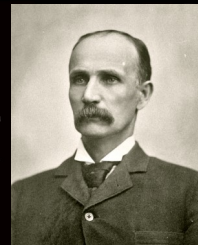


THE SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY QUARTERLY



MAKING HISTORY TOGETHER

The Magic of Flight:

THE PIONEER ERA OF MEDFORD AVIATION

by Sharon Bywater and Larry Mullaly

*“High was I! Level with any eagle and glad to be rid of earth and its boredom...
Then I would bank and swing ‘round to the west...sending the motor and
propeller to the highest pitch of their speed and wind and thundering...
and feeling myself a god.”*

Jack Morris, US Army Aviator, Sept. 17, 1917

In 1903, the Wright brothers took off in a fragile plane from Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, launching the new era of motorized flight. It was the dawn of the age of flight, and the lone aviator, the daring “birdman” was its icon. Soon after Kitty Hawk, enthusiasts began taking off from whatever flat surface they could find, often a local farmer’s field.

Flying began in southern Oregon in 1910 when Illinois native Eugene Ely tried to take off from a field on the Cox ranch west of Medford. Although Ely’s first attempt was a failure, he came back in 1911 when he succeeded in getting off the ground before a breathless crowd of 1,000 spectators. From that time on, Medford played an

important role in the development of the fledgling airline industry.

Early flyers, often ex-military pilots from WWI, were known as “barnstormers.” They stoked popular enthusiasm by selling plane rides to locals and doing stunts at exhibitions, taking off and landing from local fields. Pilots bought surplus Curtiss JN4 trainers, nicknamed “Jennies,” for as little as \$200. Stunts included “wing walking” and daring aerial loops. Barnstorming was especially popular during the “Roaring Twenties.” At that time, aviation was unregulated and dangerous, but the many accidents failed to deter daredevil flyers and eager audiences. (FLIGHT, continued on page 2)

*During a two-month period, Hall’s and Hart’s war-surplus Jenny Trainer, the “Mayfly,” provided 66 local residents the thrill of flying over the Rogue Valley.
SOHS #12490*



FLIGHT

(continued from page 1)

MEDFORD'S AEROPLANE HERE GOING UP!

A thrill of a lifetime. Your opportunity to realize the progress the world has made. Your opportunity to fully understand some of the wonderful things we have all been reading about
GET THE JOY -- The thrill of going up and up -- **DON'T MISS IT**
Soaring over this beautiful valley

The Greatest, the Most Wonderful Trip Ever Offered to You

Saturdays and Sundays will be special days. Flights will be made continuous from morning till night. Passengers will be taken up in order of their application. As aeroplane leaves Medford soon, get your application in now.

Ship Piloted by Former Lieut. Floyd Hart. Seely Hall, Mechanician

MANAGEMENT MEDFORD AIRCRAFT CORPORATION

Place your applications at the Medford Commercial Club or on the field

Southern Oregon found its own flying champion in Medford native Seely Hall, who started out as an enthusiastic

barnstormer and ended up a Vice President of United Airlines. Hall purchased his first plane with WWI flying ace Floyd Hart in 1919, giving it the name "Mayfly" because of doubts that it would ever get off the ground. "Mayfly" was a success, and Hall and Hart offered joy rides around the valley to local residents. Their "airport" was a cornfield on the local Gore ranch between the Hollywood Orchard and Hanley Road near Medford.

In that pioneer era aircraft and airports were rudimentary. When an Army pilot landed in what was designated as an airfield in Medford, he discovered that the field was covered with three feet of standing grain. In order to take off, a wide path had to be cut through the field and the farmer compensated for his loss.

While pilots were taking off and landing from Medford fields, the city established an air facility in Southern Medford named Newell Barber Field after a young local airman who was killed in Europe at the end of WWI.

In 1920, the decision was made by the U.S. Army Air Service and U.S. Forest Service to base aircraft in Medford for forest fire patrols. To facilitate this, the City of Medford and Chamber of Commerce graded a 1,500-foot long by 25-foot wide landing strip on publicly owned land south of the city (near the location of today's Armory). This was the first public airfield in the State of Oregon.

The dedication of Newell Barber Field was a major event. On Labor Day, 1920, all downtown Medford stores closed for the afternoon, and a crowd estimated at 8,000 spectators arrived to view the airfield's dedication festivities. Six de Havilland air cruisers lined the runway, and spectators saw firsthand a parachute drop from 5,000 feet. According to the Medford *Mail Tribune*, "The air circus by the army aviators of the Oregon forest patrol service wound up the afternoon program."

The field was an active military base for the next two years. In 1923, however, the forest patrols were centralized at Eugene, and for the next two years, the field saw only occasional use. But things were about to change.

With the passage of the Contract Air Mail Act of 1925, private air transport companies finally had a source of regular revenue when the US Postal Service authorized them to bid for new airmail routes throughout the country. Vern Gorst, an airplane enthusiast who had once lived briefly in Medford and who was well known as a bus line developer, won the bid for the West Coast airmail route that ran from Seattle to Los Angeles.



National Air Tour at Newell Barber Field, July 16, 1928. Many of the nation's most prominent aviators and some of the country's most modern aircraft were present. Source: Bill Alley, Aviation in Southern Oregon.

Awarded the contract on December 31, 1925, Gorst struggled to raise funds and form the Pacific Air Transport Company. He contracted with Ryan Aircraft Company for seven single wing mail planes of new design, worked feverishly to hire pilots and mechanics, build hangars, and set up beacons along a route with stops at Seattle, Vancouver (WA), Medford, San Francisco, Bakersfield, and Los Angeles. Because Portland lacked an adequate landing field at this time, Medford became the only airmail terminal in Oregon.

On September 16, 1926, mail service began when pilots flying in Ryan monoplanes took off from both Seattle and Los Angeles, loaded with heavy canvas mail sacks. Vern Bookwalter, a native Oregonian, was an original Pacific Air Transport pilot hired by Gorst. His regular route was from Vancouver, Washington, to Medford.

At that time, pilots still flew in an open cockpit and carried a parachute; accidents were common. A new Ryan mail plane crashed over the Siskiyou only two months after mail service began. By the end of 1927, two pilots had been killed. With only two of Pacific Air Transport's original planes still flying, the company scrambled to replace them with second-hand aircraft.

That same year, Charles Lindbergh completed his famous transatlantic flight from New York to Paris then crossed the nation in *The Spirit of Saint Louis*, an aircraft modeled after the Ryan mail plane. A few months later, Lindbergh was seen in the sky above Medford by many enthusiastic residents. Although he didn't land, he dropped them a note of greetings in which he encouraged them to support aviation.

Despite the dangers, public interest grew in passenger service with what was initially known as "riding the

mail." By late 1927, two passengers were sometimes being crammed into the same open cockpit. A young woman journalist who flew Pacific Air Transport from Portland to Los Angeles described wearing "a soft wool helmet and monstrous goggles," and sitting with mail sacks "jammed in beside me." Upon arrival in Medford, a parachute was strapped on her back for the flight over the Siskiyou.



Vern Gorst with Pacific Air Transport's first Ryan M-1. SOHS #23570

The growth of passenger travel brought competition to Pacific Air Transport. In the Spring of 1928, a Los Angeles-based company named West Coast Air Transport entered the field with a 4-passenger plane that allowed passengers to fly in an enclosed space. Pacific Air Transport soon acquired two aircraft with enclosed cabins, but the company was struggling. On the verge of bankruptcy, Gorst looked for additional loans and offered employees stock in lieu of salary. It was to no avail.

After a little more than a year of operation, Gorst was forced to sell his interest to Boeing Air Transport Company. He then moved on to Seattle to create other small airline companies.

Through a series of mergers, the original Pacific Air Transport evolved into what is now United Airlines. Over time, Seely Hall, the entrepreneur who had brought the *Mayfly* to

Medford, advanced from being manager of Pacific Air Transport at Newell Barber Field to head of West Coast Operations and later Vice President of United Airlines.

By this time, Newell Barber Field was no longer adequate for the larger planes, and insurance underwriters began to question its safety. Compounding Medford's problems, West Coast Air announced in early 1929 that it was relocating its terminal to the larger Eugene landing field.



1926: First airmail flight out of Medford. SOHS #08614

(FLIGHT, continued on page 4)

FLIGHT

(continued from page 3)

In response, city officials seriously began the search for a new site. In coordination with the Department of Commerce and other government agencies, they eventually chose 280 acres on Biddle Road, north of the city center.

The project was heavily supported by local businesses, and in April 1929, the citizens of Medford passed a bond measure of \$120,000 to purchase the new airfield. With additional federal support the Medford airport began service that same year. It was dedicated the following year.

The federal government continued to provide grants over the years to build and improve the new airport. Today, Rogue Valley International - Medford Airport carries over a million passengers a year on over 43,000 flights, a far cry from the days of taking off and landing in farmer's fields.

Among the Works Cited:

Alley, Bill. "Seely Hall: Jackson County's Father of Aviation." *Southern Oregon Heritage Today*, vol. 2, no. 4, Apr. 2000, p. 14.

Alley, Bill. *Aviation in Southern Oregon*. Charleston, S.C., Arcadia Publishing, 2011.

Becker, Hattie B. "The History of the Rogue Valley International -- Medford." *Rogue Valley International Airport*, Jackson County Airport Authority, <https://www.medford-airport.com>.

Hall, Seely Vinton. *Miscellaneous materials relating to Pacific Air Transport Transport and aviation, ca. 1926-1930*. SOHS Manuscript Collection, 164358.

"Medford Airport Notes." *Southern Oregon History Revised*, edited by Ben Truwe, Southern Oregon Historical Society, www.truwe.sohs.org/files/airport.html.

Medford Mail Tribune, various dates, 1911-1930. SOHS Research Library.

Wright, Jack Morris. *A Poet of the Air* (Houghton Mifflin, 1919), p. 100.

AN INVITATION to OUR READERS

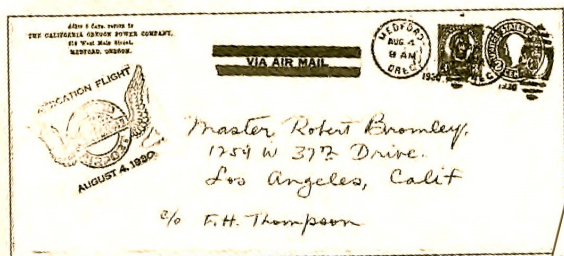
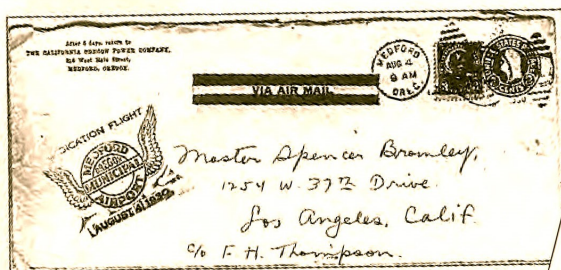
A few years ago SOHS Trustees concluded that Society members deserved something more in the way of regular communication than only the monthly newsletter. The *Quarterly* is the result of that decision. The main *Quarterly's* goals are to enhance your SOHS membership benefits and to publish accurate, interesting articles on Southern Oregon history that contribute to our region's growing body of historical scholarship. We, the editorial board, hope that you enjoy receiving the *Quarterly*.

We'd also like to hear back from you! Your comments – ranging from compliments or criticisms (preferably constructive) to corrections or even suggestions for future topics – are welcome. Because of printing costs and other limitations, we cannot promise to publish them, but when space allows, we will try to include any substantive comments or factual corrections from our readers in a future issue.

Written comments are appreciated. You can address letters to SOHS History Center, "Attn: *Quarterly* Editors," 106 N. Central Ave., Medford, OR 97501. Send e-mail comments to archivist@sohs.org. Please include the word "Quarterly" in the e-mail's subject line.

And if you would like to write an article, please contact us so we can share our writing criteria. We are always looking for new contributors!

Thank you!
The Editors



Souvenir program from Medford Airport dedication and letters transported on dedication flight, August 4, 1930.



LUCKY LINDY COMES TO MEDFORD!

by Kevin Keating

It is hard today to imagine a person as famous and universally beloved by all Americans as Charles A. Lindbergh in 1927 when he completed the first solo flight across the Atlantic. Born in 1902, he quit his college studies as a mechanical engineer at age 20 to learn to fly. He bought an army surplus Curtiss Jenny and with little training became a daring barnstormer and wing walker. He then joined the U.S. Army Air Service, graduating first in his class in 1925. He was promoted to captain one year later.

The new contract airmail routes provided Lindbergh with training in all weather and conditions (including night aviation without instruments). After several crashes and near misses, his experience grew to the point where he was ready to compete for a \$25,000 prize (*equivalent to \$350,000 today*) offered to the first person to fly the route from New York to Paris.

Competing against several of the world's best pilots, some of whom died in the attempt, Lindbergh completed the flight by himself on May 27, 1927.

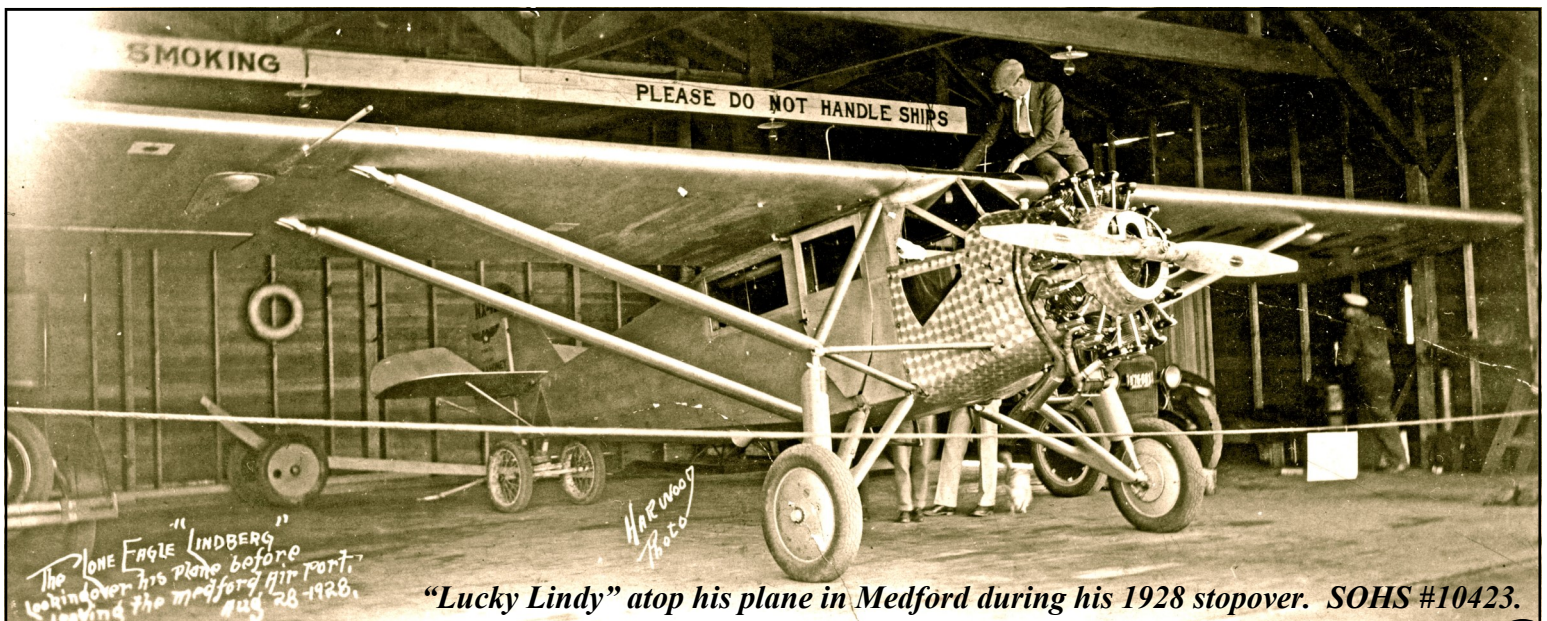
He was soon awarded the Medal of Honor, and an airmail stamp commemorating his flight. His autobiography (at age 25) sold 650,000 copies and earned him \$250,000. A 3-month tour of the United States was quickly organized and took place between July and October of 1927. Every city in America wanted to be on the tour, Medford included. In those three months, nearly a quarter of the US population (30 million people) was able to see Lindbergh in parades or flying low above their cities.

The city fathers had obtained from Lindbergh a promise to land in Medford on the day of their 50th anniversary celebration which fell on his weekly day off. Wisdom, caution, and exhaustion kept him in

Portland for his one-day's rest. The next day, on September 16, 1927, Lindbergh flew above Crater Lake on his way to San Francisco. He took special time to fly several passes over Medford, taking pains to fly slowly and banking over the schools in the town so that the schoolchildren gathered outside would be able to see him wave to them. He dropped a special note of greeting to the citizens of the town.

The following year he would actually fly into the Medford's airport, tipping Aubrey Sanford to keep his visit to the Rogue Valley quiet to avoid the staggering crowds that would otherwise detain him. One picture exists of Lindbergh checking his Spirit of St. Louis before taking off on the outbound journey.

The "Lone Eagle" suffered personal tragedy later in life but Medford remembers him as the flower of intrepid American youth who once visited our fair city.



PIONEER TAKES AN “AIR JAUNT”

by Carolyn Kingsnorth

Judge William Colvig was a writer, educator, historian, lawyer, authority on Shakespeare, President of the Medford Commercial Club, and “one of the best and wittiest public speakers in Oregon.” He is credited with helping to create the Rogue Valley “orchard boom” of the early 1900s. On October 27, 1926, the 83-year-old Colvig was one of the first Rogue Valley residents to travel by air to Los Angeles, becoming the subject of nationwide news coverage.

He described his adventure in an October 28th letter to the **Los Angeles Times** which was reprinted on the front page of the **Medford Mail Tribune** a day later... However, he said that the thrill “was not to be compared with crossing the continent behind an ox team with bands of Indian marauders in almost constant pursuit.” Colvig’s narrative appears below.

It was a day full of thrills. In my life-time, I have traveled in many different ways. I came to Oregon in a covered wagon drawn by oxen in 1851. We were five and a half months coming from Westport, Missouri, to Portland, Oregon. Our airplanes travel over the same route in less than fifty hours...so I had an intense desire to travel by airplane.

There is always nervous fear on the part of anyone who has kept his feet on the ground through a long life, but that only lasts a short time, and is succeeded by a joyful

confidence in the venture and a great feeling of pleasure in looking down on the swiftly changing pictures of earth.... So it was with a silent and unspoken prayer in my heart for the guidance and protection of the great God of Nature, and, at the same time, a hope that there was no hidden defect in the construction of the delicate machinery of the airship.

*New York Daily News photo,
November 7, 1926.
Photo from
Newspapers.com.*



THRILLS AND THRILLS.—Six-hour trip by air from Medford, Ore., to Los Angeles did not compare in thrills to cross country trip years ago behind team of oxen, with Indian marauders in pursuit, for Judge William M. Colvig, 83, above with four grandchildren. (By Pacific & Atlantic)

I entered and was chucked down into a little cubby-hole, where only my venerable head reached above the sides. [W]hen the engine began to whirl, and the wind-mill in front commenced to revolve, I would have violated the Eighteenth Amendment, the Volstead Act, or any other old law for a rousing drink of Hennessey's "Three X."

Speaking of law, there is one for which, during this trip, I will have great respect, and that is the law of gravitation. For two minutes, I thought to myself: "After all, this is a good old world. I have enjoyed its many pleasures and endured its vicissitudes for more than four score years,

and I hate to leave it." After a few long breaths, all gloomy and foreboding thoughts were dissipated, and I was enraptured by the grand panorama...over which we were flying.

The weather was at its "best." There were only a few fleecy clouds flying, and no fog to hide the landscape below. We gradually rose to a height of nearly 9,000 feet, and then I looked down upon the evergreen summits of the Siskiyou range of mountains, and looking back I took a farewell glimpse of Rogue River Valley—"the gem of the sundown seas."

Yonder in front, old Shasta ... seems an island rising from out the great sea, or a "resting place on the way to the stars." We did not attempt to compete with its snow-white summit, but swiftly moved o'er the dark forests around its base. In a few minutes, the castellated crags of the Sacramento mountains [Castle Crags] were in view. Dunsmuir, Redding and other towns and villages could be seen in the abysmal depths below. They looked like toy structures—playthings of the children of men....

Yonder, just ahead, is the wide expanse of the Sacramento Valley, and many a good landing place, should we be forced by circumstances to make a forced landing. I had had dread of this casualty nearly all the way over. The crags and peaks, the interminable forests of fir and pine, the deep and dark canyons, were not places in which such a landing could be made, but now, thank God, we can go down to Mother Earth as gently as the

falling snowflake. That is, of course, if nothing causes the law of gravitation to act hastily.

While riding in an airship and going at the rate of 125 miles an hour, you do not seem to be going fast. When an auto in which you are riding reaches forty-five or fifty miles an hour, objects along the road seem to pass very swiftly, but not so in an airplane.



Some of the national newspapers that reported Colvig's "jaunt."

The Sacramento River looks like a silver ribbon as it winds across the valley miles and miles in advance of your position in the plane. You can see the autos moving along the Pacific Highway, and they look like big black spiders. I never expect to look upon a more beautiful picture than is presented while looking down on the cultivated fields of California. It reminded me, especially around Fresno, of patchwork quilts that my grandmother used to make. The houses did not look larger than grains

of corn; it was seldom that I could see people on the earth below....

At Bakersfield, the plane gradually rises to a height of 10,000 feet [and] crosses the desolate and scarred summits of the Tehachapi Mountains. I would dread a forced landing at any point between Bakersfield and Los Angeles.

This is a hurried account, and I will state in conclusion that I enjoyed every moment of the trip, but there is one thing that I will mention. It is rather aggravating to sit all day within two feet of an intelligent pilot and cannot speak one word to him because the whirl of the engine makes it impossible for two people, though sitting side by side, to converse.

Before I conclude, I want to say a word for these brave young pilots who are managing the airships of the Pacific line. They are brave, intelligent, and loyal to every duty of their position. They do not try any stunts or unique features in flying or landing, and I believe that the time is near at hand when people who want to make a quick trip to any given point up and down the coast will go by air.

Deducting the time for four stops, Colvig calculated that the flight lasted six hours and 45 minutes. After that jaunt, Colvig found trains too slow. Describing himself as "kind of a fatalist," he elected to travel by air when possible, even chartering planes to take him to ballgames in Portland. Never a "moss-back pioneer," Colvig continued to embrace progress until his death in 1936 at age 91.

EYES IN THE SKY: WHEN ARMY PILOTS PATROLLED OUR FORESTS

by Jeff LaLande

Picture this scene: *On a hot, late-August afternoon in 1920, with its 400-horsepower Liberty engine roaring at full throttle, the de Havilland DH-4 biplane – the same model of aircraft that was a combat veteran of the skies over WWI’s Western Front – rolls along the grassy field, increases speed, and gains flight. The Army pilot attains altitude, flies north over the roof tops of east Medford, and then continues east, cruising at 8,000 feet towards Mt. McLoughlin. Directly behind the pilot, where the machine-gunner would have sat in a DH-4 during dog-fights, is the Forest Service observer, who is looking for a different kind of enemy: tell-tale smoke from a forest fire.*

The new Medford airfield that year (soon to be improved and named in honor of Army pilot and Medford High School graduate Newell Barber, killed in action a year before) served as a base for the Army Air Service’s “91st Aero Squadron” that flew over the region every fire season from 1920 through the middle of the decade.

The idea of using aircraft to find fires had been proposed as early as 1909. It seems that the earliest known forest fire-patrol flight – albeit an experimental one – was made by the U.S. Forest Service in 1913, over southern California’s San Gabriel National Forest. However, the first such flight that was made in an earnest attempt to locate fires from the air is credited to Logan Vilas. On June 29, 1915, the wealthy Chicago airplane owner flew his Curtiss “Flying Boat” over a sizeable area of northernmost Wisconsin’s immense forest. Hired by the state’s chief forester, Vilas refused pay for the work. In case of engine trouble, with the many lakes of the region, finding an emergency landing place for his “Flying Boat” was not a major concern.

However, it was not until after World War I, with the Army Air Service—now in search of useful work for its peace-time pilots and planes—that the aerial fire-patrol program truly “took off.” A joint effort of Army officers and Forest Service men, the program covered California and Oregon. The Army chose Medford as a refueling stop for its planes in 1919, the first year of the new program, but Medford became a regular Air Service fire-patrol base the following year. The very first patrols of 1919 were

made by flimsy Curtiss “Jennies,” which proved unreliable (a Jenny was apparently involved in the program’s first fatality, which occurred in Oregon). Before the summer of 1919 was over, the combat-tested DH-4s—with their 400-horsepower Liberty engines—were flying out of the Medford field (located south of town, between Bear Creek and the new Pacific Highway).



But, one wonders: How to communicate the location of a fire without flying all the way back to Medford? At first, the observer dropped hand-scrawled reports, weighted with rocks, from low altitude over Forest Service fire-lookout stations, but this rarely worked well. Next, carrier pigeons were taken aboard and released with written messages; again, poor results. By 1920, with Lt. W. D. Goldsborough in charge of the Medford base, things had improved: A crude “wireless radio-sending set” (with a small generator mounted on the landing gear) enabled crude but satisfactory air-to-ground communication.

The Forest Service crowed that the first two years of the program were a success. Although not many of the aerial-patrol flights of 1920-1921 were credited with making the “first report” of a fire (instead, ground-based mountaintop fire lookouts made most of those), the agency definitely enjoyed the publicity and public-relations benefit of the program. It also claimed that the aerial patrols’ “spy in

Line up of Forest Service patrol planes at air base.



the sky” aspect discouraged the yearly scourge of arson fires—many of them traditionally set by Southern Oregon’s old-time ranchers in late summer so as to improve the next year’s grazing. The aircraft also circled over known fires to observe and report on what direction/speed the flames were moving.

Apparently, repeatedly flying the same path—even over Southern Oregon’s magnificent forested scenery—proved a bit tedious. The initial novelty for the Army pilots and USFS observers soon wore off; the pilots’ morale reportedly began to lower as they flew over the same terrain day after day. Regular daily flights were abandoned in 1922. In addition, after three years of the program, the numbers still didn’t look good. Far more “first reports” were made by ground-based USFS lookouts than by the aerial patrols.

With both the Army and the Forest Service facing relentless yearly budget reductions, the patrols lessened during 1923-1924. Neither the Army nor the USFS now felt that the program really met a positive cost/benefit ratio. The program would have ended after the 1924 fire season were it not for a special appropriation pushed through Congress by Oregon Senator Charles

McNary; 1925 was the final year of the Army/USFS aerial fire patrol program.

For the past few years, we have continued to experience Southern Oregon’s fire seasons. Our forests are known as among the most fire-prone in the state, and various methods to detect such fires before they grow large have been around since the U.S. Forest Service first came upon the scene in 1905. In the decades since 1925, aircraft have come to have the last word on that concern. With small, privately owned civilian aircraft now in the skies nearly continuously, far more fires are now first detected by aircraft, or by people driving their vehicles out in the (now very heavily roaded) forests, than are spotted by the agency’s very few remaining mountain-top fire lookouts.

Works Cited:

Charles W. Boyce, “Aerial Forest Fire Patrol in Oregon and California,” *Journal of Forestry*; Vol 19, 1921.

Robert Cermak, “Pioneering Aerial Forest Fire Control: The Army Air Patrol in California, 1919-1921,” *California History*, Fall 1991 (290-305).

Jamie Lewis, “June 29, 1915: First Aerial Fire Patrol Took Flight,” Forest History Society (website 2011).

Oregon State Forester, *Annual Reports*, 1919-1925.



WINDOWS IN TIME

Southern Oregon History On-Line Zoom Series

OREGON CAVES: OUR UNDERGROUND TREASURE

October 7, 2020, 12n–1pm

For over 100 years, visitors from all over have enjoyed this remarkable national monument and preserve. Sue Densmore, Executive Director of the Friends of the Oregon Caves and Chateau, shares history, stories, and photographs, of the Oregon Caves and Chateau and how the Caves became a National Monument.

Register at <https://jcls.libcal.com/event/6809351>



WHAT'S IN A[N AVIATION] NAME?

by Jeff LaLande

It has not been the easiest of What's in a Name?" assignments: to come up with current, local place-names related to this issue's aviation theme. Other than one very obvious Medford street name, **Aviation Way**, nothing much readily came to mind. But, a bit of deeper digging did yield a few more.

In 1995, with its upgraded status as part of a network of international airports, various possible new names were being considered for the **Medford-Jackson County Airport** (built in 1930 and called **Medford Municipal Airport** until its transfer to county ownership in 1971). A number of names were suggested, but two came with tongue planted firmly in cheek. "**Foggy Bottom International Airport**" evoked the numerous winter days when, with absolutely clear skies above, the Valley's infamous atmospheric inversion created a thick blanket of fog over the airport – halting incoming flights for hours or even days. "Fog-seeding" technology has since greatly improved on that situation.

Another less-than-serious moniker put into the naming hopper was "**Medfly International Airport**" – a play-on-words that recalled the 1989 Mediterranean fruit fly ("Medfly") crisis in California and Oregon. The final choice was, of course, **Rogue Valley International – Medford Airport**. (Me, I just call it **MFR**.)

The airport's official "Free Trade Zone" (FTZ) area has been formally dubbed the **Robert "Bob" Smith Free Trade Zone**, after former Congressman Bob Smith. (The Highway 62 overpass that spans Biddle Road is also named for him.)

Also at the airport is the U.S. Forest Service's "Air Tanker" Base (first opened in 1958), where "fire-retardant" bombers (and other fire-fighting aircraft) are stationed during fire season. This facility is now named

the **Jack Walker Air Tanker Facility**, for the County Commissioner who worked to convince government officials not to close the Medford base as part of a proposed cost-savings move. (Some SOHS members may recall the late Mr. Walker as having been influential in the loss of the Society's tax base.)



Lt. David Kingsley

Of course, **Biddle Road** has been around for many years. It is named for Welton F. Biddle, an "orchard baron" who owned a large property where the northern portion of the airport is today. His circa 1906 home was subsequently demolished by the City of Medford for airport expansion work in 1955. (*This writer recalls picking allegedly organic apples, for a pittance, back in the early 1970s at an orchard located about where the Applebee's is now. There was nothing but widely scattered "low-rent" homes from the 1920s into the 1940s along the east side of Biddle in those days.*)

Some of the airport's new roads received names in 1997, including **Milligan Way**, honoring George Milligan who founded the Rogue Valley's famous Mercy Flights

operation in 1949. **Cirrus Drive** and **Nimbus Drive**, because of their proximity to the U.S. Weather Bureau's building, were named for types of clouds.

The final two place names here are different from the previous examples. One of them is a local name but is no longer a current name. The other is current, but not local to the Rogue Valley.

Medford's **Newell Barber Field**, located where the Southgate shopping complex is today, commemorated World War I Army pilot Newell Barber. A Medford native, Barber joined the Aviation Corps, fresh out of high school in 1917. Shipped to France, he flew with the 108th Aero Squadron. On August 11, 1918, three months to the day before the armistice ended the war,

Barber and his French observer were flying back from a bombing run, on their way to the Allied airfield at Noyon, when they were shot down over the German lines. Lieutenant Barber's body was never recovered. The French government awarded him *le Croix de guerre* for his service. The airfield, long since replaced by Medford's current airport, was dedicated in Barber's honor in 1920.

In Klamath Falls, today's **Kingsley Field** is located at the site of the city's first (1928) airfield. Later it served as a Naval Air Station during WWII (from which some of the original buildings apparently remain). In the 1950s, it became an Air Force base, and in 1957 was named for Oregonian Lt. David Kingsley. When the Air Force moved out, local politicians succeeded in getting the facility designated as the main training base for the Oregon Air National Guard. (The jet fighters that fly low and loud over the Rogue Valley's Fourth of July celebrations launch from Kingsley Field.)

Lieutenant David Kingsley's war story is a moving one. Born and raised in Portland, he joined the U.S. Army Air Force in 1942, a few months after the Pearl Harbor attack. Serving as a bombardier in a B-17, Kingsley flew with the 97 Bombardment Group of the 15th Air Force on the dangerous raid to bomb the oil fields of Romania (a German ally) at Ploesti. Kingsley's plane was one of many that didn't make it back. The aircraft, nicknamed the "Opissonyou," was badly shot up by Messerschmitt 109 fighters. Kingsley rescued the gravely wounded tail gunner and brought him forward. With the slow-moving Flying Fortress now in flames and going down, the pilot ordered his crew to bail out. All of them did so except for Kingsley and the wounded gunner who had misplaced his chute. Kingsley gave the man his chute, strapped it on him, and ordered the man to jump from the plane. The gunner later told his crewmates that his last sight of Kingsley was of him standing on the bomb-bay catwalk watching to see if the gunner's chute opened. Perishing in the crash a minute or two later, Kingsley was posthumously awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor. Kingsley is buried at Arlington National Cemetery

Works Cited:

Hattie B. Becker, "The History of the Rogue Valley International -Medford Airport." Jackson County Airport Authority, 1995.

Susan Mathistad, "Rogue Valley International-Medford Airport History Part 2." Jackson County Airport Authority, 2017.

Bill Miller, "Treading on Heroic Soil," *Medford Mail Tribune*, May 30, 2010.

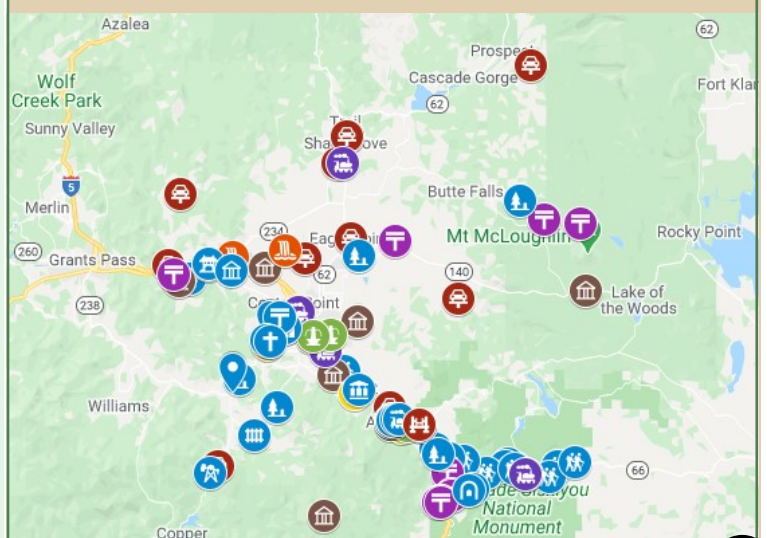


MARKING THE SPOT

*Do you like to read historical markers?
If so, it just became easier!*

Check out SOHS's new website: markers.sohistory.org. Over 100 Jackson County historical marker sites are listed along with photographs, maps, background, GPS locations, and more to help you explore local history. The website even comes with its own history.

In 2011, Peter and Linda Kreisman finally tracked down the abandoned Buck Rock Tunnel and found SOHS markers at each end. A few years later, they found an SOHS marker near Emigrant Lake. Since then, they've made it their quest to find historical markers throughout the County placed by SOHS and others. With a little help from the SOHS webmaster, they are sharing their work. Some markers are a drive away; some are a stroll through the community, and some are quite a hike! They include bridges, mining sites, railroads, wagon roads, cemeteries, military and municipal markers, and more!



GRANTS MAKE GLASS PLATE NEGATIVES A POSITIVE SOHS ASSET

In 2019, the Southern Oregon Historical Society received a donation of a unique collection of 3,000 Sawyers glass plate photography negatives. In the 1920s, Sawyers was the largest purveyor of scenic postcards in the country and a major glass plate producer in Oregon's economy for decades. The plates depict cultural and scenic Oregon and national landmarks, scenes from Native American life, rare shots from the Columbia River Gorge, early 20th Century images of the Portland Rose Festival, and more. One noteworthy image is that of Charles Lindbergh flying over Crater Lake (*shown here*).

We are proud to announce that this summer SOHS has received two grants—a Museum Grant from the Oregon Parks and Recreation Department and an Oregon Cultural Trust grant—that will fund the cost of cataloging, storing, digitizing, and sharing this unique collection.

This collection also opens the door on a complicated history. It was owned by William Gruber, inventor of the ViewMaster and a Nazi supporter. Although Gruber later renounced Hitler and the Nazi party, his connection to this collection complicated SOHS's accessioning of these glass plate images. At the same time, it provided an opportunity not only to share the collection's stunning content with the public, but also to explore in a public way how historians and cultural organizations wrestle with connections to figures whose views we denounce today.

This project will make available to the public rare images that capture the cultural and environmental history of Oregon.

These images have been out of wide circulation for 70 years and as such, present a fascinating time capsule of Oregon's rich heritage.



A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

The SOHS Board of Trustees, along with our staff and many volunteers, are considering the Society's role in our community, in light of Covid, Black Lives Matter protests, and the 2020 elections.

Our direct response is our SOHS Statement on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion which you can read at <http://sohs.org/inclusion>. In addition, we are re-examining SOHS's mission and vision statements, and our goals. Going forward, the SOHS Board will endeavor to become a more inclusive historical society, striving for more membership and involvement from under-represented community groups.

This month's Quarterly, focused on aviation in the Rogue Valley, is an example of SOHS presenting significant developments in American history with emphasis on their effects on Southern Oregon. The absence of people of color and women in the stories is indicative of life in America in that time period.

For many years, SOHS has endeavored to present the history of Southern Oregon objectively, represent the experiences of diverse populations, and focus on events of broad interest from various time periods. This is a challenging assignment. As SOHS researchers soon learn, the Archives consist primarily of English language materials, written and donated by white settlers in Southern Oregon. The artifacts in the SOHS collection were also largely donated by more privileged and affluent Oregonians. Even though SOHS has the largest museum collection and archives in Southern Oregon and the second largest in the state, it has limited resources related to indigenous people, Chinese residents, and other groups that have lived in the area.

Historians endeavor to rely on primary sources for information rather than published accounts that may

repeat myths and inaccuracies, but such sources are limited. For example, when local historians research Takelma culture, they rely heavily on recollections of Molly Orton and Frances Johnson, two Takelma women who shared their stories with Edward Sapir and J. P. Harrington in the 1900s. Little else is available.

Research on the Chinese people who lived in the Rogue Valley is also difficult due to lack of sources. It is fortunate that Peter Britt took photos of various Chinese men, but frustrating that their names and stories were not recorded.

In spite of the difficulties, SOHS staff and volunteers present materials they can find on diverse populations in Southern Oregon. Ben Truwe's website, Southern Oregon History, Revised, (truwe.sohs.org) primarily provides transcripts of newspaper articles, diaries, Oregon Superintendency of Indian Affairs correspondence, and other original documents. On the SOHS website various sources are also available on the page <http://sohs.org/discrimination>.

Speaking for the SOHS Board of Trustees, I encourage everyone who is interested in the history of Southern Oregon to join us. We would particularly like to have a more diverse membership that represents all Southern Oregon populations. You can help SOHS build a more inclusive collection and archives and interpret history from a broader perspective.

- Doug McGeary



ADD COLOR TO OUR BLOOM: BECOME A SUSTAINING MEMBER!

An SOHS Sustaining Membership is an ongoing, automatic monthly gift that can be paid securely and conveniently by credit card. Choose your monthly giving level and your membership continues uninterrupted until you tell us otherwise. You receive on-going benefits, and we know we can rely on your support and reduce our processing costs. Find more information at <http://sohs.org/sustaining>.

WREATH MAKING

at
Hanley Farm
SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 28TH
11am to 3pm

Make a wreath or buy a kit!
Kits contain grapevine or fruitwood bases,
evergreens, cones or berries, and wire.
Bring your own ribbon, ornaments, and trimmings
SOHS members, \$10; Non-members, \$15.
(Masks and physical distancing required; work tables and tools
sanitized between groups. Contact info required.)



1053 Hanley Road between Central Point and Medford

SCARECROW FESTIVAL

October 3rd & 4th
11:00am-4:00pm

Hanley Farm,
1053 Hanley Road,
Central Point

**Make a Scarecrow
or Take Home a Kit**

Decorate your yard or
protect your garden!
Build a straw stuffed
scarecrow or hanger
scarecrow.

All materials provided.
Straw: SOHS members, \$10; Non-members, \$15.
Hanger (Take-home only): Members, \$7;
Non-members, \$10.

(Masks and physical distancing required; work tables and
tools sanitized between groups. Contact info required.)

Enter your scarecrow's photo in our contest and
send it to webmaster@sohs.org by October 7th.
Winners receive a 1-year SOHS family membership.



AMY AND THE GHOSTS

TALES OF THE DARK

Because of Covid-19,
the October
Hanley Farm
Haunted Field
Production of
"Amy and the Ghosts"
is on hold.



Look for future
Information about this
joint production by
SOHS and
Crater High School
Renaissance
Academy students.



SPOTLIGHT ON *the* FAMILY NURTURING CENTER

by Alice Mullaly

Visitors to Hanley Farm frequently admire not only the manicured lawns and flower beds, but also the cultivated fields and animals that make it a farm. Few realize that the market garden portions of the farm are the handiwork of the Family Nurturing Center (FNC) and their Farm and Food Program that allows dozens of families and hundreds of children to enjoy this wonderful resource. This Spotlight salutes in a special way the managers that make this happen: Kristin Galabrun and Doug Lofdahl, Co-managers of the FNC Farm and Food Program and Isaiah Webb, Farm Manager.

In 2012, FNC worked with SOHS to provide a place where the families they were working with could produce some of their own food. It was soon realized that Hanley Farm meant more than just a plot of land. It was a peaceful, beautiful and stable place that provided an experience which many of the families had not had before. One woman, Kristin reported, likes to talk with the Sequoia tree because it has been there so strong and tall for longer than she can imagine.

Most years FNC has people out preparing soil, planting, and harvesting. Then families come together to learn how to prepare the fresh food and share that with others, experiencing the therapeutic value of a supportive group. In addition,

the Farm to School Program brings hundreds of students to Hanley to share in the growing, harvesting, preparing and eating of good fresh produce.

This year FNC has had to modify what they do and not bring people together. They still have one family at a time come to the farm. But primarily they are providing and delivering weekly fresh produce boxes for 25 families, and two institutional kitchens that serve people in need. In addition to fresh garden produce, Farm and Food raises chickens for eggs and sheep for lamb to add additional protein sources to their offerings. With several grants they have been able to add non-perishable food to the boxes as well.

The goal is always the same—to provide a healthy community for all of us. That means food and shelter security, and a supportive network. As Doug and Kristin said, they would not get such great results from just any piece of land. “FNC’s Farm and Food Program could have nowhere near the impact were it not for Hanley Farm.” It provides that illusive extra that is turning out to be essential—the natural and volunteer provided loveliness that we all feel when we visit the Hanley Heritage Farm Museum.

L-R: Kristin Galabrun, Doug Lofdahl, and Isaiah Webb.





Scarecrow Festival at Hanley Farm.
October 3rd and 4th.
See page 14.



From the History Center

SOUTHERN OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY: VIRTUAL AND REAL!

Making History Together!

Although Covid-19 has forced SOHS to cancel most of our events and activities, it has given us time to plan for the future. It has also encouraged us to expand more into the virtual world and reach out to new audiences. We've learned the future of SOHS will be both virtual and real as we serve members and guests in person and also offer ways for you to explore history from the comfort of your home...or wherever you may happen to be.

Did you attend our "Concert under the Stars" at Hanley Farm, the recent musical event reminiscent of old time drive-in theaters? Good family fun! And speaking of driving, check out our new website of historical markers to explore. Don't forget to mark your calendar for the upcoming Scarecrow Festival and Wreath Making workshop at the Farm. And did you know our Library and Archives are open again by

appointment? You can also make telephone or on-line research requests.

Or hunker down and log into a "Windows in Time" session on Zoom. Tour our collection and archives through daily Facebook posts. Read old SOHS magazines from 1981 through 2009—all scanned and available on our website—sohs.org. Relive the '60s with news clips on our YouTube video channel. There's so much more you can explore. *And remember:*

History is who we are!

*Shown right—1770 pocket sun dial
and "GPS" owned by Peter Britt.*

