

DELAWARE AVIATION *HISTORY*

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DELAWARE PUBLIC ARCHIVES



DOVER LITHO PRINTING CO., Dover, DE

strate the aeroplane. European leaders, and the military, were more than anxious to witness first-hand what they had heard so much about. Simultaneously, brother Orville shipped the second Wright *Flyer* to Fort Meyer in Virginia to demonstrate the Wright *Flyer* to the War Department.

Within five years the public interest in aviation would grow to mountainous proportions. Rodman Wanamaker, a Philadelphian, purchased a French-built Bleriot XI in 1909 and flew it locally. Within two years he would help finance a Curtiss multi-engine flying boat to fly the Atlantic. This aeroplane would make history by being the first aeroplane to cross the Atlantic via Newfoundland. When plans for the French-designed *Demoiselle* were offered in *FLY* magazine, the entire supply was sold out in seven days. The sale of plans to at home builders created a new industry of aircraft suppliers which still flourishes today.

The business world took advantage of the publicity. Cash prizes were offered to accomplish flights which appeared impossible. Sponsors were eager to lend financial support if their products were displayed and supported. Armstrong Drexel from Philadelphia took an hour and ten minutes to capture the world altitude record of 9970 feet in his 50-hp Bleriot in 1910. Unfortunately, the Federation Aeronautique International (FAI) refused to honor the record because he did not break the old record by 100 meters. Cal Rogers won the prize for duration at the Chicago International meet in August of 1911. He flew his Wright *Pusher* for twenty-two hours and collected \$10,000 for his efforts. He later flew his Wright *Flyer, Vin-Fizz*, the name of a popular soda, from New York City to Pasadena, California, in a gallant effort to win the \$50,000 prize offered by Randolph Hearst. The 4,231 mile trip required a supply train to guide the way and carry spare parts. The railroads were referred to as "the iron compass" by pilots in the early days of navigation. Crowds gathered along the tracks at every small town to witness this unbelievable attempt to fly from coast to coast. The prize stipulated the flight be made in 30 days. Rogers survived 19 crashes and missed the prize money when he arrived in San Diego in 49 days. America's first woman pilot, Harriet Quimby, crossed the English Channel alone in a French-built

Bleriot on April 16, 1912. Unfortunately, her extraordinary feat took a back seat to the tragic sinking of the *Titanic*.

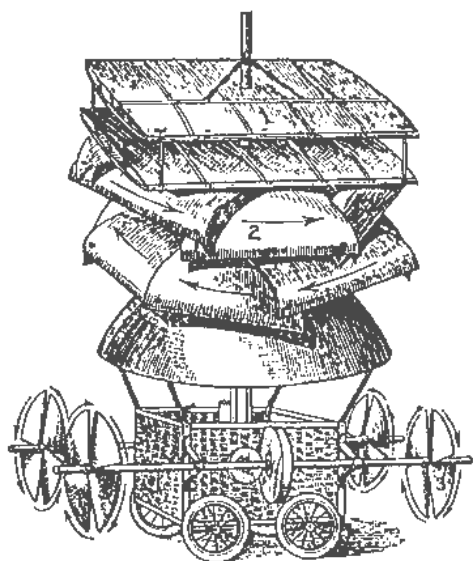
Although the airplane was now accepted as a flying machine, few people felt it had any practical application. Most pilots were considered daredevils, or hell-bent on committing suicide. In spite of many failures, competition grew between individuals, groups, and countries, all of which accelerated development and publicity. Contests and prizes were offered to test the daring aeronauts and their flying machines. After each prize was won, a more difficult challenge was offered with a prize which often included money and a coveted trophy. It was cheap advertising for the sponsor who received national press coverage. The pilot of course would enjoy the financial reward, and an ego boost that would surely motivate him to accept the next challenge. Flying was here to stay.

THE DELAPLANE

A 1909 Dover Attempt

After the announcement that the Wright brothers flew, it appears the flying fever extended into Kent County as it did in New Castle. The brothers Enoch S. LaFevre and W. D. LaFevre of Dover, on August 30, 1909, were granted a patent on their flying airship. It is not known if the airship was built and tested. However, an elaborate analysis of its capability was printed and submitted to major newspapers for publicity.

The LaFevre Airship has a vertical mast securely fastened to the bottom of the ship. Near the upper end of this mast are stationary aeroplanes, with controllable slats that can be thrown open when the airship is to ascend, and can be set at any angle or entirely closed when going forward or descending. Underneath these stationary aeroplanes are eight vertically lifting aeroplane propellers, four of them revolving like large kites around this central mast in one direction, each of the four discharging their air underneath each other, thus affording each aeroplane a stronger body of air to float upon, than the mere air it gathers in itself. And then there is another set of four counter-revolving, lifting aeroplane propellers which are revolving around the



LE FEVRE BRO'S AIRSHIP
PAT. AUG. 31. 1909.

*LeFevre Brothers' Airship
The artwork and following text were copied from an original
printed flyer dated 1903. From the George Jones collection.*

mast in an opposite direction. These two sets of counter propellers keep the ship from twisting or whirling around and enable the ship to go steadily on its way. And these two sets of counter-revolving propellers are also constantly feeding each other with discharged air and thus adding greater lifting power to the ship. If each of these revolving lifting planes were only eight feet by ten feet in size that would give it eighty square feet of lifting surface, and there being eight of them gives these lifting planes eight times eighty, or six hundred and forty square feet of lifting surface. These eight revolving planes alone have therefore considerably more lifting surface than any of the airships now in existence. And when we take into consideration that these are at once driven by the engine at greater speed than any of the other aeroplanes, it is evident that the ship must at once ascend into the air.

When as high as desirable to go, the slats on the stationary aeroplane can be closed, and then you have again added to the ship whatever amount of lifting surface is contained in the stationary plane, so that the LaFevre Airship will be capable of carrying large and heavy loads. And these it will carry with ease and safety. The stationary aeroplanes, revolving-lifting aeroplanes, and parachute are all made of light materials and are all overhead and above, and the carriage, engine, machinery, and passengers are all central underneath, so that

their weight will always keep the ship balanced and in an upright position. It will require no attention whatever to keep the ship balanced. And if anything gets out of order or machinery ceases to work these aeroplanes and the parachute would enable the ship to come down slowly and in perfect safety.

An upright mast also works the side propellers, one set on either side of the ship. When these two sets are run at equal speed the ship will move straight forward. But by the mere movement of a lever the velocity of these side propellers can be changed, so as to revolve slowly on one side and rapidly on the other, and thus like oars on a boat can change the course of the ship in any direction desired, or turn it clear around.

Both the lifting propellers and these side propellers are so arranged that both can be worked simultaneously or either set alone and separately. The lifting set alone and go vertically up into the air, and can then turn off the lifting propellers, and turn on the horizontal and go forward, or can go upward and onward at once.

The LaFevre Airship is comparatively small and compact and can start off or come down almost anywhere. And the parachute will turn off the wind and rain and sunshine and afford a comfortable voyage.

Although a thorough search was made for photographs of the finished product, none were found. This does not mean that the LaFevre Airship was not built. Photographs of this era are virtually non-existent. It also does not mean it never flew. It must be remembered that in the early days of aviation, achieving an altitude of one foot was considered a great flying accomplishment. Based on today's aeronautical knowledge, it is doubtful that this invention ever fulfilled the aspirations of the inventors. However, it does document the forward thinking of those committed to aeronautics. Many early pioneers, including Paul Goddard the father of rockets, were branded as lunatics.

To enter into a basic proof of concept, most airplane builders of this period first constructed model aeroplanes. Early model aeroplanes were used as miniature test vehicles for the full scale aeroplane which could carry the person aloft. It could be said with confidence that those involved with building full-scale aeroplanes, were also highly skilled model builders.

This was the case with Robie Seidelinger, who built and flew model aeroplanes of his own design. He accomplished this remarkable feat without having



Robie Seidelinger at the controls of Delaware's first aeroplane the Delaplane at Uorse Show Park, now Wauaset Park, Wilmington. Historical Society of Delaware photo.

prior knowledge of aircraft design and construction. There is no supporting evidence that he corresponded with anyone seeking advice on aeronautics. His first model was a helicopter, which, after testing, gave way to fixed-wing models. He powered his models at first with rubber bands, then with re-worked clock mechanisms.

Robie was working as the manager for the Monarch Typewriter Company in Maine in 1908 when he was transferred to Wilmington, Delaware. At night he would spend his idle hours building model aeroplanes as a hobby. Seidelinger's models caught the attention of George Crowe, a friend of Robie's and a salesman for the National Cash Register Company, at 825 Market Street, Wilmington. Crowe, inspired by the quality of Seidelinger's models, allowed him to display one of his flying models in the window of his store.

The three and one-half pound biplane model, with a wingspan of three feet, created considerable atten-

tion. The model had elevators just behind the wings, and the rudder was placed on the very rear of the fuselage. The model was of such quality many thought it was the prototype of a full-scale aeroplane under development. These comments caused David Snellenberg, manager of the Snellenberg Men's Clothing store located on seventh and Market street, to consider a full-scale aeroplane.

David Snellenberg was so impressed that he requested more information from Crowe as to its origin. He then invited Robie Seidelinger, along with Crowe, Grantly Postles (president of American Leather), William Dockstrader (owner of the Garrick Theater), John Gray, esquire, and John Montgomery (treasurer for Gilpin-Van Trump & Montgomery Insurance) to accept an invitation to create a flying club.

On February 10, 1910, the Wilmington Aero Club (WAC) was incorporated. The principals included David Snellenberg, Robie Seidelinger, George W.

Crowe and John Montgomery. The WAC address was listed as 11 West 10th Street, Wilmington; -the residence of John Montgomery. Collectively, the four raised \$1,000 to start the business. Capital stock was \$10 per share, with 10,000 shares being offered. A purchase of one or more shares of stock included membership in the WAC.

Their objective was to commit their combined resources and skills into a world-renowned aviation experimental group. A by-product of their efforts would be publicity for Wilmington which would draw more business to the area. The long-range plan included highly publicized air shows to be held in Wilmington to raise capital. Although a Wright *Flyer* could be purchased for \$5,000, the WAC elected to have Robie Seidelinger design and build an airplane in Delaware at a cost estimated to be \$6,000.

The WAC built a barn at the Gentlemen's Driving Park (also known as Horse Show Park and Wawaset Park) where Seidelinger would start construction of their first aeroplane, and name it the *Delaplane*. Using the existing technology of the day, the entire biplane was built from spruce with the exception of fittings and flying wires. The wings and control surfaces were covered with cotton and painted with dope for rigidity and tension. The initial timetable included finishing and test flying the aeroplane in time to enter an air meet in St. Louis in July. They learned in a hurry that building and test flying an aeroplane was not a simple task.

Robie Seidelinger was a perfectionist. He would weigh each piece of wood first. Then he would carve it and weigh it again. If a duplicate was needed, it must be an exact match. Although the WAC produced many press releases, Seidelinger was very secretive about many of his ideas (to which he gave consideration when applying for patents).

While the aeroplane was being built, the remaining members of WAC started planning a flying event which would create the publicity they so ardently sought. Other aviation clubs throughout the country were given considerable press coverage for their events which drew scores of other clubs and individuals to share their avocation. The event was to be held at the Gentlemen's Driving Park for three days starting October 7, 1910. The newspaper reports

presented the idea that the city would soon see aeroplanes in the sky as often as automobiles on the street.

By August 31, 1910, the *Delaplane* was complete except for hooking up the controls, installing the engine, and mounting the propellers. The engine of choice was the forty-five horsepower, water-cooled Elbridge, which was awaiting arrival from the factory. The aeroplane was rolled out to take advantage of the publicity that came with the New Castle County Fair which was held at the park. Much to the surprise of many, the *Delaplane* did not look anything like the model displayed in the window of the Snellenberg Men's Store. The design utilized the pitch control in the front, the rudder in the back, and the ailerons under the lower wings. No one, however, questioned if it indeed would fly because it looked like an aeroplane. It was expected to do so.

The officers of the WAC were invited to Washington, D.C., to discuss an upcoming air meet where they happened to meet J. D. McCurdy, assistant to Glenn Curtiss. The Officers convinced McCurdy that he should look at the *Delaplane*. McCurdy gave the aeroplane a thorough inspection and commented with approval on many of the new features. His final comment was what everyone was longing to hear:

Gentlemen, it will fly. This is the best constructed aeroplane I have ever seen and I have inspected all aeroplanes of reputation. The workmanship is excellent and I congratulate you. (Quote from Delaware History, *Delaware Birdmen*, Allen Hawk.)

Word spread rapidly about the *Delaplane*. A week later, Todd C. Schriver, who had gone into the air-show business after being a pilot for Glenn Curtiss, came to see the aeroplane for himself. His comments were also favorable and he gave his resounding assurance that it would fly.

Cloward, manager of the event, contacted other aeroplane owners, including Glenn Curtiss and McCurdy, to perform at the WAC flying event. The negotiations with Curtiss and McCurdy did not materialize, so they sought out others who flew in air shows. Cloward went to a Long Island air show where he met Todd Schriver. He signed him to a contract to fly his *Nighthawk* October 5 thru 8, 1910. He also signed up John Frisbee, from Roches-

ter, New York, with his *Skylark*, as well as Thompson & Flaxon and their balloon. Man-carrying kites were also shipped from California to round out the gala four-day event.

WAC later announced the pilot of the *Delaplane* would be Todd C. Schriver, a well-publicized pilot of the day who had flown the Wright *Flyer* in Ohio and flew for Glenn Curtiss. Schriver had also made the news on September 19, when he broke the record for staying aloft at night. The announcements drew favorable reaction from the community and the press, which thirsted for more knowledge about aviation. WAC and the newspapers portrayed the event to be the greatest success the city had ever known.

The final work to be done on the *Delaplane* was the installation of the Requa-Gibson propellers. A consulting engineer from New York helped Seidelinger install them on the airplane. Schriver and Frisbee agreed to conduct taxi tests on the *Delaplane*, but wanted more room for a test flight.

The well-planned WAC event started off in a series of disasters which were beyond anyone's control. The day before the meet, Schriver made a test flight in his *Nighthawk*. When he decided to land, he could not shut off the engine for a glide to land. When he tried to land the plane with full power, it hit hard and flipped over on its back. Schriver ended up with a broken ankle and was now unable to fly. Why he did not fly until the fuel was exhausted and glide to a landing is not known. The Wilmington newspaper *Every Evening* commented that, "Wilmington not only recorded its first flight, but also its first aeroplane accident."

Wednesday, October 5, the opening day of the event brought winds too brisk to fly. To appease the crowds, John Frisbee flew his *Skylark* on a few low hops of a couple of feet. On his last hop the wind carried his airplane into a tree breaking the elevator. The next day the wind was accompanied by a driving rain. The third day it was too windy for anything to fly, including the kites and the balloon. The last day brought more bad weather and the event was canceled. The Aero Club announced they would schedule another event later in the month, but it was never held.

The taxi tests on the *Delaplane* revealed some problems which needed attention. The engine was removed from under the pilot's seat and reinstalled back of the main wings to improve balance. The twin propellers were removed and a single prop installed. The rear fuselage was also shortened. On October 21, 1910, the aeroplane was rolled out of its hangar once again. In spite of a dreary evening, Seidelinger and Eddie Bloomfield, the test pilot, decided to do some high speed taxi runs. On the last run Eddie pulled back on the elevator control and the *Delaplane* rose smartly from the ground a few feet, leveled off and flew about 300 yards before landing. Bloomfield was a Delawarean and could now claim to be the first Delaware aeronaut. The few spectators who witnessed the event jumped with joy at the sight. A few more flights were made on succeeding days, then the *Delaplane* was returned to its hangar for further modifications and winter storage.

In February 1911, the WAC Annual Report was filed with the Delaware Secretary of State listing David Snellenberg (Wilm.), president; George W. Crowe (Dover), vice president; John A. Montgomery (Wilm.), treasurer; and W. Manley (Dover), secretary. Directors were Snellenburg, Crowe, Montgomery, John Hartmann, and R. W. Crook. Total shares sold to date were \$1290. The WAC at this point must have accrued considerable debt. Research to date failed to uncover why Robie Seidelinger was no longer listed on the board.

During the winter, the WAC planned another flying meet which was to be held June 6 through June 9, 1911. In spite of the huge failure of the first event, the Aero Club signed on the Wright brothers and their pilot, Walter Brookins. Schriver was engaged in another meet and could not attend. The meet would also include motorcycle races, track meets with local runners, and a drill demonstration by a newly formed organization called the Boy Scouts. The press was more than eager to place editorials in their papers since flying machines were considered a phenomenon most people still considered fictional. Philadelphia alone had a population of more than a million people, many of whom had never seen an aeroplane, much less seen one fly. The event would be a major draw from this populated area.

DELAWARE AVIATION HISTORY

The weather on June 6 was the complete opposite of the fall event. Brookins, flying the Wright *Flyer* put on a spectacular show of steep turns, dives, figure 8s, and low passes across the field. The spectators were spellbound by the performance. The weather held out until the last day, when Brookins could only make two flights.

The air meet was such an overwhelming success the WAC began planning another event to coincide with the fall New Castle County Fair. While the meet was being planned, the *Delaplane* was moved to a shed on the New Castle rifle range. As luck would have it, the shed was struck by lightning and burned to the ground consuming the *Delaplane*.

The February 1912 WAC Annual Report filed with the Secretary of State listed Snellenberg president, R.W. Crowe vice president, and John Montgomery treasurer. No secretary was listed. Directors were Snellenberg, Crowe, Montgomery, Crook, E. A. Van Trump, and John Hartman.

Although the WAC planned to hold more flying events to raise capital, they never materialized. The last annual report filed by the WAC was January 1913. David Snellenberg was still listed as president; George Crowe, vice president; John Montgomery, treasurer; and William Mosley, secretary. Directors

were Snellenberg, Crook, Crowe, Hartman, Montgomery, Van Trump, and James Cane. Total shares sold to date were \$6290. This was far below the \$100,000 the WAC hoped it could raise.

There were no other annual reports filed with the Secretary of State after January 1913. The WAC had disbanded but left a history in Delaware which could never be duplicated:

The WAC funded the first aeroplane built in Delaware.

The WAC flew the *Delaplane* seven years after the Wrights' flight.

The WAC held the first two air events ever held in Delaware.

The *Delaplane* would never have become a reality if it were not for the vision of the members who put forth the money. Although the WAC needed Robie Seidelinger to build the aeroplane, one could not have accomplished the feat without the other. The plans for the *Delaplane* have never been located and are assumed to be lost. Seidelinger and the WAC faded from the limelight and were never in the news again. It was the end of a great effort.

First Flight of the "Delaplane"

Near this site, on October 21, 1910, the first heavier than air aircraft built in Delaware made its first flight. The aircraft, known as the Delaplane, was built by Robie Seidelinger and piloted by Eddie Bloomfield. The construction was funded by the Wilmington Aero Club at an estimated cost of nearly \$6,000. Construction took place in a barn at the Gentlemen's Driving Club, also known as Horseshow Park and, later, Wawaset Park. Originally built with two propellers, the aircraft was modified to fly with a single propeller before its first flight. The flight occurred on the last run of three high speed taxi runs when the test pilot pulled back on the controls and the aircraft became airborne for approximately 50 yards. The aircraft was later destroyed by fire while being stored in a shed at a New Castle rifle range.

Sources

| Reference Number | Text | Source |
|------------------|--|---|
| 1 | on October 21, 1910 | MN, Oct 22, 1910 |
| 2 | the first heavier than air aircraft built in Delaware | MN, August 30, 1910 |
| 1 | made its first flight | MN, Oct 22, 1910 |
| 1 | known as the Delaplane | MN, Oct 22, 1910 |
| 1 | built by Robie Seidelinger | MN, Oct 22, 1910 |
| 1 | piloted by Eddie Bloomfield | MN, Oct 22, 1910 |
| 3 | Construction was funded by the Wilmington Aero Club | WSMS, Jan 30, 1910 |
| 4 | an estimated cost of nearly \$6,000 | WSMS, Feb 6, 1910 |
| 1 | Construction took place in a barn at the Gentlemen's Driving Club, also known as Horseshow Park and, later, Wawaset Park | MN, Oct 22, 1910 |
| 1 | Originally built with two propellers, the aircraft was modified to fly with a single propeller | DE Historical Society Photo MN, Oct 22, 1910 |

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| 1 | The first flight occurred on the last run of some high speed taxi runs when the test pilot pulled back on the controls and the aircraft became airborne for approximately 50 yards | MN, Oct 22, 1910 |
| 5 | The aircraft was later destroyed by fire while being stored in a shed at a New Castle rifle range | Alan Hawk, "Delaware Birdmen: The Wilmington Aero Club and the Delaplane, 1910-1912", <i>Delaware History, Volume XXI</i> , 126 |

MN: *The Morning News*, Wilmington, DE

WSMS: *Wilmington Sunday Morning Star*, Wilmington, DE



Courtesy of the DE Historical Society

Delaplane with two propellers

Joseph G. Darlington & Co.
THIS ENTIRE WEEK
Unrivalled Exhibit of Correct Fashions
Autumn Season, 1916
Dress Goods, Silks and Novelty Fabrics
ROBES, LACES and TRIMMINGS
WOMEN'S and MISSES' SUITS and DRESSES
SILKS and DRESS GOODS
EVENING SILKS
Numbers 1125 and 1128 Chestnut St., Phila.

FIRE READY FOR GREAT PARADE
J. J. PRISBEY
NARROW ESCAPE FROM DROWNING
Captain Joseph Sparks of French Grove Camp No. 1000, with Dr. J. J. Prisbey, who was rescued from drowning, are being taken to the hospital.

PORTUGAL FIRMS NEW REPUBLIC
Dr. J. J. Prisbey
Tooth Powder
CHIEF MORAN HAS GOOD FIRE PLAN
ASKS FOR MONEY

BULLETIN NO. 2
EVERGREEN LAWN GRASS SEED
HAIR GREEN GRASS SEED
THE PHILIPS-THOMPSON CO.
Fourth and French Sts.

CHEIEFS RAISED UP CITY STREETS BRIGHT WITH LIGHT
The city streets were bright with light as the chiefs of the various organizations gathered for a meeting.

NARROW ESCAPE FROM DROWNING
Captain Joseph Sparks of French Grove Camp No. 1000, with Dr. J. J. Prisbey, who was rescued from drowning, are being taken to the hospital.

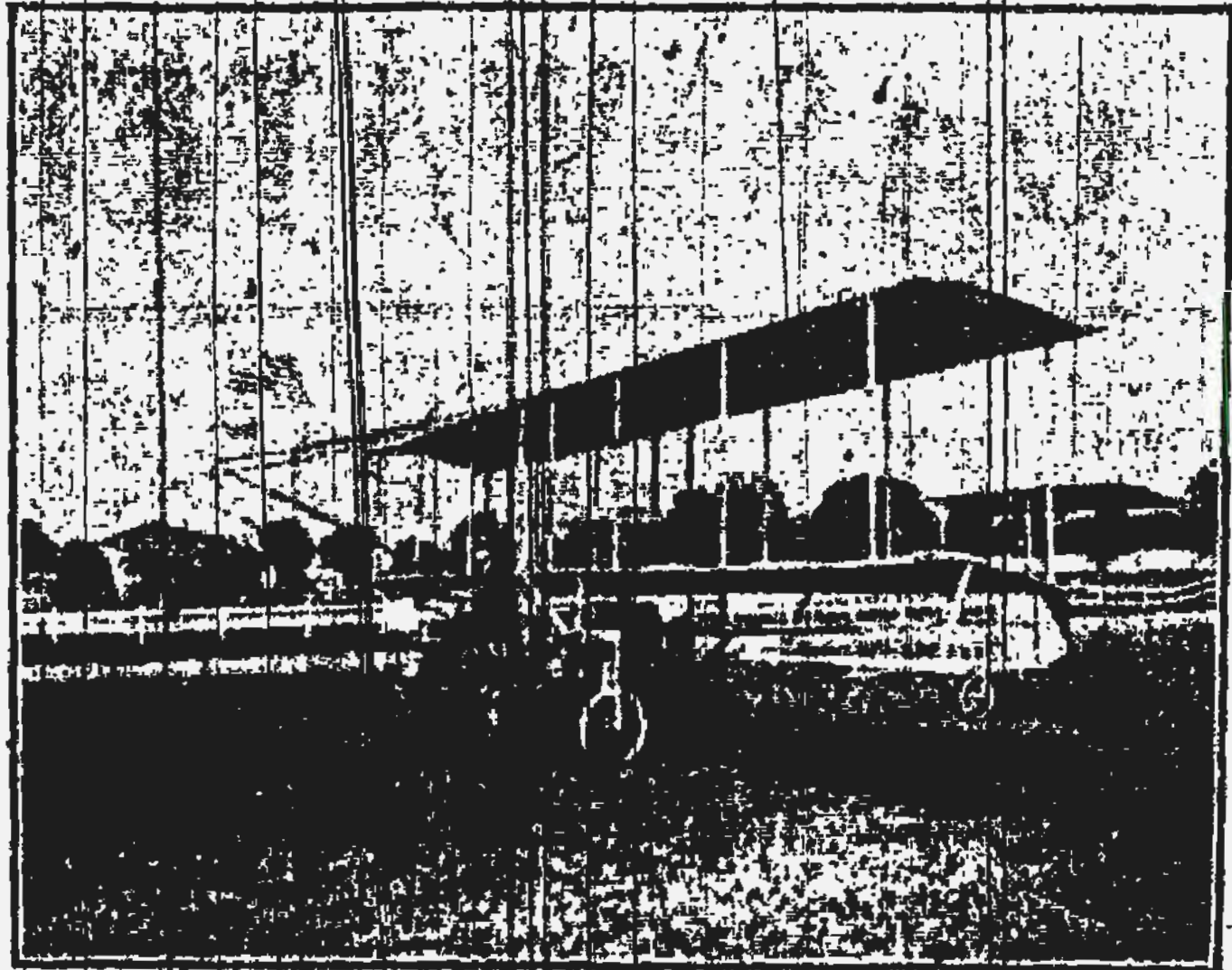
CHIEFS RAISED UP CITY STREETS BRIGHT WITH LIGHT
The city streets were bright with light as the chiefs of the various organizations gathered for a meeting.

FREE PACKAGE COUPON
Cured at Home
Piles Quickly
Senator Dupont Gave a Dinner

ASKS FOR MONEY
The city streets were bright with light as the chiefs of the various organizations gathered for a meeting.

CHIEFS RAISED UP CITY STREETS BRIGHT WITH LIGHT
The city streets were bright with light as the chiefs of the various organizations gathered for a meeting.

NOTICE
The Wilmington and Philadelphia Traction Company
PAINLESS DENTISTRY
YEETH \$5.00 TO \$10.00 PER SET



"The Blaplane," invention of Roble D. Seidinger, and which may be tried out during the present aviation meet of the Wilmington Aero Club.

THE MORNING NEWS.

SATURDAY OCTOBER 22, 1910.

PRICE

MODEL PRISONER AN OVERCOAT REESE ROBERTS CHANGES HANDS

RESE ROBERTS, THE MODEL PRISONER WHO WAS SENT TO THE HOUSE OF CORRECTION FOR THE ROBBERY OF THE BANK AT THE CORNER OF... THE OTHER MAN PICKED IT UP AT THE OTHER END AT TWIP... IN THE NIGHT. WHEN THEY WALKED OFF WITH IT... BUT THE MAN PICKED UP THE OVERCOAT WAS NOT THE SAME AS THE ONE THAT WAS TAKEN AWAY BY RESE.



THE POLICE MAN.

DELAPLANE SAILS ON ITS FIRST TEST

Robie Seidlinger's Machine Went Up Five Feet When Run by Eddie Bloomfield—It Proved That It is a Good Bit of Work.

The LaPlane, a new type of flying machine, was tested on Saturday morning in the presence of a large number of spectators. The machine, designed by Robie Seidlinger, was piloted by Eddie Bloomfield. It took off from a grassy field and rose to a height of five feet in less than a minute. The test was successful and proved that the machine was a good bit of work. The LaPlane is a biplane with a unique wing configuration that allows it to take off and land on short runways. It is currently being developed as a military aircraft for reconnaissance and observation duties.

HOW DEMOCRATS RAN THE

Had to Borrow Money to K Down Tax-Rate and Made Trotter Chaudler City

The County Board of Supervisors has made a statement regarding the financial condition of the county. It is stated that the Democrats have run the county for several years, and during that time they have had to borrow money to pay for their expenses. This has resulted in a large debt for the county. The Board of Supervisors is now seeking ways to reduce the tax rate and to pay off the debt. They have also elected Trotter Chaudler as the new city commissioner. The financial situation of the county is a cause for concern, and the Board of Supervisors is committed to finding a way to resolve the issues. The tax rate has been a major point of contention, and the Board is determined to bring it down to a level that is more reasonable for the citizens. The election of Trotter Chaudler is seen as a vote of confidence in the new administration, and it is hoped that they will be able to manage the county's affairs more effectively.

The county is in a state of financial distress, and the Board of Supervisors is facing a difficult situation. They have had to borrow money to pay for their expenses, and this has resulted in a large debt. The Board is now seeking ways to reduce the tax rate and to pay off the debt. They have also elected Trotter Chaudler as the new city commissioner. The financial situation of the county is a cause for concern, and the Board of Supervisors is committed to finding a way to resolve the issues. The tax rate has been a major point of contention, and the Board is determined to bring it down to a level that is more reasonable for the citizens. The election of Trotter Chaudler is seen as a vote of confidence in the new administration, and it is hoped that they will be able to manage the county's affairs more effectively.

CHURCH UNITY

The church is in a state of unity, and the members are working together to improve the community. The church has a strong sense of purpose and is committed to serving the needs of the people. The members are engaged in various activities, including fundraising and community service. The church is a source of strength and support for the community, and it is proud to be a part of the fabric of the town. The church is also committed to providing a safe and welcoming environment for all members of the congregation. The church is a place where people can find comfort, support, and a sense of belonging. The church is a source of hope and inspiration, and it is proud to be a part of the community. The church is committed to working together to make a difference in the world.

FOUND IN RIVER CLEANED HOUSE IN OLD COVER

Body of young child was discovered in the river near the old cover. The house was cleaned and the body was recovered. The incident is being investigated by the police.

Two things were found. The house was cleaned and the body was recovered. The incident is being investigated by the police.

DELAPLANE SAILS ON ITS FIRST TEST

Robie Seidlinger's Machine Went Up Five Feet When Run by Eddie Bloomfield—It Proved That It is a Good Bit of Work.

Although it had been stated by J. G. McCurdy, Tod Scribner, J. Frisbie and other well known aviators that it would fly, it remained for Eddie Bloomfield, a Wilmingtonian, to demonstrate that the "Delaplaine," the machine built by Robie Seidlinger, for the Wilmington Aero Club, was practicable.

This was done last evening shortly before 6 o'clock. In the presence of six or seven people—not one of the directors of the company being present—the machine was run over the field for several hundred yards. Just as the shades of night were gathering Bloomfield tilted the front or lifting plane a few inches and the machine shot upward until a height of five feet was reached. Then leveling the plane, the aviator continued for forty or fifty yards before alighting.

It had been the intention to make a trial flight but owing to the rain and darkness this was postponed, and it was decided to try the engine by running the aeroplane over the ground. Accordingly, the aviator together with Mr. Seidlinger, the inventor of the machine, and their helpers, pulled the machine into the open, between the club house and the eastern fence. At a signal from Bloomfield, the propeller was cranked and the engine struggled to release itself from the men who held it fast. Taking his seat in the machine Bloomfield seized the wheel, and away shot the airship. When the motor was shut the machine had covered several hundred yards.

Willing hands then pushed the aeroplane back to the starting point, where a fresh start was made, and in this and all trials the balance of the machine was seen to be equal. The ground was very bad, being riddled with ruts, but not once did the air craft behave poorly. On this trip a distance of 300 yards was covered before the motive power was shut down.

On the third trip, and just at the

approach of night, another start was made. This time the aviator shot down the field at terrific speed, and after going 300 yards he was seen to tilt the front plane. Instantly the machine answered the wheel, and it arose at a jump to a height of five feet. Bloomfield then brought the plane to a level and the "Delaplaine" soared along for forty and perhaps fifty yards amid the cheering of the handful of spectators.

After covering that distance the machine was brought to the earth and the engine stopped. Only then did the aviator get uneasy, and that feeling was caused by the skid or brake, which is made of wood, striking a rut and breaking. This did not amount to anything, however, and the aviator was instantly surrounded by the witnesses to his flight. The machine was then taken back to the shed where it is housed.

It was Bloomfield's first trip in an airship, and he could not express his feeling when spoken to about it afterwards, but he, like all those present, was very much pleased. Mr. Bloomfield is employed as a demonstrator for the Pierce-Arrow Automobile Company, but it is most likely that he will prove as successful as an airship demonstrator.

The "Delaplaine" has undergone several changes since it was built, one of them being the use of one propeller instead of two, as was originally on the machine. This improvement was noted yesterday when the full power was not used, yet the machine performed its stunt. Another change noted in the machine is the cutting off of some of the tail. Besides these changes the engine was taken from the diamond frame behind the seat and placed back several feet under the main plane.

Although nothing has been done in respect to having another trial, it is understood that the machine may be given a test next week.

Signal Reduction Sale

25 to 50 per cent reduction
on all
**STERLING SILVER
SILVER PLATED WARE
CUT GLASS
AND CLOCKS**

During the month of August

**Baynard
Banks &
Dryan**

JEWELERS

Cor. 5th & Market Sts.

Editor is a Candidate.
The Morning News.
WILMINGTON, Del., Aug. 29.—R.
mas Hart, managing editor of the
sex Journal, of this town, who
t years ago succeeded in getting
nomination of recorder of deeds of
county, announced this morning
he had consented again for his
e to be placed before the county
ention for the nomination to that
e. Several of the leading Demo-
c politicians have been urging him
low his name to be used, but it
not until this morning that he
ed.

here Cleaned, Dyed and Carled.
Kenzie's, No. 907 Shipley street.

NEW AEROPLANE

One Being Built at Horse Show Park
Will Be on Exhibition During
the County Fair.

Though the aeroplane which is
being constructed by Robie Balde-
linker at Horse Show Park will not be
used for flights during the county fair,
it has been decided by the Delaware
Aero Club, for whom the machine is
being constructed, to place it on ex-
hibition.

The big flying machine is practically
completed. It is felt that many per-
sons will desire to see it, because it
is the first one ever built in Delaware.
The building in which the machine is
kept is so arranged that the entire
front can be removed, and this will
give the public a good opportunity to
see.

On account of this being the first
Delaware aeroplane it is felt that the
public ought to be interested in it and
willing to show its appreciation by at-
tending the exhibition. As a matter
of fact the big machine is expected to
bring considerable fame to Delaware.

New K. of P. Building.

The building committee of the
Knights of Pythias Hall Company,
comprising William Simmons, William
W. Knowles and Thomas Mullan, Jr.,
will meet Saturday night of next week
with the board of governors for the
purpose of taking up bids for the con-
struction of the proposed hall, which
will cost about \$30,000. The site ac-
quired is at No. 905 West street.

P. O. S. A. WORK

Annual Session of State Camp of
Order Will Open Here To-day.

The sixth annual convention of the
State Camp of Delaware, Patriotic
Order Sons of America, will convene
in the P. O. S. of A. hall, No. 612
Shipley street to-day, and the session
will be called to order promptly at
10 o'clock this morning by State Pres-
ident Arthur F. Parsons.

Delegates began to arrive last night
and they were entertained by Dela-
ware Commandery, which held open
house for the entertainment of the
visitors who arrived yesterday. About
100 delegates and fully a hundred
of the local members assembled in
their hall where an informal recep-
tion was held. Several of the state
officers, as well as the candidates for
the offices which are to be filled at the
convention, were in attendance.

To-day's activities will commence
at 7:30 o'clock, when the reception
committee will meet and march to the
P. H. and W. railroad station where
they will meet the visitors from down
the state. Upon going to the hall they
will be addressed by State President
Arthur Parsons.

The address of welcome this morn-
ing will be made by President of
Council James L. Banning. Consid-
erable business will be transacted at
to-day's sessions.

Entertained at Euchre.

Miss Marguerite Ralph entertained
some friends on Friday evening at pro-
gressive euchre in honor of her guests,
Miss Mary and Laura Ahern.

It is a well
and as most
tive suffering

**DR. CA
SYRU**

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NEW CAS
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George T. H
Miss Irene P
on Thursday.

AERO CLUB HERE

Wilmington to Back Local Inventor's Flying Machine.

MODEL IS ALREADY EXHIBITED

David Spellenburg at the Head of a Movement to Organize Those Who Are Favorably Impressed by Robert Seidelinger's Aeroplane.

Wilmington is to have an aero club. Plans for its organization are now being perfected, and next month this city will take its place among the leading cities of the world in encouraging experiments in aviation.

The idea of forming an aero club occurred to David Spellenburg, of the firm of N. Frohberg & Co. and Robin Seidelinger, the inventor of several models for aeroplanes. Mr. Seidelinger has recently constructed a model for a new type of biplane, which is now on exhibition in the window of the National Cash Register Company, on Market street.

Persons familiar with flying machines have expressed the opinion that Mr. Seidelinger's aeroplane has all the earmarks of a practical flyer, and the inventor has been urged to build a large machine to test it out. In order to secure the necessary funds for the venture, it is proposed to organize a local club. The idea is to encourage experiments and to help them develop their ideas.

David Spellenburg and Grantley P. Postler are interested in the movement and will be among the leading spirits in the new organization. In addition to them are Mr. Seidelinger, George W. Crowe, R. O. Beane, Dr. George W. Quisen and several others have signified their intention of taking an active part in the club's affairs.

Mr. Seidelinger's machine, which is a biplane with many original features, has attracted considerable attention since it has been on exhibition. The most radical departure from the construction of the other flying machines now in vogue is in the manner of support. Practically everything is suspended by wires from a central hollow mast, which what frame work is absolutely necessary for rigidity is used, the mast and wires supporting and holding the machine firm.

Another new feature of its construction is the two-movable horizontal planes just behind the two stationary planes. These are tilted to various angles to the stationary planes, when it is desired to raise or lower the machine's position in the air.

The biplane is steered by means of a large vertically set rudder, which besides being capable of turning from side to side like the rudder on a ship, may also be dipped to either side in order to regain, in an emergency, the stability of the airship. In this connection it might be added that the centre of gravity of this machine is purposely made low in order to prevent, as far as possible, any tendency to instability. The three operating levers and engine control are all located together at the front of the machine below the lower plane. The model, which is shown in the engraving, is three feet wide and four feet four inches long, and weighs only three and one-half pounds. The length of the machine which it is thought will be built in the near future, perhaps this spring, will be between 25 and 35 feet.

It is hoped that everybody interested in aviation will assist with the new club and help make the building of the machine a possibility.

Robin Seidelinger, the inventor of the airship, is a Blaine man. He has been located in Wilmington for about two years, and conducts the local agency of the Monarch Typewriter Co. He became interested in flying machines about 1897, and since then has built seven or eight models. He began with a rotary top style model, and has tried many new ideas on his models, often making use of zinc work and rubber bands in testing his machines. He has had the idea of the present machine in mind for about four years. Recently he set to work on the model, working two to three hours every night. It took three weeks to complete the model.

Mr. Seidelinger never makes any drawings. And what is even more to be wondered at, he never even used a scale or made any measurements in building his models.

Another surprising fact is that the inventor has never seen a flying machine, nor has he ever seen even the motion pictures of them. His ideas are, therefore, more or less original throughout.

Mr. Seidelinger has several more designs for aeroplanes in contemplation, models for some of them being already well under way. He intends to take out letters patent on some of the original features which he has incorporated in his models.

Shooting After at New Castle.

Men Who Are Back of The Wilmin

AERO CLUB INCORPORATED

Organization Has Been Effected to Back the Seidelinger Bi-Plane.

WILL SOON BUILD MACHINE

Funds for the Purpose to Be Raised by Selling Shares in the Club at \$10 Each—Hoped to Take Part in Aero Meet in July.

"The Wilmington Aero Club" is now a reality. Application for incorporation with a capital stock of \$100,000 was filed at Dover yesterday, the incorporators being: David Snellenburg, George W. Crowe, Grantley P. Postles, William L. Dockstader, John A. Montgomery, John G. Gray and Robie Seidelinger. The following are the officers and directors: David Snellenburg, President; George W. Crowe, First Vice President; Robie Seidelinger, Second Vice President; Grantley P. Postles, Third Vice President; John A. Montgomery, Treasurer; R. O. Beane, Secretary. Directors: David Snellenburg, George W. Crowe, Grantley P. Postles, John A. Montgomery, John G. Gray, William L. Dockstader and Robie Seidelinger.

The purpose of forming the club was announced in The Star last Sunday and met with the instant approval of so many people that arrangements for incorporating the club were perfected immediately. Already the men back of the movement have received many inquiries, and Mr. Snellenburg says there are plenty of applications for membership.

The article published in The Star was reprinted widely throughout the country and several papers also reprinted The Star's engraving of Mr. Seidelinger and his aeroplane.

The backers of the club are thoroughly in earnest. Navigation of the air is no longer a dream, and they are confident that the Seidelinger machine, with a few minor changes, proposed by the inventor, is entirely practical. It is their intention to put Wilmington in line with the other big cities in the production of flying machines.

"No local undertaking in recent years," said President Snellenburg to a reporter for The Star yesterday, "has created such favorable comment and enthusiasm as this one. And it is not only Wilmington that it has attracted attention, for lots of inquiries have come from outside. We feel that Wilmington is being admirably advertised through this matter all over the country. Papers everywhere have taken notice of it, and even the pictures in The Star last Sunday have been reprinted in some of them. And as a natural result Wilmington is receiving more free advertising of the proper kind than could possibly be secured in any other way."

"Our idea in forming the club," continued Mr. Snellenburg, "is to help Mr. Seidelinger build his first machine. He has estimated that it will take from \$5,000 to \$6,000, allowing a wide margin for experimentation."

"In order that this money may be raised easily, the shares of the club will cost but \$10, thus making it possible for every public spirited citizen who has the welfare of Wilmington at heart to become a member of the club, and assist in the undertaking."

"Our first intention is to give a prac-

tical demonstration that Wilmington a man capable of building a machine for practical use."

While this is new to Wilmington, said Mr. Snellenburg, "there are already building plants in the manufacture of aircraft in Buffalo, Detroit, Dayton, Even J. Pierpont Morgan would be interested in such an enterprise."

"We know we have in Seidelinger an entirely different machine now used, and as soon as it is completely effected we will apply for patents which will prove quite valuable."

"There is offered a \$500 prize to be contested for in July. It is hoped that we will have a machine ready for this contest."

"Mr. Seidelinger will devote all of his time to the project."

As soon as the machine is ready the club's intention to hold an air show and offer prizes, particularly in view of bringing on the flying machines invented by Seidelinger.

The certificates of the club were ready a week from Tuesday and are on sale by John A. Montgomery of the club, at the insurance office, 1000 Tenth and Shipley streets.

WANT CORN, NO

Crows Preferred High-Prize Dr. Hancke's

They Ate Two Hundred Workmen Could Gather No Crow Shooting

Dr. William H. Hancke, agent of the Delaware State Fair, says all the crows in the institution. He has a box and each winter crows box and get food. It has been when the snow is on the box as a trap for the crows. The crows shot at the county buildings have been birds for a crow shooting.

But the crows this year are the bones. The crows are non-meat eaters. They eat for cereals and according yesterday, ten thousand corn. A Hars's Corner farm corn late and failed to grow. When the blizzard started day, crows came across the river from New Jersey droves. The sentinels of the Hars's Corner corn shed the whole number went to at least ten thousand crows eating corn.

When ex-Sheriff John New Castle was appointed court of bankruptcy procedure at Newark and gathered of the court. Over two hundred were eaten by the crows. It appears that while crows can be had they will not pay.

Mr. Krane Has Bag Edward Krane yesterday of the Eagle Hotel at Town streets, addressing Daniel has been proprietor of the hotel years.

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DELAWARE HISTORY

VOLUME XXI

THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF DELAWARE
505 MARKET STREET MALL
WILMINGTON, DELAWARE

1984-1985

DELAWARE STATE ARCHIVES

Delaware Birdmen: The Wilmington Aero Club and the Delaplane, 1910–1912

ALAN HAWK*

No local undertaking in recent years has created such favorable comment and enthusiasm as this one. And it is not only in Wilmington it has attracted attention, for lots of inquiries have come from outside. We feel that Wilmington is being admirably advertised through this matter all over the country. Papers everywhere have taken notice of it, and even pictures in the *Star* last Sunday have been reprinted in some of them. As a result, Wilmington is receiving more free advertising of the proper sort than could be measured in any other way.¹

David Snellenburg,
President of Wilmington
Aero Club, February 6, 1910

Inventors. Generally speaking, Amateurs are of two classes. Those of the first class believe they have conceived some entirely new system or invention, or an improvement on some machine that has previously proved a failure. They think they have discovered the secret which other inventors who preceded them failed to grasp. They expend their meager capital in trying to realize their high hopes. A comparatively small number even get as far as completing the machine and one field trial is usually sufficient to put a quietus on those who do, as it is disappointing, to say the least, to see the result of a number of months work undone in a twinkling without the machine having shown the least disposition or ability to get off terra firma.²

Charles Haywood in
Building and Flying an Aeroplane

* Alan Hawk is a graduate of the University of Delaware and is a historic preservation intern for the City of Wilmington's Office of Planning.

¹ *Wilmington Sunday Morning Star*, Feb. 6, 1910 (hereafter *WSMS*).

² Charles Haywood, *Building and Flying an Aeroplane* (Chicago, 1914), 134–35.

Gentlemen, it will fly.³

J. A. D. McCurdy, pilot, after inspecting the Delaplane.

ROBIE SEIDELINGER had been interested in flying since 1897 and had built eight model airplanes by 1910. Since he had never seen an actual airplane fly or even a movie of a flying airplane, he worked out his ideas by trial and error. He experimented with helicopters at first and then moved on to less tricky fixed-wing airplanes powered first by rubber bands and later by clock-work motors. Some of his designs worked better than others. During the day, Seidelinger worked as a manager for the Monarch Typewriting Company, which had transferred him to Wilmington from his home in Maine in 1908. At night, he built and tinkered with airplanes. He never used scale measurements or made drawings of his designs. He learned through trial and error what worked and what did not.

George Crowe was a salesman for the National Cash Register Company and a friend of Seidelinger. He knew of Seidelinger's curious hobby and invited him to display his latest model in his store window at 825 Market Street. The model attracted considerable attention. It was a biplane with a wingspan of three feet and a weight of three-and-a-half pounds. Rigid bracing was kept to a minimum, and the wings and fuselage were suspended by wires running from a vertical central mast. The elevators were located just behind the main wings and a paddle-shaped rudder was on the rear of the fuselage.

Seidelinger's model caught the eye of many people. Aviation enthusiasts who saw the model quickly concluded that it could be a prototype for a practical airplane and suggested Seidelinger build a full-size version. David Snellenburg, the general manager of N. Snellenburg and Company, a men's clothing store located at Seventh and Market streets, was one of those who liked the design. He joined with Crowe, Seidelinger, Grantly Postles, president of American Leather Company, William Dockstrader, owner of the Garrick Theater, John Gray, a lawyer for Delaware Corporation Company, and John Montgomery, treasurer for Gilpin, Van Trump and Montgomery Insurance Company, to raise \$100,000 and form the Wilmington Aero Club. Incorporated on February 6, 1910, the club's stated purpose was to build the airplane and plan an air meet.⁴

The organizers also hoped that the club would attract aviation industries to Wilmington and help give the city a progressive image. Since the

³ *The Morning News*, Sept. 22, 1910 (hereafter *MN*). ✓

⁴ *WSMS*, Jan. 30, Feb. 6, 1910; *MN*, Feb. 7, 1910. The officers were: Snellenburg, president; Crowe, first vice-president; Seidelinger, second vice-president; Postles, third vice-president; Montgomery, treasurer; and R.O. Beane, secretary. See also John C. Rumm, "Airmindedness: The Early Years of Aviation in the Wilmington Region," unpublished paper in the collections of the Hagley Museum and Library, Wilmington, Del.

1890s, Wilmington's traditional industries—shipbuilding, railroad-car manufacturing, and leather tanning—had been declining, and no new industries were coming into the city. The Wilmington Board of Trade, revived at the turn of the century, was proving ineffective in attracting new companies to the city. The Aero Club was part of the effort to reverse this decline. Even before it was organized a local newspaper proclaimed its lofty ambitions, including placing Wilmington "among the leading cities of the world in encouraging experiments in aviation."⁶ The following year, *The Morning News* described the organization's desire to promote the city: "The club believes that a meet of the right kind will attract people from this and other cities . . . Behind the whole thing, there is a desire to advertise Wilmington. Every man in Wilmington is vitally interested in the future of the city and is confident that this event will do more toward advertising Wilmington than anything which has been attempted in a long time."⁷

The club's first step was to build an airplane. It was estimated that it would cost between \$5,000 and \$6,000 to build the machine, "allowing for a wide margin of experimentation."⁷ A Wright Flyer, in comparison, could be purchased for about \$5,000. Snellenburg hoped to have the machine ready for a air meet scheduled to be held in Saint Louis that July, while Seidelinger, just slightly less optimistic, predicted the airplane would be ready for tests by late August. Once the first airplane was completed, the club was confident that other local inventors would come forward with designs that could, in turn, be built and flown by the club. As the members were to learn, building and flying an airplane was not as easy as it seemed.

The club built a shed at the Gentlemen's Driving Park, now Wawaset Park, on the western edge of the city and placed a large electric sign of identification on it. As soon as the building was finished, Seidelinger began working on his airplane. First he had to select and weigh the wood to be used in its construction carefully. A reporter for *The Morning News* described the process:

Had the people from without the club been allowed to enter the building yesterday afternoon, they would have seen the inventor weighing two pieces of spruce, which weighed fourteen pounds and thirteen ounces exactly. The fact that these two pieces of spruce, the choice of the whole lumber yard, weighed exactly the same before they were worked upon, shows the care with which the ship will be built. Every piece of material will be carefully weighed and worked into the proper shape under the personal direction of Mr. Seidelinger, and every piece must balance exactly."⁸

⁶ *WSMS*, Jan. 30, 1910.

⁷ *MN*, May 26, 1911.

⁷ *WSMS*, Feb. 6, 1910.

⁸ *MN*, Apr. 30, 1910. See also *MN*, Mar. 28, 1910.

For the next five months, Seidelinger worked behind closed doors. Secrecy was important because his design included new ideas that had not yet been patented. Twelve features of the airplane were thought to be patentable, including a new scheme for controlling the airplane. Such a system would have been a major breakthrough, because Orville and Wilbur Wright held all the patents for aircraft control systems and only Glenn Curtiss had been able to get exempted from the Wright's patents after a long and bitter lawsuit.⁹ It is not known whether Seidelinger ever applied for any patents.

By August 31, the airplane was complete except that the controls had not yet been linked up, and it still needed an engine and propellers. It was displayed in this unfinished state to the general public for the first time during the New Castle County Fair held in the Driving Park. Despite all the talk about new and radical innovations, the new airplane exhibited a conventional design that looked more like a Bristol Box kite than the model that had been displayed in the window of the National Cash Register Company. Seidelinger had created a biplane with a wingspan of about thirty feet that was to be powered by twin propellers turned by a single 45-horsepower water-cooled Elbridge engine located just behind the pilot's seat. The elevator was in front of the pilot, mounted on triangular outriggers; the rudder was attached behind the main wings on the rear fuselage, and the ailerons were placed on struts below the main wings. Most of the people at the fair thought the airplane looked as if it would fly, but nobody who had any experience with aeronautics had examined the airplane, by now referred to as the Delaplaine.¹⁰

When J.A.D. McCurdy, assistant to Glen Curtiss, was in Wilmington that September to discuss an upcoming air meet with the officers of the Aero Club, he was talked into taking a look at the Delaplaine. A reporter for *The Morning News* described the scene:

[His] look seemed to settle all thoughts of getting back to Allentown the same night, for it was over an hour after entering that he spoke of a train. It was after ten minutes of quiet inspection that he said, turning to the committee and newspapermen, "Gentlemen, it will fly." . . . There is no question that Mr. McCurdy was astonished at new features, for several times he remarked, "That is good and has never been tried."¹¹

⁹ The Wright brothers control mechanism uses linked rudder and ailerons. The rudder steered the plane and the ailerons banked the wings to insure a smooth turn. As long as the airplane was not flown for financial gain or at a public air show, the Wright Brothers did not consider use of the control mechanism as an infringement of their patent (Haywood, *Building and Flying an Airplane*, 134-37).

¹⁰ *MN*, Aug. 30, 31, 1910.

¹¹ *MN*, Sept. 22, 1910.



Figure 1. The Delaplane, invented and designed by Robie Seidelinger, was built by hand in a shed at the Gentlemen's Driving Park (from a postcard in the collections of The Historical Society of Delaware).

McCurdy went on to ask Seidelinger some questions about his design and then said with a smile, "Mr. Seidelinger, you have the best constructed machine I have ever seen and I have inspected all aeroplanes of reputation. The workmanship is excellent. I congratulate you."¹²

A week later, Tod Shriver, a former pilot for Glenn Curtiss who had gone into air-show business for himself, came to see the Delaplane.¹³ Like McCurdy, he was impressed with the workmanship and commented:

"My Nighthawk will look rather shabby alongside of it."

"Yes," replied Seidelinger making an anxious glance toward the airplane, "but yours will fly."

"So will yours, provided your engine has sufficient horsepower and will run steady."¹⁴

The flying club scheduled the air meet for October 5 through 8. Aviators would be needed, so a committee, headed by N.D. Cloward, the general director of the meet, contacted Glenn Curtiss and McCurdy, who were in Allentown preparing for a cross-country flight over the Lehigh Mountains to Philadelphia. On September 20, Cloward and Snellenburg went to Allentown and met with McCurdy, who took a train

¹² *MN*, Sept. 22, 1910.

¹³ *MN*, Sept. 25, 1910.

¹⁴ *MN*, Sept. 29, 1910.

to Wilmington two days later to check out the facilities at the Driving Park in Wawaset. When he left the next morning, he assured the committee that either he or Curtiss would take part in the meet. Several days later, however, negotiations were broken off, and Cloward went to Mincola, Long Island, to meet with Colonel Baldwin, Shriver, and other aviators who were flying there.

Cloward asked Shriver, who had just broken the record for longest solo night flight the previous Monday, to take part in the air meet. Shriver was already entered in the Saint Louis meet scheduled for the same time, but he decided to cancel and appear in Wilmington instead. He signed the contract on September 25 and began preparing to ship his Dietz-Shriver biplane—the Nighthawk—to Wilmington. He and his wife arrived on Monday, October 4, with his plane, which would take mechanics a full day to assemble.

The same day, John Frisbee, the other pilot who had agreed to appear at the meet, arrived from Rochester, New York, with his biplane, the Skylark. Man-carrying kites had arrived from California and Thompson & Flaxon had their balloon at the Driving Park.¹⁵

Last-minute work on the Delaplane was being done to ready it for the meet. A consulting engineer from New York brought down the propeller assembly made by Requa-Gibson and helped Seidelinger install it on the plane. Both Shriver and Frisbee agreed to run taxi tests on the Delaplane but felt that the park was too small to attempt a test flight.

The air show promised to be an exciting one, but then everything that could go wrong did go wrong. The day before the meet, Shriver made a test flight on the Nighthawk. At the end of the flight he could not shut off the engine, which had no throttle, to glide in for a landing as he usually did. He tried to land the plane under full power; it hit the ground hard, bounced into the air, and flipped over. Shriver broke his ankle and could not fly for the rest of the meet.¹⁶ To this misfortune, an editorial in *The Morning News* commented, "Wilmington is up to date, the first aeroplane to fly here was followed by the injury of the navigator. Thus this city had a flight and one of the regulation accidents as well."¹⁷

The air meet opened on October 5, and Frisbee had engine trouble. When his Skylark was brought out, the motor refused to start until a mechanic had spent a half hour adjusting it. The airplane was taxied out onto the field and began the take-off run. The engine abruptly quit again and could not be started before nightfall.

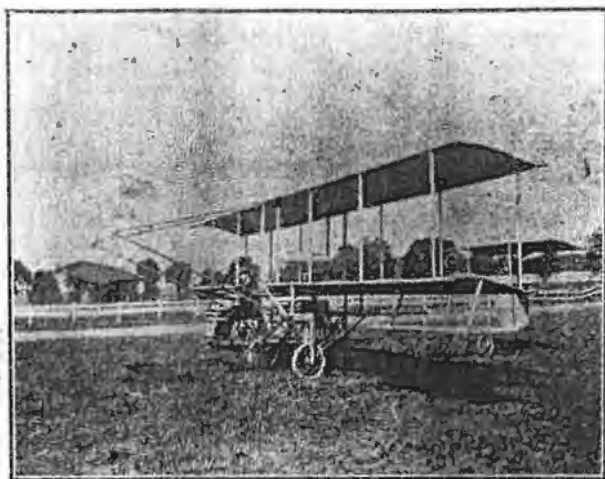
It was too windy to make any real flights the next day, but Frisbee

¹⁵ *MN*, Sept. 20, 23, 28, 30 and Oct. 4, 1910; *WSMS*, Sept. 30, 1928. *The Morning News* had trouble with the spelling of Frisbee's name. It was spelled "Frisby" on October 4, "Frisbie" on October 5, and "Frisbee" throughout the rest of the meet. The *Wilmington Sunday Morning Star* spelled it "Frisbie."

¹⁶ *MN*, Oct. 5, 1910.

¹⁷ *MN*, Oct. 6, 1910.

9-28, 1910. Assoc. B



"THE DELAPLANE."

DELAPLANE SAILS ON ITS FIRST TEST

**Robie Seidlinger's Machine Went Up Five Feet
When Run by Eddie Bloomfield—It
Proved That It is a Good Bit of Work.**

Figure 2. The first flight of the Delaplane on October 21, 1910, was heralded in the *Morning News* the following day (collections of The Historical Society of Delaware).

made a few low hops. On his last hop, the wind carried his plane into a small tree and smashed the elevator. On the third day, it was both too windy and too rainy to fly. On the last day it was still too windy to fly, and the balloon ascension scheduled for that day was also canceled. On Sunday morning, Frisbee was planning to test the Delaplane, but it was still too windy and he had to be content with taxiing around the field.¹⁸

¹⁸ *MN*, Oct 6, 7, 8, 1910; *WSMS*, Oct. 9, 1910.

As Frisbee and Shriver, who was on crutches, boarded the train to Mineola, the Aero Club announced it would hold another meet later that month.¹⁹ Shriver wanted to take part and prove that he could fly, but the meet was never held.

As planning began for the next meet, work continued on the Delaplane. The evening of October 21 was rainy, so no test flight was planned, but Seidelinger and Eddie Bloomfield, the test pilot, did decide to make a few taxi runs before it got dark.²⁰ A reporter described what happened next:

On the third trip, and just at the given approach of night, another start was made. This time the aviator shot down the field at terrific speed, and after going 300 yards, he was seen to tilt the front plane. Instantly the machine answered the wheel and it arose to a height of five feet. Bloomfield then brought the (front) plane to a level and the Delaplane soared along for forty, perhaps fifty yards amid the cheering of a handfull of spectators. After covering that distance, the machine was brought to the earth and the engine stopped.²¹

The plane that flew that October 21 was a slightly different version than that "rolled out" two months earlier. The twin propellers had been replaced by a single propeller; the rear fuselage had been shortened; and the engine, originally located just behind the pilot's seat, was moved back under the main wings.

After a few more flights in the succeeding days, the Delaplane was put back in the shed for further modification. Over the winter, Seidelinger moved from Wilmington and the care of the machine was left to Bloomfield. The pilot made more flights with it the following spring, never flying higher than roof level because of his inexperience. The Aero Club hoped that the airplane would be ready for demonstration at the air meet planned for June 6, 7, 8, and 9, 1911.

This air meet was to be more ambitious than the one held the previous year. The Wright Brothers agreed to send one of their pilots, Walter Brookins, to fly at the meet, but Shriver could not honor his earlier commitment because he was flying in Japan. Not only would the meet feature flying, there would also be motorcycle races (including a race between a motorcycle and an airplane), track meets featuring local runners, and a drill demonstration by a new organization for boys, the Boy Scouts.²² It was going to be a proud day for Wilmington. "It will . . .

¹⁹ *MN*, Oct. 10, 1910.

²⁰ The *Wilmington Sunday Morning Star* spelled his name "Bromfield." The name Edward Bloomfield does not appear in the city directory for 1910 or 1911. There is a listing in 1911 for an Edward Broomfield, who gave his occupation as "chauffeur."

²¹ *MN*, Oct. 22, 1910.

²² *MN*, May 22, 23, 24, 30, 31, Jun. 1, 2, 1911.

be the first time that the Wrights have given an exhibition in this section." *The Morning News* noted, "Philadelphia, with its more than a million people, has never had the Wright aviators at any of their meets."²³

The air meet promised to be a spectacular event. Publicity articles in *The Morning News*, in contrast to the previous year's articles, were shameless in their sensationalism.

Plans have been laid by the officials of the local club to attempt an absolutely new and hair raising experiment in mid-air. If carried out successfully, it will mean the demonstration or experiment of which will be of interest world wide. Not until everything is assured that the attempt can be made, will details of the plans be made public, and that is likely to occur within the next few days.²⁴

It was even rumored that Wilbur Wright himself was going to come out of retirement and fly at the meet, but apparently he decided against it.²⁵

Unlike the previous meet, the air show of 1911 was extremely successful. Brookings dazzled the crowd with his flying. On the first day, Fred Seby of *The Morning News* described the crowd:

Cheer after cheer then rent the air and little boys jumped for glee, women, old and young, looked hysterical and the male portion of the audience looked exceedingly wise, for all had seen in many cases for the first time, a real flying man. The crowd was indeed spellbound.²⁶

It was the same for the next three days. Brookings flew for the crowds that poured into the Driving Park. He thrilled them with tight turns and spiral glides, where the pilot acts as if he is about to fly the airplane into the ground and recovers just before he "crashes." He also raced motorcycles. Only on the last day did the weather misbehave so that Brookings could only make two flights.²⁷

As soon as the meet was over, the Wilmington Aero Club announced plans for another meet to be held that fall, perhaps during the New Castle County Fair. Although it was to last only one day, it was to be an even grander affair than the previous meet. The costs of the event were to be defrayed by local businessmen; no admission would be charged. The Aero Club negotiated with Harry Atwood and George Hamilton to fly at the meet.²⁸ The club's hopes were dashed when it could not raise

²³ *MN*, May 26, 1911.

²⁴ *MN*, Jun. 1, 1911. The "hair raising experiment" was never explained or carried out.

²⁵ *MN*, Jun. 3, 1911.

²⁶ *MN*, Jun. 8, 1911.

²⁷ *MN*, Jun. 6, 7, 9, 10, 12, 1911.

²⁸ *MN*, Jun. 15, 17, 29, 30, Jul. 10, 13, 31, 1911.

enough money, and the meet was never held. A year later, the club had disbanded.²⁹

While the third meet was being planned, the club moved the Delaplane to the state rifle range near New Castle, and Bloomfield, now confident that he could handle the machine, was eager to make higher altitude flights. Despite the change in location, the plane remained a victim of hard luck, for later that year it was destroyed when the shed was struck by lightning and burned to the ground.

The Wilmington Aero Club left few traces. It was born with a great deal of enthusiasm and ambition but died only two years later. Why it disbanded is not clear. Perhaps it tried to do too much. It did not have the resources to hold two air meets a year, even though it tried, nor was it able to attract aviation industries to Wilmington. The club did not have the drive and the organization to keep itself going. What it could do, and do well, was give Wilmingtonians their first taste of aviation, which was to have a profound effect on their lives.

The truly great success of the Wilmington Aero Club was that it had designed, built, and flown an airplane, which is no small feat. The success of the Delaplane was due to the fact that the Aero Club had enough money to build the airplane and that Seidelinger actually knew what he was talking about. Not only was he a careful methodical worker, he also had sense enough not to make his first airplane too radical and to stand back and let another person, who may have had more experience, fly the machine. As much as the success of the Delaplane owes to Seidelinger, it could never have been built without the backing of the Wilmington Aero Club.

²⁹ Rumel, "Airmindedness."

wagons. Consequently, much of the time the factories were busy and they had large payrolls.

Many persons also were employed in the activities which the carriage industry and the horse created. When the automobile came along, and the demand for carriages began to fade, some of the carriage builders lost their jobs. Some managed to adjust themselves to other types of work. Some, no doubt, were absorbed by the motor industry. The transition, being slow, evidently was painless.

Building an Airship

It is an interesting coincidence that the first airplane I knew of as having been built in Delaware was made on the site of what is now Wawaset, in which is situated the home of Lieut. George S. Welch, U. S. A., whose exploits as an Army aviator have brought him renown. Lieutenant Welch's home is 906 Blackshire Road. His parents, Mr. and Mrs. George L. Schwartz, were among the first residents of Wawaset after it had been developed into a home site.

The airship construction venture on that tract took place about 35 years ago. At that time the tract, formerly a driving park, which was enclosed by a high fence, was devoted chiefly to the training of horses. The area, if I remember correctly, extended from Woodlawn Avenue to the golf links of the Wilmington Country Club, and from Seventh Street to near Pennsylvania Avenue.

Robie Seidlinger was the airplane builder who pioneered on what is now Wawaset. Mr. Seidlinger, I believe, was engaged in the typewriter business. He had mechanical and

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scientific talent. And so, he built an airship, presumably in accordance with ideas upon which he based his calculations.

Although I saw him at his task several times, I do not remember just what success he had. I saw him testing his machine and figuring on improvements. He was enabled to carry on his experiment because he had the encouragement and financial backing of several substantial citizens who obviously believed there was a future for aviation.

The sponsors of the project were frequent visitors to Mr. Seidlinger's workshop, which was in one of the buildings on the grounds. They watched the enterprise in its various stages. My recollection is, however, that there was little known of the venture except by the persons directly concerned.

This revives memories of the various uses which have been made of the Wawaset tract within my recollection. When I first knew the place it was known as Schuetzen Park. At one time it was outside the city. The western municipal boundary was Union Street. Inside the enclosure there were a track and a clubhouse in which refreshments were sold. In the center there was a comprehensive array of stables.

Sometimes there were quartered in the stables, temporarily, strings of horses brought here from other places. The track and other facilities made Schuetzen Park an ideal place in which to train horses and keep them in good condition.

The track became very popular. Eventually regular matinees were held there, chiefly on Saturdays, by owners of local horses trained for harness racing. Most of the horses entered in the matinee races were driven by their owners, who engaged in the sport for the love of it and because of

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their natural interest in horses. In later years the races were held on the then new track at Elsmere.

It was the members of the matinee group of horsemen who formed the McDaniel Horse Club, named in honor of the late Elmer E. McDaniel, and the Willis Horse Club, named for J. Wirt Willis, who were among the most enthusiastic members of the racing group.

The name of the enclosure finally was changed to Wawaset Park. That name was retained until it was converted into a housing site. Since then it has been known as Wawaset.

During several years of the Wilmington fair, started as the county fair, the park was the fair ground. Although even then it was regarded as almost "out in the country," it was readily accessible from all parts of Wilmington. In order to make the fair easy to reach the Peoples Railway Co. ran one of the lines of its city system from Seventh Street up to the main gate on Woodlawn Avenue at Ninth Street. The spur was continued in use as part of the Seventh and Eighth Streets line of the Delaware Electric Power Co., which in 1915 absorbed the competing system. The Delaware Coach Co. now operates on Woodlawn Avenue, serving the residents of Wawaset.

Eventually the fair was moved to Elsmere, where, although modern and adequate facilities were provided, it was unable to make ends meet. And so, it passed out of the picture, leaving the field to the Kent and Sussex Fair held annually at Harrington.

Wawaset Park had an interesting and useful history, much of which now is only a memory.



DELAPLANE

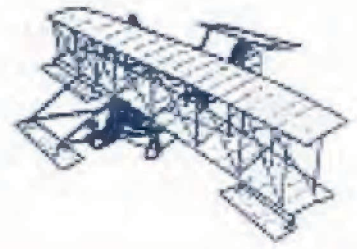
Delaware's first airplane

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2011 DAHF Inductees

Six current or former Delawareans have been named to the Delaware Aviation Hall of Fame (DAHF). They will be inducted at the organization's Annual Honors Banquet on September 24, bringing the total inductees to 73 since the inaugural year 2000.

One of the six will be inducted posthumously.

According to Hugh Horning, president, all six are pilots, one a female astronaut. Two saw military combat during WW II, one during the Korean War and two during the Viet Nam war. And four were also involved in civilian aviation.



Daniel E. Coons, Ed.D, Dover - is the founder of the Airways Science Program at Delaware State University which was later broadened nationally via the USAF ROTC program. Since its inception in 1987, the undergraduate degree-granting program has trained and placed hundreds of graduates in commercial, corporate, governmental and military aviation careers.



Nancy J. Currie, PhD, Wilmington - is a NASA astronaut who has successfully performed as a mission specialist on four space shuttle missions, accruing more than 1000 hours in space. A retired U.S. Army Colonel with more than 4000 flying hours as a Master Army Aviator, she is the first female Army officer selected as an astronaut.



John D. Kroening, Milford - enlisted in the Army Air Corps for pilot training at age 18 early in WW II. He flew B-25 medium bombers across the Atlantic to Africa. Stationed in Corsica, he flew 65 missions in southern Europe destroying bridges and RR tracks to disrupt enemy

supply lines. He was awarded the Air Medal eight times and the Distinguished Flying Cross twice.



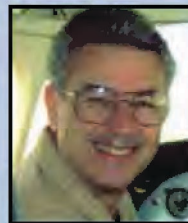
John A. Jordan, Newark - a U.S. Army Chief Warrant Officer (Ret), Flew AH-1G Cobra helicopters in Viet Nam for 780 combat hours. Following 20 years of Army service, he joined Boeing/Defense Division for an additional 19 years of aviation service. He is currently employed by Survice Engineering Co. as a test pilot.

He has a total of 10,000 accident/incident-free flight hours.



Lt. Col. David F. McCallister (1920-1961) - a WW II P-51 combat pilot with 131 missions, rebuilder of the Delaware Air National Guard starting in 1948, winner of a national jet air race, became Chief, Engineering Test Flight with Delaware's All American Engineering Co. With more than 4000 flying hours,

he was nationally known as a strong proponent of military airpower advancement and flying safety. He died in 1961 in an aircraft accident at age 41.



John P. Renzetti, Chief Warrant Officer (Ret), Chadds Ford, PA became a helicopter pilot in 1969 and deployed to Viet Nam in 1971 with a total of 700 combat hours. In 1972 he joined the Delaware Army National Guard and became a full-time instructor following 8 years as chief pilot for an industrial

company in West Africa. A Master Army Aviator, he has over 19,000 hours in fixed-wing and rotary aircraft, both military and civilian.

The Honors Banquet will be held Saturday, September 24 in Clayton Hall, University of Delaware, Newark. Reception will be at 5PM, dinner and program at 6:15 PM. Jacket and tie. Tables seating eight will be available. Parking is plentiful and free.

For further information, please call (302) 674 2868 or VISIT WWW.dahf.ORG.

Honors Banquet Tickets Ordering Now Available on DAHF Website

To make it easier for you (and us) to process invitations, order form replies, payments and ticket distribution, we have set up the "Pay Pal" system for credit card payment.

Go to our website www.DAHF.org, click on the "Honors Banquet" button in the left navigation panel, then click on "Order Tickets" and follow the directions to place your order.

Aviation Historic Marker Dedicated in Wawaset Park

A state of Delaware historic marker commemorating the first flight of an airplane designed, built, and flown in Delaware 100 years ago, was dedicated in the Wilmington community of Wawaset Park on Saturday, June 25. The aircraft, named Delaplane, flew from a racetrack for several hundred feet on October 21, 1910 in what was then known as Horseshow Park and the Gentlemen's Driving Club.

The idea of a marker commemorating the historical Delaware Aviation event was initiated by the Delaware Aviation Hall of Fame (DAHF) and coordinated with the Delaware Archives Office with grants provided by state senator Harris McDowell and state representative Gerald Brady in whose districts the marker lies. The entire project and ceremony on June 25 was organized and managed by Jim Hickin, a DAHF Trustee and chairman of

its government relations committee. Speakers at the ceremony were Hugh Horning, president of DAHF, Al Suber, DAHF Trustee, Tom Summers, Delaware State Archives who unveiled the marker, Jim Hickin, State Representative Gerald Brady, and Harold Schneikert, president of the Wawaset Park Community Association.

The Delaplane has also been honored by DAHF ever since the organization's founding 12 years ago as the name of the organization's newsletter. A replica of it is featured in the DAHF emblem, newsletter masthead and on membership pins. It was featured as the theme of the 2010 annual Honors Banquet last Fall attended by some 300 guests.

The text of the Delaplane historic marker may be seen on the DAHF website:

www.dahf.org.



DAHF and Bellanca

The June meeting of the DAHF Board of Trustees was held in the Bellanca Airfield Museum near New Castle. It is the unofficial home base of the DAHF and contains a large display featuring the 67 DAHF inductees to date, partially shown in the photo. More information about the museum, including visiting hours, is available at www.friendsofbellanca.org.



Videos of DAHF Inductees

DAHF Trustee and 2006 Inductee Mike Brock initiated and is managing a new DAHF program titled "Aviation Legacy Videos" which includes interviews of past inductees' histories and achievements. The first inductee interviewee is Joe Jenkins, class of 2003, of Wyoming, Delaware. The videotape may be seen on the DAHF website www.DAHF.org. Additional videos of inductees will be forthcoming in the near future. The cost of DAHF videotape production by the Legacy Video company is being underwritten by an anonymous donor.