

The Cover Story

The American Legion & Aviation Development in the 1920s – 1930s

Part II of III by Phil Fetting

This fraternal pattern brings us to organizations such as the American Legion, one of the largest veteran's groups in the country. These types of fraternal or service organizations also have a nucleus of membership who are the young future business and political leaders of any given area. Now, we can see the perfect set up for future growth as young, trained and ambitious citizens mix together in organizations and start to think about careers and development in their personal lives and that of the community in which they live

In the 1920's surplus airplanes and pilots were easy to find. Airports were not all that common at first as all you really needed was a flat piece of land. What was really scarce was a use for this fledgling industry. Many military veteran pilots scraped together the money to obtain a plane and set off to try to make a living at something they loved – flying. Pilots would land near a town and offer to take local citizens up for short flight for a fee. Ads would be placed in newspapers announcing a future arrival at a town or even a county fair. Figure (on front cover, 3) shows the front/back of a postcard which was given to passengers who took such a demonstration flight given by Interstate Airlines. This operation was a little more advanced as Interstate already had a government mail contract to fly between Chicago and Atlanta and they hoped to build up passenger service. At the end of your flight you would receive a postcard which you hopefully would mail to somebody extolling the merits of airplane flight. Eventually Interstate was merged into the American Airlines system.

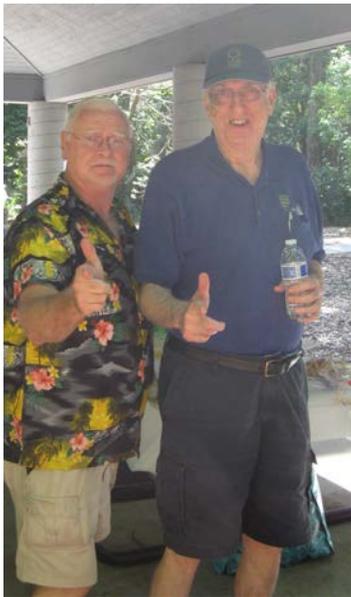
During the 1920's, the United States experienced explosive economic growth, as did many other countries around the world. Aviation related industry enjoyed some of this growth as well as helped provide improved transportation opportunities to other business ventures. The 1929 Stock Market crash and following depression obviously put a halt to the high rate of growth, however aviation development continued at a much slower pace. The opening of local airports also continued as local business groups worked to open new commercial opportunities. By the late 1920s the need for a better system of training and licensing of pilots became apparent. The military fliers who had continued with aviation after WWI were getting a little older as the planes were getting faster and more complicated in control systems. In addition, the many that had not flown since the war were no longer considered to be trained. As a result aviation training opportunities were created with a little more formal oversight by government agencies.

Philatelists welcomed airpost covers during this period as a major collecting interest. Many covers show the influence of the local American Legion Post in the cachet. Other covers take it one step further and you will note the Legion and local Chamber of Commerce working together. This was a natural outcome as the WW I vets who were members of the American Legion were now, in many cases, also the local business leaders.

Figure (on front cover, 4) is an airport dedication cover dated April 27, 1929 from Wayne, PA. Waynesboro played a minor role in the battle of Gettysburg in 1863 as the Confederate Army traveled through town on the way to the battle and came back after. They occupied town for a few days. By 1929, Waynesboro had a number of thriving machine tool factories. Very little of this industry remains today. The cover has a nice C-11 plate single and is addressed to a collector in St. Petersburg, FL.

[Editor's Note: Part I appeared in the April Newsletter and Part III will be in the June issue.]

CFSC Spring Picnic by the Editor



The first annual club picnic took place on April 5 at the Maitland Community Park on a wonderful sunny spring day in Central Florida. The event attracted nearly 30 folks which included a number of spouses, a couple of tiny tots and one very cute dog owned by the Patrick's. There was a nice selection of foods, with some very yummy hamburgers and hotdogs grilled by the Editor. Roy Anderson had a great demonstration of how to remove the bothersome self-stick stamps from paper.



Great job Roy! Phil Fettig was not able to attend the picnic (darn those subs) but he contributed a



“mystery box” for an auction – starting at \$2 the spirited (and sometimes prodded) bidding ended at \$40; with A. Stephen Patrick the proud owner. **Please extend a big thank you to Roy Anderson and Stephen/Linda Patrick for making this event happen!**

