crowds with their expert flying in their small biplanes. Much color was added to open house activities by mass flights of hot air balloons. Local balloon pilots had organized the “Red Rose Balloon Rally”. The rally was organized to celebrate the Airport’s 50th anniversary, but was also a celebration of the 150th anniversary of John Wise’s first balloon ascension in 1835, in Philadelphia. Three flights were made during the weekend. About twenty balloons made each flight, seven of which were owned and flown by local pilots. Jim Willauer was chairman of the Rally committee, and acted as “balloonmeister” for the event.

Local residents lined up for a chance to ride in helicopters and airplanes which were “hopping” passengers all day long until sundown on both Saturday and Sunday. On Saturday, Suburban Airlines took hundreds of people short $5.00 rides in one of their commuter airliners.

The Lancaster County Commissioners and Lancaster’s mayor Arthur E. Morris proclaimed August 11-17, 1985 as “Aviation Week”. The week culminated with a dinner dance on Saturday August 17, fifty years to the day of the dedication of the airport. In addition to representatives of county, state, and federal governments, many attended who had played a part in the early history of the airport. E. George Siedle, early proponent for a municipal airport, now 97, was honored and responded with brief remarks. General Daniel B. Strickler who spoke at the 1934 groundbreaking was present as was H. Clifford Kriesle who had helped acquire the necessary land for the airport in 1934. Jesse Jones, first manager of the airport attended, and the former Gladys Hickey, Lancaster’s first woman pilot, travelled from California to attend. Principal speaker was former Pennsylvania Senator Richard A. Snyder. The event served as a reunion for many former local pilots, many now in their sixties and seventies, whose careers had taken them all over the United States.

Notes

### Appendix

#### Officers of Lancaster Aero Club

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>President</th>
<th>Vice President</th>
<th>Secretary</th>
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<td>Dr. Robert Huber</td>
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Habecker, Kenneth  Siedle, E. George
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Jones, Jesse P.  Swartz, Warren L.
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Kreisle, H.C.

About the Contributor

William E. Krantz is a retired Lancaster businessman. He has been active in local business and civic affairs since his graduation from Franklin and Marshall College in 1937.

A pilot with airplane and hot air balloon ratings, he is a past president of the Lancaster Aero Club and is a member of the Lancaster Airport Advisory Committee.