

MAINE HISTORICAL SOCIETY NEWSLETTER

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NEWS OF THE SOCIETY

The 150th anniversary of the Society will be observed at a Special Meeting in Portland on April 22, 1972. Dr. Clifford K. Shipton, *Director Emeritus* of the American Antiquarian Society will be principal speaker for the occasion. The regular Annual Meeting of the Society will be held at Brunswick on Saturday, June 24, 1972. Full details of both meetings will be announced later, but we hope this early warning will motivate you to mark at least *one* of your 1972 Christmas Calendars.

Membership in the Society continues to grow at a good, steady pace. This issue of the *Newsletter* will be received by 1517 members compared with 1404 members last February. Despite such signs of health, the Maine Historical Society is no more immune from this country's severe inflation costs than any other institution. The increase in postal rates along with other goods and services was anticipated by the Standing Committee last spring.

In an effort to sustain the work of the Society at its present level, the Standing Committee voted to increase the dues for Active Membership by \$2.00 at their regular meeting in March. This was done with great reluctance; however, the Standing Committee felt that it would rather rely on the loyalty of Maine Historical Society's members than curtail our present level of activity or risk jeopardizing the entire future of the Society by running dangerously into debt.

The new dues schedule effective for the year 1972 will be:

Active membership	\$8.00
Sustaining	\$20.00
Corporate	\$50.00
Life	\$200.00

Ronald F. Banks' *Maine Becomes a State*, the Society's contribution to the State Sesquicentennial observance last year, has received high praise in the *New England Quarterly*, *Journal of American History*, and the *William and Mary Quarterly*. 990 copies were sold by the end of August. If your Christmas list is still incomplete, you may wish to give a copy to someone. If it is not in your bookstore, copies may be ordered from *Barre Publishers* in Barre, Massachusetts or the *Wesleyan University Press* in Middletown, Connecticut. At the same time you will be helping the Society since royalty is received from each copy sold.

Again with Christmas in mind, a gift membership to Maine Historical Society could be a refreshingly different idea for the right person on your list. He or she will receive six publications during the year -- four *Newsletters* and two special publications, free admission to the Wadsworth-Longfellow House and active membership in the fourth oldest historical society in the United States.

Wadsworth-Longfellow House: The number of visitors to the Wadsworth-Longfellow House exceeded last year's figure by 908. 10,695 enjoyed the House and Garden between mid-May and October this year. The Wadsworth-Longfellow House does not operate at a profit, but the modest visitor's fee usually allows it to be self-sustaining unless a major repair is called for such as a new roof a couple of years ago, or a new furnace which will be needed in the very near future.

The Society considers it not merely a trust but a privilege to be able to share this historic treasure with the public during at least four months out of the year. The immense job of maintaining the House in an immaculate state of preservation is frequently taken for granted. However, a new low was reached this year when the City of Portland valued the Society's efforts so little that for the first time in many years, it contributed not a penny towards the work of the Society.

May we take this opportunity to wish you all a very happy holiday season, and express our thanks to all members of the Society for their generous support and many contributions during the past year.

NEW MEMBERS

From MAINE Bangor: George D. Carlisle, Garrett D. Speirs *Bath:* Mrs. Francis C. Palmer, Mrs. Alice H. Rodney *Bingham:* Arthur R. Macdougall *Brunswick:* Mrs. George A. Ricker *Cape Elizabeth:* Frank N. Strout *Freeport:* Halton E. Merrill *Gorham:* Maurice M. Whitten *Mattawamkeag:* Miss Sheila E. Burke *Norway:* Kenneth LaFleur *Portland:* Harlan Baker, Forbes O. MacVane, Mrs. Edward W. Merrill, Stephen H. Snell, Paul A. Wescott *South Portland:* Miss Margaret Gray, Mrs. Beatrice Hebert, Richard J. Kahn, Mrs. Raymond Kierstead, Richard S. Leonard, Mrs. James R. Nickels, Terrance A. O'Donnell, Mrs. Rita Preston *Thomaston:* Beniah C. Harding *Waterville:* Mrs. J. M. Carpenter *Weeks Mills:* Larry H. Baker *Whitneyville:* Mrs. Betty L. Hennessey *Yarmouth:* Mrs. Warren E. Peterson, Clifton R. Sargent, Jr.

Other States ILLINOIS Evanston: Theodore F. Freeman, Jr. *MASSACHUSETTS Cambridge:* John H. Ross *Dedham:* Mrs. Ralph Redman *Newton Centre:* Ellis Spear *Newtonville:* William N. Locke *Springfield:* William J. Russell *West Newbury:* Mrs. Paul M. Byron *NEW HAMPSHIRE Hampton:* Stillman M. Hobbs *NEW YORK Bronx:* Terrence F.X. O'Donnell *Lockport:* John M. Potter *Roslyn Heights:* Mrs. William F. Tarlow *PENNSYLVANIA Pittsburgh:* William Myers *RHODE ISLAND Barrington:* Chester A. Files, Jr. *Providence:* Mrs. William N. Davis.

NEWFOUNDLAND St. John's: John G. Reid.

LIFE MEMBERS

Miss Margaret J. Tibbetts
Bethel, Maine

George R. Hutchinson
South Portland, Maine

NEWS OF OTHER SOCIETIES
AND INSTITUTIONS

Maine League of Historical Societies and Museums: The Maine State Archives and State Museum were hosts for the annual meeting of the Maine League this year which now numbers 115 museums and historical societies. The following officers were elected for the ensuing year: William B. Miller, *President*; Harry W. Rowe, *Vice President*; Samuel S. Silsby, Jr., *Secretary*; and James Silsby, *Treasurer*.

Harry Martin Jones honored: On Sunday, August 29, 1971, Harry Martin Jones, having flown in earlier in the week from Tulsa, Oklahoma, at the age of 81, was a very happy man. On that sunshine filled Sunday he was honored by the town where he spent so many of his years.

In 1919, some 52 years before, a few farsighted Old Orchard Beach, Maine hotel men guaranteed Harry M. Jones \$300.00 to start a flying service at the well known resort area. Promptly buying a surplus Army Jenny, Jones began a service on the beach that was to last almost twenty years and bring Old Orchard Beach to the front pages of the world's newspapers.

Known as "The New England Aviator" since before the first World War, Jones had learned to fly in 1912. In early 1913, he became the first (and only) aviator to land on Boston Common. He carried the first Air Parcel Post (baked beans) from Boston to New York City - in only 56 days! An instructor for the Army during the war, upon discharge located his home at Old Orchard Beach, Maine.

Flying Jennies and Standards, and later one of the first Stinson Detrouiter cabin biplanes, Jones had carried thousands of passengers and taught hundreds to fly by 1927. Being able to fly only at low tide, and having volume traffic only in the summer, he rounded out his activities by flying a Curtiss MF Seagull flying boat from Long Lake at Naples, and running a radio shop in the nearby city of Portland.

The big excitement at Old Orchard Beach, I suppose, really all began on September 1, 1927, when J.D. Hill, a pilot of the transatlantic Fokker monoplane *Old Glory*, telephoned Jones, his old friend from Army days. He wanted to inquire about the possibility of using the beach for their take-off, as Roosevelt Field in New York was rain-soaked and too short for their heavily loaded plane to take off. Lindbergh had landed on the beach earlier in the season when he couldn't find the Portland Airport in the fog, and on August 25th *Pride of Detroit* had stayed overnight on her round-the-world flight. The succession of

trans-Atlantic attempts which followed during the heyday of daring aviators made Old Orchard Beach, Maine a household word in millions of homes around the world.

At 4 P.M. on this happy Sunday, the Maine Aviation Historical Society and the Old Orchard Beach Historical Society held a brief ceremony in Veteran's Memorial Park in front of the Edith Belle Libby Library, Jerome A. LePelletier, President of the Old Orchard Beach Historical Society presiding. After the invocation and the introduction of the guests, Mr. LePelletier read the text of the plaque which will be mounted on a large rock in the park. The text reads, "Runway to Glory. Early transatlantic flights from Old Orchard Beach, Maine in recognition of Harry M. Jones, pioneer aviator, whose flying facilities at the beach made these flights possible." This is followed by a list of eleven transatlantic flights (or attempts) from Old Orchard Beach from 1927 through 1939.

Linwood Wright, Maine Aeronautics Commissioner, spoke briefly of Harry Jones's contributions to Maine aviation; including his Maine Pilot's License #1, and his appointment as the first Airport Commissioner, as the position was called in 1933. The Honorable Peter N. Kyros, United States Representative from the First District, compared Harry Jones's pioneering with the exploits of the spacemen and their exploration of the moon. He then presented "Captain Jones" with a special plaque from the Federal Aviation Agency honoring him for his contributions to the field of aviation nationally.

Mr. LePelletier then called upon "Captain Jones", as he was known locally, to say a few words. He spoke eloquently about his early days at the beach. He said he still couldn't understand why anyone would want to try to fly the Atlantic in those days, money and/or glory being the only answers. After his remarks, Mr. LePelletier unveiled an original water-color painting of the take-off of the *Yellow Bird* in front of Captain Jones's hanger in 1929. This painting by Arthur G. Hahn will be raffled off this winter to raise funds for this plaque. Ernest Broussard of Old Orchard Beach presented "Captain Jones" with the rudder fabric from his Stinson which was burned in a hangar fire. Captain Jones announced that he was leaving his scrapbooks and memorabilia to the two societies to be kept in the Edith Belle Libby Library in Old Orchard Beach, Maine, to be available to all.

A crowd of several hundred then adjourned to the library for refreshments and to meet "Captain Jones", many for the first time and many to renew old acquaintances. He had logged over 10,000 hours in the air and carried over 100,000 passengers before he stopped keeping count. Copies of the new book

Flight Fever by Joseph Hamlen who was present and saw many of these famous flights as a boy at the beach, were sold. These were autographed by "Captain Jones", and net profits from the sale were donated by Jones Book Shop to the plaque fund. Much hangar flying was done in the library that day and many pleasant memories recalled.

--The above account was contributed by Leo Boyle, President of the Maine Aviation Historical Society, Mr. Boyle officially represented the Maine Historical Society at that occasion.



Harry M. Jones

Jerome LePelletier

Leo Boyle

Courtesy of Biddeford-Saco Journal