

"Aviation History Photo Essay"

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By Jay A. Graybeal

The county's aviation history contains a number of pilots who flew in America's wars in the twentieth century and for recreation. Our history also includes visits during the barnstorming era and the establishment of the Westminster Airport in 1943. An early reference to aviation appeared in the September 22, 1911 issue of the Westminster Democratic Advocate newspaper under the headline of "Aeroplane in Westminster":

"Early Monday morning, about five o'clock an aeroplane owned by Rex Smith, the Washington aviator who is to take part in the Harrisburg Patriot's aviation meet, was towed through this city behind an automobile on the way from the aviation park at Washington to Harrisburg, Pa.

A brief stop for some automobile supplies was made at the store of Wm. N. Keefer, on East Main street, where several persons inspected the aeroplane. This mode of transportation was adopted on account of inability to make suitable railroad arrangements in time. The aeroplane was placed on a platform supported by pneumatic tired wheels and the scheme worked well thus far.

The Rex Smith machine is similar to the Wright biplane and the one seen Monday is new from the factory, the aviator having merely given it a brief tryout Sunday. Separate parts of the aeroplane were carried along in the automobile."

The Historical Society's historical photograph collection contains several images of early aircraft and a number of portraits of military aviators. These images help document aviation during war and peace.

Photo caption 1: Army aviator Lt. Francis Earl Shriner of Union Bridge was one of several Carroll County men who trained as Army or Navy aviators during World War I. He posed in the standard flight gear, heavy leather jacket, gloved and helmet with goggles, worn during the era of open cockpit biplanes. His equipment, incidentally did include a parachute. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, bequest of Mrs. Thelma Shriner, 1994.

Photo caption 2: Lt. Donald C. Utermahlen of Union Bridge (far right) was photographed in the summer of 1944 for this press release photo captioned, "At a bull session after returning from a raid over the So. France beachhead in support of allied troops, a P-38 Lightning pilot tells his fellow pilots how he escaped fire from an enemy fighter." Historical Society of Carroll County collection.

Photo caption 2: Fighter pilot Sherman E. Flanagan, Jr., of Westminster posed shortly after joining the Air Force in 1951. Trained as a fighter pilot, he flew combat missions during the Korean War and also flew during the Berlin Airlift in 1961. His duties with the D. C. Air National Guard took him to Vietnam where he volunteered to fly combat missions again. Lt. Col. Flanagan was declared missing in action after being shot down by ground fire on a July 21, 1968 mission over the Demilitarized Zone. Historical Society of Carroll County copy photograph collection.

Photo caption 4: Wesley Brooks of Westminster posed in the front cockpit of a civilian aircraft in the 1920s. The image was taken by Westminster photographer Serick Wilson which suggests that it was taken somewhere near town, perhaps at the site of the current airport. Late Historical Society member

and aviation enthusiast Ed Haifley identified the biplane, registration number 3010, as a Waco 10 and speculated that the aviator in the rear cockpit might have been an early barnstormer named "Dutch" Becker aka the "Flying Dutchman". Historical Society of Carroll County collection.

Photo caption 5: The Navy's Blue Angels was a favorite subject of aviation enthusiast and amateur photographer the late Ed Haifley of Frizzelburg. He photographed stunt team on many occasions including this image taken at an air show in the mid-1950s. Historical Society of Carroll County collection, gift of Ed Haifley, 1989.