



**A History of the Claremont Municipal Airport
1927 to circa 1950**

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for the City of Claremont

&

New Hampshire Department of Transportation

Division of Aeronautics

Stantec Consulting Services, Inc.

February 2019

Introduction

This goal of this essay is to present an in-depth history of the Claremont, New Hampshire Airport and its role in the life of its community from its founding in 1927 up to about 1950. During that initial period, supporters of the airport believed that they had reason to hope that the Claremont Airport could emerge as a major asset to the regional economy and society of the Upper Connecticut Valley, and in particular that commercial airline and air-freight service via the airport would promote the further growth and development of Claremont. As circumstances and events allowed, not least among them that of the initial siting of the airport, the hopes of the airport boosters were bound for frustration; nonetheless, the early story of the airport offers considerable illustration and insight as regards the early history of aviation in America as seen from a regional perspective (Figure 1).

The preparation of this historical account came about in connection with a public project for the improvement of the airport facility. Since approximately 2011, the historic 1927 hangar building at the airport has been the subject of study and assessment as regards its suitability for further service. Evaluation of the building as a historic resource has been a prominent element in the series of investigations concerning the 1927 hangar. As a consequence of its finding in a determination of eligibility study that the hangar is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places, the New Hampshire Division of Historical Resources has requested that this history of the airport be compiled in order to provide the Claremont community with documentation of the airport's significant role in the city's heritage (Figure 2).

The author would like to express his thanks for this opportunity to Stantec Consulting Services, Inc., to the City of Claremont, and to the New Hampshire Department of Transportation. For their assistance with the research for this historical study, his thanks are also (and warmly) due to Fire Chief Bryan Burr at the Claremont Fire Department, and to the staffs of the Bureau of Aeronautics at NHDOT, especially Tricia Lambert, the Fiske Free Library in Claremont, the New Hampshire State Archives, especially Brian Burford, the New Hampshire Historical Society, and the New Hampshire State Library.

A Brief History of Claremont, New Hampshire

Settlement of the Claremont area by European Americans commenced in 1762 when Moses Spafford and David Lynde came north from Connecticut province, cleared land and established homesteads in this location in the wilderness portion of New Hampshire that had not yet been organized as regards town jurisdictions. Spafford and Lynde evidently recognized the excellent potential embodied in the town's future site strategically located astride the banks of the Sugar River adjacent to that tributary stream's outlet into the Connecticut River. These pioneers' activities drew the attention of additional Connecticut colonists, and on October 26, 1764, Governor Benning Wentworth issued a land grant to sixty-nine men for a new town to be named Claremont. The name was chosen to commemorate in America an estate of that name in England owned by Lord Clive, a friend of the governor. The sixty-nine grantees mostly treated their individual grants as investment assets; just three of them settled in the new town themselves, while most sold their Claremont holdings to other settlers by 1767.¹



FIGURE 1

Aerial photo of Claremont Airport, 1993
(Source: NHDOT, Division of Aeronautics)



FIGURE 2

Claremont Airport 1927 hangar in November 2018, looking to northwest
(Photographer: Philip E. Pendleton)

A great asset for the new community was its excellent situation vis a vis waterpower for industry such as various types of mills, provided by the Sugar River and the sloping topography of the location. The course of the Sugar drops by some 300 feet as winds its way through Claremont. Benjamin Tyler established a gristmill-sawmill complex in 1767, and within a few years added an iron forge and smelting works. Tyler built a second gristmill downstream from the older one in 1775, and in 1800 added a flax mill to his industrial holdings. Other industry-minded proprietors were drawn to the town, including the owner of the town's first paper mill in 1810, the woolen mill operator Asa Meacham in 1813, who used the wool of America's first flocks of Merino sheep (introduced to Claremont by Leonard Jarvis in 1810), and the shareholders of the Sugar River Manufacturing Company, maker of cotton and woolen textiles, in 1831. The Sugar River Company was renamed the Monadnock Mills in 1846. With occasional downturns due to periodic nationwide economic recessions, Claremont would continue as a vital and prosperous manufacturing center of the traditional type through about the 1970s. Its population rose to 2,526 in 1830 and would attain the level of 12,377 in 1930. Claremont became a city in 1948. As of 2010, its population numbered 13,355.²

Claremont's real industrial prominence came following the advent of railroad service to the community. The Sullivan Railroad (later designated a division of the Boston & Maine), running north from Springfield, Massachusetts to traverse the length of the Connecticut Valley, opened service to Claremont in 1849. Perhaps the most pronounced boost to the town's industrial development, however, came in 1871 when Claremont became a significant rail junction due to the completion of the Boston & Maine line connecting the town to Concord and thus more directly to Boston and the eastern seaboard. This development was enabled by the completion of the steep Newbury Cut, a challenging project. Further development of Claremont's industrial base was evident in the growth of the Monadnock Mills which became famous for its "Marseilles" brand quilts, and in the establishment of other large concerns including the Sullivan Machinery Company in 1851 (famous for its production of the line of Diamond Drills and various mining machinery), and the Sugar River Paper Company in 1866 (later known as the Claremont Paper Company). Drawn by the town's industrial growth, Claremont came in the late nineteenth century to be home to noteworthy Russian, Polish, and Scandinavian ethnic enclaves in addition to the earlier arrived groups of Anglo-American, Irish-American and French-Canadian heritage (Figures 3 and 4).³

In addition to the important industrial complex in the town, and to the long thriving dairy farming community outside the urban core, retail commerce was evidently an economic factor that made a significant contribution to Claremont's prosperity up to the 1970s. With its attractive downtown core area composed of substantial brick commercial blocks lining Tremont Square and Pleasant Street, Claremont became known in the larger Upper Connecticut Valley region as "The Shoppers' Town." As noted in the 1938 *American Guide* New Hampshire volume and in the 1939 town directory, downtown Claremont represented "the shopping district, not only for the town, but for surrounding villages in both New Hampshire and Vermont." It was said at this time that the "approximately 250 retail places of business and 100 professional offices" comprised the commercial and service hub for more than 65,000 regional inhabitants, a figure about five times or more that of Claremont's own population.⁴

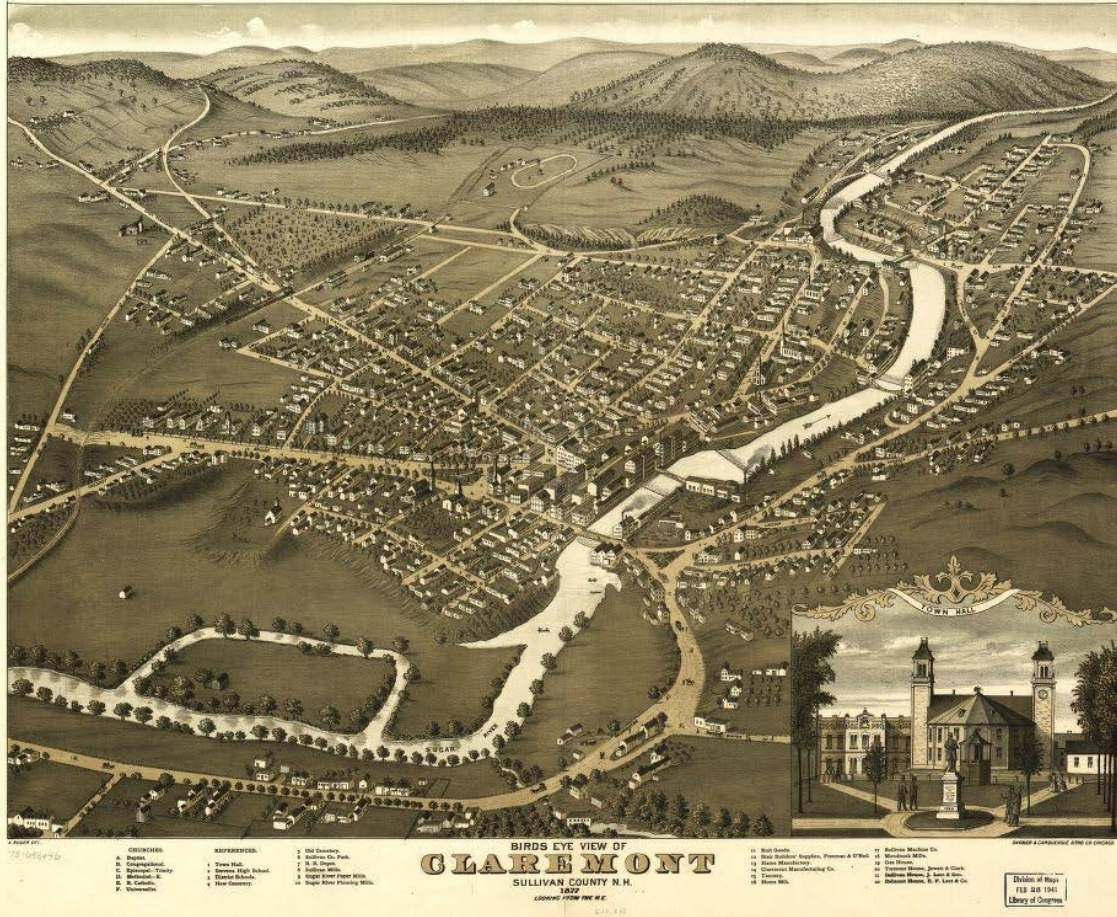


FIGURE 3

Bird's-eye view of Claremont, 1877
 (Source: A. Ruger; Library of Congress collection)

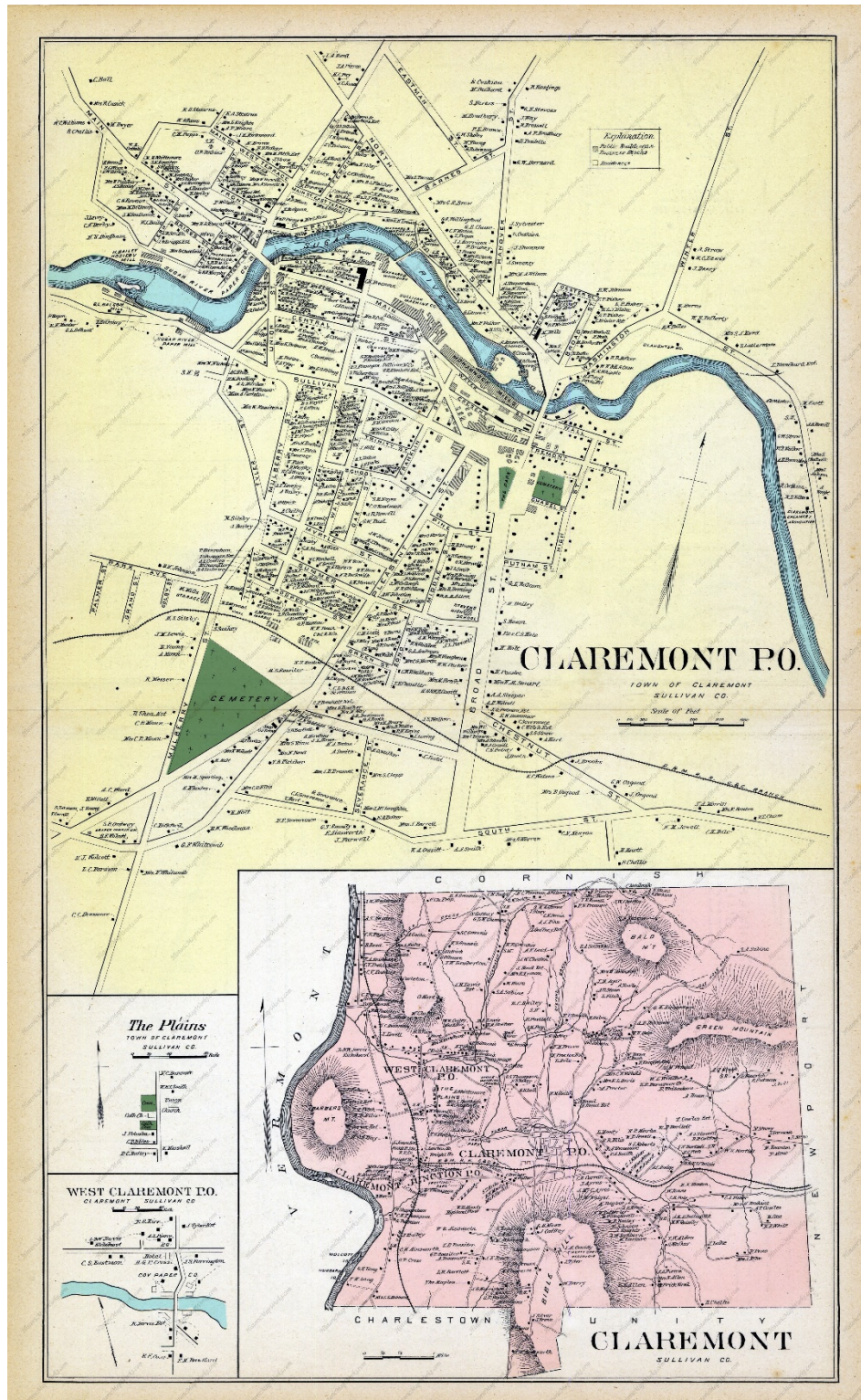


FIGURE 4

Map of Claremont, 1892

(Source: D.H. Hurd & Co., *Town and City Atlas of the State of New Hampshire*)

As happened in the late twentieth century to so many historically prosperous industrial and commercial communities of its size, Claremont entered a period of economic and demographic difficulty around 1980. The town's mills gradually closed down during the 1970s and 1980s. The regionally important highway route of Interstate 89, connecting the Concord-Manchester area with Montreal, ran through Lebanon and Hanover to the north, bypassing Claremont, and West Lebanon evolved into the region's major commercial hub, ending the reign of the former "Shoppers' Town." As the twenty-first century proceeds, however, Claremont seems to have entered upon a phase of gradually rebounding fortunes, occasioned by light-industrial and tourism-related redevelopment (such as the Red River Computer Company and Common Man Inn complex which have transformed a portion of the old Monadnock Mills).⁵

Aviation in New Hampshire up to ca. 1950

The first documented airplane flight in New Hampshire took place on June 19, 1911, when Harry Atwood flew his Burgess-Wright biplane from Waltham, Massachusetts, following the course of the Merrimack River as far as Concord in one day. The first instance of aircraft ownership in the state came with Robert S. "Bob" Fogg's 1920 acquisition of a Curtis biplane in Toronto, Canada, which the talented aviator then flew overland to Concord "without a compass or guide other than the sun." The delivery of air mail began in the state, in a limited way, with the circuit route that Fogg established at the famous vacation area of Lake Winnepesaukee in the summer of 1923. Fogg flew a seaplane around the lake to deliver the mail to the many leading businessmen who were taking their ease at hotels and cabins, no doubt lowering the blood pressure for a number of these grandees who were involved in important ongoing financial transactions regardless of time of year or their current location. In the 1920s, Fogg emerged as a veritable "prince of aviators" in the Granite State.⁶

Commercial aviation activity developed rapidly in New Hampshire in the decade or so following the close of the First World War in 1918, as it did in most parts of the nation. It took some time for this activity to evolve beyond the more rudimentary forms and aspects embodied in the relatively small airfields and relatively few and diminutive aircraft that characterized aviation in most areas outside the most important metropolitan centers such as New York City, Chicago and Los Angeles. Northeast Airways was New Hampshire's first commercial aviation firm to offer charter passenger service, beginning in 1928. The insurmountably adverse business circumstances of the Great Depression dealt a death blow to this ambitious effort in 1933, although for a brief span of years Northeast had flown a fleet of five planes offering service on call between Boston and Concord and Manchester. More important generally than passenger service in the nascent years of American commercial aviation was the air mail service supported by regular contracts between the fledgling air companies and the US Postal Service. The Boston & Maine and Central Vermont Airline (a firm established by those railroad corporations in partnership) secured the first New Hampshire airmail contract in June 1934 for air postal delivery between Boston, the New Hampshire cities of Concord and Manchester, and White River Junction, Montpelier and Burlington in Vermont, a service soon extended to become international in scope by reaching to Montreal. In December 1934 the railroad-run airline began carrying air express freight as well.⁷

The earliest reliable statistics for aviation in New Hampshire were compiled in 1930, when there were 48 aircraft and 55 pilots registered in the state. This registration number would increase by 1939 to 64 planes and 188 aviators. In 1931, the state began counting airfields, of which there were then 24 regularly used stations (including seaplane docks) “for the landing and taking off of aircraft and which provide facilities for shelter, supply, and repair of aircraft.” In 1933, the record keepers considered the matter of facilities appropriate to the operations of commercial aviation, and found that there were just 16 fields in the state that were registered for commercial use, of which just three, all municipal properties, “could be considered safe for extensive commercial operations.”⁸

Similar census counts for New Hampshire aviation made during the years following World War II reflected a considerable and rapid growth in local commercial aviation activity after the conclusion of hostilities. As of 1949, just four years after war’s end, the state was home to 243 registered aircraft and 650 registered pilots. There were 12 public airports including four that were receiving scheduled airline passenger service. By 1952 the latter number grew to five including Berlin, Concord, Laconia, Keene, and Lebanon. (Manchester was not receiving service because the Air Force was retaining the field for use as an air base.)⁹

New Hampshire, however, lagged behind other areas of the northeastern US somewhat in terms of airline service during the 1950s and 1960s due to the rural character of most of the state. As stated by the New Hampshire Aeronautics Commission in 1962, this relative dearth of service was caused by the lack of a large concentration of population and the fact that the distances between regional centers such as Concord, Portsmouth, Nashua, Keene, and Claremont, were actually not very long. These factors ran against the simple fact that “the very characteristics of air transport dictate high speed and non-stop operation over long distances to take maximum advantage of this form of travel.”¹⁰

Formation of the Claremont Airport, 1927

The Claremont Airport—the second to open in the state of New Hampshire, in 1927—came about due to the inspiration and effort of a number of resident businesspeople, members of Claremont’s Chamber of Commerce. Amidst the prosperity and economic growth of the 1920s era, with bright horizons of opportunity on the national scene, the local boosters apparently saw aviation as a key factor in the nation’s future, and also for their town of Claremont, promising new commercial opportunities for the community. Claremont could become a key link in Northern New England’s transportation system, which would be revolutionized by the airplane.

Among Claremont’s citizens at large, there appears to have been a fair amount of support for the idea of a local airport. In the town, as throughout the United States, people were generally excited about aviation, about its thrilling modernity and the newfound ability to soar through the air at great speed and survey the surrounding landscape, with people, animals, trees, buildings, automobiles, etc., appearing as if they were so many little toys. Claremont’s rival newspapers, the *Daily Eagle* and the *Advocate*, both featured front-page accounts of air-related events practically every day, such as the setting of new records for distance and speed and other achievements in flight, as well as stories of crashes and of missing or lost pilots.

In July 1927 the hero of the hour Charles Lindbergh, while flying the *Spirit of St. Louis* on a celebratory tour of New England subsequent to his epic solo flight across the Atlantic, flew over Claremont. This “near visit” generated excitement in Claremont even though the famed aviator was too tightly scheduled to touch down and make a visit to the town in person. On the morning of July 26, it was learned that “Lucky Lindy” planned to pass over Claremont on his way to Springfield, Vermont from the state capital of Concord, where he had stayed the night before. This news generated a tremor of excitement that vibrated through the town’s entire populace. As reported in a local newspaper, Claremont’s Superintendent of Schools Albert B. Kellogg, an aviation enthusiast,

posted himself on the roof of the Sullivan Machinery company building shortly before noon and braved the heat of the blazing sun in order that the word might be passed as soon as the plane crossed the horizon, and the factory whistles blown to tell the people of its coming. A minute after 1:30 the plane was sighted coming down the Connecticut valley following the course of the river. The blast of the whistles followed immediately and was a signal for a mad dash into the streets from factory, office and store. Tremont Square, almost deserted a moment before in the lull following the noon hour, became thickly populated with an eager crowd scanning the skies. A shout went up as the plane came into view, the hum of its motor heard above the cries of welcome. Banking and circling, the plane passed over the center of the town, dropping lower and lower until its undercarriage seemed scarcely to clear the trees and rooftops, then passing directly over the Square a thin roll was slipped out through the window in the side of the plane to flutter down and drop within the exact center of the Square. It was picked up by John M. Little, the string and canvas wrapping cut away to reveal a greeting to Claremont from “Aboard the Spirit of St. Louis, On Tour.” Encircling the town several more times, now regaining elevation, the plane finally straightened out and headed toward Springfield, Vt., followed by the cheers of admiration and good wishes of all Claremont.¹¹

Lindbergh’s triumphal tour was more than a tour—Lucky Lindy had a mission, a goal that was endorsed by the US Department of Commerce. As Lindbergh would tell an audience on a celebratory dinner that evening in Springfield, he intended his tour to further “the advancement and development of aviation” in the United States, in which cause an important element was the establishment of airports. It may be that Lindbergh had been informed in Concord that there were parties in Claremont interested in the opening of an airport there, and that his flyover was intended to help promote the cause of aviation locally with a frisson of excitement. Here is the text of the note dropped by Lindbergh:¹²

Aboard “Spirit of St. Louis” On Tour

To the City of Claremont,

GREETINGS:

We regret exceedingly that the limited time and extensive itinerary of the United States tour prevents us from landing at your city.

We wish, however, to send you this greeting from the air to express our sincere appreciation of your interest in the tour and in the promotion and expansion of commercial aeronautics in the United States.

We feel that we will be amply repaid for all of our efforts if each and every citizen in the United States cherishes an interest in flying and gives his earnest support to the air mail service and the establishment of airports and similar facilities. The concerted effort of the citizens of the United States in this direction will result in America’s taking its rightful place within a very short time as the world leader in commercial flying.

CHARLES A. LINDERGH

On July 30, 1927—just four days after the Lindbergh flyover—a group of leading Claremont residents announced their plan to open an airport for the community, and to do so within the ensuing six weeks. These foremost citizens included Edward J. Rossiter, George A. Tenney, Roy E. Dodge, Fred Densmore, Elroy A. Barker, and Frank Putnam. The men stated their intention to form a well-capitalized corporation to get the facility up and going, although the possibility was voiced that the town might eventually move to adopt this asset as a municipally owned and administered enterprise. The group also proclaimed that they had secured an option with the airport in view on a tract of 70 acres judged suitable for the purpose. Already, on the morning of the 28th, a committee of local businessmen had taken Edward H. Holterman of Woodstock, Vermont, an engineering consultant specializing in airport siting and design, on a tour of the Claremont neighborhood to identify suitable sites, and Holterman had pointed to this property as meeting the criteria. The parcel had been the location of the town poor farm sometime back in the early or mid-nineteenth century, and was presently owned by Mrs. Prescott Putnam. A fairly level piece of undeveloped open ground, it had also served for a time “many years ago” as the site of a mile-long horse racecourse. This land was located approximately a mile and a half west of the central area of town on the south side of the Sullivan Street Extension. The line of the Boston & Maine Railroad ran east to west along the southern edge of the tract (Figure 5).¹³

The property extends from the Tolles meadow at the foot of Twistback [hill] southwesterly to the Jones property at Claremont Junction and provides a level plateau, admirably adapted to landing field purposes. This plateau when cleared will form an all-way field, that is, a field permitting airplane landing and take-off in any direction, a much desired feature in airports. . . . Clearing the tract of brush and undergrowth went forward at once with a crew of 25 men engaged on the task this week. The company expects that

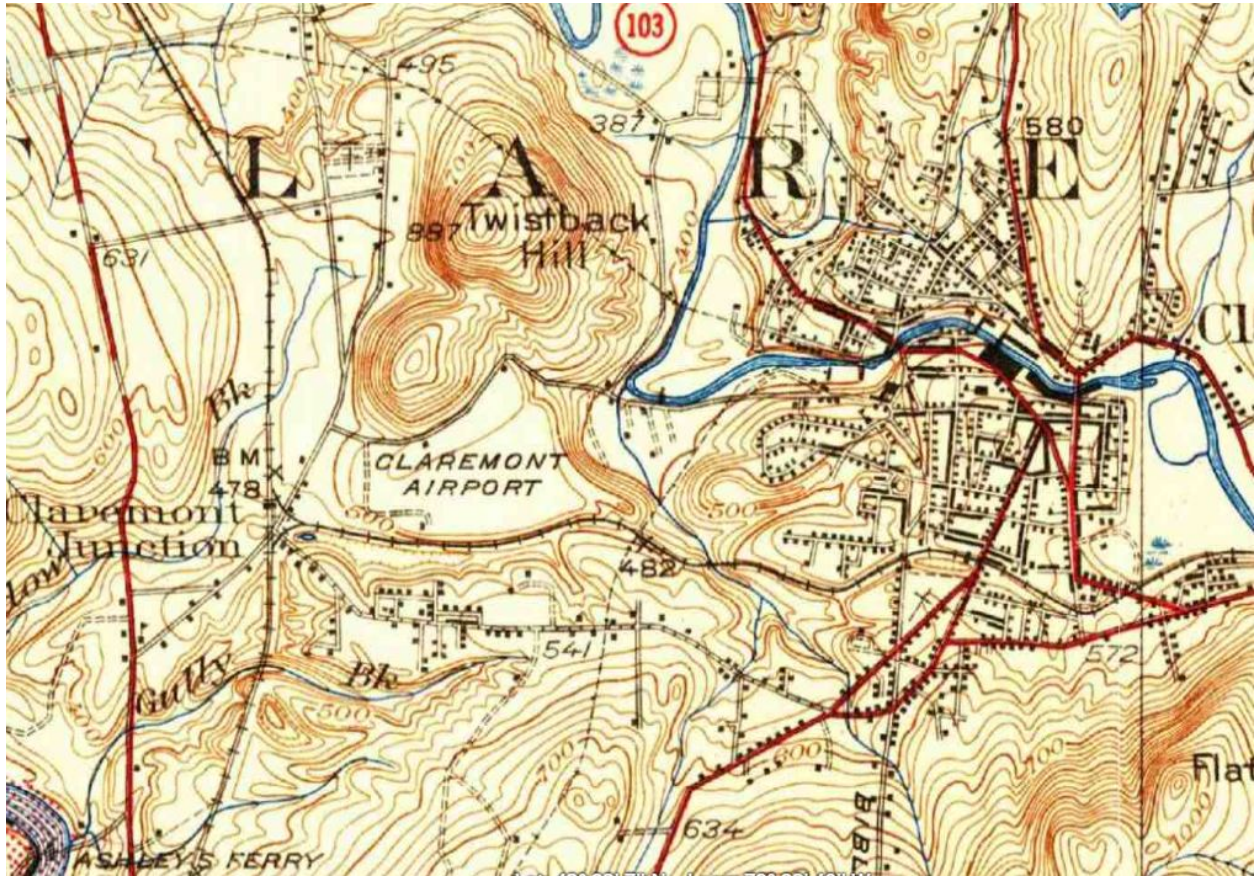


FIGURE 5

Claremont with airport property, 1929
(Source: US Geological Survey, *Claremont* 15 minute quadrangle)

the field will be ready for a formal dedication about the middle of September, at which time a celebration will be held, with a fleet of airplanes as a special attraction (*National Eagle* August 4, 1927).¹⁴

In the long run, unfortunately, the rosy outlook in 1927 regarding the selected location proved not to be warranted. The airport site, though itself representing a limited patch of nicely level ground, lay in a relatively narrow glen representing a notch intervening between two fairly steep slopes—a factor that did not bode well in the long run for this facility’s chances to head to the front of the pack as “the best airport in New England” (a stated aspiration of the promoters). At this early date, when most American aviation activity was still characterized by the war-surplus Curtiss Jenny biplanes employed by barnstormers in entertaining local crowds, the ambitious Claremont aviation entrepreneurs did not possess a crystal ball that might have shown them the forthcoming technological progress that would render their hemmed-in airport site obsolete.

On August 16, 1927, a group of leading Claremont citizens incorporated a company to be known as the Claremont Airport Corporation. The company was initially capitalized at \$15,000. The executive personnel for the Airport Corporation included Roy E. Dodge as President, J. Duncan Upham and George A. Tenney as Vice-Presidents, Edward J. Rossiter as Treasurer, and Albert Kellogg as Clerk. Dodge was owner of a drugstore and involved in real estate development. Upham, perhaps mainly retired, served the town as a Trustee of the Public Fund. Tenney was President of People’s National Bank and also served as Treasurer for both the Monadnock Mills Company and the Claremont Gas Light Company. Rossiter owned an insurance agency and also acted as one of the town’s justices of the peace. In addition to his post as public education Superintendent, Kellogg held the rank of Lieutenant Colonel as an active officer in the US Army Reserves. Within the past couple of weeks, the team working on the airport site had already removed some 2,000 small trees and stumps from the location, and was set to start filling in the shallow depressions in the land surface. Following completion of that task, a steamroller would traverse the plot to ensure that it was level. A hangar was planned, measuring 80 feet by 60 feet in plan and capable of accommodating eight to ten planes. The three-day celebratory and appropriately festive opening airshow was now planned for October 6 to 8.¹⁵

The private ownership years, 1927-1937

On September 20, 1927, the first airplane touched down at the nascent Claremont Airport. The pilot, Lieutenant Richard E. Cobb of the US Army Air Corps, pronounced the field to be “good, very good right now.” The Claremont community made a great to-do over the opening of the airport, with a three-day celebration October 6 to 8 including closing of the banks and schools, a parade, and balls on two nights. Plans were ambitious:

Claremont will be host to a list of celebrated aviators who will be here with a fleet of twenty or more airplanes. On several occasions these planes will be all in the air at one time, a sight never before seen in this vicinity.

The aerial spectacles to unfold over the three days would include races, parachute jumping, and stunt flying, and rides in planes would be on offer for a fee. In the actual event, Governor Huntley N. Spaulding and US Senator Henry W. Keyes honored the enterprise by their

attendance at the festivities. The pilots who participated numbered among them Robert Fogg, considered to be New Hampshire's own leading aviator, and Walter Johnson, a nationally famous stunt flier. A crowd of spectators estimated at 20,000 came to enjoy the wide variety of aerial demonstrations.¹⁶

As first established, the open dirt landing field of the Claremont Airport had two runway corridors, each defined rather approximately: a longer one extending east to west and approximately 2,500 feet in length, crossed at about its midpoint by the shorter north-south runway, about 1,500 feet long (Figure 6). The frame hangar building constructed in the early autumn of 1927, which was still standing in December 2018 though slated to be taken down, was sited by the northwest angle of the crux of the two runways, and close to Sullivan Street. Planes had easy access from the hangar to either runway. The historic hangar—the only building on the property as of 1927 and for about fourteen years thereafter—was a front-gabled building holding a single large open aircraft bay, measuring about 80 feet long by 60 feet deep, and having a frame lean-to addition extending along the west end of the hangar, about 60 feet by 15 feet (Figures 7 and 8). The addition was built as part of the original construction to provide some space for office work, relaxation and socializing (the “Pilots’ Lounge”), and service activity such as food preparation. The hangar had a clearance of about 20 feet in height between the packed dirt floor and the eaves (Figure 9). A set of four great wooden sliding doors mounted on tracks enabled this space to be left completely open at the front for the full 20 feet, or completely closed and secured. The building was sheltered under a metal roof supported by a wooden truss system. The exterior walls were clad with clapboard. Since its first construction, the hangar has been altered noticeably, e.g., by removing the original set of 20-foot-tall doors that extended fully across the main section of the building.¹⁷

Longtime local resident Edward J. Tenney II (1924-2007), who was in fact a grandson of airport founding partner George Tenney, spent much of his spare time at the airport beginning in his boyhood and ultimately, following World War II service in the Army Air Corps, kept his own plane at the field. In 1996, Ed Tenney described the field as it existed around 1940, just before America's entry into World War II:

The airport was more or less a cow pasture. A large circle, drawn with lime, was placed on the ground. A windsock was positioned inside that circle of lime so the pilots could ascertain the direction of the wind.¹⁸

Businessmen involved in or connected with the Claremont Airport Corporation set up another company to actively manage the facility, viz., the Claremont Aero Service Corporation, registered with the State of New Hampshire on July 17, 1928. Claremont School Superintendent Albert Kellogg acted as President of this entity; Kellogg was also Clerk for the Airport Corporation. The company's first “operating manager” and general pilot was Albert S. Harvey, flying an OX-Waco 5, a rebuilt surplus plane from the First World War. Frank Gibson, who also flew a Waco, took over as Claremont Aero's general manager by 1929 and continued in that role until some date in 1931, when he in turn was superseded by Floyd B. Miller. Apparently, however, after five years of trying, the Aero Service establishment was not able to make a go of its business, and was ultimately dissolved in April 1933.¹⁹

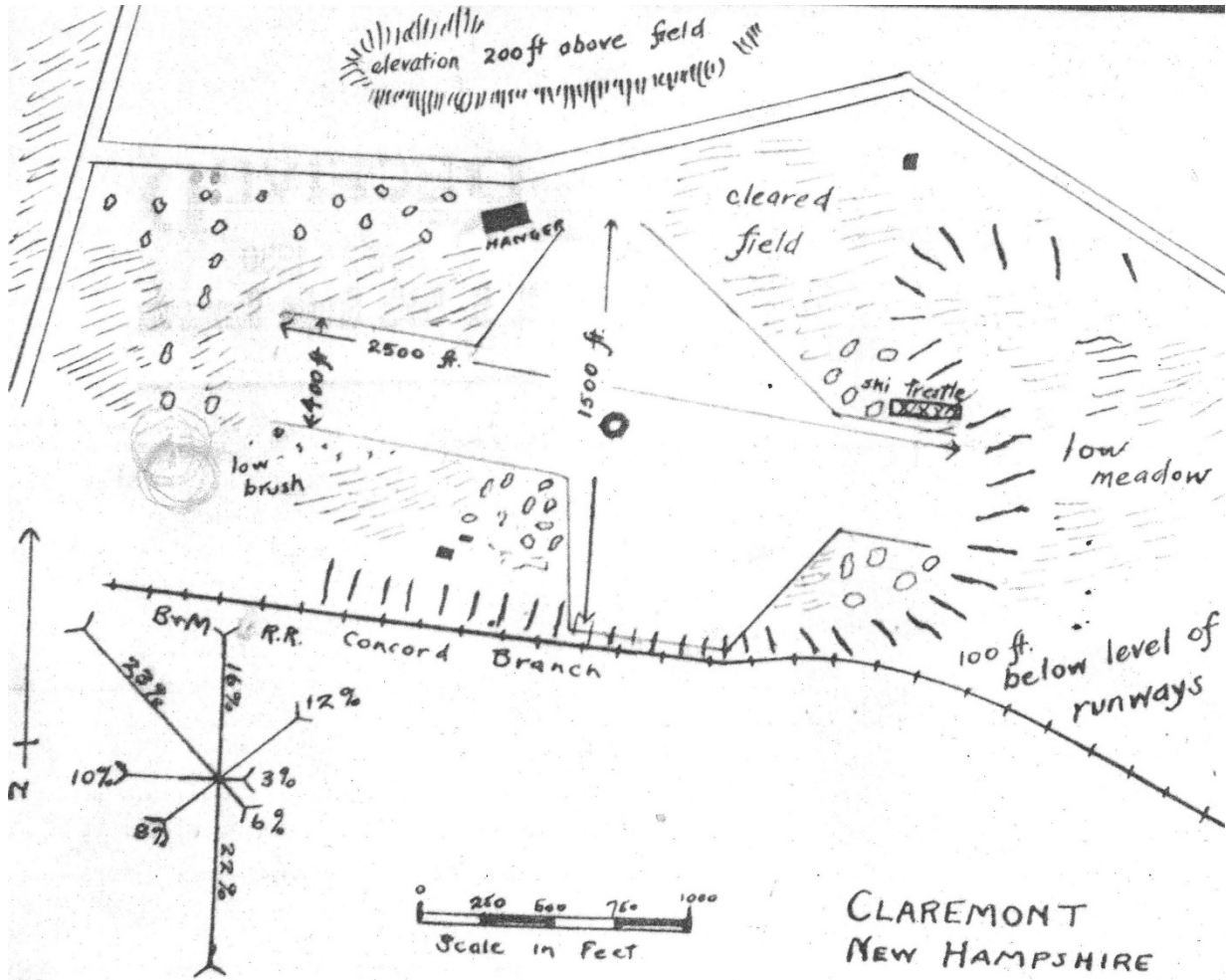


FIGURE 6

Sketch plan of Claremont Airport, 1930, evidently made for Claremont Airport Corporation
 (Source: NHDOT, Division of Aeronautics)



FIGURE 7

Postcard view of Claremont airport hangar, circa 1928
(Source: New Hampshire Historical Society)



FIGURE 8

Claremont airport 1927 hangar in November 2018, looking to north
(Photographer: Philip E. Pendleton)



FIGURE 9

Claremont airport 1927 hangar in November 2018, interior view
(Photographer: Philip E. Pendleton)

Aviator Edward H. Spooner took over the airport operation as an independent manager-proprietor on November 5, 1932. His responsibilities included those of local commercial pilot, flying to provide a variety of aerial services. Ed Spooner had the assistance of his energetic wife Pearl Granville Spooner. Pearl had a family background in aviation—her brothers ran an aircraft-making firm in the Springfield, MA, vicinity, where they produced a speed record-holding model of airplane known as the GB Racer. The Spooners initially made their domicile as well as office in the hangar's leanto section, though they later purchased a house in downtown Claremont and had it moved onto a lot situated a stone's throw from the airport property. In November 1935, the state office of the Federal government's Works Progress Administration, the famous WPA, appointed Ed Spooner to supervise its projects at New Hampshire airports, which job required him to take up residence in Concord for a year or so. While Ed served in this capacity, Pearl stayed behind in Claremont to maintain the couple's hold on management of that field, with pilot Fred Greenwood working for them to do the flying. The Spooners would continue their management and air service proprietorship at Claremont until February 1942, following the outbreak of America's participation in World War II, when Ed would be appointed to a training position in Alabama instructing military pilots.²⁰

A change in the ownership of the airport real estate came on October 26, 1933, when the Claremont Airport Corporation conveyed the field to a bankers' partnership comprising the People's National Bank of Claremont and the Claremont National Bank. This transition was evidently undertaken in response to the straitened circumstances of the Great Depression, which by that time had been ravaging the nation's economic and social life for some four and a half years and had no doubt been severely impeding the general public's usage of aviation services, outside perhaps of governmental projects such as aerial survey and mapping photography, police work, and forest and flood patrol. On March 1, 1934, the Town of Claremont began leasing the airport property from the banks and renting it out in turn to manager-proprietor Spooner. In June 1935, the Claremont Airport Corporation was dissolved. The banks retained ownership of the airport until the town took over actual ownership in early 1937.²¹

A beneficial aspect of the town's lease was that it qualified the airport to be a public agency that could apply to the Federal government for aid from New Deal programs. During March to May 1934, the Civil Works Administration (or CWA), which President Roosevelt had established on a temporary basis to organize short-term employment for millions of people during the particularly dire conditions of the winter of 1933-1934, carried out a project of long-deferred maintenance and updating improvement at the airport. The CWA team of fifty workmen repaired the hangar, gave it a floor of cement, deposited fill adjacent to the front of the building to bring the grade up to the level of the hangar's cement apron, cut down a great deal of trees and brush, took down the telephone and electric-power poles that had been present, excavated a ditch and installed new underground telephone and power cables, and set about building an improved runway. Prior to 1934, the airfield had been laid out essentially as an open dirt area with two axes for taking off or landing, one aligned approximately east-west, the other approximately north-south. In the 1934 modernizing project undertaken under the town's oversight, the re-design gave the east-west landing strip a length of 2500 feet and precedence in treatment and usage over the north-south strip, which would now go into a status of disuse as regards take-off and landing activity. The original 1927 design had also provided for a length of 2500 feet for the east-west strip but apparently either the initial work had failed to fully embody the planned

design, or vegetation such as saplings had been allowed to take over portions of the area because in day-to-day use the relatively small craft routinely using the field could make do with a reduced area. A May 1934 newspaper account of the improvement project reported that

The main feature of the landing field when work is completed will be a runway 2500 feet long and 500 feet wide, running east and west. This part of the project is practically completed. The length of the runway will allow the landing and taking off of heavier aircraft, and the 500-foot width is sufficient to handle the landing of planes from the south. A north-and-south runway is not contemplated on account of Twistback Hill, which creates a down draft at the north end of the field and makes landing of planes from that direction hazardous (*National Eagle* May 3, 1934).²²

IN THE NEWS

*Flying Circus To Remain For An Extra Day – October 25, 1928**

The Gates Flying Circus continued its carnival here Wednesday and today. Despite the chill weather of Wednesday afternoon the airport was a mecca for the half-holiday crowd and passenger-hopping was popular with the curious and the enthusiastic. The visiting fliers staged another thrilling show during the afternoon, featuring a variety of stunts that left the crowd gasping.

This noon the square was crowded with youngsters and adults interested in grabbing up one or more of the twenty miniature parachutes to be released from the planes. Shortly after 12 o'clock two of the planes circling high over town, executed a variety of daring evolutions, and then circling about released the parachutes one by one. A stiff breeze carried them clear across the town in an easterly direction, but several were located in a short space of time by the crowds that chased them.

National Eagle

Inauguration of Night Flying Draws Many To Local Field As Noise of Plane Arouses Town – May 15, 1930

Night flying was inaugurated at the local airport Friday night when pilots [Albert] Harvey and Nason made an initial flight over the town at 8:45 PM, rousing considerable interest and some uneasiness on the part of townspeople who, unacquainted with the nature of the procedure and believing a plane in distress, telephoned town officials or made a trip to the field to attempt to assist the supposedly marooned aviator to make a safe landing. Several hundred cars were at the port before the program of night flying ended, and several passengers took advantage of the opportunity to make their first nocturnal trip aloft. C.H. Garland, local taxi driver, was the first person [passenger] to see Claremont from the air at night. The writer was the last, making the flight at 11:15 PM, just as the theatres were letting out.

It is impossible to describe the wonders of night flying. The Square and all streets leading into the business section looked like the "Great White Way" of Broadway. Visibility was excellent, and persons could be seen coming from the theatres and going into the restaurants. The bright moonlight showed up the horizon for fifty miles. One

* For the purpose of this document, newspaper excerpts have been edited, generally by reducing them in length for the sake of brevity.

seemed suspended in space, with the twinkling stars above and the twinkling lights below—a new thrill.

It was not a particularly pleasant thrill, however, for town officials including members of the police and fire departments, who acted on phone messages from persons believing the plane a low-flying stranger in distress and in search of a landing place. Considerable criticism was heard today of the fact that the flight had been made without previous warning.

National Eagle

Airport's Pet Cat Has Thrilling Trip – June 5, 1930

Waco, a small pet tiger cat at the Claremont Airport got the thrill of a lifetime—and then some—when it had its first airplane ride Monday evening.

Pilot Harvey took his plane up before dark and after gaining considerable altitude felt something pushing against his leg. Looking down he saw Waco walking around on the floor of the cockpit.

On landing poor Waco got the thrill of his life when the rumbling of the wheels scared him. Making a wild dash for the rear of the plane, he hid himself behind the fuselage, but after some coaxing came out of his own accord, feeling none the worse for the experience.

National Eagle

New York Woman Lands Plane Here – September 3, 1931

The first woman flier to put in at the Claremont field since the local airport was established came here Monday afternoon when Mrs. John T. Renney of New York landed her “165” Travelair biplane after a flight from Curtis field, Long Island. Mrs. Renney was making her first long distance cross-country flight. She spent the night with friends in New London and took off for her home field this noon.

National Eagle

New Cabin Plane Added to Fleet At Local Field – September 10, 1931

A third airplane, a new Waco cabin model, has been added to the fleet at the Claremont airport. The ship arrived this morning from Boston, and was immediately placed in commission as a part of the air transport facilities of the Claremont flying field.

The new plane was purchased by Pilot Floyd Miller with the financial assistance of interested persons here, although it is understood that it may later be taken over by the Aero Service Corporation. It is one of the latest model Wacos of the cabin type, powered with a 165-horsepower Continental motor, and will used entirely for passenger flying.

National Eagle

Local Boy Sets Flying Record – September 24, 1931

What is believed to be a United States record was established here Saturday afternoon by Harold Davis, son of Mr. and Mrs. Clifford Davis, owner of the Ideal Laundry, Washington Street, when the young man soloed a plane after receiving only 2 hours and 15 minutes instructions. The young aviation enthusiast learned under the supervision of Transport Pilot Floyd Miller of the Claremont Airport.

On his first solo flight Davis took the OX-5 Waco off the ground in a capable manner and after circling the field a couple of times set the ship down on all three points, executing a perfect landing.

National Eagle

Spooner Plane Flies Mail To White River Jct. And Return As Flood Emergency Service – March 26, 1936

With the mails held up on account of flood conditions on the highways and railroads, Postmaster Harry Severance resorted to the air Thursday and some 80 pounds of first class mail was shipped out of Claremont for White River Junction, Vt., at 11:55 o'clock that morning, marking the first airmail service out of Claremont since the opening of the airport in 1927.

The take-off for White River was made under extremely hazardous conditions. The field was muddy and soggy from the heavy rains, and only about 300 feet at the northwest corner was in condition suitable for the take-off.

Skillfully handling the heavy Standard plane, Pilot Ed Spooner headed it into the wind. The ship picked up speed rapidly and lifted from the ground about 10 feet from the point where the muddy ground starts.

The trip north over flooded valley areas was made in about 15 minutes, and a successful landing was made on the Twin State airport, where about 125 pounds of southbound mail was loaded aboard. The plane arrived back at the Claremont airport about 12:30, bringing the first mail from the north to arrive here in two days.

National Eagle

The public acquisition of the airport, 1936-1937

Proponents first made a bid for the town to officially acquire the airport in the winter of 1936. Claremont's Town Warrant for 1936, posted in early March, was the roster of proposed expenditures and other public actions for that year. The warrant included an item proposing appropriation of \$4,500 to purchase the airport property and also any adjacent land parcel deemed necessary to make a "complete landing field." Town ownership would enable the receiving of a \$37,500 grant from the WPA to expand and improve the airport. After an intense debate on the floor of the March 10 town meeting, in which airport proponent George Tenney faced strenuous opposition to the airport initiative led by Judge Albert D. Leahy and John H. Leahy, the citizens voted against the acquisition. Tenney could not even get a vote on his suggestion that the town invite the WPA staffer who was present to describe the project and the grant application process. (The Federal grant would have entailed the town putting forth a matching expenditure of \$8,000 on top of the \$4,500 for the purchase, a total of \$12,500 to be supplemented by the generous threefold benefit from the WPA).²³

A year's reflection on the part of the citizenry, however, brought a favorable response regarding the town takeover. In March 1937, an item for purchase of the airport was again on the Town Warrant, the bankers having reduced their price to \$1,500. Proponents noted that the town was already paying \$150 a year to lease the airport and that at this rate they might as well take advantage of the low asking price to acquire the property outright. At the town meeting on March 9, the voters approved the acquisition, and on March 11 the two owning banks duly conveyed the airport property to the Town of Claremont.²⁴

The pre-war town ownership period, 1937-1941

It was during the years just following the town acquisition, while Ed Spooner was still managing the airport and running his Claremont-based aviation business, that young Ed Tenney became intimately familiar with the field and with airplanes.

I commenced my association with the airport when I was about fifteen years old [ca. 1939-1940]. In exchange for rides, I sold tickets and helped gas up airplanes for Ed Spooner. I was able to ride as a passenger with him in his New Standard open cockpit biplane. Spooner owned five airplanes and conducted most of his own mechanical work. Gasoline for the planes was acquired in 50-gallon drums which were stored in the hangar. We drew gas from these drums into milk cans. We then climbed upon the wings of the big biplane where we poured gas into its tanks through a chamois cloth held over a funnel.

Pilots were viewed as oddities in those days and to my knowledge up until 1937 there had never been a fatality at the Claremont Airport. Unfortunately, it was in that year that a young pilot by the name of Benjamin Gardner was killed on his twenty-first birthday while flying in an open cockpit out of the field.

In August of 1940, when I was just a bit over 16 years of age, I intended to commence flying lessons. Prior to 1940 my flying had been limited to jumping off the barn roof with a huge umbrella, modified into a parachute by tying the ribs down to the handle with bailing twine so it would not turn inside out when I jumped. My father became aware of that exercise when I badly sprained my ankle while leaping from the top of a maple tree. Anyway, my father asked that I not take flying lessons at that time [age 16]. Out of respect to his ill health, I deferred taking flying lessons until March of 1941. (My father died in December of 1940.) It was during my Easter vacation from Kimball Union Academy [a private boarding school located about ten miles from Claremont] in the spring of 1941 that I started taking flying lessons. As a result of my keen determination to become a pilot, I soloed on April 5, 1941. This unforgettable event followed six hours and forty minutes of instruction over a six-day period. My first solo flight occurred on April 5, 1941, just at daybreak. From April 5, 1941 to the present [1996], I have accumulated approximately 8,000 hours of flying time, both military and civilian.²⁵

Public ownership for the airport cleared the way for Federal money to aid in its improvement via WPA funding. In the course of the late 1930s, an additional factor arose that militated in favor of this Federal aid—members of President Franklin Roosevelt’s administration developed a deep conviction that America needed to start preparing for a major war in the face of the aggressive imperialist ambitions expressed by Hitler and the Nazi Germans and by the military clique that had gained control of the government of Japan under General Tojo. During the summer of 1940, with Ed Spooner still managing the facility, Federal authorities initiated a program at Claremont under the sponsorship of the CAA offering government-supported free flight training for civilian young men, with the understanding that such instruction should qualify them for future military air service. Claremont was one of five airfields in New Hampshire approved by the CAA for participation in this civilian training initiative. The local response was immediate and enthusiastic, as airport manager Ed Spooner informed a reporter for the *Claremont Advocate* on June 20, 1940. Spooner was a well-regarded flight teacher in the region; during the year 1939

alone, he had trained forty-five fliers who had then successfully passed the official test to be certified and licensed as pilots. As of June 20, in just the past week Spooner had received applications from eighteen men to receive consideration for the CAA's new program. He anticipated the acquisition of three additional planes, and that training of at least thirty pilots would commence by July 15. The program of instruction consisted of "a ground course, dual and solo flights and some instrument training, a total of 35 hours." Spooner described the interest among local candidates and gave a positive assessment of the airfield's suitability.

If present plans materialize, we will be training thirty new pilots at the field. We have had a large demand recently by young men who want to "beat the gun" and get in the Air Corps should they be called. If they have pilot training, they feel it enhances their chances. . . .

While our field lacks lights and [hard] surfaced runways, we can handle the fastest pursuit ship [i.e., fighter plane] the Army Air Corps is building. Only this past weekend an experimental job, a new Curtiss Wright ship with Pratt and Whitney 1200 HP motor, landed here after a fifteen-minute flight from Boston. If we can accommodate as fast a ship as that, our field must be pretty good. The pilot, Captain Sessions of the Air Corps, said our airport was the only available one on the Connecticut River above Hartford.²⁶

In the event, the program enrolled twenty-five of the applicants to participate in the course. The pilot training school was conducted over a period lasting several weeks, concluding before work commenced on the latest episode of airfield improvement.²⁷

A meeting in Claremont on June 25, involving officials from the WPA and state government, members of the town Chamber of Commerce, and Ed Spooner, outlined and assessed ideas for expansion of the airport.²⁸ A proposal for modifications to the Claremont airfield under WPA auspices, dated July 24, 1940, stated the basis for the projected improvements clearly:

New airport needed to assist in training pilots. Also airport can be used for commercial and military purposes. This has been designated a National Defense Project by the War Department.

The proposed budget for the improvements was \$110,645, of which the Federal government would provide \$93,000 or 84%. The project was centered on improvement of the runways, presently consisting of dirt:

Clear and grub area. Construct two paved intersecting runways, 100' by 2500'. Grade and seed landing strip, 200' wide on each side of paved runways. Construct taxi strip, necessary drainage, erect fence, install lighting system and perform appurtenant work.

The budget included \$3,000 to purchase an estimated extent of land required for the reconfigured runways. The improvements proposed at this time would not extend to construction of a lighting system that would illuminate the runways; instead, "1 unit lighting equipment" was to be installed, presumably designed to better light the area immediately next to the hangar including the taxi strip.²⁹

On August 24, 1940, the town held a special meeting of the citizens to approve funding for the project, which apparently was considered a foregone conclusion in the community. Although the town broadcast the announcement of the meeting, a mere 69 of its voters attended the session which lasted for all of eleven minutes. The participants unanimously approved a plan in which the town would spend \$13,000 supplemented by a \$97,000 contribution by the Federal government to make a total of \$110,000 for the project. As regards the town's slice of this pie, the town would take \$3,000 from its existing funds and raise the additional \$10,000 through a loan which would be paid off via annual taxation over a five-year interval. Planners anticipated employing about 160 men on the project, including about 30 to 35 Claremont residents, the latter number being "all that are available from the Claremont lists."³⁰

A report prepared by WPA staff, submitted on November 23, 1940, stated that the new runways were then under construction. The document noted that the existing airfield had been "an all-way field" lacking pavement or contouring for drainage. The final design for the paved runways had the one aligned east to west extending for the full 2500 feet as initially proposed, but the one running northeast to southwest laid out for 2350 feet in length. The 1927 airfield plan had the dirt runway strips configured in a simple cross, at more or less right angles; the new pattern incorporated an angled "X"-form layout. As ultimately completed for wartime use, shown in a 1943 plan, the runways would be lengthened, to 2750 feet for the east-west strip and to 2550 feet for its shorter mate (Figures 10-12). The continual modifications would require additional funding. In August 1941—with actual war conditions still well in the distance so far as anyone in authority knew—the US Civil Aeronautics Administration (the CAA) allocated for New Hampshire a total of \$1,773,000 in funds designated for national defense, the purpose being to improve seven of the state's airports including Claremont. The CAA earmarked \$87,000 of this fund for "non-labor costs" at Claremont for the further extension of the runways. Despite this financial augmentation, the construction temporarily ground to a halt in September 1941 because the original WPA funding from the year before was exhausted. According to the fiscal provisions in force for the project, the new \$87 K was designated for the newly planned further runway extensions and thus could not be applied for the completion of the earlier project task. Within a few days, however, New Hampshire's US Senator Styles Bridges came to the rescue, arranging to have another \$65,897 in CAA funds transferred to the WPA, thus enabling the completion of the first stage of the improved runways. By the summer of 1942, the overall project would be finished.³¹

In his reminiscences of 1996, Ed Tenney noted that the WPA also constructed some frame buildings for the airport complex, apparently paid for by the town and intended for strictly temporary use for the anticipated military flight training programs. These structures, positioned near the hangar, consisted of two leantos to provide offices, and a larger building holding classroom spaces that was situated in between the two offices. Tenney also remembered that the new asphalt-paved runways constituted a notable improvement over the old dirt ones, especially with reference to winter conditions:

Prior to the runway construction, during the winter the planes were equipped with skis, a modification that made taxiing and turning on the ground a very interesting experience, to say the least!

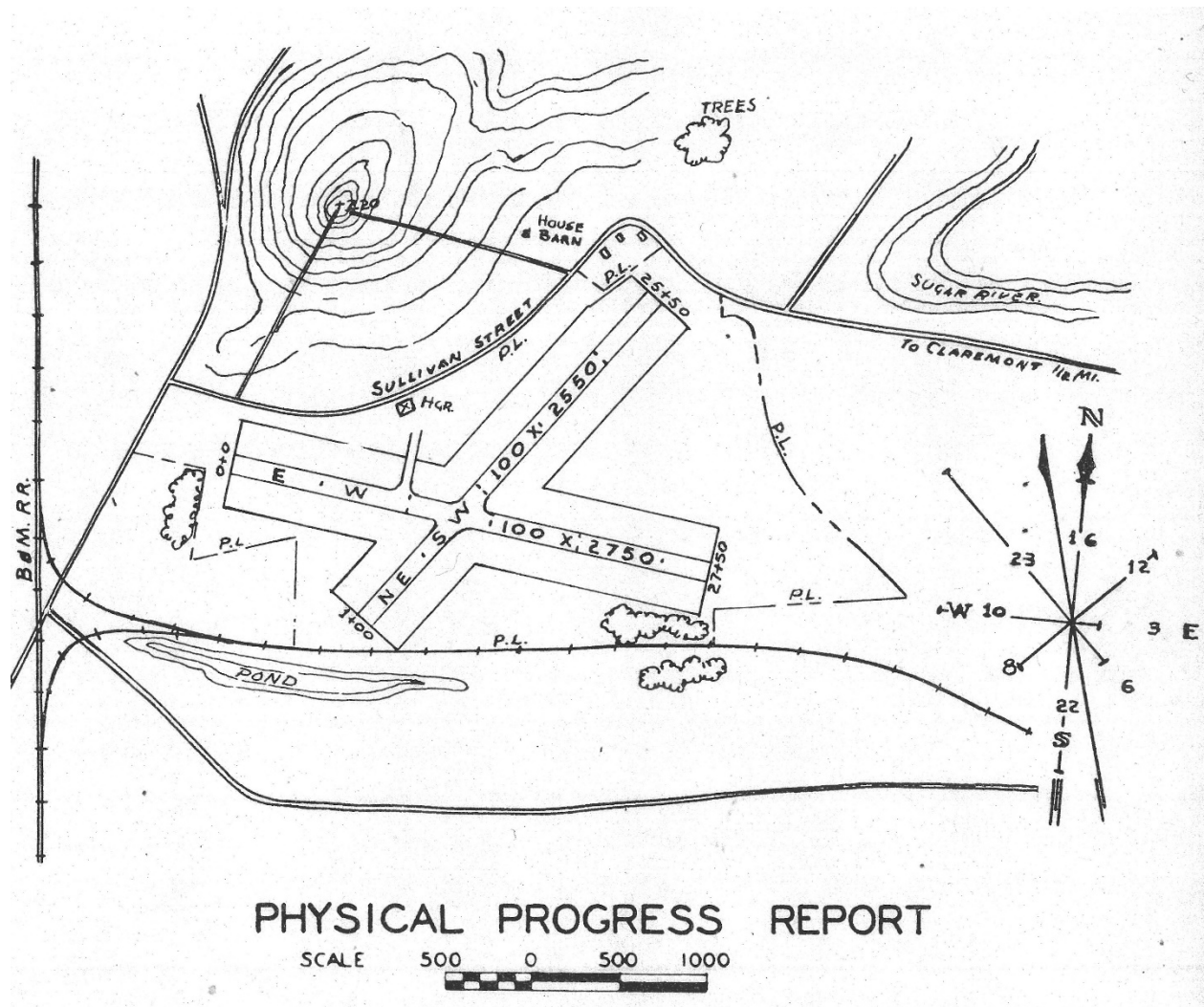


FIGURE 10

Plan of Claremont Airport, 1943, evidently made for Civil Aeronautics Administration
 (Source: NHDOT, Division of Aeronautics)



FIGURE 11

Aerial photograph of Claremont Airport, 1956
(Source: Historic Aerials, accessed online)

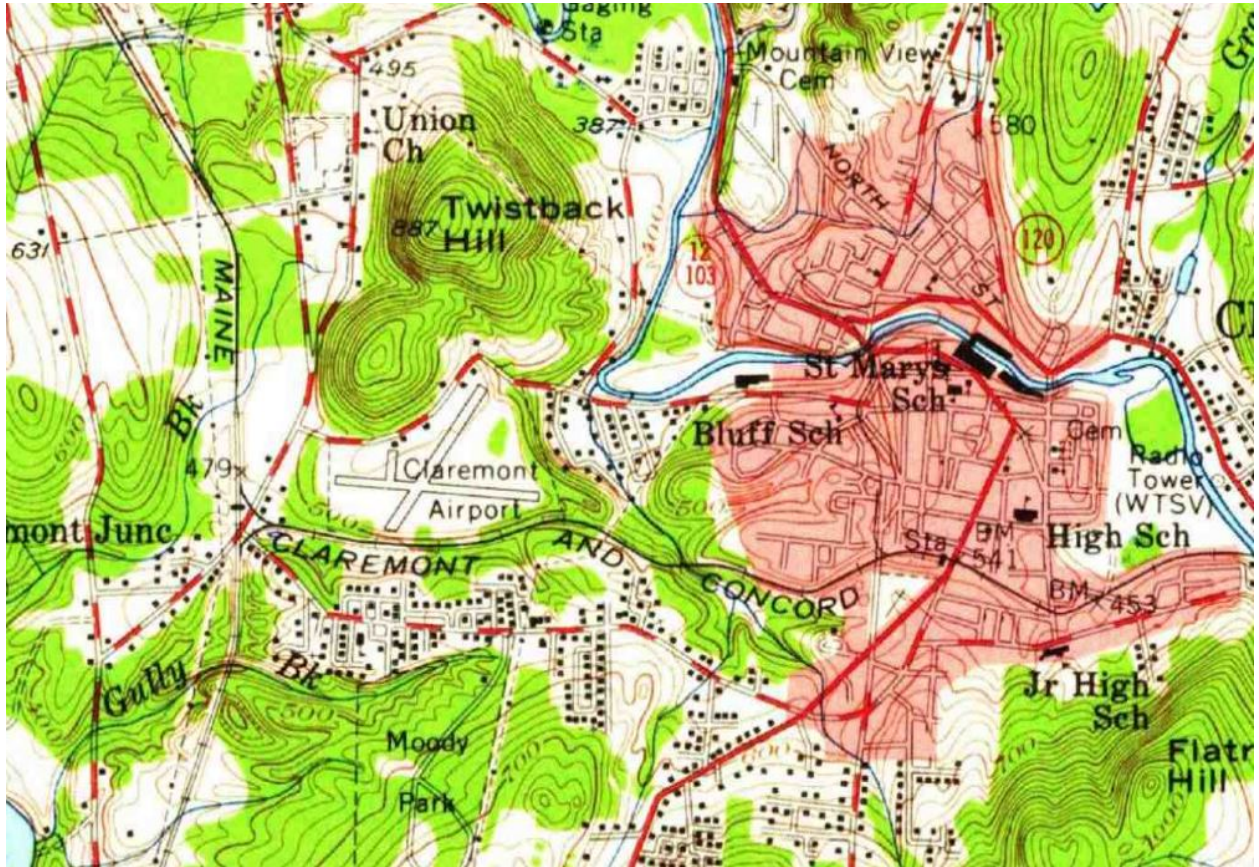


FIGURE 12

Claremont with airport, 1957

(Source: US Geological Survey, Claremont 7.5 minute quadrangle)

During the runway building project, the airport remained active, with flight activity ongoing despite the construction. Tenney asserted that

I was forced to make many “go-arounds” while practicing my landings because frequently some of the WPA workmen would casually stroll into the grassy landing area.³²

IN THE NEWS

Local Woman Has Pilot's License – March 23, 1939

Mrs. Mildred Dufresne became the first woman in Claremont to obtain an airplane pilot license after successfully passing tests administered by a Federal inspector at Concord recently. The test included a written examination on Civil Air regulations and air traffic rules, and a flight test.

She was accompanied on the hop to Concord by Instructor Edward H. Spooner of the local airport where she has been a student flier. According to Mr. Spooner, Mrs. Dufresne's test flight at Concord was made more difficult than ordinarily by high banks of ice on both sides of the runway and a wind blowing across instead of down the runway. Despite these handicaps she handled her test flight with fine skill and passed her tests with high marks.

National Eagle

Claremont Port Adds Airplane Of Latest Type – May 29, 1941

The latest in small-type airplanes has been added to the equipment of the Claremont airport with the purchase last week of a Piper coupe by Edward Spooner, manager. The plane becomes the fourth that the airport has for training and cross-country work.

A flashy colored job in blue and yellow, the new plane is a streamlined model throughout. Powered with a 75-horsepower Continental motor, the plane cruises at a speed of 99 miles per hour, several miles faster than the other small ships at the local field. Two gas tanks that hold 25 gallons give the planes enough fuel to fly 600 miles, compared to the cruising range of 210 miles of the other planes. The coupe type enables the passenger and pilot to sit side by side, while in the tandem models the passenger is seated behind the pilot. Equipment on the new plane includes navigation lights for night flying, a battery and generator, radio, hydraulic stopping and parking brakes, and a starter. The latter piece of equipment is new for light planes.

Dual controls in the cabin enable both occupants to fly the ship. The plane will not be used for training, Spooner explained, because the off-center location of the student would not give him an equal view of both sides of the ship. The plane is so stable that on a recent trip to Plymouth the ship flew itself after the course was once set. The plane will be used for passenger service and cross-country trips.

Daily Eagle

Enthusiastic Young Pilots Learning To Fly At Claremont Airport – August 18, 1941

Although the dusty condition of the field, with new hard surface runways currently under construction, does not encourage flying to a great degree, several young men have achieved pilot or silo licenses.

Youngest of these flying aspirants is Howard Banister, 16, of 18 Mulberry Street, Claremont. Propped up on several cushions, Howard made his solo last week after eight hours of training. He is only five feet one, but that hasn't prevented him from getting the solo license he aimed for. He is the youngest flier ever to be trained since Manager Edward Spooner has been at the field. Howard is not able to get a private pilot's license, the age limit being 18.

Under the tutelage of Flight Instructor David Harris of the Claremont airport, Howard started his training several weeks ago. Starting off with the fundamentals of flight, he progressed through figure 8's, two and three turn spins, and stalls until he took off last Friday afternoon with nobody in the extra pit to give him a helpful word of advice.

"I was thinking mostly of what I was supposed to do and what not to do when I took off, so I didn't feel much of a sensation," he replied in answer to a query about his feelings on the first solo take-off.

"It was quite a sensation to know I was up there all alone though," he added, "and when I got out of the plane after landing I felt plenty weak-kneed!"

Stalls rated tops in the thrill department, Howard said. "My whole body seemed to float in mid-air when I let the nose drop."

Howard plans to keep on with his training, and hopes to get his pilot's license in another two years. All his training was done on the Piper Cubs at the Claremont field.

Daily Eagle

World War II, 1941-1945

1. Claremont Airport during the war – general introduction

The people as well as the government of the United States endured a terrible shock on December 7, 1941, when Japan declared war with the launching of a powerful surprise attack on US military and naval installations on the island of Oahu in Hawaii. On December 11, Hitler followed suit, foolhardily declaring war on the US and thus bringing America to join the United Kingdom and the Soviet Union as a powerful ally in the ongoing European war. As an element in the initial response to the threat of invasion, the US government immediately ordered all air traffic along either seacoast to cease, this prohibition extending as far inland as Claremont (situated at least 75 miles from the Atlantic coast) and farther. Later, in July 1942, the government promulgated a wartime "no fly" zone along the east coast that varied in width from 40 to 70 miles. The ban on flight extended to all pilot training activity, military or civil, necessitating that military flight training schools be located outside the zone.³³

The onset of war and the resulting emergency in terms of national security led to the creation of new governmental agencies and programs in America. One of these organizations, which would prove to be quite active in Claremont by the later stages of the conflict, was the Civil Air Patrol, established by a Federal administrative order on December 9, 1941 as a branch of the Office of Civilian Defense (an agency created by President Roosevelt in May 1941). The Civil Air Patrol (CAP) was intended to function as a civilian auxiliary to the US Army Air Corps, carrying out activities such as security patrols and assistance in the training of military pilots and air crews. On December 26, 1941, airport manager Ed Spooner informed the Claremont *Daily Eagle* that a

local unit of the CAP was being organized and that he had been sent a packet of application blanks for enlistment in this civilian defense unit.

“Everyone who can fly or help in any phase of flying is needed,” Mr. Spooner said. “This includes persons with pilots’ licenses, mechanical knowledge, knowledge of aerial photography, or other special skills.” Specific services for which the Civil Air Patrol may be used include guarding of airports, courier service, observation patrols, towing of targets for gunnery, ferry service, repair of military planes forced down at the airport, patrolling for highway traffic under possible evacuation conditions, and searching for military aircraft which have crashed in sparsely settled areas.³⁴

By December 31, Spooner had received expressions of interest in serving with the unit from twelve local men. Their principal duty during this initial stage may have been that of security patrol at the airport—a March 2 article reported that, “The local airport is now under 24-hour guard, but so far no one has been chased away save a few parkers.” The role of the local CAP unit would evolve later in the war, so that during late 1943 through early 1945 its primary involvement would be with the CAP’s pilot cadet program, which was initiated on a national basis in October 1942.³⁵

During the early months of the war period, the airport improvement construction continued. Ed Spooner left for his new post as a training supervisor at Tuscaloosa, Alabama about February 14, 1942. The War Department, mindful of the field’s function in the near future as a training ground for military pilots, added a much-needed lighting system into the program. The town announced on March 2, 1942, that following the spring thaw, the government would construct a beacon light on Twistback Hill, the small mountain rising just to the north of the airport. This light would be mounted on a tower 50 feet in height at the summit. Additional lighting would include hazard lights positioned at 150-foot intervals in two separate lines ascending the south slope of Twistback, rising from the side of Sullivan Street to converge at the beacon tower; marker lights lining the edges of the landing field at 275-foot intervals; and obstruction lights mounted on the hangar and on houses in the immediate vicinity of the airport. As the spring and summer of 1942 progressed, however, shortfalls in funding and materials continued to plague the overall improvement project. On June 18, with nothing left to complete but the paving of the runways with asphalt, the Boston contractor hired by the Federal government to finish the job (McCourt Construction), was informed that the team could not have the asphalt necessary for completion because available stocks were needed “for war purposes.” The Federal administrative personnel working at that juncture in the supply chain considered the Claremont Airport to be an asset solely for civil aviation, not a potential asset for the war effort. Asphalt, like practically every useful other substance in the country, was a strictly rationed commodity. The town selectmen set about the process of contacting people strategically positioned to enable the opening of the asphalt dam. Finally, on July 7, after a work hiatus of three weeks, the CAA voiced its belated reiteration that the airport project was after all being undertaken “in the interests of national defense,” and the supply of asphalt resumed its flow.³⁶

2. Military pilot training at Claremont

The flight ban made Claremont a strategic location for air training. Due to the sheer volume as regards the need for pilot instruction for the war effort, the military contracted out much of the training for fledgling military and naval aviators to civilian operators. Thus in August 1942, following the imposition of the long-term coastal flying ban, the Eastern Airways company transferred its pilot training program from Beverly, Massachusetts just north of Boston to Claremont, shifting a sizable squadron of trainer aircraft, more than forty planes in number. As part of the arrangement enabling the flight school, the town leased the airport to Eastern Airways. The managers of the program initially expected to have a total of about seventy personnel stationed at the Claremont field, including instructors, crewmen such as mechanics, and about forty Army Air Corps trainee pilots. Eastern Air collaborated in the program of instruction with the faculty of the noted technically-oriented university the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in Cambridge, which provided the instructors who taught the fledgling pilots in the technical aspects of aviation. The MIT instruction took place in Cambridge, and the cadets were shuttled between the two locations as necessary. In Claremont, they were housed at first in the Hotel Moody, located in the center of downtown. Accommodating the cadets represented a great boon to the hotel. On July 30, the management had concluded that wartime business conditions were forcing them to close down the hotel “for the duration;” a day later they were informed that the training program needed to rent the entire fourth or top floor of the building for dormitory space, as well as the dining room and the kitchen, and that was before the number of cadets was expanded upwards from the original contingent of forty.³⁷

According to Ed Tenney, the Eastern Airways training contingent soon grew to a typical complement of about 100 cadets supervised by ten flying instructors, accompanied by “a number of mechanics and flight line service people. There were still no gas tanks located at the airport and the planes were serviced by from a gasoline tanker which traversed the flight line and pumped gas into the planes.” The chief supervisor of the Eastern Airways flight school throughout the program was Warren S. Frothingham.³⁸

The major or longer-term client of Eastern Airways for their Claremont flight training operation proved to be the US Naval Air Corps rather than the Army Air Corps, for about a year and a half from October 1942 into early 1944. During this period, Eastern Air taught several batches of Naval Air cadets. The first contingent of about fifty Navy trainees commenced their six-week course at the airport on October 27 while eight Army cadet pilots were still in residence completing their instruction.³⁹ Ed Tenney, eighteen years old as of late 1942, had the opportunity to observe the training program in progress:

The planes which were utilized for training the Navy cadets were Aeronca 7-AC's, planes comparable in size to the J-3 Piper Cub. These planes were owned by Eastern Airways, Inc. The cadets were brought through the solo period of flying and perhaps 35 hours of flight time, both dual and solo, and from there were given an additional 12 to 15 hours in two biplanes that were on the field.

For additional background, Warren Frothingham was the General Manager; and some of the flying instructors were Tom Croce, a flying buddy of [famous Army Air Corps

General] Jimmy Doolittle, an old timer; Jim True, Rudy Farrant, Ray Seaver, Bob Frye, fellows whose last names were Marshall and “Hamilton” (as I remember), and an additional instructor whose name I simply cannot recall. As soon as Eastern Airways arrived, I was asked if I would be interested in becoming a flying instructor. I immediately started the required training, passed all written exams for a commercial instructor’s license but left for the Army Air Corps in late 1942 as a pilot before I ever accepted employment.

The flying instructors at that time were paid \$90 a week, considered a goodly sum in those days. In addition to the instructors, there were three young ladies who worked in the office, three full-time engine mechanics, three so-called line boys and three individuals who repaired instruments and performed structural work on the aircraft. The work performed there included the refurbishing of aircraft wings, rudders, and fuselages.

The cadets were initially quartered at the Hotel Moody in downtown Claremont and were required to march back and forth [about a mile and a half each way], regardless of the weather, until they were later quartered at Kimball Union Academy in Meriden [about ten miles distant to the north], beginning in February 1943. There, they were housed, fed, and given ground school training. They were then transported by buses to and from the Claremont Airport for flight training. At the time the cadets were quartered at the Hotel Moody [October 1942-February 1943], the downtown Claremont area took on the appearance of a military installation. Some of Claremont’s attractive single young ladies soon found it interesting to visit the Claremont Airport on Saturdays to observe the young cadets being trained to fly.⁴⁰

In what may have been a bitter financial blow to hoteliers around the nation, in early 1943 the US Navy Department administration decided on a change in policy in regard to the housing of its neophyte officers; thenceforth, the Navy would requisition available college and secondary boarding school campuses, of which the supply seems to have been more than adequate due to cancellation or downsizing of regular academic programs because of the war. For the Claremont program, the Navy made an arrangement to use the Kimball Union Academy, as noted by its alumnus Ed Tenney. The plan was to house eighty trainees at Kimball and employ the classrooms for their ground instruction, dividing the contingent into halves for field training at Claremont Airport ten miles away and at the Bugby Flying Field in White River Junction, Vermont, a similar distance. The new arrangement would take some of the pressure off of the facility at Claremont Airport, which was said to be “now carrying a 50 percent extra load.”⁴¹

Eastern Airways continued paying \$25 monthly rent for the airport through September 1944, although apparently the training program had wound up for the final contingent of Navy cadets around the end of July in that year. The *Daily Eagle* noted on August 10, 1944 that the airport was now “back on civilian status, commercial flying has resumed, and this week saw two planes stopping here after long-distance flights.”⁴²

IN THE NEWS

Plane Topples Over Bank; Pilot Unhurt – November 6, 1942

A naval cadet in training at the Claremont airport escaped injury at about 10 o'clock this morning when the plane in which he was flying, caught in a cross-wind, rolled off the east end of the field and toppled over the steep bank dropping away to the Tolles Meadow.

The plane, an Aeronca F-T, suffered considerable damage and will be out of commission for a week or so undergoing repairs, according to Warren S. Frothingham, chief instructor of the training group at the local port. The pilot, unhurt, immediately transferred to another machine for a second flight on which he met better success. His name was withheld under wartime military regulations.

The trainee, understood to be one of the latest group of arrivals at the Claremont field, had had about two hours of solo flight and was coming in from the west for a landing. The ship was caught by a gust of wind and thrown temporarily out of control just off the ground. The pilot brought it to earth successfully but too near the east edge of the field, according to Mr. Frothingham, and could not check its speed sufficiently to bring it to a stop before it toppled over the bank.

Daily Eagle

Claremonters To Entertain 37 Naval Air Cadets On Holiday – December 23, 1942

A community Christmas project which produced more than 200 percent results was completed here today with announcement that all members of the naval air cadet forces stationed in Claremont will enjoy Christmas dinners in Claremont homes, and that as many more householders who offered their hospitality will be disappointed in their desire to entertain members of the group.

The project, sponsored by the Claremont Chamber of Commerce, produced 90 requests for men in service, Secretary Robert E. Hasham announced today. As a result, the 37 cadets who make up the present force stationed here will not lack for Christmas entertainment despite the fact that all leaves for the group have been cancelled over the holiday.

Although invitations came from as far away as Enfield, in response to the Chamber's plea for hosts and hostesses, no cadets could accept invitations outside of town, being forbidden by regulations to ride in privately owned vehicles.

Daily Eagle

3. Civil Air Patrol cadet activity in Claremont

In August 1943, the Civil Air Patrol (CAP) established a new formation for Sullivan County in implementation of the policy making the enlistment and training of young CAP cadets an important subdivision of CAP activity, while continuing to fulfill the CAP's basic military-auxiliary function. (The level of CAP activity in Claremont since the departure of airport manager Ed Spooner in February 1942 is not known.) The Sullivan County CAP unit, administered as a platoon under supervision of the Concord CAP squadron, would be open to both men and women of age 17 and over. The Army Air Corps had officially taken over administration of the CAP from the US Office of Civilian Defense. "Members of CAP are the

only civilians performing combat duty and who are privileged to wear US Army insignia and official Air Corps uniforms.” The local plan as of August 1943 was to base the CAP’s patrol plane at the Newport Airport and use both that field and the one at Claremont in conjunction while the latter field was still devoted primarily to training the Navy fliers. In October 1943, the CAP unit reached a milestone in that it included fifty or more personnel who had completed 50 hours of “indoctrination,” henceforth it was officially designated the Sullivan County Squadron and became independent of Concord though continuing within the New Hampshire CAP wing. The squadron numbered 61 personnel and was commanded by Lieutenant Francis P. Murphy, Jr. It was divided into two flights—one designated Flight A based at Newport (the county seat) and led by Harry M. Woodward, and the other, Flight B, stationed in Claremont under Verden W. Hodge of that town.⁴³

Sullivan County Squadron owns three planes, which include a Taylorcraft 65-horsepower machine, a 55-horsepower Aeronca, and a 100-horsepower American Eagle. The first of these planes is owned by Verden Hodge, the second jointly by Andrew Stetson and John Howe, and the third by the Sullivan County Civil Air Patrol, Inc. This corporation is a non-profit organization in which members of the Sullivan County CAP hold stock, since under present wartime regulations no person may fly a plane unless he is a member of some branch of the armed forces, or unless he owns a plane. Shareholders in the local CAP own the American Eagle plane. Unit meetings are held Mondays and Wednesdays of each week, convening one month in Claremont, and the alternate month in Newport.⁴⁴

The *Daily Eagle*, examining the role of the CAP on the national level, reported that the scope and scale of the agency’s activity was “broadening all of the time.”

The patrol has two major functions—it serves as an aerial home guard, ready to fly in emergencies, and on a wider scale, it acts in such important jobs as the anti-submarine coastal patrol. The CAP’s first job was to gather together men and women in the country who were private flyers, and form them into squadrons which could do these types of jobs. Civilian pilots, student pilots, mechanics, radio operators, photographers and ground service personnel are included in the organization. . . . Before any persons are allowed to don the uniform of the patrol, they are fingerprinted and carefully investigated. First step in training members of the patrol is 81 hours of basic training in military drill, courtesy, discipline, first aid, gas protection, guard duty and other defense subjects. This is followed by 150 hours of advanced training in navigation, meteorology, and special flight missions. . . . The CAP program has now been extended to include a limited number of young people in the last two years of senior high school. These are known as CAP cadets, and a large group of them, both boys and girls, is active here.⁴⁵

IN THE NEWS

Two Local Planes To Join Boston ‘Raiders’ – December 2, 1943

The Sullivan County flight of the Civil Air Patrol has received special orders to be carried out December 12 by two planes, which will participate in the special air raid bombing mission to Boston.

Two hundred CAP planes will take part in the sham bombings, flying to the Boston airport to receive orders and “bombs,” which will be made of small paper bags, tied with

different colored streamers to designate them as high explosive incendiary, and the like. From the Boston airport, the CAP planes will fly over the areas participating in the air raid, delivering their loads.

One of the local flight planes will be piloted by Lieut. Francis P. Murphy, Jr., of Newport with Second Lieut. Harry Woodward of Newport acting as observer, while the second plane will carry Flight Instructor Wiggins of Claremont as pilot and Lieut. Verden Hodge of Claremont as observer.

Daily Eagle

Claremont CAP Aids In Search For Missing Boy – April 26, 1944

Claremont's Civil Air Patrol was called to active duty yesterday for the first time since it was organized here last year, when an emergency call was received at 7:30 yesterday morning. The communications officer, Captain Williams of Laconia, notified the local squadron, asking that a group of members report to Canterbury to aid in the search for Dana Lamprey, lost child.

The radio detail of the local squadron was requested to furnish two-way radio communication, and a two-car convoy of men trained in that branch of service left Claremont shortly afterward. Radio equipment consisting of two "walkietalkies" and one portable mobile unit was supervised by Warrant Officer John H. Stoughton.

The New Hampshire wing of the CAP received a call for assistance from state police headquarters on the previous evening. The CAP responded next morning with 56 members from the Andover squadron, 22 from Concord, 23 from Manchester, 20 from Laconia, and six in the radio detail from the Sullivan County squadron.

Members were divided into two groups and started at 9:06 AM. At 9:18 AM, the group in charge of Lieut. Dougherty of Laconia CAP found the body of the child about a half-mile from his house. CAP airplanes were also standing by at Concord airport to be used if necessary.

Daily Eagle

Sullivan County CAP To Join In NH Mobilization – June 21, 1944

The Sullivan County Squadron of the Civil Air Patrol will participate in the National CAP mobilization to be held at Gifford Airport, Laconia on July 23, 24, and 25, it was announced today. First Lieut. George Wiggin, commanding officer, flew to Laconia Sunday with Lieut. Anthony Leahy to attend a Wing staff officers' meeting and arrange details for the affair, which will be the first of its kind to be held in the country.

The squadron received a new code practice set Monday evening from the Army for instruction in the Morse code. The equipment included a loud speaker which can be tuned to several different notes and five extra keys for practice in sending and receiving. This set will speed up the classes in code instruction, which are under Warrant Officer John Stoughton.

The squadron lost another of its staff officers when Second Lieut. John F. Howe reported for active duty June 12 at the Bedford Air Base as a mechanic in the Civil Air Patrol, Low Target Unit No. 22, in which Lieut. Verden W. Hodge is now serving as radio technician. Lieutenant Howe was plans and training officer of the local squadron and also cadet recruiting officer for the Army Air Force in Sullivan County.

Staff Sgt. Eva Cemel has been relieved of her duties as flight adjutant and has taken over the position of intelligence officer. Sergeant Cemel has served as assistant intelligence officer for several months.

Daily Eagle

Claremont CAP Plans Air Show – October 10, 1944

The Sullivan County squadron of the CAP will be host to a Wing mobilization on October 22 at the Claremont airport.

The main features of the program will be flight over town for all pilots, simulated bombing, message pickup demonstrations, and dropping supplies by parachute.

The high point of the mobilization will be an air show by one or more squadrons of either Army or Navy fighter planes.

This mobilization will be for the recruiting of Civil Air Patrol, Women's Army Corps, and Air Corps cadets. The public has been cordially invited to attend.

Daily Eagle

Late-war and post-war years, 1944 to 1951: efforts to improve and expand the Claremont Airport

In late 1944, following the conclusion of the pilot training program at Claremont, town governmental and business leaders began deliberations on the question of how they would promote expansion of the airport's scope and scale of activity to help Claremont grow in the post-war era. They were hoping that the Claremont Airport could emerge as an aviation service center for commerce and for passenger travel served by the large-scale commercial airline corporations. These aspirations were doomed to disappointment. The physical facility lacked the room for significant further extension of the runways that could serve the ever larger airliners coming on line, and the site was subject to adverse wind currents coming off both Mount Ascutney, located just across the river in Vermont and Green Mountain on the northeast edge of Claremont. Regarding the runways, three of the four termini had sharp vertical drops lying just a few yards away from the end of the runway.⁴⁶

In 1944, the town appointed a Postwar Planning and Development Commission charged with developing initiatives to promote economic growth and development for the community. The commissioners on this planning board as well as influential business leaders from the Claremont Chamber of Commerce wanted expansion of services at the airport to be in the forefront of the town's modernizing effort. Attainment of Class 3 status in the Civil Aeronautics Administration's system of airport classification (Claremont was currently Class 2, and just barely) appeared to be the key element that would offer fulfillment of the airport's potential to help fuel the town's future growth. Class 3 would qualify the facility for passenger service by airlines, which Claremont was also actively pursuing at this time. But it appeared early on that Claremont was facing an uphill battle in this drive. On November 30, 1944, the Federal government announced that it would disburse a massive allotment of grants for improvements to the nation's airports, with \$14,943,000 to be distributed within New Hampshire alone. However, of this princely sum, Claremont's airport was earmarked for a mere \$88,000 (about six tenths of one percent of the total state package). The Chamber of Commerce immediately approached Governor Robert Blood in hopes of learning why Claremont was being so disregarded. Blood tapped the state Aeronautics Commission for information, but Chairman O'Neil of that office protested ignorance in this regard as there had been no consultation of the state agency by the Federal authorities. Governor Blood assured Claremont that he would do all in his power to rectify the unfair situation, and then wrote an official letter to the Civil Aeronautics Administration asking that the size of the grant to Claremont be reconsidered.⁴⁷

Despite the governor's best efforts, the CAA remained immovable in refusing to increase Claremont's allotment from the grant program. In fact, on March 23, 1945, the town's special joint airport committee, formed of members from the Postwar Commission and various civic organizations, received a letter from the CAA informing the town that it had been decided to make a further reduction in the Claremont Airport grant, to just \$59,000, because "lighting equipment was not available at the present time." The committee's response to this rebuff was to take the large view, so to speak, and make a deeper study of the airport's future situation. The body resolved unanimously to recommend to the Postwar Commission that it hire consultants to make an engineering survey of the present airport as well as potential locations for a completely new airport, and that that body should take whatever action necessary for "proper consideration of Claremont's airport needs." Three days later, the Postwar Commission decided to meet with the Boston engineering firm of Faye, Spofford, & Thorndyke (FST) to discuss the possibility of such as survey being conducted by that group.⁴⁸

On March 28, 1945, L.P. Henderson of FST came to Claremont for the meeting and made a preliminary reconnaissance. Henderson gave as his initial judgment that the airport's existing location was a good one,

and that both runways, one by switching [its orientation by] 15 degrees, can be extended to the minimum requirements of 3700 feet in length for consideration as a Class 3 airport. [Claremont was currently classified at the lower level of Class 2 airport.] The second of the runways [i.e., the northeast-southwest one], however, would have to cross the airport road [Sullivan Street].⁴⁹

About a month later, the town Board of Selectmen agreed with the Postwar Commission to go ahead and make the contract with FST to carry out the survey at the proposed price of \$1,000. It was hoped that the survey would enable the town to procure adequate funding from the Federal government to undertake the improvements necessary to attain Class 3 status for the airport. The FST survey team kicked off their study on May 21 and delivered their report to the town on July 16. The survey's vision for improvement to the airport was ambitious. FST recommended an initial construction program estimated to cost \$122,000, and outlined a further expansion, if funding could be obtained, that was priced at \$739,000. The town had copies of the survey report forwarded to the CAA and to the state Aeronautics Commission.⁵⁰ The *Daily Eagle* summarized the report's description of the airport in its current status:

The airport is now, according to CAA classifications, a small Class 2 port, though only one runway is of sufficient length for such a qualification. As it is now, the field consists of a 2450-foot-long, 500-foot-wide landing strip running northeast-southwest and a 2750-foot-long, 500-foot-wide landing strip running east-west. The buildings on the field are a wooden hangar, a small office building, a frame dwelling, and a small control tower.⁵¹

The "frame dwelling" referred to may represent the building erected around 1940 to serve the training program by housing classroom space; if so, it apparently had been re-purposed as a residence by the new airport manager, Henry Volpe, who had begun running the facility in November 1944.

The recommended initial construction program priced at \$122,000 comprised

- Construction of a new northwest-southeast runway 2050 feet in length [currently there was no runway thus aligned] -- \$65,000
- Improvement of approaches via clearing of trees as appropriate -- \$7,000
- Improvement of the paving on the existing runways through the addition of wearing courses by laying two inches of hot bituminous concrete -- \$50,000

The expensive potential program of airport expansion for \$739,000 included

- Extension of the existing 2750-foot east-west runway to a length of 3200 feet -- \$90,000
- Extension of the existing 2450-foot northeast-southwest runway to a length of 3500 feet by filling in a ravine, acquiring additional land for the airport tract, and re-routing a segment of Sullivan Street as needed -- \$649,000

In the final event, later in 1945 the CAA, having studied the FST survey report, turned down Claremont's plan, denying the airport any contribution toward the necessary funding, including the less expensive initial stage. As a consequence, Claremont would never meet the minimum standard for runway length stipulated for commercial airline service, which would rise to 5,000 feet by 1959.⁵²

Although the events of 1945 probably represented the key reverse in Claremont's long-range effort for airport improvement, the town's supporters of the airport refused to concede defeat at the time. Of course, the airport itself continued in its usual pattern of varied small-scale commercial service offered by Volpe's Flying Service under the proprietorship of airport manager Henry Volpe. The Flying Service was the airport tenant and management during a tenure from November 1944 into 1950, paying a monthly rent of \$25. Volpe had come to Claremont in about 1943 to be one of the Eastern Airways instructors, and stayed in town after the program concluded. In 1945, he purchased a Boeing PT-17 aircraft. During the immediate post-war years, among Volpe's activities at the field was a program conducted under the GI Bill to train war veterans as pilots. Dave Harris was Volpe's second instructor for this program. In addition to Volpe's activities, there was the housing of a few privately owned planes, such as that owned by CAP-alumnus and airport booster John F. Howe, whose Howe Motors company (the local Chevy dealership) rented a small lot within the field where Howe had built his own small hangar. Also, during April-May 1945 the town airport committee and the Postwar Committee entered negotiations with three firms in hopes of initiating regular air freight service for the community, but this effort led nowhere.⁵³

In early 1946, the town selectmen appointed a three-person Airport Commission to oversee continued development of the facility, chaired by R.H. Hawkins. This panel reported at the close of the year that it had "closely followed the State and Federal legislation which might aid in developing and improving our airport." The commission had renewed the effort to obtain Federal funding, making a new application to the CAA under the aegis of the Federal Airport Act of 1946 for a project to improve the airport's lighting system. This try had met with success, as Federal funds of \$37,825 had been tentatively allocated to Claremont with the proviso that the town, possibly with state assistance, must match this amount with its own funding. The town gradually met this funding challenge, appropriating \$5,000 of its own revenue toward the lighting project in 1947, \$6,000 in 1948, and \$6,875 in 1949. Although the Airport

Commission's brief 1946 report does not state the cash amount, it noted that the state's own aeronautics funding program for 1947 had favored Claremont with "the largest appropriation of all the project allocations." In its report for 1946, the commission stated its hope that in the future a more ambitious improvement might still obtain "the added facilities of scheduled air-passenger and freight service" for Claremont.⁵⁴

In 1948, Claremont, until then the largest town in the state, gained the distinction of official incorporation as a city. The airport's long-deferred construction of an improved lighting system finally took place in 1951. The overall cost of the project is not known, but it was evidently in the area of \$75-80,000 or more, as the city annual report for 1950 noted that the cost was to be shared 50% by the Federal government and 25% each by the city and the state. The new lighting installed, applied to both of the runways and to the taxiway, included a rotating beacon light for the tower on Twistback Hill, an illuminated windcone, 70 marker lights, 5 hazard beacons on nearby hills, and a number of obstruction lights. The city report issued after the close of 1951 asserted that an increase in use of the airport by visiting aircraft had taken place since completion of the enhanced lighting system, this uptick attributed to the project.⁵⁵

After 1951, mention of the airport is virtually absent from the city annual reports, suggesting that by this time if not earlier the community's business and governmental leaders had tired of the repeated frustrations attendant upon an effort to expand air service at a facility that apparently could not meet the physical requirements without a transformation too costly to be justified by practical returns. Ed Tenney recollected in 1996 that in 1946 the Chamber of Commerce, apparently in the interest of generating favorable publicity for the airport, had staged what was proclaimed as an official dedication ceremony for the property, accompanied by an air show. Tenney and Bob Landry, a Navy veteran torpedo bomber pilot, flew their own biplanes to do stunts in the show. Tenney apparently enjoyed participating well enough, but his slightly rueful tone suggests he considered the belated dedication of the 19-year-old airport a somewhat hollow exercise, calling it a "ritual promulgated by the Chamber of Commerce."⁵⁶

A copy of a letter sent in March 1948, from the regional office of the CAA to the Claremont Airport Commission, reposes in the files of the New Hampshire Bureau of Aeronautics. Writing to John F. Howe, who apparently was then the chair of the Airport Commission, the CAA District Airport Engineer, F.A. Carboine outlined the CAA's "conclusions regarding the adaptability of the field for scheduled airline service," which of course was one of the town leadership's most sought-after ambitions. Carboine, in conjunction with the CAA district Senior Air Carrier Inspector, a Mr. Newman, had given the Claremont situation a close examination, and their assessment was not positive as regards the potential for regular service:

Mr. Newman and I concluded that if the East/West runway were extended to the maximum length of about 3400 feet permitted by the terrain at either end of the present strip, it would undoubtedly be acceptable for limited operation by planes with performance characteristics similar to the generally used DC-3. The extent of the limitations placed on such operation would be governed by the ability of the plane to safely avoid the hazards which the high ground in the West would constitute and would, of course, vary for different conditions of wind, intensity, direction and visibility.

It is Mr. Newman's opinion that the character and extent of the obstructions in the West approach as well as the hazards presented by the nearby mountains, would result in operational limitations which would make service to Claremont a marginal affair from the standpoint of regularity of service, even if the runway were longer than 3400 feet.⁵⁷

Modern period, ca. 1950 to present

Since the early 1950s, the City of Claremont has continued to maintain its airport as a facility for limited commercial aviation services and for the housing and servicing of small, privately owned business and recreational aircraft. The city has carried out a number of repair and limited-improvement construction projects over the decades.

During the first decade or so of this period, manager-proprietors at the Claremont Airport included Harold E. Hall for 1950-1960, and Harold Buker of Buker Air Lines for 1960-1962. According to the research for this study, the final commercial aviation company operating out of the airport was Claremont Airways, a charter service active from 1967 into the 1980s. Ed Tenney served as the company's Clerk and one of the Directors beginning in 1969. As of 1981, the August Avionics company had a small installation repairing and maintaining aircraft at the field.⁵⁸

Despite the seeming loss of energy that could be seen by this time in the city's effort to expand its airport's role in the transportation system and economy of the region, the city did make a series of improvements during the late 1960s and early 1970s. Evidently the airport was relatively popular with owners of small recreational planes during these years. In 1966, the city purchased land on the western edge of the property from the Jones family, extending the airport tract all the way to Plains Road. With the new strip of land in hand, the city then made another extension to the northwest-southeast runway, lengthening it by 250 feet toward the northwest and 100 feet to the southeast, for a total length of 3100 feet. This runway is the one still in use as of 2019. Also in 1966, the city appropriated \$20,000 for the construction of a new hangar; this building, a six-bay example of the "tee hangar" type designed for the economical storage of relatively small private planes, was built in 1968. In 1969 and again in 1970, private individuals built their own small hangars on small lots within the airport which they leased from the city. About a generation later, another series of modifications was undertaken. In 1998, the shorter northeast-southwest runway was permanently closed to use, and its alignment was modified in subsequent years, being made narrower for its segment just north of the main runway for continued service as a taxiway leading to the hangars. Over the years from 2004 to 2016, another small hangar was built for private use, and the city built a six-bay "box" or rectangular hangar sited along the farther segment of the disused runway. That portion of the runway strip was widened somewhat and repaved for a new function as the apron area for the box hangar.⁵⁹

The actual development of the Claremont Airport did not fulfill the hopes and aspirations of the progressive-minded individuals who had the foresight and optimism to establish the airport in 1927, or those who had the determination and commitment to continue to seek its improvement and expansion over the ensuing decades. But—in addition to providing actual emergency

services such as facilitating search-and-rescue missions and embodying the airfield necessary to train young men to fight World War II from the air—the Claremont Airport did confer a legacy of qualities and experiences to the people of its community, including exposure to the forces of modernity, technological progress, and outlook to the wider world, as well as a visceral sense of excitement as expressed in the many air shows that were held at the field and in the personal sensations of being airborne in flight that many residents were able to experience there.

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