

ISN'T IT TIME WE HAD...

an aviation museum for Canada?

By C. W. THOMAS

AT THE BACK of the Aviation Exhibit of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, D.C., behind the first jet plane built in the U.S., and near the showcase which houses Britain's Whittle jet engine, is a tiny exhibit containing half a dozen balsa and paper models. The models, proclaims the label in small type, are of aircraft built in Canada during the early days of flight. They are the work of an enthusiastic amateur and were no doubt donated to the Smithsonian because their builder could find nowhere to display them in Canada. True, there is a dingy building in a back street in Ottawa, the Canadian War Museum, which houses a few aviation relics, yet it seems strange that Canada, a country of immense wealth in relation to its population, has still not been able to provide the funds to build a permanent Museum of Aviation*.

This is all the more surprising when it is considered that a very great proportion of the money which has been made in Canada has been the direct result of the exploits of our aviators, in particular the bush pilots who helped to seek out the enormous mineral deposits of the Canadian Northland. It is only now, in the Fiftieth year of powered flight in Canada that this country is beginning to realize that it already has a glorious heritage of Aviation — starting way back before World War I and running through the War years, the interwar years and the days of World War II. Wouldn't it provide some inspiration for our sons and our sons' sons to be able to gaze on a Canadian built Jenny (Canuck) of 1916, a Norseman of the thirties, an Anson of World War II — and perhaps a prime sample of the Canadian designed and built aircraft which now stand ready to defend Western freedom in the European NATO organization?

Planting the Seed: It would be in-

*Recently, a small step in the right direction was made when the DoT agreed to allot space — on a temporary basis — in the new Ottawa Airport passenger terminal where items of historical significance to aviation in Canada can be exhibited.

teresting to know how many of "the few" who fought over England in the Battle of Britain were taken as fascinated children through the London Science Museum to gaze in awe at the huge wings of Alcock & Brown's Vickers Vimy suspended from the ceiling. Or how many of the men of the U.S. Army Air Forces who fought the war in the Pacific began their boyhood dreams of flying when gazing on the "Spirit of St. Louis" — not a model but the original large-as-life aircraft in the Washington museum? And how many of the engineers who designed, and the craftsmen who built the planes which helped win the war were first drawn into the industry by childhood and adolescent memories of examining the crude mechanisms of early aircraft and motors, still to be seen in the great aviation museums of the U.S., the U.K. and many European countries?

A FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY FEATURE



Joseph Howe, one of the fathers of responsible government in Canada wrote:

"A wise nation preserves its records, gathers up its muniments, decorates the tombs of its illustrious dead, repairs its great public structures, and fosters national pride and love of country, by perpetual reference to the sacrifices and glories of the past."

The dismal truth is that many of the glories of Canada's aviation past have already disappeared forever and many more lie mildewed and decayed in fields across the country.

How does a national museum start? Usually by an individual bequest — the Smithsonian was began, strangely enough, with a sum of money bequeathed by an Englishman in 1829. A museum can become, in course of

time, largely self-sustaining if a small admission charge is made — but to house relics as substantial as complete aircraft, a sizeable building is required — and to procure a suitable building in a metropolitan or other reasonably accessible area would be a formidable and expensive task. It would seem that the likeliest method of raising the initial capital would be for some authorized body to prevail upon our larger industrial concerns, not only the aviation industry but also the mining and oil companies and others who have benefited greatly from aviation, to make the initial contributions.

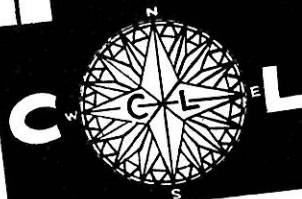
If such a fund could start and showed some signs of achieving its objectives, it would be reasonable to expect the Government to make some contribution. All our educational organizations and certainly the Department of National Defence has a vested interest in any measure calculated to make Canada's youth, and indeed its oldsters too, more aviation-minded.

Collecting Exhibits: As for the exhibits for such a museum — it is probable that the initial collection of aircraft engines and other exhibits could be gathered as gifts or borrowed on a semi-permanent basis from their owners with no more outlay than the cost of transportation, if that. The NRC's aeronautical museum, a semi-official effort inspired mainly by John Parkins, already exists as a fine nucleus for a national aviation museum.

It also seems probable that there are in Canada many engineers and craftsmen who would cheerfully devote their spare time to the restoring old aircraft if the materials were forthcoming and the results of their handiwork would be on display for generations to come. There has recently been a considerable spurt of activity in the reconstruction of old time aircraft with many interesting results. How could anybody with any interest in aviation have failed to be fascinated by the reconstructed McCurdy Silver Dart which was on display at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto last year? Such

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COMING EVENTS

March 7—Quality Control Forum, Toronto Sec., American Soc. of Quality Control, Hart House, University of Toronto.

March 12-13—Canadian Aircraft Industry Instrumentation Symposium, Toronto, sponsored by the Toronto Section, Instrument Society of America.

March 31-April 3—SAE National Aeronautic Meeting, Aeronautic Production, Forum & Aircraft Engineering Display, Hotel Commodore, New York.

April 12-19—First World Congress of Flight, Las Vegas, Nevada.

April 20-21—AITA Semi-annual Meeting, Empress Hotel, Victoria, B.C.

May 4-8—National Industrial Production Show of Canada, Exhibition Park, Toronto.

May 14-16—Annual Convention, RCAF Assoc., Queen Elizabeth Hotel, Montreal.

June 12-21—23rd International Air Show of France, Le Bourget Airport, Paris.

June 13—Air Force Day across Canada.

June 14-18—ASME Semi-annual Meeting, Chase-Park Plaza Hotels, St. Louis, Mo.

June 15-17—CAI Annual General Meeting, Keltic Lodge, Ingonish, N.S.

June 23-25—Aviation Distributors & Manufacturers Assoc. Meeting, St. Francis Hotel, San Francisco, Calif.

August 8-16—International Aviation & Air Industries Fair, New York Coliseum.

October 26-28—AITA Annual Meeting, Queen Elizabeth Hotel, Montreal.

yoke-type control column was strange; as was the ASI and the Go/No-Go dial for take-off.

But it's a tidy cockpit; like most American fighters, it is long on pilot comfort. The entire aircraft is like that. Easy to look at, easy to fly. At the present time, it is the best all-weather fighter in use with NORAD forces. With Canada slipping toward a Bomarc future, it is possible that we will be increasingly dependent upon the F-102 for protection against the manned-bomber threat for a few years to come.

AVIATION MUSEUM

(Continued from page 29)

reconstructions as this are legitimate exhibits for a museum and side-by-side with latter day, all metal, Canadian built aircraft would serve to show the enormous strides which have been made, here in Canada, in the aviation industry.

It is interesting to conjecture on what aircraft could be collected if such a museum were established. Are any of the Jennies and the Curtiss flying

boats which were built in Toronto still around? What of the Vickers Vedettes and Stranraers also built in Canada. Rumour has it that an Ontario farmer has the remains of a Swordfish, a Lysander and a Yale stored away, waiting for some organization to offer to restore them. Could there be a more worthy spare-time project for the pupils of our technical schools and flying clubs than the job of restoring such priceless relics?

Apart from the problem of sheer bulk, the main difficulty encountered in storing aircraft is deterioration, but miracles can be achieved if proper preservation techniques are employed as can be seen from the apparently factory-fresh two-seater Spad of World War I still on display in one of the Washington Museums.

Long Life: The problems of preservation almost cease to exist with modern all-metal aircraft. A CF-100 could be displayed, indoors, indefinitely, and would require virtually no maintenance. Could not at least one of these aircraft — and perhaps a Canadair Sabre also, be earmarked for preservation when its service life is completed?

With larger aircraft, even if the storage of the whole aircraft was impractical it would be reasonable to retain at least a portion of the structure. How many ex-RCAF bomber aircrew would welcome the chance to show their children the flight deck of a Lancaster or the cockpit of a Mosquito?

Most museums have collections of models and there are already in Canada various sizeable collections of models, notably that at the RCAF Air Materiel Command at Rockcliffe, which would form a wonderful nucleus for a permanent collection. To enlarge such an exhibit, there is little doubt that Canadian manufacturers could easily be persuaded to finance the building of models of their products.

The engine side need not be neglected. There is at least one Avro Orenda Chinook still in existence and possibly the cutaway Orenda engine presently used at aviation displays could eventually find a home in a Canadian museum of aviation if such a museum existed.

The idea of such a museum is not new. It has been discussed for years with little tangible result. Perhaps it is time an active nation-wide campaign were started to promote the idea.