

MORE TALES OF THE TWENTIES

Rhode Island Early Birds and their flying machines

By GARRETT D. BYRNES

THE STUFF OF DREAMS was already there. The Wrights — Orville and Wilbur — had begun the whole exciting business at Kitty Hawk in December, 1903.

World War I made the aeroplane — the word “airplane” was to come later — something to quicken the imagination and the aviators were thrilling heroes, akin to the astronauts of today. Everyone knew the names of the planes they used in aerial combat — Spads, Fokkers, Sopwith Camels, Nieuports, Albatrosses. And everyone knew the names of the great aces — von Richthofen, Fonck, Mannock, Bishop, Udet, Nungesser, Guynemer, Immelman and our own Eddie Rickenbacker. Although their business was shooting enemies out of the air, they operated in a chivalric way with a code of gallantry that smacked of Camelot.

Fresh in memory, too, was the first heavier-than-air crossing of the Atlantic. Our Navy had four NC-4s, one of which was cannibalized to provide spare parts for the three others. Those three flying boats set out from Far Rockaway, Long Island, on May 8, 1919. Only one made it all the way. By way of Nova Scotia, Newfound-

Garry Byrnes is special features editor of the Journal-Bulletin.

land, the Azores and Portugal, it arrived in Plymouth, England, on May 31. A fortnight later, Alcock and Brown in a Vickers-Vimy biplane, carrying a dog, a cat and a four-pound sack of mail, flew from St. Johns, Newfoundland. After 16 hours and 27 minutes of ghastly going they made a crash landing in a bog at Clifden, Ireland. It was the first non-stop flight across the Western Ocean.

The groundwork for what was to come in The Twenties had been done. Gerald Hanley took to the air from Field Point in his flying boat as early as 1913. Harold G. Brow, later to set speed records for the Navy, sprouted wings. And Harry M. Jones, another early bird from Rhode Island, got headlines by flying a small cargo of Boston baked beans from that city to New York, with many mishaps, in the winter of 1913-14. He nearly froze to death.

When you mention those days of the air pioneers to older Rhode Islanders, they think of the legendary Jack McGee of Pawtucket who learned to fly in 1912. Hearts stood still at Newport Beach, Rocky Point, Crescent Park, the old Narragansett track in Cranston, the Kingston Fair grounds and the trotting park in Woonsocket when Jack McGee went through his “dip of death” and looped the loop. Ironically, Jack McGee was drowned. He was test flying a new flying boat from the Gallaudet plant at Cowesett on June 13, 1918, had made several successful flights

and was about to make a downwind takeoff when a sudden gust got under the tail assembly and flipped the plane over.

World War I left the country with a plentiful supply of surplus planes — Curtiss Jennies, Curtiss flying boats, DeHavilland 4s; and engines — OX-5s and Liberties. It left, too, a lot of young men and kids badly bitten by the plane bug.

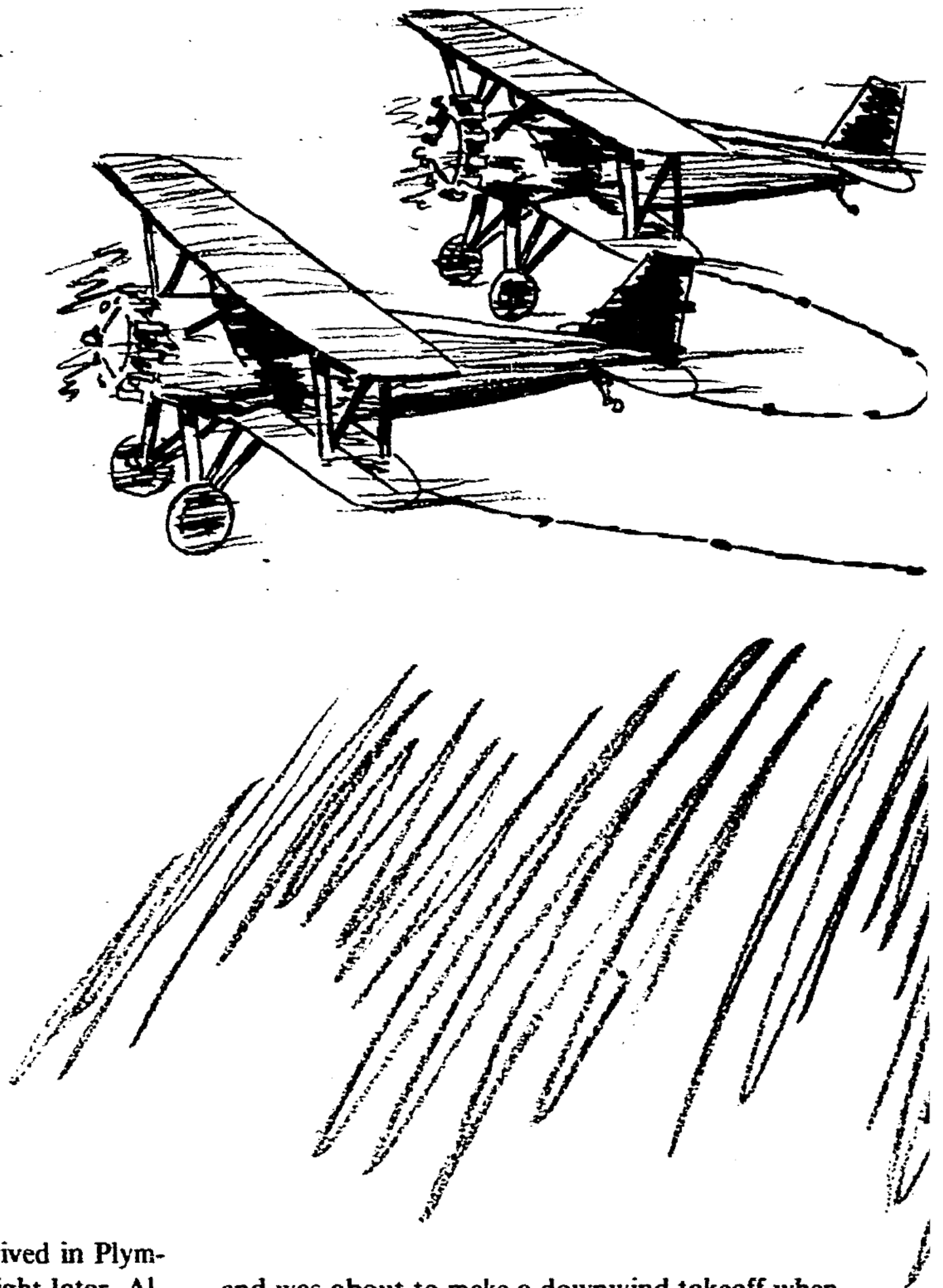
THE AGE OF INNOCENCE aptly describes flying in the early Twenties. Planes were of wooden frames, cloth covered, and the engines so low powered that speeds over 100 miles an hour were exceptions. There were no airports; just open fields, reasonably level. If there were small trees or bushes on the proposed landing strip, you put a chain around them and snaked them out with an automobile.

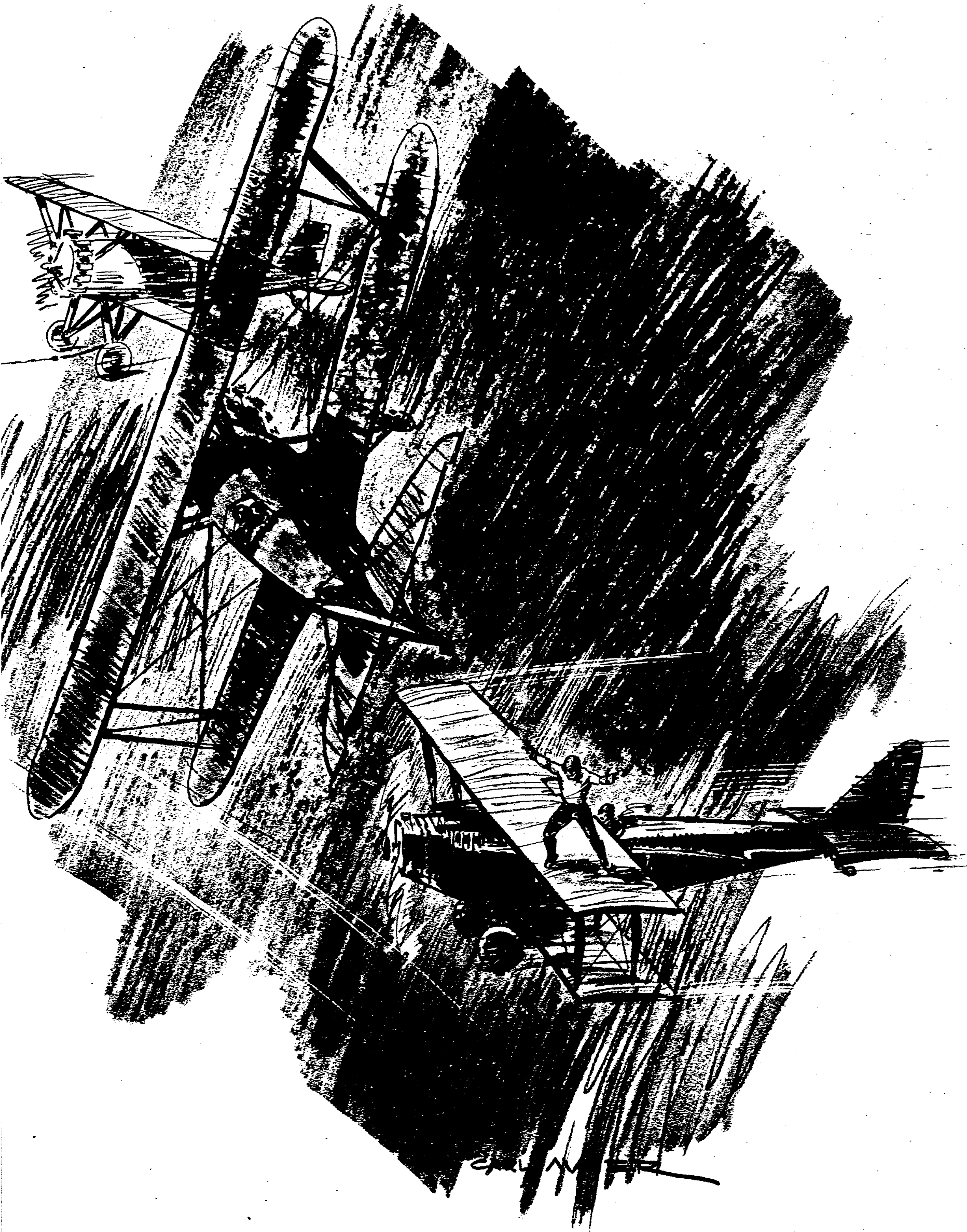
The early birds were, for the most part, tinkers who, if they cracked up and walked away — and most of them did — were able to repair the damage themselves.

Scores of Rhode Islanders were flying for fun or scant profit or both. The birdmen who provide the framework for this account of how it was were typical.

There was, for example, a young man named

►69





EARLY BIRDS

For Al Potts, aviation was a feast or a famine

Albert G. Potts who lives, now, in South Providence. As a kid of 17, then resident in Norwood, he built his first plane only ten years after the Wright Brothers proved it could be done. Al Potts sent off to Chicago for blueprints of a Glenn Curtiss pusher biplane, for parts and for an Adams-Farwell engine, complete with propeller. The engine, he recalls, cost \$150 secondhand. Al built the framing and his mother sewed the cotton muslin to cover the wings which were assembled on the front porch and covered with a dope that smelled of banana oil. When the plane was ready, it was taken to a field on the Sprague farm on Post Road, across from where Aldrich High School is today. The landing surface was about 300 feet long; there was a swamp on one side, a row of tall elms on the other.

The plane was a year a-building and in 1914, Al Potts taught himself to fly. He taxied up and down at first and then hopped it briefly off the ground, and then, when he thought he was ready, he took off. He thinks he never went higher than 100 feet and his air speed was about 40 miles an hour.

The great adventure lasted just about a year; in 1915, Potts's Pride crashed into the swamp and never flew again. On February 18, 1919, Al put the plane up for sale in what probably was the first "aeroplane for sale" advertisement ever to appear in the *Journal-Bulletin*. There were no takers so Al junked it.

World War I brought an end to civilian flying and Al Potts went to work for Gallaudet at Cowe-

sett as a mechanic. Later he moved over to Potosomut where Jack McGee was training pilots at the Gallaudet flying school in seaplanes and JN-4Bs, the famous Jenny.

By this time, Al Potts had the air bug bad and during The Twenties, he was in aviation on what he calls a "feast or famine" basis, barnstorming, making advertising and promotion flights, fixing other people's planes.

In 1923, Mr. Potts became the owner of a war surplus Jenny (a JN-4D) which Allan P. Bourdon assembled at Roosevelt Field on Long Island and flew back to Rhode Island. Al Potts paid \$550 cash for it and set up in business at the old Collingwood race track at Post and Strawberry Field Roads in Hillsgrove, just south of the present air terminal.

At first there were plenty of customers because you gained enviable cachet if you could say that you had been up in a plane; it was the next best thing to saying you had been over Niagara Falls in a barrel. A five-dollar ride with Al Potts took you over Oakland Beach, Shawomet, Conanicut, Lakewood and back to Hillsgrove. For \$15 you could ride for half an hour.

When the supply of cash customers began to run out, Al Potts went barnstorming elsewhere. The owner of the field or pasture got ten per cent of the gross. Brockton Fair was pretty good, Newport was a washout and so was the Kingston Fair. At Misquamicut, Al Potts hired a pasture full of haystacks and took in \$240 the first Sunday. Quonset, then a training ground for the National

Guard, was pretty good but the old birdman still resents the fact that near Woonsocket, the owner of the field demanded—and got—\$50 plus the usual ten per cent; the first Sunday grossed \$478. At Nashua, New Hampshire, Mr. Potts not only took up paying passengers but collected \$50 for advertising an automobile sale. The plane was tied down to ground screws when not in flight but it was blown into the nearby woods in a snow storm. It was brought back to Rhode Island in a truck.

By this time—1925—Mr. Potts and his associates were flying a British Avro which had a nine-cylinder rotary engine. It was fine to fly, with a quick takeoff and slow landing.

In July, 1926, Mr. Potts rented the north end of the Budlong pasture, so-called, at Buttonwoods where the big shopping center is today. For the usual ten per cent of the gross, Mr. Potts and his associates, after removing whatever brush was in their way, were to use the land for the purposes of "commercial aviation." Later, the field was taken over by the late Armand C. Pothier, nephew of the governor. The runways were improved by Mr. Pothier and a hangar constructed in what was to be known variously as the Buttonwoods or Pothier flying field.

In the late Twenties, backed by the late Webster Knight and other Providence money men, Mr. Potts and a man named Henry Hunt, in a Knight mill at Fiskeville, built a plane which was to be a small, rather slow aircraft for the private pilot. Al Potts still is convinced that this plane

>71



Photo courtesy Albert G. Potts

READY FOR TAKE-OFF in glider of the late '20s is Al Potts. Note launching shock cord lower left.

EARLY BIRDS

A young lieutenant from the R.F.C.

would have been a winner, long before the Piper Cub, if Mr. Hunt at the last minute hadn't changed the design by removing the wing flaps. The plane was tested at Quonset but nothing ever came of it.

Mr. Potts, after the Department of Commerce began applying rules and regulations to hitherto lawless aviation, became the first Rhode Islander to be licensed as a plane and engine mechanic. That was on April 1, 1928.

As the decade ended, there was much interest in gliders and sail planes and Al Potts built a glider or Webster Knight. A thick rubber shock cord, rigged like a slingshot, catapulted it off the ground.

ANOTHER PIONEER was Leonard Curtis who now lives down by the Kickemuit River in Warren. He was born in 1896 in London where his father was a Scotland Yard policeman. The family emigrated to Cranston in 1910 and when World War I broke out, young Curtis got a job on a boat taking horses for the British Army from Boston to Liverpool. The horses were wild and ugly and savored the voyage no more than Leonard Curtis who was sick most of the time. In England, he tried to join up but was found unfit for service. So he came home in a cattle boat, went to the university at Toronto for a year and then joined the Royal Flying Corps in Canada.

As a brand new second lieutenant with wings, he was sent to a flying field near Stonehenge where he trained other pilots, English, Anzacs and even some Americans. He was the first R.F.C. flying instructor who hadn't served in France. In the spring of 1918, he was ordered to France where he flew bombing and observation flights. He was over the German lines in a DeHavilland-9 when a burst of shrapnel flipped the aircraft over. Lieutenant Curtis was painfully wounded in the tail and a bit of shrapnel took off a thumb. He managed to get the plane back to base and made a fairly decent landing. Then there was a long period in hospitals in England and he was invalided home to Cranston in time for Armistice Day.

He had flown many of the R.F.C. planes — Jennies, Avros, Bristol fighters, Sopwith Camels, DeHavillands — and still had the flying bug. So in 1920, he got hold of a Jenny and became a barnstormer, flying for himself or for anyone else who needed a pilot. One of his planes was a mongrel with a Jenny fuselage, a Fokker tail assembly and an OX-10 engine. In the late Twen-



Photo courtesy of Albert G. Potts

SANTA flew to Pawtucket with Al Potts (left) and Leonard Curtis.

ties, Mr. Curtis became instructor for the Brown University Flying Club, a group of about 25 air-minded students. The lessons were given in a dual control Challenger, flying out of the What Cheer Airport which took up part of the land now occupied by the Narragansett race track in Pawtucket. The field had been developed by Nicholas Bertozzi, the ice cream king, and out in back of the main grandstand at the track, you can still see a small building which was the hangar for the plane of the Curtis Flying Service. The Brown flying club looked like a bonanza but it didn't last very long and even though Mr. Curtis was getting \$7.20 an hour for instructional flights, he found it hard to collect.

The R.F.C. veteran recalls flights in The Twenties to Florida — he barnstormed in North Carolina on the way down — and to the West Coast. The latter was a rouser because his Jenny had a maximum altitude of 8,000 feet so he had

to fly his way through the low places in New Mexico and Arizona. From that trip, he came back to Rhode Island by train.

THEN THERE WAS Robert A. Kamm, now resident in Tiverton but in the old box kite days best remembered for his exploits out of his own field on the Post Road in Charlestown. Some of his colleagues from The Twenties say he was the daredevil of the lot. He grew up in Glastonbury, Connecticut, where he was born in 1898, and the airplane bug bit him when they started to make Harriman flying boats — a triplane, two-engine job with a bicycle chain transmission — in his home town. Bob Kamm was 16 when he started to fly in a Jenny and he was 20 when, with the help of his wife, he built his first plane, a J-1 Standard. Then he went barnstorming, landing in 55 New England pastures and hay fields which never had

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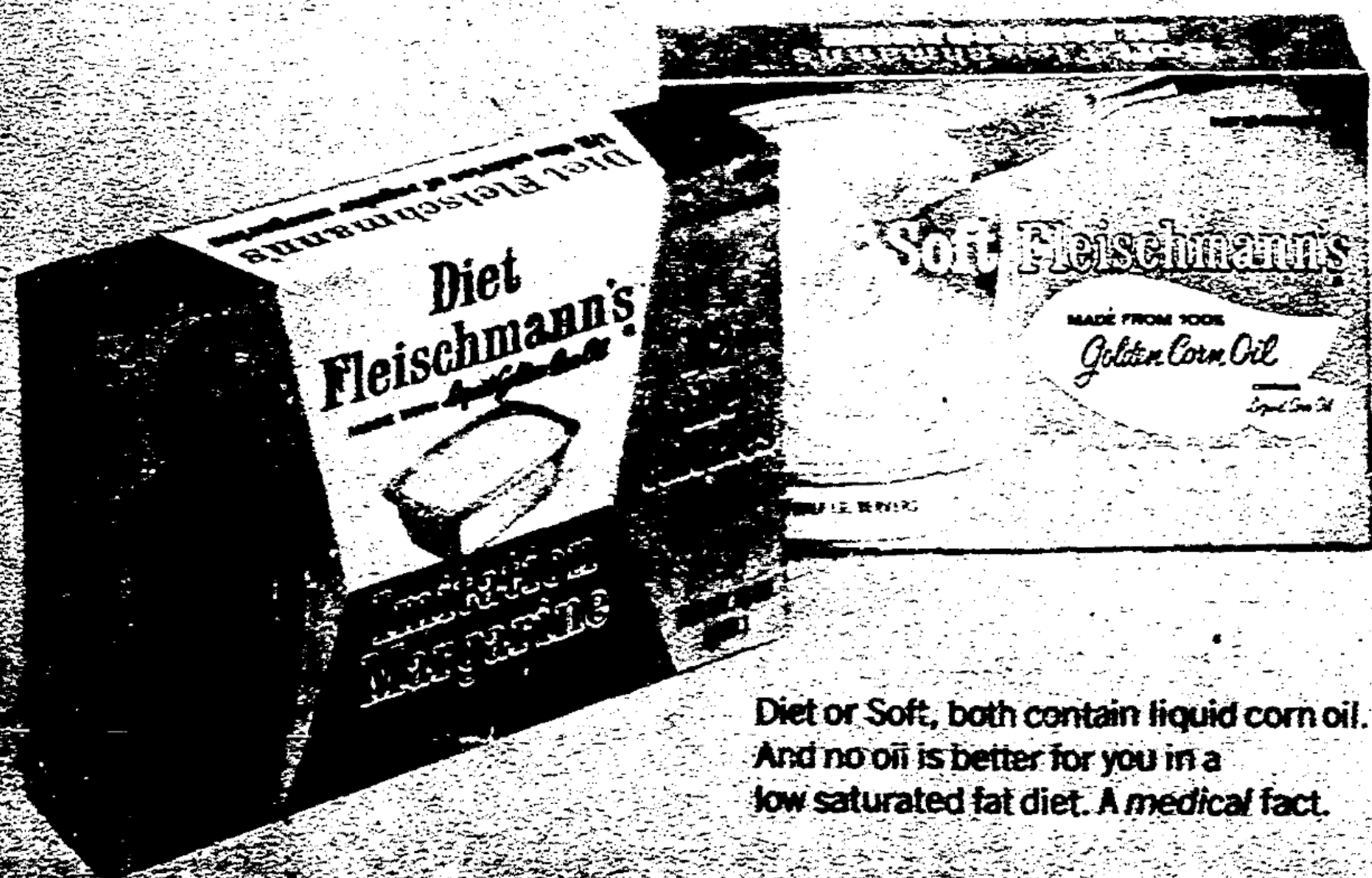
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EARLY BIRDS

No one got rich

been caressed by a plane before. He carried wing walkers, parachute jumpers and even did some wing walking himself.

His first Rhode Island landing was on the beach at Misquamicut in 1922 where he charged \$5 for a six-minute ride, two passengers at a time. For \$20, you got a stunt ride with loops and spins and no insurance. In 1925, Bob Kamm set up in the aviation business in Rhode Island, first clearing a field of scrub oak in Charlestown. Weekends, he'd put on air shows, landing right out of a loop or coming in with a dead stick. This proved to be solid merchandising; any pilot who could fly like that must be all right and lots of passengers bought rides. Mr. Kamm for several summers flew *The Providence Sunday Journal* to Block Island regardless of weather, landing in Mott's hay field near New Harbor, and he had many flying students. He guaranteed to teach you to fly for \$200 and if you didn't make it, you got your money back.

Bob Kamm was the first pilot to make a night landing at the old What Cheer Airport; there were no lights, only a big white circle painted on the ground at the center of the field and barely visible in the gloom.

AL POTTS, Leonard Curtis and Bob Kamm are good examples of Rhode Island's early birds. There were so many others like them in the days when it was all glamor, scant profit, frequent crackups and flying by the seat of your pants.

The Armitages — George and Gilbert — were not only early fliers but plane manufacturers. Joseph Taglione of Warwick started flying in 1921 and was still going strong 45 years later. Like the Armitages, Allan P. Bourdon was both flier and plane maker; his Kitty Hawk was considered a small plane gem in the late Twenties. Reginald F. "Red" Schueler of West Warwick, a veteran teacher of fliers, was so gone about aviation that he even got married while at the controls of his plane. His pilot's license had a very low number—469.

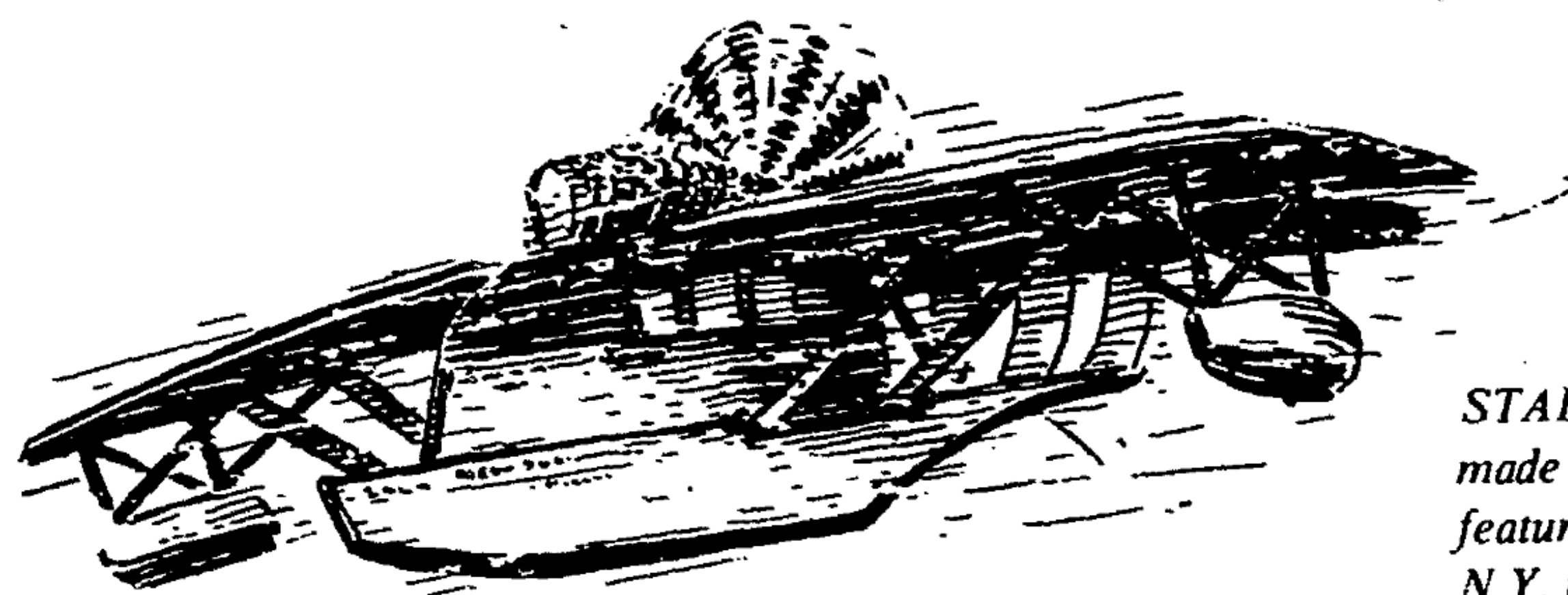
The perpetual tree warden of Bristol, Joe Kinder, had a Curtiss JN-4D as early as 1926 and the *Journal* ran a fondly kidding story about his exploits in the air, including the fact that he held the record for a "non-stop flight from Poppasquash to Hog Island."

Arthur R. Jones, chief of airport operations in Rhode Island today, is another pioneer whose recollections go back to the Avros with their radial engines, lubricated with castor oil you could smell a mile downwind. He can remember, too, the little Aeronca C-2s, powered with a 27-horse engine and built so low to the ground that the pilot simply reached out and grabbed the wheels, much as in a wheel chair, to brake the plane when it was landing.

Men like these knew flying when it was indeed young. It was exciting, it was fun and no one was getting rich.

►75

EARLY BIRDS

A chummy flight by air yacht
from Newport to New York

STAFF ARTIST Jim Henderson made this sketch to go with the feature story about the Newport-N.Y. flight.

chored offshore. This is puzzling because the photographs which ran with Mr. Ball's feature story show people being carried between plane and shore pickaback by menials who obviously didn't mind getting their feet wet.

Noting that "there is no air congestion yet," Mr. Ball expressed the opinion that flying to New York was safer than the road to The Pier on a Sunday afternoon. A one-way ticket cost \$30 with no refund if the plane didn't complete its flight. There was an additional charge of 25 cents a pound for baggage which was weighed on a spring scale. Once aboard the air yacht, Captain Thorburn sat at the controls in the front seat with Miss Elizabeth Chapin of New York beside him. Miss Chapin had been on the golf links all afternoon and was due in New York for a dinner party that evening. On the cushioned back seat, where there was room for three, Mr. Ball shared the space with Irving Monroe, a Boston banker. There were no seat belts. Thinking ahead, Mr. Ball sat on the right hand side so that he could watch the Rhode Island, Connecticut and New York shore lines slide by. He likened the arrangement to sitting in a chummy little roadster with no top. Overhead, just aft of the cockpit, was the engine.

This first commercial air flight out of Rhode Island attracted much at-

tention. Lots of people drove out to Coddington Cove to watch the takeoff. Mayor Mortimer A. Sullivan with an escort of aldermen made a speech. There was plenty of Army and Navy brass on hand, and a chorus of men from the training station sang songs to the accompaniment of the Navy band.

Departure was scheduled for 6 p.m. but Miss Chapin was a mite tardy and the *Fleet Wing* was not airborne until 6:13 p.m. The flying boat put down in the East River and nosed into the dock at 31st Street at 7:58 p.m.

HARRY ATWOOD took Mr. and Mrs. Gerald T. Hanley Sr. for a spin in his plane in 1912 and that flight, less than a decade after the Wright Brothers, gave Mr. Hanley the air bug. It was arranged that Atwood would build a plane for the Hanleys but he didn't get around to it and, in 1913, Mr. Hanley bought a flying boat at Hammondsport, New York and based it in a hangar at Fields Point. An early bird named Raymond Morris came to Providence, put up at a downtown hotel, probably the old Narragansett, and taught Mr. Hanley to fly over a period of four months. World War I put an end to civilian flying.

After the war, Uncle Sam had more planes than he knew what to do with

and Mr. Hanley bought a seaplane at the Brooklyn Navy Yard for \$12,000. It had cost the government \$20,000. It was a Curtiss flying boat similar to the NCs which flew the Atlantic in 1919. The new plane arrived, crated, at the Gallaudet plane factory in Cowesett and was assembled there.

Meanwhile, to have a proper base of operations, the Hanleys bought a large estate, *Villa Serra* — it is still in the family — on Main Street in Warren. The property had extensive frontage on the lower Warren River. A hangar was erected, a marine railway 400 feet long was built out into the river to get the plane in and out of the water, and there was even a long water pipe so the plane could be washed down and freed of salt after every flight. Arrangements were made with the oyster companies to attach white flags to the oyster stakes in the river so that on takeoffs and landings they could be seen easily.

The Hanley plane had a 75-foot wing spread, its fuselage was 37 feet long and it was driven by a 400-horse Liberty engine with a four-bladed propeller. The engine was mounted above the fuselage and aft of the cockpit. The plane came complete with a radio antenna, a long wire on a reel which could be lowered during flight. The Hanleys didn't need the radio so young Jed, now the restaur-

►78



THE BIG Hanley flying boat taking off in the Warren River. Photo courtesy of Gerald T. Hanley Jr.

EARLY BIRDS

It helped to have your ears plugged with beeswax

rateur and former speedboat racer, got the reel which held the antenna wire and used it when he flew kites. To make a cockpit for additional passengers, Mr. Hanley had the gas tanks moved aft in the hull to a point under the engine and young Jed usually rode in the circular cockpit way up in the bow where the machinegun mount had been.

Paul Wilcox who had a garage in Warren, became the mechanic for \$35 a week, and this experience so interested him in aviation that he later became a flier himself.

The Hanley plane took off at about 50 miles an hour, cruising speed was 70 miles an hour, and the plane usually flew at about 2,000 feet. If the flight was over land, the plane was taken upstairs so that, in the event of trouble, it would be able to glide into the nearest body of water.

For several years, the Hanleys made flights to Newport, the Vineyard and Nantucket, to the Corinthian Yacht Club at Marblehead, to Block Island and down to Long Island to visit their relatives, the Dempseys, at West Hampton. Under very favorable conditions, the plane even landed off Narragansett Pier. Mr. Hanley always wore a handsome brown leather flying suit.

There was one bit of the flying ritual which suggests how primitive, by

today's standards, these flights really were. Overhead was that big Liberty, making a dreadful noise, so the Hanleys and their passengers, before a flight, got into the habit of chewing gobs of yellow-brown beeswax until it was soft enough to be shaped into ear plugs.

SOMEWHERE AROUND 1926, Mr. Hanley's interest shifted from his big seaplane to boats. When he decided to sell the plane, he got in touch with Leonard Curtis, the veteran of the Royal Flying Corps who, among other aerial chores, had done some flying for a rumrunning gang from Bridgeport, Connecticut. This work involved flying out of the tiny field at Post and Strawberry Field Roads in Hills Grove, mostly observational flights down the bay.

The rummies were interested in the Hanley plane but wouldn't buy until they had a demonstration flight. So Mr. Curtis took two of them out to "rum row" off Block Island where they wanted to pick up some cases of champagne. There was quite a sea running and in landing one of the wing pontoons was torn off. The champagne was put aboard and then, to balance the plane for the take-off, Mr. Curtis put one of the rummies out on the wing where he hung on for dear

life until they were safely back in Pawtuxet Cove. It was the rum runner's first flight; he later was shot in Attleboro and the plane, long after Mr. Curtis had anything to do with it, was found wrecked and washed ashore near Bridgeport.

The plane was a valuable tool in the rumrunning trade. Bob Kamm, who was flying out of his own field in Charlestown in The Twenties, was an acknowledged daredevil among the state's early birdmen, and he made many flights for Danny Walsh, the Charlestown rumrunner whose disappearance is one of Rhode Island's most provocative mysteries.

It was standard practice to send out instructions to the swift rum boats by radio, telling them to land the goods at Drop No. 1 or 2 or whatever. When the radio was out of whack or there was reason to believe that the Coast Guard was eavesdropping, Mr. Kamm flew out to rum row and dropped instructions, in a sealed can with a long streamer, across the deck of the rummy.

Flights out to rum row were routine and they paid well but they couldn't compare to the barnstorming job Bob Kamm had in late 1929 when he helped ballyhoo a less than memorable movie. It was called *Flight* and had iron-jawed Jack Holt as the star. In the film, Holt was a veteran pilot training

cadets and in the climactic episode, the star took his pupil through the works — loops and upside-down flying. But Mr. Holt had neglected to strap himself in and fell out of the airplane, leaving the cadet to bring the plane down safely — which may have been the big moment of the picture.

Bob Kamm in his Challenger was engaged by the movie company to simulate this episode over the New England cities — Providence, New London, Worcester, Malden, Lowell, Haverhill and such — where *Flight* was about to open. By this time, there were regulations forbidding anyone to throw anything out of planes, and that included free movie passes. So Bob Kamm took along a parachute jumper who, just like Jack Holt, fell out of the plane and tossed passes to the winds on the way down, before the chute opened. It was a good show and, after all, the regulations didn't apply to a man in a free fall. While that lasted, it was a good job worth \$250 for each city.

Another source of easy and sometimes dangerous money was the aerial dog fight, simulating the aerobatics everyone had read about in World War I. The whole point was to pursue, approach, dive at and come close but never hit the rival plane. Bob Kamm did a lot of this work with Joe James, who flew out of Middletown, as his ri-

► 80

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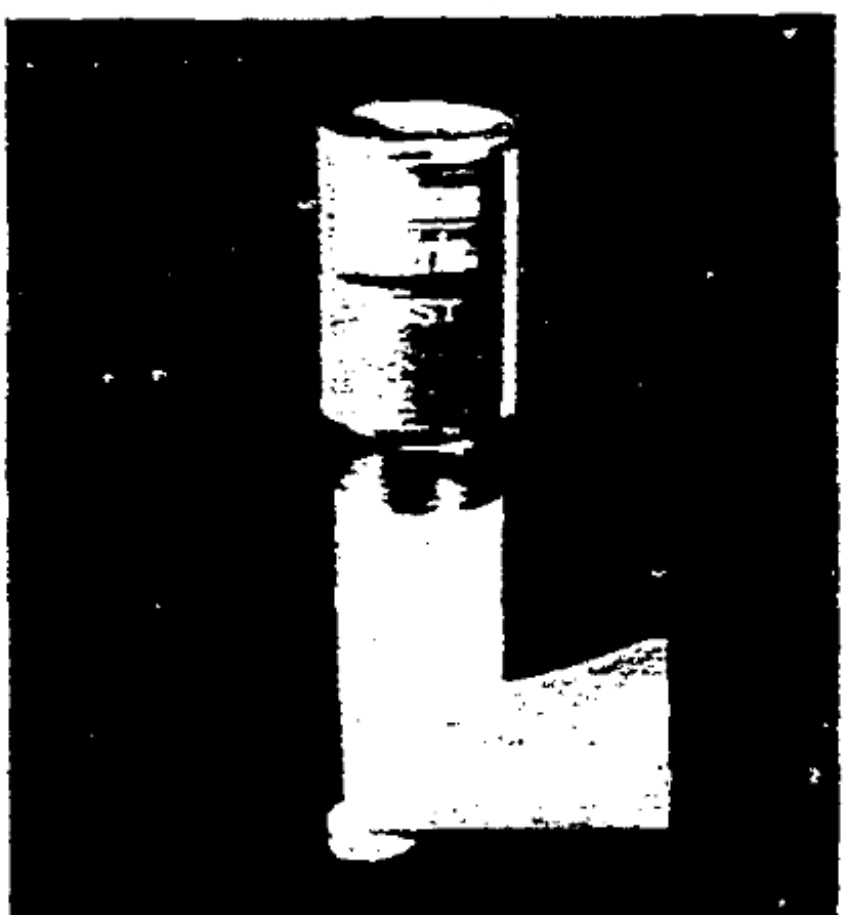
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EARLY BIRDS

In The Twenties, Rhode Island had three plane plants but it didn't last

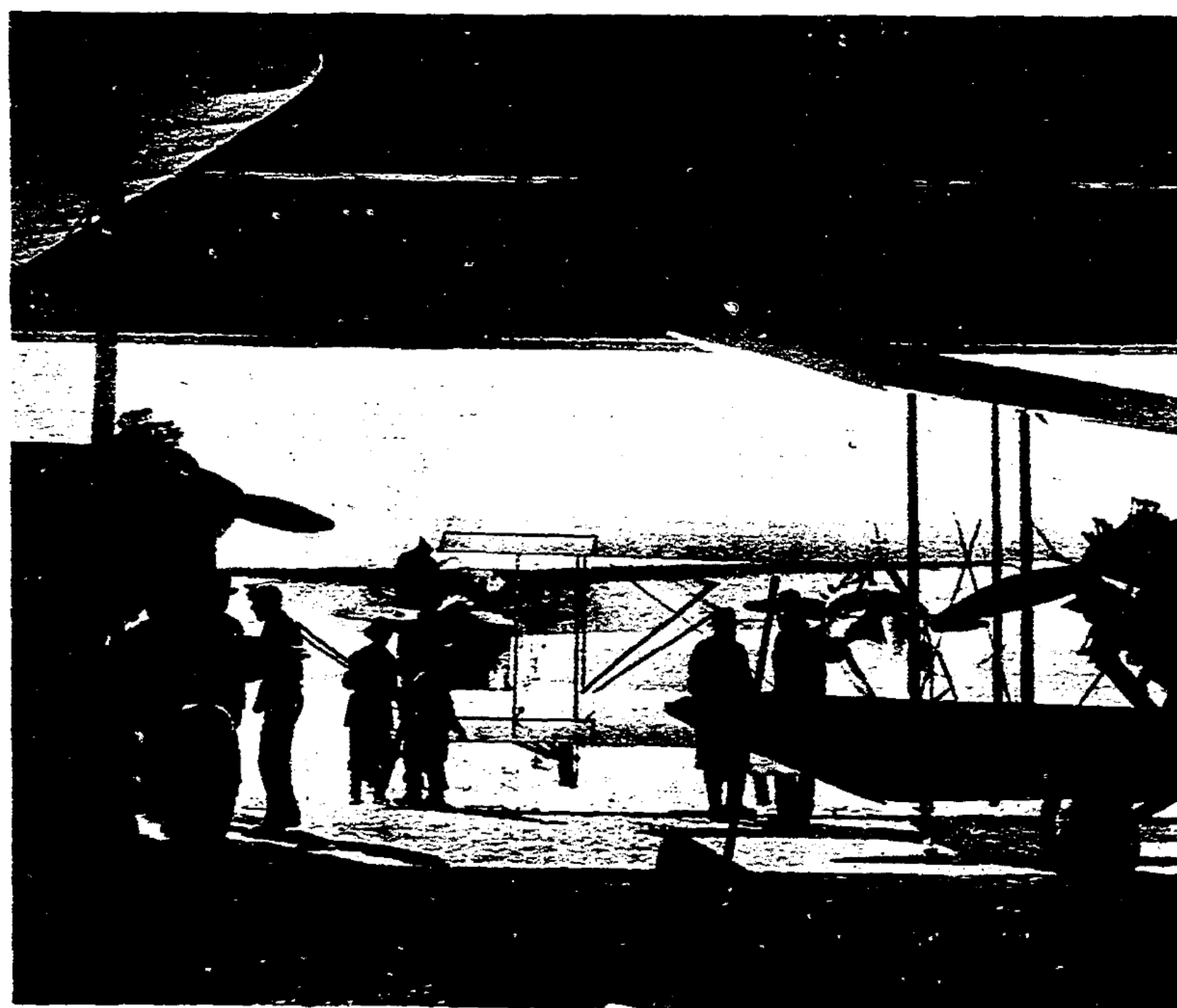
val. For a half-hour fight over, let's say, the yacht club at Newport, the fliers split a \$100 fee.

ASIDE FROM the tinker pioneers like Al Potts and Bob Kamm who could fashion their own primitive flying machines from a few sticks, some cloth and a motor, Rhode Island in The Twenties had three airplane manufacturers.

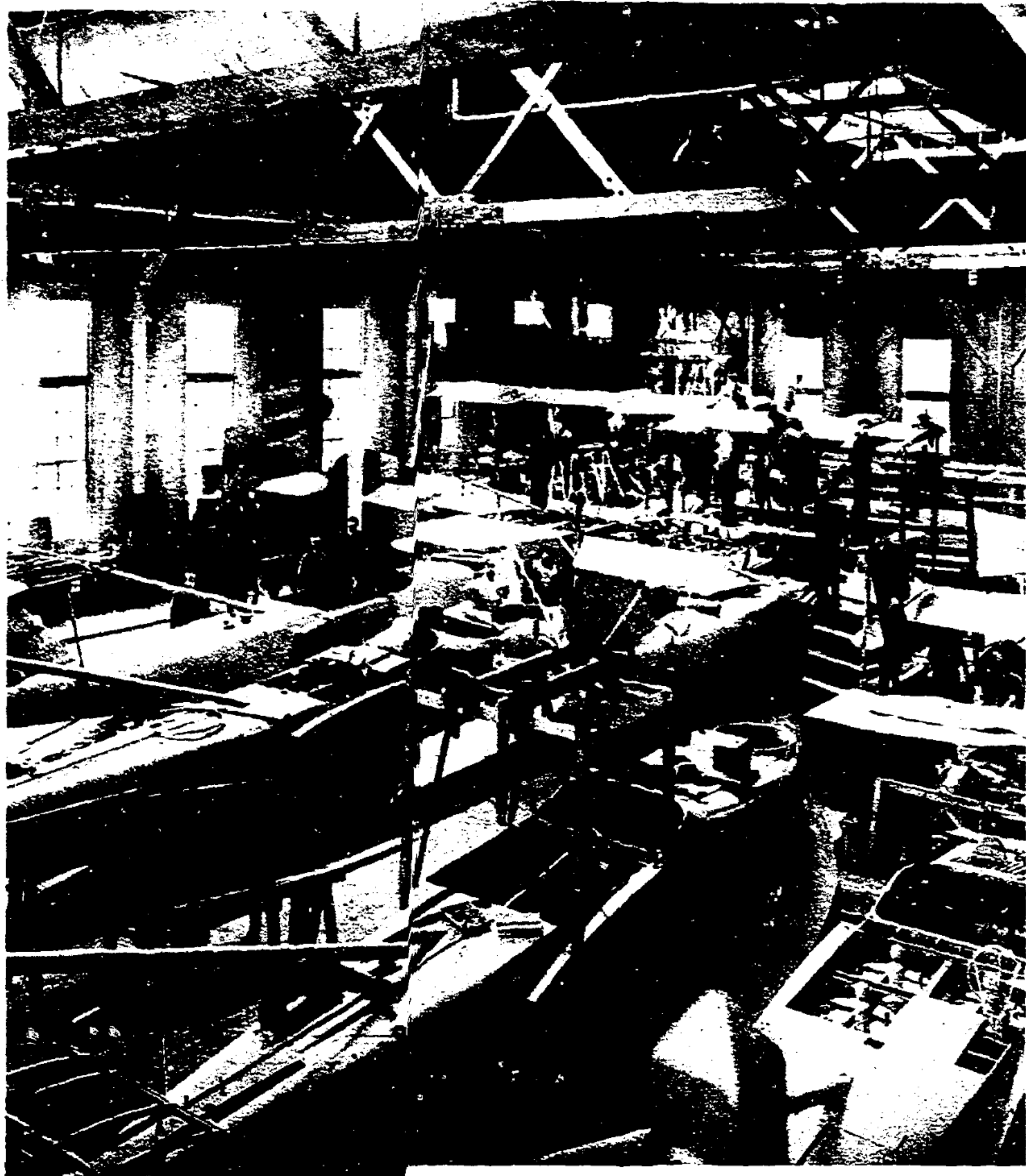
First, there was the Gallaudet Aircraft Corporation with a plant on the sandspit at the north end of East Greenwich harbor. Edson Gallaudet, a sometime rowing coach and physics instructor at Yale, as early as 1912 was building seaplanes and, for its time, a fast monoplane called the Bullet.

Shortly before the United States got into World War I, a group of East Greenwich businessmen put together a kitty of \$30,000 and induced Edson Gallaudet and his brother, Denison, to move their plant from Connecticut to Chepianoxet.

With contracts from the government, the Gallaudet operation expanded rapidly, at one time achieving a payroll of more than 800 people. The plant built pursuit ships, bombers, big seaplanes, and was one of the pioneers in all-metal planes. Gallaudet faded out of the aviation picture in 1923-24 when it was reorganized as Consolidated Aircraft Company. That firm moved first to Buffalo, New York, and then to San Diego, California, where it merged with Vultee to become Convair. Thereafter, until the Gallaudet



PLANES at What Cheer Airport, Pawtucket, in winter of '28-'29.



CURTISS flying boats were assembled at Gallaudet's

plant was blown to pieces in the '38 hurricane, it made textile machinery.

Late in The Twenties there were two aircraft manufacturing companies at opposite ends of the ground floor of the old Elizabeth Mill in Hillsgrove, just west of the railroad tracks. Both were headed by early Rhode Island birdmen.

Allan P. Bourdon, president of the Bourdon Aircraft Company, got his first aerial experience in gliders and then as a balloonist. He worked for Gallaudet at about the time it was becoming Consolidated and then as a designer and engineer for the Dennison Aircraft Company of Boston until he opened his own plant at Hillsgrove in 1928, turning out an eminently flyable plane, the Kitty Hawk. He had as many as seven planes on the production line at a time.

At the other end of the old mill was the New England Air Transport Company, with an inventive genius named George H. Armitage as president. His personal conquest of the air began in 1905 with a glider on his father's farm in West Wrentham, Massachusetts. Then he got the idea of putting two gliders together and an engine, which he built for

in the Taft-Peirce plant at Woonsocket. It wasn't until 1909 that he got the contraption off the ground. By 1911 he was the owner of three planes, one of them a Bleriot to which he added floats. He tried to fly that one off Narragansett Bay without success. He kept on making planes, some of which he sold, and during World War I was chief engineer in an aircraft plant in Boston. Then he went back to plane-making, financing his aircraft ventures with his inventions — a machine for making berry baskets, another for packaging cigarette tobacco in little cloth bags, one which put tips on shoe laces and yet another which popped tickets automatically out of the counters of the early movie houses.

George Armitage was, in a way, the very epitome of the men who pioneered the air age in Rhode Island. His first venture with the glider came only two years after the Wright Brothers flew at Kitty Hawk. He survived numerous crashes and was still following the Grail when his plane, with seven others aboard, exploded in mid-air in 1948 over Somerset, Pennsylvania, and plummeted into a wooded mountainside.

► 82

Advertisement



Make This Your Loveliest Year Ever

Every year of a woman's life should bring with it a new phase of beauty, for today the discovery of a remarkable tropical moist oil at last assures her that each passing year can bring added loveliness to her complexion.

Extraordinary scientific achievement is embodied in this unique moist oil with its ability to contribute to the unfolding and blossoming of a radiantly beautiful complexion.

All skins need supplementary ministration of a particular kind after the age of twenty-five, when the glands gradually become less active and manufacture only a fractional quantity of vital skin fluids. Sometimes this deprivation of the essentials is brought about even more prematurely through unfavourable weather hazards, difficult climatic conditions or any one of a dozen other circumstances exclusive perhaps to the twentieth century that directly or indirectly have a depletory effect on natural dermic fluids.

A lavish application of the scientific moist oil to the face and neck helps sponsor nature's every effort to provide the skin with regenerative, sustaining elements that work to restore balanced functioning.

Optimum benefit is obtained from the natural balance of oil and moisture which this beauty fluid possesses. Cosmetic scientists have aptly described it as a "peeled" beauty oil, by which they mean it does not contain the heavy sealing elements common to normal oils. Its rapid softening and beautifying values are immediately available to the complexion and prove their worth most dramatically when applied to alleviate skin dryness, for the complexion quickly takes on a

smoother, dewier, lovelier appearance.

Another great, beneficent property of the tropical moist oil is its readiness to further the skin's natural hygroscopic tendencies, and a healthy bloom is soon established as moisture is constantly attracted from the atmosphere to the complexion.

This moist tropical oil is obtainable in most countries of the world and here in America is available from druggists as oil of Olay. Smoothed over your skin daily and used as an ideal sub-foundation for make-up, it brings your complexion the richest dividends of beauty and heralds the attainment of your loveliest year ever.

Beauty Skin-Care Consultants Recommend

To gain the best benefits of the beautifying properties of this moist oil and to keep your complexion clear of wrinkle dryness always smooth on a film of oil of Olay beneath your make-up to protect and beautify your complexion whilst ensuring your make-up has perfect matt beauty.

Radiance is restored to the complexion when it is cherished with rich cream at night. Before you go to bed, massage gently with the oil of Olay, paying particular attention to the crow's-feet area where ageing lines first appear.

Towards maturity cherish your skin with a little extra care to smooth wrinkle-dryness and help keep facial lines at bay. Before retiring, apply a generous film of oil of Olay, massaging it with the fingertips in circular movements that spiral upwards and outwards.

EARLY BIRDS

Lucky Lindy left us inspired — and embattled over an airport

THE TWENTIES was a decade studded with names. To mention only a few, there were the Einsteins, Albert and Izzy, John Thomas Scopes, Babe Ruth, Jimmy Walker, Admiral Byrd, Johnny Torrio and Al Capone, Emile Coue, Alvin Shipwreck Kelly, Michael Arlen, Warren G. Harding and Nan Britton, Bobby Jones, Dempsey and Tunney, Leopold and Loeb, Aimee Semple McPherson and The Pig Woman. It was a decade sated with sensation and excitement.

Out of those ten years one name emerged larger than the rest. An attractive young man of 24 named Lindbergh took a \$13,000 Ryan monoplane from Roosevelt Field on Long Island to Le Bourget in Paris on May 20-21, 1927. His 33½-hour flight, alone, across those 3,600 perilous miles, caught the fancy of America and the world. He was an instant hero.

The *Journal-Bulletin* news and editorial pages were crammed with Lindbergh. The morning after his flight began, the *Journal* reported that people in East Greenwich had seen the plane go over on its way to Paris. When word came that he had landed, engineers in factories tied down their whistle cords and automobilists blew their horns. A *Bulletin* reporter checked all the people named Lindbergh in this area and came up with the limp report that none of them was related to the flier. Some days later, a factory in Attleboro got the job of striking the commemorative medal.

In spite of all the gaga aspects of the aftermath — notably the rash of business enterprises which took the name Lindy or Lone Eagle and that soon-to-be-forgotten dance called the Lindy Hop — the young flier did more than anyone to speed aviation as a major industry and means of transportation.

In France, Belgium and Britain he was lionized before coming home with his plane in an American warship. Much to the annoyance of New York City, Lindbergh's first major reception was at Washington, D.C., on June 11 and the measure of the occasion is suggested by the fact that President Coolidge, for once, didn't look like a puckered prune. Two days later, Lindbergh, now a colonel, got the ticker tape routine in New York with Grover Whalen as master of ceremonies. Western Union and Postal Telegraph were swamped by thousands of telegrams to the flier

and before the adulation was over, he had received 35,000,000 pieces of fan mail.

It is significant that on the day of the Lindbergh triumph in Washington, the U.S. Air Corps recruiting office in Providence did a land office business. Soon the modest young man who had touched off all this fervor set out in *The Spirit of St. Louis* on a tour that would take him, a missionary of the air age, into every state and to 78 major cities. Providence was one of them.

THURSDAY, July 21, 1927, was a good summer day in Rhode Island, sunny and with the temperature going into the low 80s. The *Journal* that morning gave nearly a column on page one to an almost minute-to-minute schedule, starting with Lindbergh's departure from Hartford at 1 p.m., his Providence fly-over and subsequent arrival on the parade ground of the National Guard at Quonset, receptions at City Hall, Roger Williams Park and the Biltmore, right down to 9 p.m. when the Rev. William Appleton Lawrence, rector of Grace Church, was to give the benediction for the Biltmore dinner. The scheduled events were on time at the beginning and running late at the close.

Quonset was jammed and it took the combined forces of the National Guard and the State Police to keep the crowds back from the Lindbergh plane. The roads on the trip to Providence by automobile parade were crowded and so was the Mall in front of City Hall when Mayor James E. Dunne, very natty in ice cream pants and a straw skimmer, welcomed the hero. The hillsides around the music temple in Roger Williams Park were packed and it was estimated by the *Journal* next morning that more than 300,000 of the 704,000 people in Rhode Island had gazed upon Lindbergh.

The climax of the day was the Biltmore dinner. Henry D. Sharpe was toastmaster and he was surrounded by a phalanx of speakers, all of whom had their say before Colonel Lindbergh said what he had come to say. The aviator was brief.

He said that it had taken him 45 minutes to fly from Hartford to Quonset by way of Providence and an hour to get from Quonset to Providence

by motorcar. He recalled that he was surprised to find Le Bourget, with its guiding beacon light, so close to the French capital, and said that Le Bourget was better than any flying field in the United States. He mentioned a good field at Brussels and said Croydon, outside London, was large and well equipped. Even New York had nothing to compare with these fields.

The colonel went on to say that commercial flying was only around the corner and that soon, the United States would have a better aviation system than anything in Europe. He guessed that if the tremendous outpouring of people he had seen in Rhode Island earlier in the day was any indication of interest in aviation, Providence would have an airport soon.

Next day, Lindbergh flew to Boston to spread the winged gospel there but he left a deep impression in Rhode Island. A slight measure of that impact showed up on the cover of the *Journal Almanac* for 1928; the design included three planes, a large hangar and a radio tower. One of the planes, with a little imagination, could have been *The Spirit of St. Louis*.

AT FIRST, the results of Colonel Lindbergh's missionary visit to Rhode Island seemed to consist largely of words. It was generally agreed that the state should have a major airport. There was general and often bitter disagreement as to the kind of airport and its location.

While the two-by-two private fields continued to proliferate, nothing concrete was done toward getting a state airport until the general election of 1928 when the voters approved 76,281 to 9,369 a bond issue of \$300,000 for an airport. The General Assembly at the January 1929 session authorized issuance of the bonds and created a State Airport Commission.

Governor Norman S. Case appointed Harry T. Bodwell of Cranston as the representative of the Senate, William D. Strachan of Pawtucket from the House, and W. Gordon Reed of Warwick, Thomas J. H. Peirce of Providence, and Percy W. Hathaway of South Kingstown. The commission elected Senator Bodwell its chairman.

Perhaps because he already had done so much



*THE WORLD'S best-known
plane at Quonset during
Lindbergh's visit to Rhode Island
soon after his transatlantic flight.*

flying with Bob Kamm from Charlestown, taking air views of Rhode Island which appeared in the old sepia gravure or "brown section" of the *Sunday Journal*, Avery Lord of the Sunday staff in the early months of 1929 looked at and wrote about airports elsewhere. These inspection trips were made in Mr. Kamm's FC2 Fairchild, a high wing monoplane with an enclosed cabin. In an extended series of articles, *Journal-Bulletin* readers learned about airport developments in St. Louis, Dallas, Chicago, Cleveland, Atlanta, Baltimore, Newark and other cities. In many instances, the airports cited by Avery Lord ran to a million dollars or more.

To put the ensuing battle — and it was that — over the site of Rhode Island's airport in perspective, it is necessary to recall that aviation in the late Twenties relied on water as well as land for landing surfaces. The Navy's trim scouting and fighting planes were using Potter Cove on the east shore of Jamestown north of the ferry landing, the Sikorsky-designed clippers of Pan-Am were flying regular schedules, and Dr. Claude Dornier in Germany was evolving plans for a seaplane, the DO-X, which eventually would be capable of carrying 169 passengers beneath its battery of 12 engines mounted on the upper wing. With good reason, many believed that a landing area of water was just as important as a landing area of land and that, if you could combine the two in one situation, you would have the ideal airport of the future.

There had been serious discussion of such a combined airport in the cove south of Field Point, close to Providence. Then, there was Gaspee Point, a high and well-drained plateau which could be located easily by an approaching flier simply by following the west shore of the bay; the proponents of that location, and they were legion, saw in Gaspee Point the ideal combine of a land and seaplane base. Except to the west, the point was surrounded by water, assuring an approach

clear of high buildings, high tension lines or other hazards.

What Cheer Airport in Pawtucket, where the race track is today, was backed as the site of the state airport by the Pawtucket forces, notably the Chamber of Commerce.

A salient point about the selection of a state airport was that the voters in 1928 had put the Republicans solidly in control of Rhode Island, with all the general officers and comfortable margins in Senate and House. And over the whole apparatus was the finance commissioner, Frederick S. Peck of Barrington, "the boss." Probably it was he in the first place who set \$300,000 as enough money to spend on an airport. This all-powerful man played state monies close to the vest.

The airport commission under Senator Bodwell went to work. The engineering firm of Black and Bigelow of New York City was engaged to provide professional advice. About July 1, 1929, it leaked out that the commission was going to select a site in Hills Grove, east of the Post Road.

All hell broke loose.

The town council of Warwick quickly passed a resolution urging the selection of Gaspee Point. The *Journal-Bulletin* newspapers which had backed Gaspee Point from the start, decried Hills Grove. But on July 3, the commission, which had power of condemnation, said the airport would be at Hills Grove and listed the scores of parcels of land which would be taken. It was a flat area on the same geological plateau as Gaspee Point.

In its lengthy statement, the commission acknowledged that Gaspee and What Cheer both were excellent sites. But the Hills Grove area, largely brush land and not highly valued in tax assessments, was selected because it was roughly as close to the center of Metropolitan Providence as Gaspee, it was close to the New Haven railroad and two plants at Hills Grove already in the airplane manufacturing business, and at some fu-

ture time, some state-owned land controlled by the Metropolitan Park Commission on Narragansett Parkway in Warwick could be developed as a base for seaplanes, about two miles distant from the landing field at Hills Grove.

Almost daily thereafter, the choice of Hills Grove was attacked. Anyone who ever had flown a plane was interviewed and the quoted opinion was unanimous that the Hills Grove site would be hard to locate from the air by an approaching flier. Two Brown professors on a July afternoon bushwacked through the underbrush and called attention to low swampy spots sure to mire any plane. Something called the Providence Aero Club, made up of former fliers in the military services, said Hills Grove was a bad choice. The aviation committee of the Providence City Council asked the airport commission to reconsider; maybe the city could find some money which, with the state's \$300,000 bond issue, would make it possible to finance Gaspee Point. The civic clubs of Providence, through their joint aviation committee, deplored Hills Grove and said Gaspee was the only place. Bob Kamm said Hills Grove wouldn't "be worth a nickel" as an airport and Allan P. Bourdon, who was making airplanes just west of the railroad tracks in Hills Grove, was quoted as saying that although the proposed Hills Grove field would be close to his plant, he thought the commission's site would be dangerous for the big planes of the future.

It was a loud and long hassle.

The State Airport Commission resolutely held its course. Although the field wouldn't open officially, with a major air show, until September, 1931, before The Twenties ended, men with scythes, brush hooks and tractors were clearing the 350-acre area of brush and small trees.

Looking back, the selection of Hills Grove was a good choice. The seaplane gave way to land-based planes. The increasing sophistication of aviation communication and the development of

►84

EARLY BIRDS

A good choice

electronic devices which made all-weather flying possible ultimately proved the answer to the argument that an air field could be found visually only by means of prominent landmarks. And Hills Grove, back from the bay, is less bedeviled by fog than Gaspee Point would have been.

Spurred principally by Lindbergh's missionary work, Rhode Island in those waning days of The Twenties was, at long last, making its long step into the Air Age.

G.D.B.



CULMINATION. State airport at Hills Grove opened in 1931; 100,000 watched the air show.

Her husband left her up in the air...

ON SEPTEMBER 19, 1929, a dual-control Kitty Hawk biplane built in the Bourdon plant at Hills Grove touched down at Providence Airport in Seekonk. The pilot hopped out and his companion asked, "Where are you going, Jess?"

"Darling," he replied, "I want you to take it around now, all by yourself." Thus, without warning and therefore without worry, Sally Fenno found herself in the air for the first time on a solo flight. It lasted 14 minutes.

Almost daily thereafter, Sally Fenno took to the air alone in a Kitty Hawk, practicing turns, slips and landings. She was eight years out of Smith College, the mother of two boys, one three-and-a-half, the other about four months old.

On October 15, she flew dual to What Cheer Airport in Pawtucket, practiced solo landings for 15 minutes and then went aloft for the critical flight of 19 minutes with John L. Moran, aeronautical inspector of the Department of Com-

merce. When she landed she received private pilot's license No. 9920, the first ever given to a Rhode Island woman aviator.

Admittedly, Sarah S. Fenno had sort of an inside track to the distinction which, next morning in the *Journal*, was recognized by a story with a two-column headline and a one-column cut. The picture is of an attractive woman wearing a flying helmet and goggles pushed up on her forehead.

Her husband, Jesse K. Fenno, soon after he got out of Dartmouth was in the Air Force in World War I, becoming a flight instructor on the West Coast. His bags were packed for service in France when the war ended.

Then, for a bit, he was a wool buyer in South Africa, went into the stock brokerage business and, in the late Twenties, with several partners established the Providence Airport Corporation. The firm bought the Humphrey farm in Seekonk, on the old road to Fall River across from

today's stock car track, erected the largest hangars then serving the metropolitan Providence area, and went seriously into the aviation business with regularly scheduled service to New York.

The Fennos lived in Barrington and Mrs. Fenno's carefully-kept personal log book records numerous flights in Kitty Hawks and, later, the tiny Aeroncas. She never did get to fly the autogyro, precursor of today's helicopters, which was one of the wonders of the Rhode Island air in the early Thirties, but over the years she did accumulate 45 hours and 27 minutes of solo flying time.

Mr. Fenno died in 1962. Today, Rhode Island's first licensed woman pilot presides over a gracious house on the main road in Lyme, New Hampshire, a few miles north of Hanover. Her log book and a scrapbook full of clippings about those early days in the air are cherished.

G. D. B.



Photo courtesy of Mrs. Jesse K. Fenno

SALLY FENNO and her Kitty Hawk at Providence Airport.

The Rhode Islander is grateful to the following for assistance on the articles about aviation in The Twenties:

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