

Hattiesburg Area Historical Society

HAHS MUSEUM
Hattiesburg Cultural Center
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HOW TIME FLIES!

By December 17th of 1903, Orville and Wilber Wright made the first sustained, controlled, powered, manned flights. In 1913 the Wright brothers actually flew from a board runway on a field in Hattiesburg and clipped the only tree in the field. It was not long before aircraft were being used by the military—first for reconnaissance, but soon for combat. Radiotelephones were explored on airplanes as communication between pilots and the ground became more important.

In 1917, a plane was seen on the Normal College (USM) campus next to Hardy Street. The pilot probably landed on the street since the campus was covered with trees and stumps. Later that year, Ruth Law flew into Camp Shelby, and the public was invited to her show.

After World War I experienced pilots were eager to show off their flying abilities. Many became barnstormers flying into small towns across the country. Surplus planes were purchased for about \$300 by these male and female daredevils. In the 1920s some came to Hattiesburg to perform, and take paying passengers for rides. Long time residents recall aerial exhibitions with wing walkers on top and below the wings.

Pilots landed in any vacant field available. One such field (where the Wright brothers landed) was on the corner of Concart Street and 13th Avenue. Circuses also used that field from time to time, and it still sits empty over one hundred years later. Tales of running out of fuel short of a field, landing on cars, flipping on stumps, and blowing chickens against a farmer's fence may have been reasons for building a city airport, but Hattiesburg's leadership already knew it was time for an official airport.

Plans were made for a modern municipal airport with one hanger, one dirt runway, one spotlight, and a grandstand. The airport would be located on 420 acres, four miles southeast of town near Palmer's Crossing. After completion, much hoopla surrounded the September 23, 1930 dedication.



Mayor W. S. F. Tatum and T. S. Jackson, Secretary of Chamber of Commerce, prepare for the city airport dedication with the hanger in the background. (above)

At right, Joseph Johnston, traveling salesman, landed the first plane at the new airport on September 15, 1930 after dark with the aid of the new light. Johnston worked for a Cincinnati paper company and was the husband of Ethel Foster Johnston, secretary to *Hattiesburg American* editor and publisher Francis Harmon.



Headlines in the *Hattiesburg American* announced, "AIRPORT DEDICATION TO DRAW HUGE THrong." A program of thrills with races and sky acrobatics was promised.

Mississippi native Rear Admiral Thomas P. Magruder, commandant of the Eighth Naval District, was to dedicate "Mississippi's finest airport." Although there had been "days of intermittent rain" the field was in perfect condition, and Mayor W.S.F. Tatum assured everyone "that everything was in readiness for the dedicating ceremonies."

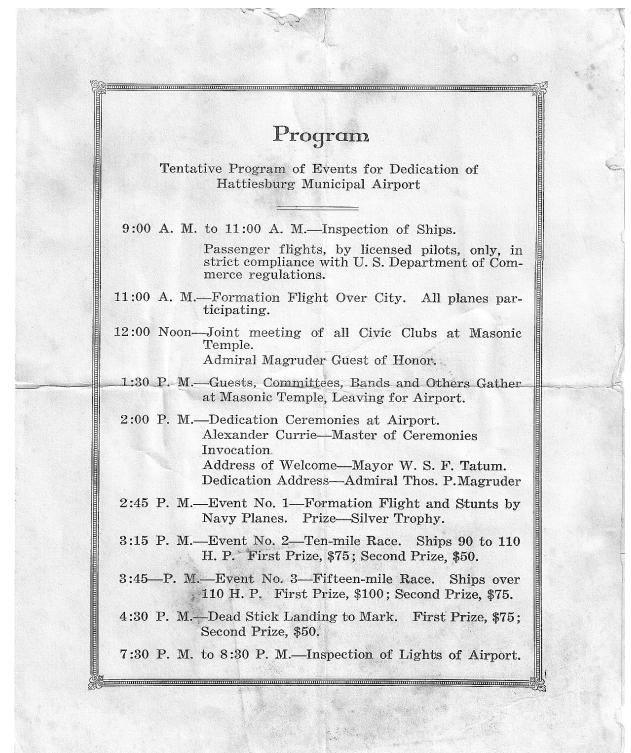


Dignitaries and area residents attending the dedication of the city airport September 23, 1930, from left: J. T. Bounds (supervisor) and son, Dr. B. E. Green (supervisor), Unknown, Mrs. McAulay, Unknown, L. McAulay (commissioner), W. E. Estes (commissioner), Billy Estes, Mrs. Estes, Unknown, Shelby Pickett, Mrs. Pickett, Admiral Thomas Pickett Magruder, Admiral A. W. Marshall, Alexander Currie, Mayor W. S. F. Tatum and Mrs. Tatum. They are standing in the original hanger that is still used today.

Flags and bunting decorated city buildings and the Masonic Temple, where local clubs hosted a joint civic luncheon for 400 guests, civic leaders, and members. After lunch the Woodmen of the World band led a procession to the airport. Boy Scouts posted the colors and Admiral Magruder, ignoring a quickly passing shower, gave the principal address praising Hattiesburg for its progressiveness. Dozens of private, commercial, and military airplanes (including planes from the Naval Station in Pensacola) participated in the races and airshow. Hundreds of visitors and thousands of local spectators at the field and in the downtown streets enjoyed the day-long celebration.

For a time during World War II when additional bases were needed for the U.S. Army Air Corps, a lease agreement allowed the civil airport to be used as Hattiesburg Army Airfield. The first mission was antisubmarine patrols over the Gulf of Mexico. Activities phased down in 1945, and full civil control was returned in 1946.

Although commercial airline service moved to the Hattiesburg-Laurel Regional Airport in 1974, the municipal airport is still there and playing a vital role serving the needs of the Hattiesburg area. In 1980s the facility was renamed the Bobby Lee Chain Municipal Airport. The hanger built in 1930 serves as the maintenance building of 2014. (Continued on back page.)



GIFTS TO THE SOCIETY

November 20, 2013 – June 8, 2014

- * Two scrapbooks of Clippings from Mayor Claude Pittman, Jr. (Mayor from 1962-1965) from Jim Crosby
- * Booklett, Women's Council of Realtors, "Favorite Recipes Cookbook 1981" from Garland Sullivan
- * Picture: Hattiesburg Police Dept. showing Ray Lee & Ben Jones from Officer David Byrd
- * Wedding dress, slip & veil worn by Mrs. W. W. Crawford; 1901 wedding picture of Mrs. Crawford, and wedding invitation from Ray Carter.
- * Three pages of small postcards showing Camp Shelby WWI from Lisa Foster, Camp Shelby
- * Canon L-50 Toner from Paula T. Harvey
- * Original material for Hattiesburg Historic Neighborhood Survey (forms, negative, index) from Harry C. Ward
- * Class of 1937 composite, MS Southern Button and Beanie Cap "Hattiesburg City of Progress from Ellen McCurdie
- * Fuel mixing can for Maytag multi-motor washer from Catherine H. Price
- * Two Henley Photographers photographs and Hattiesburg street car map from Harry C. Ward
- * Enlarged picture of Gulf & Ship Island Depot Hattiesburg 1902 plus description; DVD of Mississippi Sanborn Maps from David Price
- * 1948 "Southerner" Mississippi Southern College Annual from Joey DiFatta
- * Two copies of the book; "Twice Heroes" (one to go to the Hattiesburg Public Library) from Tom Graves
- * Various assorted newspaper clippings, telephone books, Hotel Hattiesburg platter, music book and church book, 1964 City Directory, and First Baptist Church memorabilia from Joyce Craig.
- * Assorted historical photos and documents including Dixie Pine Grocery & Street Scenes showing Henry Ford's camper from Dr. & Mrs. Robert Bailey
- * Assorted articles, programs & school memorabilia, war ration books, HHS 1996 tassel & Steve Blair Sr. letters from Lynn Phillips Helwig & Tom Phillips
- * Booklet: "Lance Corp Roy M. Wheat" and genealogy information on John Wesley "Wes" Fairley & Lorenzo Nolly Dantzler (brass footprints near the Carter Building).
- * J. Espey & Co. pump organ (shown at right) and stool from Frank and Lula Corage.
- * Two uniforms; Dress Blues, jacket, pants, field jacket belonging to Col. John Fishel and map of Camp Shelby from Lucia Fishel Pardue.



Recent Monetary Contributions

Nov. 20, 2013 – June 8, 2014

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A J Jones
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Albert & Cornelia Jones
Laurie Crowson

CORRECTION: In the Winter 2013 issue on page 4, Ginger Sigler Chappell's grandmother was Aussie Haney Sigler (Mrs. C. M. Sigler). We apologize for the typo.

HAHS MUSEUM
Post Office Box 1573
Hattiesburg, MS



39403-1573

MUSEUM HOURS

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2:00 - 4:30 p.m.

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Located in the
Hattiesburg Cultural
Center
723 Main Street
Downtown
Hattiesburg, MS

Web site:

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(Continued from Page 1)

A newly resurfaced 6099' x 150' runway and an eleven acre concrete ramp can safely accommodate the largest jets. Chain is the preferred business airport for Forrest, Lamar, and Perry counties and also serves parts of Pearl River, Stone, and Green counties. Both area air ambulances are based there, and private, corporate, and military planes arrive and depart at an average of 250 per week.



It seems as if it were just yesterday that early visitors to the south Mississippi piney woods and its Choctaw residents came on foot or horseback. My, how time flies!

MEMBERSHIP: The status of your membership is found after your name on the address label – the year dues were last paid and/or “L” for Life Member. The HAHS year begins on January 1 and ends on December 31st. Thank you for supporting HAHS!

THANK YOU!! The Society gratefully appreciates all donations and contributions. 100% of your dues, memorials, and donated items are used for preservation of history and education of area citizens.

TO BECOME A MEMBER OF THE
HATTIESBURG AREA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

2014 HAHS DUES

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Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Individual \$10 _____

Couple/Organization \$15 _____

Student \$2 _____

Life Membership- Each Person \$100 _____

(Please make checks payable to HAHS and send to
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