



BELLANCA AIRFIELD

2014 NEWSLETTER

INVENTION CONVENTION

In January the Hagley Museum invited the Friends of Bellanca to participate in their premier annual family event "Invention Convention". The theme for 2014 was Aviation. This three day event inspired innovation with science shows, hands on activities and demonstrations designed for younger visitors to explore with their



families. The Bellanca exhibit included posters and handouts relating to early aviation in Delaware and in particular the innovative accomplishments of G. M. Bellanca and the Bellanca Aircraft Corporation. A major attraction of our display was our Flight Simulator that allowed a youngster to handle the controls of a Bellanca Cruisair for a flight over Delaware and a landing at Bellanca Airfield. This event proved to be extremely popular with over 250 young people piloting a Bellanca. Many expressed hopes to become a pilot or have a

career in aviation. Bellanca members Barbara Finnan and Elliott Smith are to be commended for organizing and conducting this event.

REST ROOMS AND KITCHEN

Work resumed In the early spring to complete the interiors of the restrooms. Light fixtures, sinks and decorative items such as mirrors and window treatments were installed by Joe Finocchiaro, Bill Wilson and other volunteers. Many of the fixtures were either donated or recycled. Remaining tasks are to prepare and paint the interior and exterior walls.

HISTORIC BEACON TOWER

With the approval of the Trustees of the New Castle Common, Delaware's Historical and Cultural Affairs Architectural Historian and



the Federal Aviation Administration a 52 foot tall vintage Aviation Beacon Tower was erected adjacent to the Bellanca Hangar. This tower replaces the original tower that was installed in 1928 and stood for many years. Bellanca member Harry Van

Den Heuvel found this tower at Sussex

County Airport and arranged to have it donated. He also had it moved to Bellanca Airfield, refurbished and painted. In his honor it is called the "HARRY VAN DEN HEUVEL TOWER". FOBA member Joe



Finocchiaro, almost single handedly, did a remarkable job of installing the tower, mounting the vintage green and white rotating beacon and attaching a commemorative sign. Bill Wilson handled the

electrical wiring to the beacon and Mike Sobieski and Elliott Smith restored the rotating beacon light which was donated by Jim Hicken.

OPEN HOUSE AND PUBLIC ATTENDANCE

During the month of March preparations were made to reopen the Museum for visitors. Protective tarps covering the displays and art work were removed and housekeeping chores were carried out by FOB members and with the help of students



from William Penn H. S. and Tall Oaks School. The Bellanca Airfield Museum opened to the public when the weather was warm on Saturday, April 12. The museum was then opened on a regular basis on the second and fourth Saturday of each month through October. In addition small groups were accommodated at other times on request. It

is estimated that there were 900 or more visitors to the hangar during this period.

LECTURES

The museum hosted a series of lectures presented by General (Ret.) Frank Ianni. The lectures were used as a low cost fund raising project with a modest fee. All sessions were preceded by a brief history of Bellanca and the Airfield. Topics were: "The Race to Cross the Atlantic"; "The 100th Anniversary of World War 1 and the Early Development of Military Aviation"; and a Delaware Heritage Commission Special, "The 200th Anniversary of Commodore Macdonough, The Battle of Lake Champlain and America's First War Against Islamic Terrorists". An expanded series will be presented next year and we welcome suggestions for topics.

MODEL TRAIN EXHIBIT

The DELAWARE LARGE SCALERS expanded



their model train layout and ran their trains when the hangar was open to the public. The

trains proved very popular and served to attract families with children to our museum.

MODEL WING



A unique item displayed at the hangar is a four foot long aircraft wing that was constructed by an anonymous

donor while he was a student training years ago

to be an Aircraft and Power Plant Mechanic. The donor lived off Faulk road until recently, moving to Pennsylvania, the move prompting his donation. The model features all the characteristics of a full scale wing of an earlier period, including spars, ribs, and a fabric cover painted with "dope." When the wing was completed, the instructor then punched the cover to make a hole. The student then had to demonstrate his skill at patching the hole. The quality of the work is impressive. The donor retired as an airline pilot.

BREITLING FLYING TEAM POSTERS

BREITLING, a 125 year old Swiss watch company, is famous for the accuracy of its watches, development of the wrist chronograph, and its two demonstration flying teams, one comprised of jet fighters and the other of biplanes with female wing walkers, commemorating both ages of aviation. Breitling has the largest private flying teams in the world that travel around the globe to promote both aviation and their watches. Their watches are favored by pilots



everywhere. Through the generosity of A. R. Morris, Jewelers on Market Street in Wilmington near Eighth Street, promotional material was obtained to construct the two displays using colorful photos of their teams in action around the globe demonstrating their precision flying and the daring of their female wing walkers. The two displays are a fitting and colorful tribute to

aviation in general and to the practitioners at all levels.

AMELIA EARHART LUGGAGE AUCTION

To help finance her flying exploits, Earhart



sponsored a line of luggage for air travelers as well as a line of

clothing designed "For the active woman."

The museum has one of her suitcases on display in the section devoted to her. Lottery tickets for a smaller Amelia Earhart travel bag was sold as a fund raiser for the museum. The winner was Mr. Denis Beaumont of New Castle.

PARKING LOT AND LICENSE PLATE DISPLAY

Construction of a paved parking area for the Bellanca museum has begun. Lighting fixtures



have been installed and grading of the area is progressing. We eagerly await completion... The new paved parking lot will permit the staging of antique car shows and other transportation related events as draws for the Museum. In anticipation, a display of Delaware License plates going back to 1905 was installed at the Museum using a kiosk constructed by the museum's volunteer master carpenter, Joe Finocchiaro. The display features the collection of David Lincoln, a long time collector, who used to reside near Centerville but now resides in West Chester. The display traces the evolution from the earliest homemade versions to the cherished black porcelain plate and beyond. The display was obtained from DELDOT who may soon offer six newly designed versions of Delaware plates.

BALLANCA CRUISAIR SENIOR

The National Air and Space Museum of the Smithsonian Institution wanted to relocate the Bellanca Cruisair they had in storage to a suitable



site where it can be put on public display. After evaluating all of the applicants that desired this airplane they choose the Friends of Bellanca Airfield to give it to. This choice is most appropriate since the Cruisair was manufactured right here at the Bellanca factory just across the Airfield from our hangar. Thanks to a generous gift from Mario Medori and others, Joe Finocchiaro was able to arrange to have it trucked to the hangar. The Cruisair is presently in the process of being reassembled for display next spring when the museum reopens.

CONSERVATION AND CONTROL OF COLLECTIONS

FOBA Secretary Ann Rossi and member Elizabeth LaPenna have undertaken the task of inventorying the museum's collections. This is a



time consuming but vital task and their dedication is commendable.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

At the Annual meeting of the Friends of Bellanca Airfield, Inc. in June nine Directors were elected to serve for one year. The directors in turn elected the following officers of the corporation:

President Elliott Smith, Vice President Barbara Finnan, Secretary Ann Rossi, Treasurer Al Tambourelli.

Friends of Bellanca Airfield, Inc.

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A Non-Profit Corporation under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code

Membership dues and donations are tax deductible as permitted by law