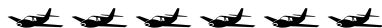




Fly North

Volume 6, Number 3:
July-September, 2014



NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTHWESTERN ONTARIO AVIATION HERITAGE CENTRE

*Preserving and celebrating the diverse history of aviation in the northwest,
through the collection and preservation of artifacts and stories of the persons
and events that made this region unique in aviation history*

NOAHC NEWS:



The Thunder Bay Public Library is spearheading a community partnership to commemorate the centennial of World War One. Members of the partnership, which includes the Library, the City of Thunder Bay Archives, City of Thunder Bay Heritage Advisory Committee, the Northwestern Ontario Sports Hall of Fame, the Thunder Bay Military Museum, Lakehead University History Department and the *Northwestern Ontario Aviation Heritage Centre*, will contribute photographs and records to a dynamic online exhibit depicting life at the Lakehead during World War One.

The Library will host and administer the exhibit at www.tbpl.ca. Visit the website and click on Research / World War One for a sneak peek. New stories, photos and documents will be added throughout the next four years. The public will be invited to contribute their World War One stories, photos and documents at a launch planned for early November. Details will be announced at a later date.

NOAHC is interested in hearing from members and others in the community who might have WWI RFC/RAF aviation memorabilia, such as diaries, letters, documents, photographs and logbooks that they would be willing to donate or loan to the Centre, for use as it develops its contribution to the project. If you have anything that you think would be of interest, please contact David Kemp, Newsletter Editor at dkemp@lakeheadu.ca

Recent Acquisition: Gary Duncan has donated his father's passport and British Ministry of Aircraft Production ID badge to NOAHC. Robert Arnold Duncan, from Fort William, was a civilian radio operator with the RAF Atlantic Ferry Service., which flew aircraft built in Canada and the U.S.A. across the North Atlantic for service in Britain. He lost his life on August 14, 1941, when the Liberator aircraft of the Return Ferry Service, in which he and 20 other personnel were being flown back to Canada, crashed on take-off at Ayr in Scotland. Albert Tamblin, a radio operator from Port Arthur was also on the flight.

Such donations, which are part of the aviation history of the region, are much appreciated by NOAHC.



Upcoming Attraction: On Sunday, October 19, 2014, NOAHC will host a presentation on Superior Airways, a local company, founded by Orville Wieben. He also created Armstrong Fisheries and Severn Enterprises Ltd. which, along with Superior Airways, made a major contribution to the development of commercial aviation in the region. Members of the Wieben family and former employees of Superior Airways will be present to talk and reminisce about a company that had a colourful forty year history during which it helped to link the Lakehead with many communities in the north-west.

A Superior Airways promotional brochure from the 1960s

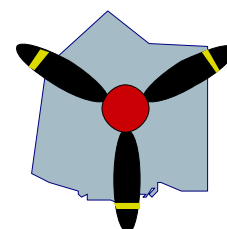


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John Paterson's other aircraft: John N. Paterson is well-known among the members of the aviation community at the Lakehead for his restoration of a Spitfire LF Mk IX similar to one he had flown on D-Day and over Normandy during the invasion of Europe in 1944. (see *Fly North* vol 6, no 2). After flying it for a couple of years he donated it to the Canadian Aviation Museum in Ottawa. Shortly after that, John purchased a Stearman 4EM Senior Speedmail biplane from a farmer in Idaho who used it for crop dusting. He flew the unheated open cockpit aircraft 1500 miles back to Fort William in 1965 in two days in sub-zero weather. He had the plane fully restored and painted with the Royal Mail colors to celebrate the aircraft as an example of those used to deliver mail in the 1930's in western Canada for Canadian Airways Ltd. The biplane had a 450hp Pratt and Whitney radial engine, cruised at over 200km/hr and was fully aerobatic. John flew it for fun and in a few airshows for a couple of years. On September 24, 1970 the plane was flown to Ottawa with a commemorative load of mail and donated to the Canadian Aviation Museum where it can be seen today.

Shortly after the gift of the 4EM John bought another open cockpit Stearman, a PT-17 Kaydet, with a 225 hp engine which cruised at about 120 mph. With a 2 seater aircraft he was able to take others up to share the joy of flying. As his son Alexander remembers, "He used to love taking people for a ride. I remember being about 12 years old and going for a flight. We wore leather helmets, parachutes, and communicated by radio. As the aircraft was a World War II trainer the passenger sat up front and it had dual stick control system. After getting away from the airport and heading out to Candy Mountain he asked if I wanted to do a loop and before I could answer the stick in front of me pushed forward and we went into a dive. We did a couple of loops, a hammerhead and a roll. It scared the heck out of me but I remember it being better than any amusement park ride I have ever been on."

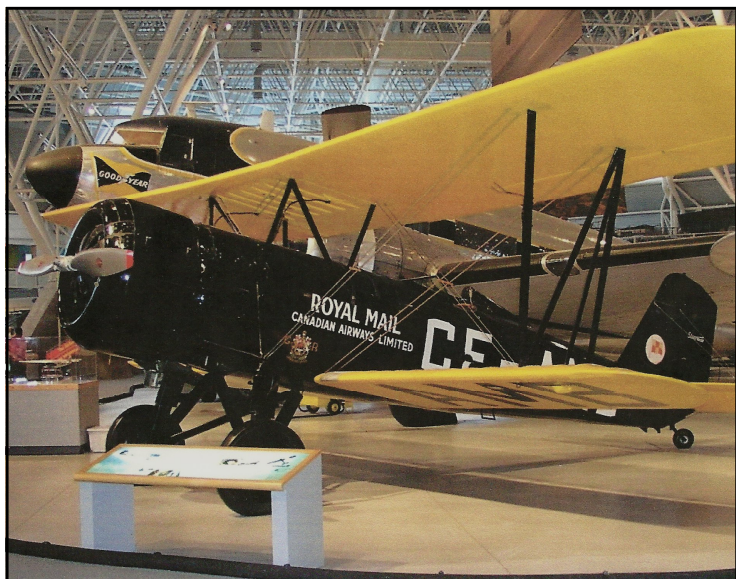
The airplane was sold to two Air Canada pilots who in 1986 donated it to the Canadian Warplane Heritage Museum in Hamilton where it is still flown regularly.

Today vintage aircraft are being restored and flown all over the world, but in the 1960's and '70s, the business was in its infancy and pursued by a relatively small number of enthusiasts. John N. Paterson was one of these enthusiasts; one of the pioneers in the aviation restoration field.



John Paterson climbing into the cockpit of his Stearman 4EM Senior Speedmail

(With thanks to Alexander Paterson for information and pictures)



The Stearman 4EM Senior Speedmail in the Canadian Aviation and Space Museum in Ottawa



John Paterson with his Stearman PT-17 Kaydet in Fort William. 300 of these aircraft were acquired by the RCAF in 1942 as basic trainers for the British Commonwealth Air Training Plan

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Remembering the 'Rosies of the North'

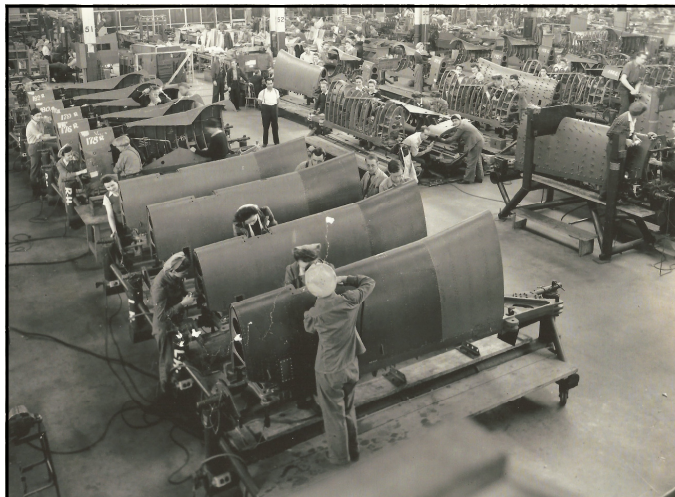
On June 22, 2014, NOAHC commemorated the work of the women who built Hurricanes and Helldivers at the Canadian Car and Foundry plant at Fort William during WWII. The presentation opened with a showing of the movie, *Rosies of the North*. Directed by a local film maker, Kelly Saxberg, it documents the work of the 'Rosies' through archival footage and interviews recorded at a reunion held in 1999. The film is a tribute to the more than 2,500 women, mainly from the Lakehead and from the Prairies who, as Saxberg says, "donned trousers, packed lunch pails and took up rivet guns to participate in the greatest industrial war effort in Canadian history". Some were as young as 16 when they first entered the plant to become riveters or welders; many had never lived away from home before. Denise Lyzun told the story of one 'Rosie', Mary Skrepichuk (Antoniow), who came to the Lakehead from Saskatchewan. She lived in Winston Hall, built by the company as a residence for women from out-of town, along with her sister and other women, mainly from the west. During their time at Can-Car they helped to build more than 1,400 Hurricanes and more than 800 Helldivers, but as soon as the war ended they were let go. Lay-offs in 1945 left only 3 women still employed from a peak of 2,500 the previous year. Many stayed on in the Lakehead, married local men and raised families, who remember with pride the contributions of

their mothers and grandmothers to an enterprise that was essential to the war effort. Sadly, time has taken its toll on the 'Rosies', but we were lucky to have a number able to attend the presentation (see page 4) and provide the audience with stories of what it was like to work in an industrial environment previously dominated by men. They were truly pioneers.

NOAHC Oral History Project: Over the past several years members of NOAHC's Oral History Group have been interviewing individuals who have been involved in aviation in northwestern Ontario during the past 50-70 years. Now recorded on DVDs, they include interviews with former bush pilots, workers at Can-Car, wartime bomber pilots, aircraft maintenance engineers and restorers as well as discussion of the Air Cadet organization at the Lakehead and the early days of Trans Canada Airlines service in the community. Excerpts from some of the interviews can be seen on the NOAHC webpage (www.noahc.org) under Video/Media Archive. The complete DVDs are available for viewing at the Centre. In addition, we have recordings of NOAHC events, such as the Hawk One appearance in 2009, the visit of the CWH Lancaster bomber in 2010, our veterans appreciation day in 2013 and the Paterson Spitfire presentation. These too can be viewed at the Centre.

NOAHC's Commemoration of the Women of Can-Car

June 22, 2014



'Rosies' at work building Helldiver wings at Can-Car in 1944

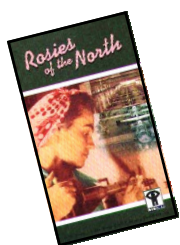
Saskatchewan
'Rosies' on the
steps of
Winston Hall,
where they
lived while
working at
Can-Car



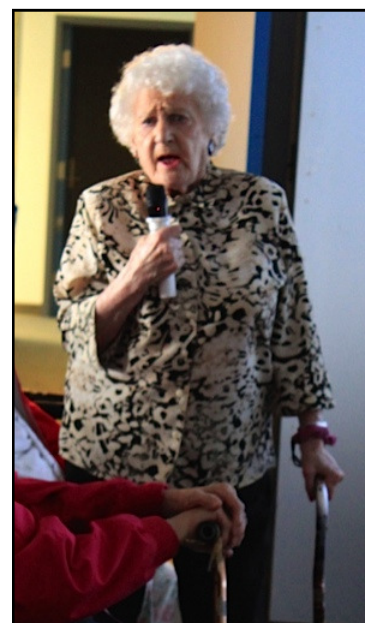
Mary Skrepichuk's
work pass



Full-house at the Centre for the
'Rosies' presentation



Rose Dysevick
and Nellie
Venaski



Claudine Kovac talks about her
time at Can-Car

Ten of the more
than 2,500 women
who built Hurri-
cane and Hell-
divers at the Can-
Car plant in Fort
William during
WWII



All colour pictures courtesy of Kathryn Lyzun