

Aviation Came To Dairy Field At Pinehurst In 1911

BY JIM McDUFFIE

Less than a decade after Orville and Wilbur Wright made their conquest of the skies over Kitty Hawk, the first airplanes appeared in Moore County.

Lincoln Beachy, described in the newspapers of the day as one of America's most daring early aviators, brought his biplane to the dairy field at Pinehurst. Although this arrival of aviation in the area was a nuisance to the resort guests and native cow-often the targets of hawk-like dives by Beachy—it was thrilling to most.

As the Pinehurst Outlook of April 1, 1911, reported, "All Moore County gathered to witness Saturday's special exhibition bi-plane flights and all Pinehurst joined in touching elbows and exchanging greetings with the residents from towns within access of special trains. 'County Fair' day it was, a holiday long to be recalled in a firelight glow, round cabin fireside, an epoch in Village history.

"The flights, three in number, were perfect exhibitions, marvelous when we recall the progress that has been made within a few short years.

"The first flight was over the golf course where the tournament



YOST PLANE — Lloyd Yost aboard his Fairchild cabin monoplane, the first to serve the growing resort communities of Pinehurst and Southern Pines.—(John Hemmer Photo, Tufts Archives).

(North and South Amateur) was in progress; the second, sharp turns, rapid rises, and quick dips above the aviation field; and the third, a long straightaway which reduced the machine to a mere speck which hovered afar off, then drew rapidly nearer, passing three thousand feet

above the earth."

Beachy left Pinehurst to continue his exhibitions nationwide. His last show came in 1915 when his plane plunged 7,000 feet into San Francisco Bay and he was drowned.

Sport of "Buzzing"
But the cows and caddies of

Pinehurst had not seen the last of airplanes.

In the early 1920s Lloyd Yost left his native Pennsylvania to establish an agency at the dairy field for selling WACO airplanes and to teach flying.

Like Beachy and other early aviators, Yost had a penchant for

exciting the Village. It was only a short time after his arrival that he received the first of several complaints about "buzzing" golfers.

Pinehurst, Inc. President Richard S. Tufts received on Feb. 2, 1926, a letter from resort guest Frank Finney requesting that Tufts prohibit flights over the links.

Finney wrote, "I have long felt that the airplane flying over the golf courses was a nuisance to the players. Today I was scared out of my wits, as well as others with me, when the plane shut off its engine and swooped down to a height of about 25 feet over our heads on the 16th hole, course 3...and coasted to the field amid laughter in the plane at our discomfort."

"Couldn't the flyers keep away from the courses and fly out in the country just as well?" he asked. "I think every golfer would send you...a gold medal if those darn planes would keep away from the courses."

Finney closed his letter saying, "the worst part of the episode" was losing the 16th hole.

Tufts replied, "If you ever hear of that fellow doing any such fool trick again just step down to my house and get a shot gun and go up and promptly shoot it into (the plane)."

But, as many in the community later attested, Yost never actually endangered lives. In fact, his passenger services became an asset to the resort and his early efforts to gain improvements at the dairy field led to the construction of the modern-day Moore County Airport.

Airport Growth

By the mid-1920s, Yost had firm assurances from Tufts that a "first rate" airfield would be completed before the decade ended. In January 1928 Tufts met with other area businessmen to study the feasibility of a new airfield, concluding that people were turning to aviation as they had to automobiles and that an adequate facility was necessary.

After enlisting federal assistance in the selection of a site, a crew of about a hundred men spent the early summer months clearing land and planting grass for the new airfield. One county newspaper called it a "model field ideal for the pur-



EARLY AIR SHOW — Crowds regularly gathered at the new Moore County Airport to view early air shows.—(John Hemmer Photo, Tufts Archives).

pose" and "one of the big flying fields of the South."

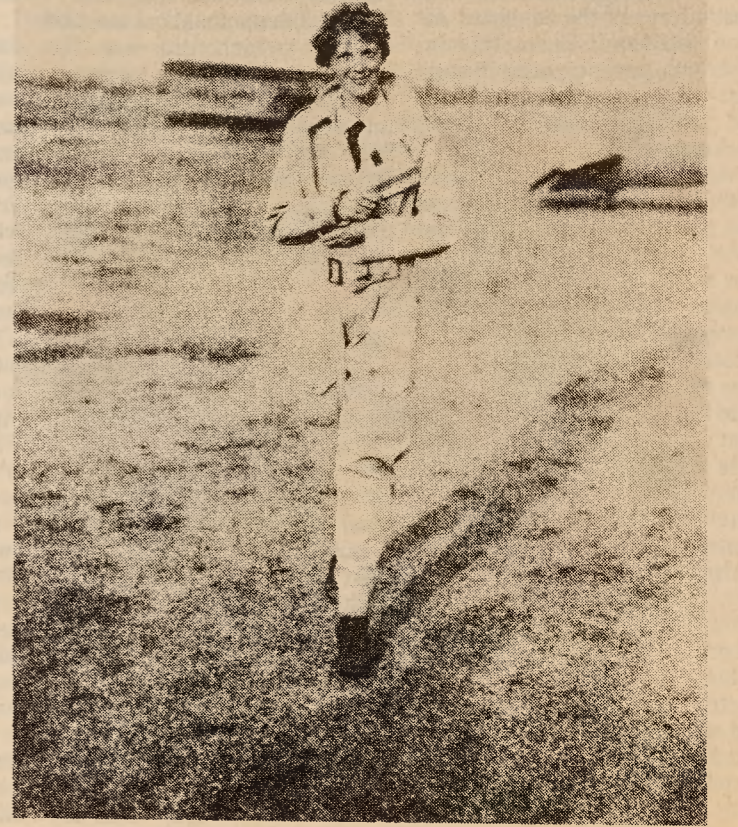
Although regular passenger service became commonplace when the field was opened, the local newspaper continued printing the "Airport Notes" column which logged the cities and towns from which resort guests, businessmen and other hailed. For the year round residents less given to air travel, this news tended to offer a sense that their community was in a national mainstream. After all, New York was only a "six or seven hour hop."

Occasionally the press had more interesting copy to file from the airport.

It was reported in 1931 that a "mighty legion of Sandhill folks" greeted world famed pilot Amelia Earhart when she flew in aboard an autogyro—the "windmill plane" that was a prototype of the helicopter.

Similar crowds assembled in the winter of 1932 to watch about 100 fliers in 40 planes, all entrants in the New York to Miami Air Derby, make an overnight stop at the airport.

In the years that followed bigger and faster planes arrived regularly to replace the old biplanes which had "buzzed" cows and given new meaning to the golf term, "birdie." Aviation was coming of age.



AMELIA EARHART — Famed American pilot Amelia Earhart visited the Moore County Airport in the 1930s and exhibited her gyroplane, a forerunner of the helicopter.—(John Hemmer Photo, Tufts Archives).

Whispering Pines Began With Comer Land Sales

BY EDWARD L. COMER

In 1947, I began doing business in insurance and real estate from an office in Carthage. Several years later, in 1958, a Mr. A.B. Hardee from Lexington happened to come into my office. He stated that he was attending a Rotary convention in Pinehurst and had become very impressed with our area. He expressed an interest in buying a large lake or lakesite for the purpose of creating a lakeside development.

I showed him around and was fortunate to sell him the perfect piece of property, which contained 475 acres and included a 275 acre lake known as Thagards Lake. This lake was over 200 years old and had been used as a grist mill and later to generate power. Until that fortunate day for all of Moore County, there had been practically no growth or

progress in the county since the great depression.

I then entered into a signed agreement to obtain additional parcels for him and to represent him in sales. I was able to obtain enough property adjoining the original tract to build four more lakes and three golf courses. The tremendous success of this project was due in part to the resident engineer, Ernest McCutcheon, who provided for ample sized lots, parks and community beaches. Being practically a native of Moore County, I saw the great potential of this area for new growth in recreation and retirement. As a result of this successful venture, there followed the creation of the Country Club of N.C., Foxfire, Seven Lakes, Lake Surf (now Woodlake) and the expansion of Pinehurst.

At the inception of what is now

the Village of Whispering Pines, there was only one home on the approximate 2,500 acres and the total valuation of this acreage would not have been over 1250,000. Today, we are the county's third largest taxpayer. According to "Poor Cliff's Almanac," just the real estate valuation base is over \$54,000,000 and is over \$14,000,000 higher than Aberdeen. Whispering Pines is rated as the fourth most

affluent town in the State of North Carolina.

In summary, I can only say that I feel privileged to have been a part of this most important and historical event in our beloved county. I appreciate the wonderful people who find our area desirable and elect to come here to enjoy life with us.

Today, Comer's Realty is still a flourishing, one-man operation, active in most of Moore County.

Waterey Branch

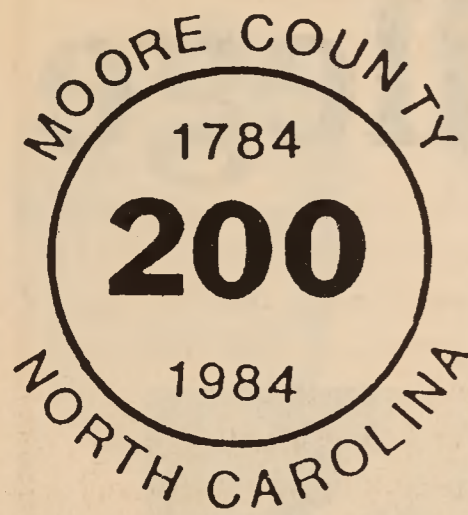
Waterey Branch School was near an old copper shop below the McLaughlin home on the present Lake Surf (Woodlake) Road.

There is reference of a young "Mr. Currie" who taught school at Waterey Branch in 1878. He supposedly surveyed the first land in Vass.

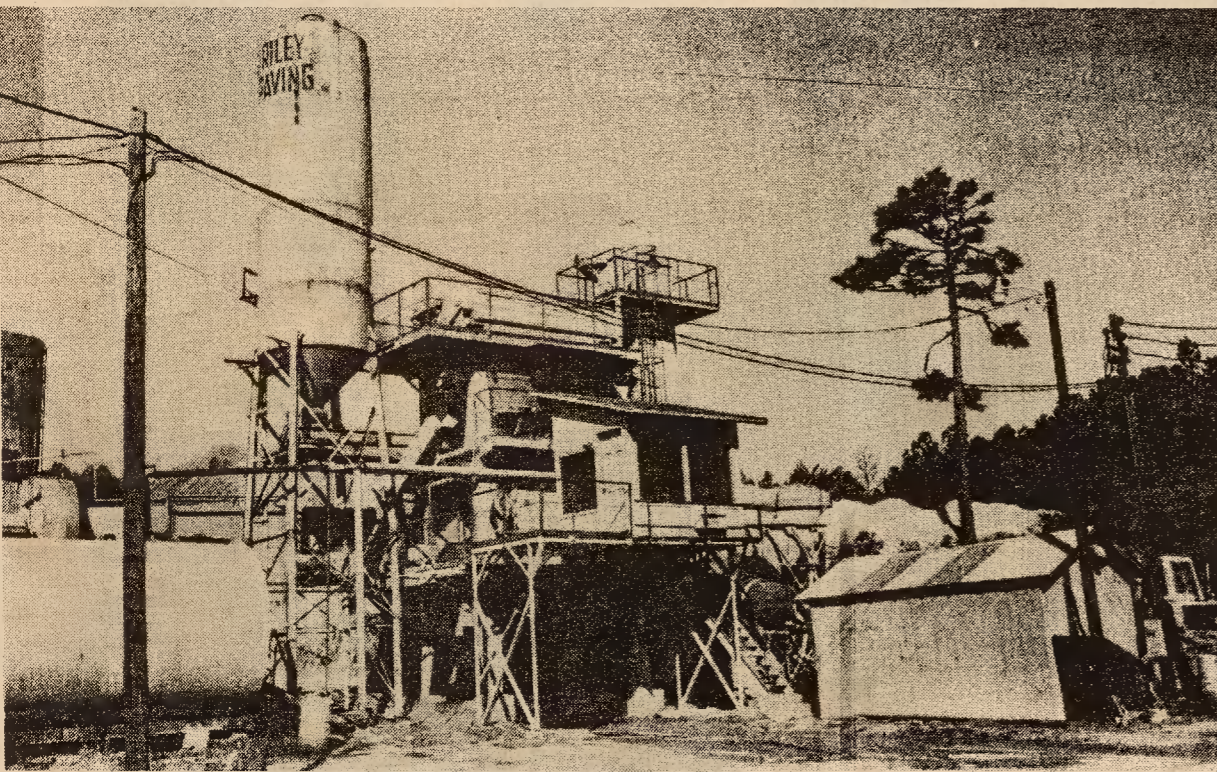
Mrs. Sadie Gilliland Oldham and her mother were carried to a

little house near the school on Monday morning and stayed until Friday so that Sadie might go to school.

Donnie McDonald from Cameron taught at Waterey Branch along with Mr. Currie. Will McCraney and John William Smith were some others who attended Waterey Branch.



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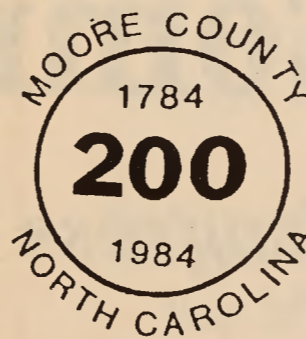
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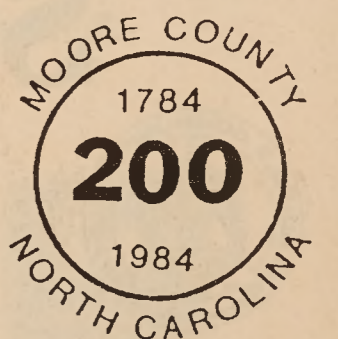
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