

DICKINSON COUNTY HISTORY – TRANSPORTATION – AIRPLANES

[Compiled & Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

EARLY AIR TRANSPORTATION

Iron Mountain Press, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, Volume 17, Number 15 [Thursday, August 29, 1912], page 1, column 6

MAY BE VISITED BY AEROPLANE

Only Aeroplane Built in U.P. to Make Maiden Flight Soon.

If the Iron Mountain people should awaken some morning and gazing upward see a huge, bird-like object flying over their housetops they should neither summon help nor run for their shot-guns [*sic – shotguns*], as it will only be an aeroplane, invented and constructed by **E.E. Lessard**, formerly of St. Louis, machinist at the Negaunee garage of **Charles J.A. Forell, Jr.** Mr. Lessard is seriously thinking of flying with his hydro-aeroplane in this direction for the purpose of demonstrating the only aeroplane of its kind in the world. The preliminary work on the machine was done in Iron Mountain.

FIRST AIRPLANE FLIGHT ON THE MENOMINEE IRON RANGE – JULY 4, 1914

Iron Mountain Press, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, Volume 19, Number 4 [Thursday, June 11, 1914], page 1, column 4

EAGLE WILL SCREAM

Iron Mountain Is Planning Biggest Celebration in the U.P.

The call issued by Mayor Cruse for a meeting of citizens to consider the matter of a Fourth of July celebration was held at the city hall last Monday evening and was well attended.

The meeting was opened by his honor, who after stating the object of the meeting, voiced a desire to make the celebration a county affair and invite Norway neighbors to participate in the "doings."

A temporary organization was perfected by the election of Mayor Cruse as chairman and S. Rex Plowman performed the duties of scribe.

Frank M. Milliman, Henry LaFountaine and John Andrews, Jr., were named a committee on permanent organization. A general committee of arrangements was named, as follows: Louis J. Will, John Andrews, Jr., Henry Suino, Joseph B. Eslick, Z.P. Rousselle, Joseph Balderica, John E. Quarnstrom, Charles Hallman, Frank M. Milliman and E.J. DeGaynor. The committee was empowered to name such sub-committees as were deemed necessary and to report at a second meeting to be held in the immediate future.

It developed at the meeting that the Miller street carnival was desirous of coming to Iron Mountain the week of the Fourth opening on June 29th and closing on the Fourth and the sentiment was unanimous in favor of encouraging the management to bring the show here. The Miller shows were here last season and gave excellent satisfaction. The shows

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were clean and much better than the average street carnival attractions. In addition to this, no rowdyism was permitted and gambling devices were barred. The Miller carnival would add very materially to the celebration.

The committee of arrangements is composed of a bunch of live wires, the businessmen are disposed to be liberal in the way of donations, and it is safe to predict that the coming celebration will be the largest and best ever held on the range.

Iron Mountain Press, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, Volume 19, Number 5 [Thursday, June 18, 1914], page 1, column 5

A HUGE CELEBRATION

Iron Mountain Will Expend a Large Sum in Entertaining.

The several committees having charge of our Fourth of July celebration have been working early and late this week. The finance committee is still engaged in soliciting. Yesterday the subscriptions totalled [*sic – totaled*] over \$1,000 and the committee is confident of securing several additional hundred. The program committee is now at work and promise many attractive features. It is proposed to have a particularly strong program for the children. All this in addition to the aeroplane flights and the street carnival. The Miller shows – eighteen in number – will be here for a full week, closing on the night of the Fourth. The shows will be stationed on the streets abutting Stephenson avenue, between Ludington

and C streets. The combination gave excellent satisfaction when here a year ago and the management say that it has been greatly improved. The shows are clean and gambling devices are not tolerated. Our citizens are planning to make this a county celebration. They want Dickinson county people to rally in Iron Mountain on the Fourth and promise a celebration second to none in the north country.

Iron Mountain Press, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, Volume 19, Number 5 [Thursday, June 18, 1914], page 1, column 5

AEROPLANE EXHIBITION.

Our Fourth of July committee has negotiated a "fly or no pay" contract with Lincoln Beechey [*sic – Beachey*], the world famous aviator of Chicago. By the term of this contract, Mr. Beechey [*sic – Beachey*] agrees to send an expert aviator to Iron Mountain and the aforesaid fly-man will make the flights in an aeroplane from central point in the city regardless of atmospheric conditions. The local committee agrees to pay Mr. Beechey [*sic – Beachey*] the sum of \$500. The flights will probably be made from the ball grounds – in the afternoon and evening. The aeroplane exhibition will be worth coming miles to see. It will be the first ever seen on the range and is certain to attract many visitors to our city.

Iron Mountain Press, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, Volume 19, Number 5 [Thursday, June 18, 1914], page 8, column 1

FLYING MACHINE TOYS

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[Compiled & Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

Lincoln Beechey Says Government Aeroplanes Are No Good.

"The aeroplane will decide the next great war," declared Lincoln Beechey [*sic – Beachey*], the noted loop-the-loop and upside-down aviator, who has engaged to give a demonstration with one of his machines in this city on the Fourth of July.

"Americans cannot seem to realize the tremendous import of the air navy. In the present Mexican situation the aeroplane and pilots are nothing more nor less than toys, fit for no practical use. In the first place the men are not trained for aerial 'rough riding' and their craft are no more adapted to hazardous scouting flights than a race horse is fit for pulling a heavily loaded truck.

"To start on the inside, congress and senate members look on aviation as a joke. Probably not one-tenth of them ever saw a real flight. They only know that a sum of money was appropriated for a few aeroplanes and men from West Point and Annapolis were assigned to the flying corps. Machines were smashed and men were killed in accidents. When the Mexican trouble arose the army and navy arose to the front. But they are doing little more than help make a lot of convenient "copy" for the enterprising correspondents.

"I think I know something about aviation, but you couldn't pay me enough to go up in some of the hulks I have seen those army officers fly in. What the United States needs is a better flying equipment and more scientific methods of teaching the art of aviation. No little appropriation is going to bring this about.

"Why, do you know that even Mexico spends more money every year for her air navy than America does? Mexico sets aside \$400,000, while the United States graciously permits her war office to apportion \$125,000. Over \$7,000,000 is deemed for little France, while 600 war aeroplanes are not considered adequate by Russia.

"Aerial warfare even with its drawbacks in the way of machines and experienced pilots has been proven highly efficient by the army and navy experts. Radio will permit an aeroplane ten miles in the air [*to*] take messages and signals from the ground. Positions of troops and fortifications can be seen and platted 2,500 feet in the air. Photographs can be secured at 1,500 and 2,000 feet in the air. Why, one aeroplane with a cargo of terrible lydite bombs could have wiped out the combined armies of Alexander the Great, Napoleon and Julius Caesar.

"An armed aeroplane could have blown up the Spanish armada while Admiral Drake was taking his morning shave. This country could have won its independence without its years of hardship and suffering had aeroplane warfare been known. England has 300 machines of war that can steal up in the night like a thief and wreck whole towns and fortifications. Germany has 1,200, Russia between 500 and 600. France over 500 and the United States has the imposing array of fifteen, and mighty slim prospects of getting any more.

"I am going to Washington after my exhibition dates and show the war office officials what can be done in the air. Anything I can do others can be taught to do. Looping the loop isn't dangerous; it is scientific."

*Iron Mountain Press, Iron Mountain,
Dickinson County, Michigan, Volume 19,*

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[Compiled & Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

Number 6 [Thursday, June 25, 1914],
page 1, column 5

CONTRACT CLOSED

Iron Mountain Will Pay \$800 for Aeroplane Flights.

To Be Made by Lieut. Roy Francis, Who Will Be Accompanied by a Parachute Jumper.

They come high but Iron Mountain is willing to pay the price, meeting vigorous metropolitan competition in the matter of securing an aeroplane for the entertainment of our guests on the Fourth of July.

Until last Thursday, the committee having the proposition in hand, supposed that an arrangement had been reached with the Lincoln Beechey *[sic – Beachey]* company for two exhibitions. Word was received from Chicago, however[,] that the agreement had not received the approval of Beechey *[sic – Beachey]* and the deal was likely to fall through. A meeting was held and it was decided to dispatch a committee[,] consisting of Mayor Cruse, Louis J. Will and John E. Quarnstrom, to Chicago for a personal interview. The interview with the Beechey *[sic – Beachey]* people was secured and as a result an iron-clad contract was signed to close the deal, it was necessary for the committee representing Iron Mountain to guarantee the company \$800. Before leaving for home the following self-explanatory telegrams were received at the Chicago office of the Beechey *[sic – Beachey]* company:

"Roy Francis, Aviator, San Francisco, Cal. Have closed up the Fourth of July for you at Iron Mountain, Michigan, for \$800 with parachute jumper. You can arrange to ship direct so as to be there in due time. Best luck and good wishes to all in the family.

"Hartford, Conn.: Closed Iron Mountain for Francis, July 4th, and wire Francis. We have closed our share for \$800 net. Pickens"

Pickens is Lincoln Beechey's *[sic – Beachey's]* personal representative. Francis is a lieutenant in the regular army now on a furlough. He is considered one of the most daring and successful aviators in the world and there was great competition for his services. The parachute jumper is a *[sic – an]* added attraction. The jump will be made from the aeroplane from a height of seven thousand feet and it will be a most thrilling sight. It will be an exhibition never before seen in Michigan, and will be a sight worth traveling many miles to witness.

And all this is only one of the many attractions to be seen in Iron Mountain the Fourth. It is not too much to state that our celebration will be the greatest ever here in Northern Michigan.

*Iron Mountain Press, Iron Mountain,
Dickinson County, Michigan, Volume 19,
Number 7 [Thursday, July 2, 1914],
page 1, column 5*

BIGGEST IN THE U.P.

The Iron Mountain Celebration of Nation's Birthday.

The Beachey Aeroplane Has Reached the City from

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San Francisco.

Other Features of the Day.

Iron Mountain will be called upon to entertain many thousands of visitors next Saturday the Fourth of July. The city will be appropriately dressed for the occasion. The decorations will be elaborate and becoming and many business houses will spend large sums in decorating.

A great program has been perfected for the entertainment of our guests. In addition to the street carnival, there will be a great parade in the morning, to be followed by field sports. There will be an oration and music by the bands.

In the afternoon there will be more athletic contests, a baseball game and the aeroplane flight. The aeroplane has arrived and the contract with the Beachey company provides for two flights and a parachute jump regardless of weather conditions. Lieut. Roy Francis, of the United States government corps of aviators, will make the flights. He is now in the city and declares that the flights will be made in accordance with the contract, one in the afternoon and one in the early evening. The ascensions will be made from the base ball [*sic – baseball*] grounds. Lieut. Francis is one of the most daring and successful aviators in the world. He has made many successful flights in the vicinity of San Francisco, from which city he comes direct to Iron Mountain. He will be accompanied in his flights by a parachute jumper, who will leave the aeroplane from a height of several thousand feet. This will be the first time such a dangerous exhibition will be seen in the upper peninsula and the attraction alone is sufficient to bring many people to

the city. The cost of this feature of the celebration is \$800.

In addition to the foregoing there will be displays of day and night fireworks.

Iron Mountain people extend a cordial invitation to county and range neighbors to be their guests for the day.

Iron Mountain Press, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, Volume 19, Number 8 [Thursday, July 9, 1914], page 4, column 1

GREAT CELEBRATION

Iron Mountain Entertains Many Thousands on the Fourth.

It is estimated that Iron Mountain entertained 15,000 visitors on the Fourth of July.

It was one of the best looking and best dressed crowds ever assembled in the upper peninsula.

Despite the throng and the liberal policy of the authorities, there was not a serious accident during the celebration.

The program was a most varied and entertaining "something doing all the time."

The decorations were the best ever seen in the peninsula.

The parade was several miles long and contained five bands, all good tootlers[,] not to mention the Rag-Time Brigade. The floats were good those of the Light & Fuel and von Platen Lumber companies being deserving of special mention.

The "talk" by Dr. Abrams, of Hancock, was short and snappy, one of the best Fourth of July orations ever heard here, and contained many patriotic thoughts.

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The aeroplane flights by Lieut. Francis were considerably more thrilling than anticipated. There was one at noon and a second at six o'clock. Two more were made on Sunday. In the last flight a height of 4300 feet was reached. Topographical conditions here were such that a parachute drop part of the program had to be abandoned after three trials. In the last the plane was nearly wrecked. Lieut. Francis stated that it was necessary for his plane to reach a ground speed of thirty miles an hour before it would lift two men with the needed apparatus. Despite this failure, the exhibition gave immense satisfaction.

The fire works *[sic – fireworks]* in the evening were excellent, pleasing a crowd of 10,000 people.

Finally, voicing the sentiments of 25,000 people, The Press wishes to thank the committees who made the celebration such a complete success. Folks not connected therewith have but a faint idea of the immense volume of labor involved in planning and conducting such a great celebration. The committeemen are to be congratulated.

LINCOLN BEACHEY

Lincoln J. Beachey (March 3, 1887 – March 14, 1915) was a pioneer American aviator and barnstormer. He became famous and wealthy from flying exhibitions, staging aerial stunts, helping invent aerobatics, and setting aviation records.

He was known as *The Man Who Owns the Sky*, and sometimes the *Master Birdman*, Beachey was acknowledged even by his competitors as "The World's Greatest Aviator". He was "known by sight to hundreds of thousands and by name to the whole world."

Beachey was born in San Francisco, California on March 3, 1887. He worked as a dirigible pilot for Thomas Scott Baldwin. Beachey helped build the dirigible "California Arrow" and made his first dirigible flight in 1905 at the age of 17.

He piloted his balloon at the 1910 Los Angeles International Air Meet at Dominguez Field where he raced against a fixed-wing aircraft around a course, at an altitude of 100 feet.

Beachey learned to pilot airplanes at the Curtiss Flying School.

On June 27, 1911, he took off into a drizzle and flew over the lower falls of Niagara Falls, then above American Falls, before an estimated 150,000 spectators. He took his plane under "Honeymoon Bridge," 20 feet (6.1 m) above the rapids. (Local papers described his plane as looking like "a beat-up orange crate."

In Chicago, Beachey raced a train and let his wheels touch the top of the moving train as it passed underneath. At the 1911 Chicago International Aviation Meet, he won multiple awards for stunts, and set a new altitude record. He filled his tanks with fuel, then said he would point the plane's nose skyward and keep going until the fuel ran out. For an hour and forty-eight minutes he spiraled upwards until the engine sputtered and died. The plane glided in spirals to the ground, and Beachey climbed out, numb and stiff. The barograph aboard the plane showed he had reached a height of 11,578 feet (3,529 m), temporarily setting the world's altitude record. In 1912, Beachy, Parmelee, and Martin performed the first night flights in California with acetylene burners, fuses, and small noise making bombs dropped over Los Angeles. In 1913, Beachey took off inside the Machinery Palace on the Exposition grounds at the San Francisco World's Fair. He flew the plane at 60 miles per hour and landed it, all inside the confines of the hall.

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His stunt specialty was the "dip-of-death", where he would take his plane up to 5,000 feet (1,500 m), and dive toward the ground at full speed with his hands outstretched. At the very last moment he would level the plane and zoom down the raceway, with his hands off of the controls, gripping the control stick with his knees. In a jest aimed at Blanche Stuart Scott, another member of the Curtiss exhibition team, Beachey dressed up as a woman and pretended to be out of control in a mock terror to hundreds of thousands.

Orville Wright said: "An aeroplane in the hands of Lincoln Beachey is poetry. His mastery is a thing of beauty to watch. He is the most wonderful flyer of all." Thomas Alva Edison wrote: "I was startled and amazed, when I saw that youngster take to the sky and send his aeroplane through the loop and then follow that feat with an upside-down flight. I could not believe my own eyes, and my nerves were a tingle for many minutes."

In 1913, a Russian pilot, Captain Peter Nesterov made the first inside loop. Frenchman Adolphe Pegoud later that year became the second and more famous person to do it and Beachey wanted to try it himself. Curtiss refused to build him a plane capable of the stunt, and Beachey left the flying team. At the same time, he wrote a scathing essay about stunt flying, stating most people came to exhibitions out of morbid eagerness to see young pilots die. On March 7, 1913, he announced he would never again fly professionally, believing he was indirectly responsible for the tragic deaths of several young aviators who had tried to emulate his stunts. In May, he would cite twenty-four fatalities, all of whom were "like brothers" to him. He felt tremendous guilt about their deaths and the suffering of their families.

Beachey went into the real estate business for a time, until Curtiss reluctantly

agreed to build a stunt plane powerful enough to do the inside loop. Beachey returned and, on October 7, took the plane up in the air at Hammondsport, NY. Unfortunately, on its first flight either a downdraft or a loss of speed following a turn caused the plane to dip momentarily. One wing clipped the ridgepole of a tent on the field and the plane then swept two young women and two naval officers off the roof of a nearby hangar, from where they had been watching the flight, contrary to Beachey's wishes. One woman was killed and the others injured as a result of the fall, a distance of about ten feet. Beachey's plane crashed in a nearby field but he managed to walk away from the wreckage with minor injuries. (A coroner's jury ruled the death of the 20-year-old woman as accidental.) Beachey decided for the second time to leave aviation.

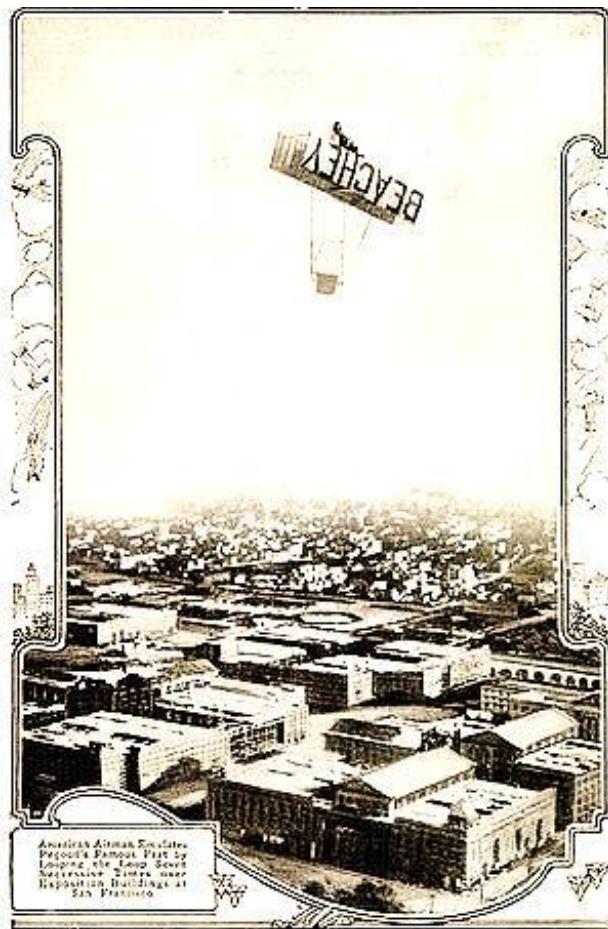
However, the sight of a circus poster changed his mind. The poster depicted a plane flying upside-down, a stunt that hadn't been attempted yet. Beachey was determined to master the loop and upside-down flight, but decided to go it alone.

He tried making a living demonstrating loops on exhibition grounds, but soon found that people would not pay to see a stunt they could see easily outside the gates. He retired for a third time, but returned when his manager had an idea that he depicted in a poster: the "Demon of the Sky" against the "Daredevil of the Ground." Beachey was to race his plane against a racing car driven by the popular driver, Barney Oldfield. The manager made sure there was a high fence around the exhibition grounds, forcing people to pay if they wanted to see the race. Beachey's plane was faster than Oldfield's car, but they took turns "winning," and crowds flocked to see their daily competitions. With the money he earned by racing, Beachey designed and built a new plane, the "Little Looper." He

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had his name painted in three-foot-high letters across the top wing. Soon he was flying multiple loops. Whenever he heard about another pilot setting a record for flying continuous loops, Beachey would promptly break it, flying as many as eighty loops in a row. Beachey and Oldfield toured the country, staging races everywhere they went. In Dayton, Ohio, home of the Wright Brothers, they performed to a crowd of 30,000.



After he first successfully completed a loop, he wrote a poignant reflection, saying, "The silent reaper of souls and I shook hands that day. Thousands of times we've engaged in a race among the clouds. Plunging headlong in to breathless flight, diving and circling with awful speed through

ethereal space. And many times when the dazzling sunlight has blinded my eyes, and sudden darkness has numbed all my senses, I have imagined Him close at my heels. On such occasions I have defied him, but, in so doing have experienced fright which I cannot explain. Today, the old fellow and I are pals."

In 1914, he dive-bombed the White House and Congress in a mock attack, proving that the US government was woefully unprepared for the age that was upon it.

In 1915, he had a large wooden model made of the Battleship Oregon, and had it anchored a mile offshore of San Francisco just before the Panama-Pacific International Exposition. The Navy loaned him 100 sailors to man the fake vessel, which was loaded with explosives. Beachey flew his plane over the model, dipped, and dropped what looked like a smoking bomb. One explosion grew into fifty as Beachey swooped over the model dreadnaught. The crew had already escaped aboard a tugboat, but 80,000 people onshore screamed and some fainted in the belief that Beachey had just blown up the Oregon.

It was at the Panama-Pacific International Exposition that Beachey made his last flight. Prior to the exposition, in 1914, he had ordered a Taube monoplane built with an 80 horsepower (60 kW) engine, powerful enough to carry out a maneuver Beachey had not yet presented to the public: inverted flight. He had tested it at low altitudes, and on March 14, 1915, he was ready for his first public flight. He took the plane up in front of a crowd of 50,000 (inside the Fairgrounds, another 200,000 on the hills), made a loop, and turned the plane onto its back. He may have been so intent on leveling the plane inverted he failed to notice he was only 2,000 feet (610 m) above San Francisco Bay. He pulled on the controls to pull the

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plane out of its inverted position, where it was slowly sinking. The strain caused both wings to shear off, and the fuselage plunged into the bay. Navy men jumped into action, but it took 1 hour and 45 minutes to recover Beachy's body. Even then, rescuers spent three hours trying to revive him. The autopsy found he had survived the crash and had died from drowning.

His funeral in San Francisco was said to be the largest in the city's history up until then. Vast crowds had followed his tours and it has been estimated 30 million people saw him in his career, 17 million in 1914 alone.

ROY NEWELL FRANCIS (1886-1952)

Died in San Francisco, California, on
October 10, 1952



Lieut. Roy N. Francis

Captain Roy N. Francis, born 1886 in Santa Clara County to Octave Francis, is considered one of the "early birds" of American aviation. In 1911, he took off from Cow Flat near the Presidio of San Francisco, and made a successful flight in a biplane of his own design. On November 18, 1912, his twin-tractor plane made the first passenger flight over the San Francisco Bay carrying local theatre member Vivian O'Brian, taking off from Alameda and landing near Cliff House. Later he partnered with Charles Patterson in Patterson-Francis Aviation Company, San Francisco. They produced a two-engine tractor flying boat, which Francis flew in the 1913 Great Lakes Reliability Tour, and a Twin-Tractor plane designed by Francis.



**Early San Jose Aviator Roy N. Francis
and his young passenger, Ernest
Stockton**

Postmaster Chapman established a postal sub-station at the Aviation Meet McLeansboro IL. Aviator Roy N Francis flew from the meet about five miles to a point near the Post Office where he dropped the mail from the plane. The mail was then retrieved and taken to the post

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office. As an added attraction, James Irving made a parachute jump from Francis's plane landing among the meet onlookers.



Paterson Twin-Tractor Biplane, Roy Francis, aviator

The Patterson & Francis Aviation Company started as the Patterson Aeroplane Company based out of San Francisco, California.

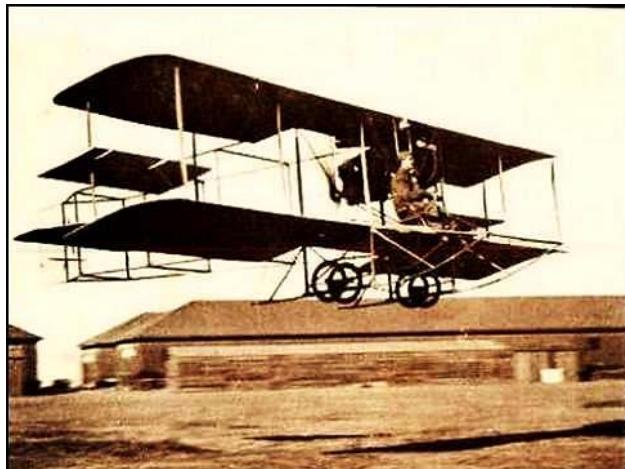
In 1912 Chas H. Patterson built and tested his own aircraft based on a Nieuport Design. Later aircraft included twin tractor designs from his future partners, Roy Francis and Frank Bryant. Shortly afterward, production moved to 1410 Howard Street.

Patterson built Nieuport style aircraft and custom parts for early aviators such as Fritz Schiller and E.F. De Villa. The company also built aircraft to compete in the Gordon Bennet Races Allan Haines Loughead, co-founder of Lockheed, contracted Patterson for a float to be used on the first Loughead aircraft, the ALCO Model G.

In 1913, the company produced a twin propeller flying boat that competed in the 1913 Great Lakes Reliability Trophy. Competing against Glenn L. Martin, Francis earned 6722 points flying a route around the Great Lakes. The aircraft developed mechanical difficulties around Pentwater,

leaving Francis with a twelve hour train ride to get parts to continue.

The historical papers of the company are now held by the Burton Historical Collection of the Detroit Public Library.



Roy N. Francis taking off in his bi-plane.



Prof. James Irving Jumps from Roy N. Francis' Aeroplane in Parachute (Roy N. Francis at right)

GREAT LAKES "RELIABILITY CRUISE", 1913

Not until 1913 was sufficient interest aroused in the United States to warrant a contest for water craft. Under the auspices of Aero & Hydro , a Great Lakes "Reliability Cruise" was organized for the week of July 8 – the course to follow the shoreline from

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Chicago to Detroit via the Straits of Mackinac. It was heralded as the biggest competitive aerial event of the year. Most of the pilots who had taken up the practice of flying over water were on the entry list – a total of fifteen names. John B. R. Verplanck, an affluent sportsman from the Hudson River Valley, and his seasoned pilot, Beckwith Havens, entered a Curtiss flying boat with a 90-hp Curtiss motor, as did Charles C. Witmer, Jack Vilas, G.M. Hecksher, and Navy Lieutenant John H. Towers, Antony Jannus, Hugh Robinson, and Tom Benoist entered Benoist flying boats, each with a Hall-Scott motor of 100 hp. Walter E. Johnson, who had worked as a mechanic for Glenn Curtiss, enlisted himself as the pilot of a Thomas brothers flying boat specially designed for the contest; with a 65-hp Kirkham motor, it was the first aircraft with an all-metal hull in the United States. Glenn Martin entered his tractor hydro with 90-hp Curtiss motor. Although labeled a "queer craft" by the Los Angeles *Examiner*, it had carried three passengers in California without trouble, and was headed for altitude records. Others on the original list were Max Lillie (the first to receive an "expert aviator's certificate" from the Aero Club of America), piloting a Walco monoplane flying boat with 70-hp Sturtevant motor; DeLloyd Thompson, flying a Walco biplane model with 50-hp Gnome; **Roy Francis**, with a Paterson tractor hydro powered by an 80-hp Hall-Scott; Weldon B. Cooke, with his Cooke flying boat fitted with 75-hp Roberts motor; and Frank Harriman, also with a flying boat and engine of his own make. When the day of the race dawned – one of the stormiest in years on Lake Michigan – the list had appreciably shortened. Only five flyers actually managed a start from the Chicago lakefront either that morning or the next – Johnson, Jannus, Havens, Martin, and **Francis** – and only one, Havens,

reached the first control point at Michigan City. Johnson, vainly fighting the weather, put in at Robertsdale, Indiana, only a short distance out of Chicago, while lifeboats searched for him until word came of his safety. From Michigan City to the control points at Muskegon (45 miles) and Pentwater (81 miles) beyond, the pilots had difficulty with rough water, balky engines, and broken propellers – the last a common complaint caused by damage from spray. Such obstacles slowed progress and kept public interest at a minimum. Holes were knocked in floats, and wind and high seas continued to harass the contestants – till, on the seventh day, only the team of Havens and Verplanck could be said to have made a creditable showing. Alone on July 14, they flew the distance of 138 miles between Pentwater and Charlevoix, in 2 hours 25 minutes at an average speed of 780 m/hr. On July 15 the race ended in recriminations – a fiasco as far as "reliability" was concerned.

In view of the unexpectedly poor showing, the committee was reluctant to pay out prize money, while the prospect of flying without reward was not pleasing to the competitors. Verplanck and Havens finished in Detroit on July 18 and decided to prolong their Great Lakes excursion, giving exhibitions here and there. Martin announced that he, too, would exhibit independently, but **Francis** felt it was time to dismantle his machine and ship it home. All the others had given up. It was not a heartening experience for proponents of the hydroaeroplane in the United States – especially as the Schneider cup race at Monaco had just laid the foundation for record-breaking performances over water. Americans could, however, take satisfaction in the fact that Glenn Curtiss had given the world the first flying boat – the development of which was one of the leading features of aviation in the last year before World War I.

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FORD AIRPORT

Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, Volume 5, Number 2 [Monday, April 13, 1925], page 1, column 8

FORD MOTOR COMPANY PLANS AIR TERMINUS HERE

METAL PLANES WILL BE USED ON NEW LINE

Company Plans to Utilize Air in Speeding Up Orders

BUILDING FIVE SHIPS

First Airship Leaves Today on Maiden Trip From Detroit

The Ford Motor company today inaugurated what is said to be the first commercial air line in the United States when the "Maiden Dearborn," an all-metal monoplane, hopped off from Detroit for Hegewisch, Ill., near Chicago.

The plane, of the "air" Pullman type, took off from the Ford airport, Dearborn,

with a cargo of company mail and express for the Ford plant at Hegewisch, near Chicago.

The plane, piloted by Eddie Hamilton, a former British flier[,] is one of two Duralumin planes to form the nucleus of an air service to link the Ford company here with the plants at Chicago, St. Louis, St. Paul and Iron Mountain. The second plane will receive its first tests within a few days.

No Details Received Here

The flight to Chicago is expected to require two and one-half hours, but speed is to be sacrificed for safety, a statement given out in Detroit by the Ford company said.

Plans for the institution of a Detroit-Iron Mountain commercial air plane [*sic – airplane*] line are known here but no definite instructions have yet been received, it was stated at the Ford plant offices this afternoon. No preparations have been made for a landing field nor other arrangements made for the planes.

The flight of the "Maiden Dearborn," [*sic*] marks the opening of a company operated airplane service which is to be extended gradually until several planes will be leaving Detroit daily on regular flying schedules.

Not For Public Use

The Ford Motor company, the announcement said "has operated heretofore its own railroads, ocean and lake steamship lines and motor truck lines. Now it utilizes under its own control every type of modern transportation."

The Ford air line, today's statement said, will not be available for public use, nor connected in any way with outside interests.

"The line is to be operated exclusively for company business and no outside business enters into the service," the statement continued.

All-Aluminum Body

DICKINSON COUNTY HISTORY – TRANSPORTATION – AIRPLANES

[Compiled & Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

The Maiden Dearborn is constructed entirely of aluminum, has a wing spread of 60 feet and its length is 46 feet, two inches. The plane has a maximum speed of 115 miles an hour and a cruising speed of 100 miles an hour.

William B. Tout, designer of the plane, said that following completion of the second plane now under construction, five other [*sic – others*] will be built for other air transport lines.

They will have a terminus at St. Louis, Mo., another at St. Paul, Minn., where the new hydro-electric plant of the Ford company will be in operation and a third will terminate in Iron Mountain.

Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, Volume 5, Number 11 [Thursday, April 23, 1925], page 1, column 3

GET FIRST MAIL VIA FORD PLANE

Commercial Air Route Makes Fast Service Available Here

The Iron Mountain Ford plant last night received the first mail routed via the new commercial airline instituted a few days ago by the Ford Motor company.

The mail, sent from Detroit, was dispatched by the company's own airplane, the Maiden Dearborn, to Chicago. It left Detroit on Tuesday. At Chicago the mail was sent through the regular government postal service and arrived here last night.

The new service places the Iron Mountain plant in closer touch with Detroit

by one or two days. Important mail from the Iron Mountain plant will be sent to Chicago by train where it will be picked up by special messenger, transferred to the company's airplane and rushed to Detroit. When sent by this route a letter mailed here one day will reach Detroit about noon of the next day.

The Ford company is planning to extend its airplane route to Iron Mountain. This service will begin, it is believed, as soon as more of the Stout metal airplanes have been built.

A landing field will be graded at the plant so that planes will have the utmost safety in landing and taking off.

The planes will carry only company business.

Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, Volume 5, Number 11 [Thursday, April 23, 1925], page 6, columns 5-6 [bust photographs of Henry Ford and Edsel Ford]

They're Doing It

Henry Ford and his son, Edsel, the latter president of the Ford Motor company, have given commercial aviation a tremendous aid by the starting of an air line [*sic – airline*] linking the Detroit, Chicago and Iron Mountain factories. Edsel Ford is also one of the backers of a new proposed air line [*sic – airline*] that will engage in outside business. The Fords have taken a big field at Dearborn and turned it into an airport. The factory of the Stout Metal Airplane company, which the Fords are also backing, is located at this field.

EARLY FORD MOTOR COMPANY AIRPLANES

DICKINSON COUNTY HISTORY – TRANSPORTATION – AIRPLANES

[Compiled & Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, Volume 5, Number 11 [Thursday, April 23, 1925], page 6, columns 1-8

Day of Flying Flivver Near As Ford Enters Aviation

Motor Magnate Devotes Energy and Money to Aid Development

Iron Mountain Is Terminal on Company's Commercial Route; Dearborn Airport Modern in All Details.

**By HOWARD MINGOS.
(In the New York Times)**

HENRY FORD has gone into aviation. The man who revolutionized the automobile industry by popularizing the motor car has assigned to himself the task of popularizing the flying machine. The manufacturer whose production methods created one of the world's greatest industrial organizations expects now to use that same organization for the promotion of aerial transport.

Henry Ford and his son, Edsel, are undertaking the job together, believing that the time has come to realize some of the limitless possibilities of flying. They purpose to produce metal aircraft that can remain out in all kinds of weather to reduce the cost of both planes and dirigibles so that, *[sic]* they may be available for public

use. In a sense, they intend to "Flivverize" the air.

"There is not a doubt in the world that commercial aviation can be successful," said Henry Ford at Dearborn the other day. "We are going to see that it is made a success."

"As soon as we get into quantity production the planes will be disposed of through the regular sales units of the Ford Motor Company," said Edsel Ford. He has made a special study of the technical aspects of flying and the scientific requirements of aircraft. He speaks the language of the aeronautical engineer. He is a young man, still in his twenties, and keen to make his own mark.

Edsel Ford's Ambition.

While he is President of the Ford Motor Company and has assumed no small share of the responsibility that his father once shouldered, Edsel Ford is ambitious to enter the new field in a big way and gain the same important position in aviation that his father occupies as a builder of motor cars. And Henry Ford is equally desirous of helping Edsel accomplish that purpose. He has authorized the statement that from now on they will continue to expand their aviation interests in every direction.

There is much speculation regarding a "flivver" airplane. It is not in existence, as yet. But several designs for a small flying Ford have been drawn on paper, and at least one of them has been set up as a sort of model "to see how it would look," according to the engineer who made the pattern.

The flying "flivver" as it is now envisioned will carry loads of two, three and four persons, or the equivalent in cargo; the cost to the purchaser will not be more than \$3,000 at the start with a gradual reduction in price as the design is further simplified and Ford production methods are applied.

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[Compiled & Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

But the small Ford plane must await the development of the Ford aircraft engine. Today experiments are being conducted in the laboratories at Dearborn. Henry Ford and his engineers are developing motors large and small, the large motors to take the place of the present military engines that were brought out during the war, such as the Liberty.

New Motor To Be Built.

Mr. Ford recognizes the fact that the military engines, as they exist today, are too heavy and too expensive to run for the work they can do. He expects to bring out lighter engines to do the same work and a smaller motor giving more power for its weight than existing types. This may take the form of a radial, air-cooled engine, or it may be [a] water-cooled engine and in the form of an inverted V. It may be one year and possibly two before the Ford engine sufficiently light and economical for air flivvers will be in the production stage. The small flying Ford depends on the perfection of such an engine.

Both father and son are devoting many hours a day to their new venture. A few days ago they helped load and send off the first plane of a fleet of cargo craft that will soon link together some of the important plants of the Ford Motor company in other cities. A second plane will be put in service next week, and five others will be added as soon as they can be built.

These planes are not built by the Fords. They are turned out by the Stout Metal Airplane company, and William B. Stout, its president, is the inventor and engineering genius who created the plane which the Ford Motor company will soon be selling to other agencies engaged in aerial transport. However, Henry and Edsel Ford have played important parts in its development.

Detroiters Backed Stout

Stout conceived the idea of a metal plane for commercial use shortly, before the

end of the war. He devoted his personal fortune to experiments with preliminary types which were employed on rigid flight tests. A thousand persons were carried safely in the trial machines. Two years ago he expanded his company, more than a hundred business men *[sic – businessmen]* in Detroit and Chicago contributing equal amounts to the venture. Edsel Ford was one of his supporters, and has been serving as a director of the company. He and his father have followed closely the radical methods by which Stout rivets together pieces of metal, invents jigs and special tools, methods that are the result of fifteen years of hard work and an expenditure of a half million dollars, a large part of which he himself had contributed.

One day last summer Henry Ford pointed to a chart showing the 12,000 acres of land he owns at Dearborn, some twelve miles from Detroit.

"What is the best location for a flying field?" he asked one of his engineers.

"The section adjoining the laboratories on the main road to Detroit"

"But that," put in Ford's secretary, is already plotted as a subdivision for workmen's homes."

"That was yesterday," said Ford. "Today it is a flying field."

Mr. Ford sent forty tractors out on the plot, and in eleven weeks 240 acres had been rolled and made smooth. He built two runways 300 feet wide and more than half a mile long. He spent hours on the field talking with the workmen and engineers and getting their opinions on details that would help to make the field of permanent value to the Ford aviation program.

In talking to a pilot one afternoon he was informed that the high tension wires would menace aircraft landing and taking off. He spent thousands of dollars transferring them to conduits under the ground.

"What about wet weather?" he asked.

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[Compiled & Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

"Well, the rain and snow will make it very muddy around here at certain seasons of the year."

"We will drain the field," said Henry Ford. He sent for another gang of men and they sank more than twenty miles of draining tile which empty into two eight-inch mains and keep the field dry in any kind of weather.

At one side of the field, one the main road to Detroit, Mr. Ford put up an airplane factory building in six weeks. He was on the job personally supervising the work each day that he was in Dearborn, or vicinity. Though he had chopped down more than a hundred maple and walnut trees on the field to make safe landings for the planes, he caused the foundations of the factory building to be moved over three feet when he discovered the building line touching a crab-apple [sic – crabapple] tree.

Kills the Trees He Loves

"There is no use destroying something which requires so long to grow," he explained. "Let it live."

And then a squadron of army planes flew in from Selfridge Field one afternoon. Henry and Edsel were there to greet them, as they usually are when there is any activity on the field. As they came in some of the pilots staged a little aerial circus, looping about, barrel-rolling and hedge-hopping, until they came down low enough to brush their landing gears against the treetops in a grove of maples that flanked a corner of the field.

As he noticed this, Henry Ford became excited.

"Cut every one of those trees down," he ordered. "Cut them down immediately. I don't want to see one of those fine young fellows killed."

When he assured the pilots that they need no longer fear to land at his airport because the trees would be taken away, none had the heart to tell him that they had

been hitting the tops by design in order to give him a thrill.

After the Fords had put up the factory building at the Ford Airport they invited the Stout company to move out from Detroit and make itself at home. In so doing they advanced the position of the company three or four years, for it is estimated that it would have taken that long to get into production had Ford facilities not been supplied. For that reason the Stout machine and the manner in which it is produced are of paramount interest.

Believe in All-Metal Plane

The Fords have placed their faith in the all-metal plane because of what they have observed at the Stout plant. Henry Ford divides his time between the plant and his laboratory. In his laboratory he spends many hours at a blackboard drawing designs and illustrating his ideas with chalk talks before groups of engineers. Then he jumps into his car and goes over to the airplane plant, where he follows intently the manner of building a flying machine.

It is made of duraumin, a copper-aluminum alloy almost as light as paper and as strong as steel. The metal is soaked in a temperature of 75 degrees Fahrenheit, after which it is pliable, and crystallization is eliminated. This also makes the machine weather-proof and it requires no shelter. A single coat of varnish makes it impervious to rust and other deteriorating agencies. One of the experimental planes has been outside for months with no sign of damage.

The Fords have adopted it because it can be produced in unlimited quantities. They will expand the Stout company to provide for mass production. They may possibly take it over in order to have a free hand in determining its policies. Whether or not they do this, the Fords are going to make airplanes and engines, and their methods will be based upon the series of production cycles not unlike those

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[Compiled & Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

employed in the Ford factories and assembly plants, which now have a capacity production of two and a half million cars a year.

The entire plane is built and assembled on a single floor. The present factory has a capacity of one plane a day. When Henry Ford found that the building would not accommodate the planes after they had been completed, he walked down the side of the field a few hundred yards and marked off a new building, which is nearly completed. It will be used to "service" the machines while they are in operation.

Ford's offices are besieged with hundreds of inquiries as to how it is possible to make an airplane so quickly. Here is the answer. The duralumin sheets come from the heat-treating baths to machines which cut out the patterns and then press them into corrugated form until they have the appearance of oversized washboards. The corrugations contribute to the unusual strength. Thence the metal pieces are moved over to the jigs, which are permanent steel patterns set in the concrete floor so there is not the slightest variation. There the sheets, spars and braces are riveted together by means of compressed air and electric tools. Women and girls could do nearly all the work.

The metal covering on the wings and body is only as thick as four sheets of paper, but it will stand many times the maximum pressure that can be laid against it anywhere. After the wings have been made they are swung over and set into the body of the plane, the U-shaped spars of duralumin extending clear through the upper part of the body. The engine comes next, and as it is locked into the framework of the nose, the hood is fastened into place by means of four bolts. The pneumatic tires are put on, and as they are inflated they raise the plane enough to jog it off the jigs and free itself automatically.

Engineers have praised the plane highly. Though it is not a small machine, it is the parent type of those that the Fords intend to produce in quantities, matically [sic], just as steamships slips [sic – slip] from the ways when the key structure is removed. When the engine is started the machine can be run off the factory floor under its own power.

That system appeals to the Fords, who see in it an opportunity to make planes almost as rapidly as they make cars. And they are overlooking no opportunity to familiarize themselves with the art. Their friends say that Henry Ford and his son have a vision of filling the skies with Ford planes.

Handling Company Business

They are now operating machines with the idea of reducing the cost of maintenance. They paid the Stout company \$25,000 each for the two planes already delivered. It is believed that the large types can be produced in quantities for a fourth or perhaps a fifth of the present price. But even with the present cost of production they are making money on their experiment. The new Ford lines will handle only company business at first. Mail, small parts, and emergency packages are carried between the plants in Detroit and Chicago.

The company mail between those branches averages 800 pounds, or 32,000 letters a day each way. More than seven hours are required to transport it by railroad. The planes carry it in two and one-half hours. Each plane saves \$1,250 a day in postage alone.

The same idea applies to the other private lines projected. They will be put in operation as quickly as other planes are available. One will extend to St. Louis. Another will tie up the Twin Cities branches and a third will be an air line [sic – airline] between Detroit and the Ford sawmills and other plants at Iron Mountain, Mich. By the

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[Compiled & Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

time the planes are completed, emergency landing fields and service depots will have been established over the last route. No passengers will be carried for some time to come.

Will Carry A Ton

The present Ford plane is built to carry a ton load. Its wing measures 60 feet between tips and the body is nearly 50 feet long. Yet it weights [*sic – weighs*] 1,000 pounds less than the average large sedan. It carries a 75-gallon gasoline tank in the wing on each side, at a point where the wing is 32 inches thick. In order to prevent ice forming on the plane and weighing it down, thus reducing its carrying capacity, small leads have been extended from the exhaust pipes throughout the interior of the wings and body. This keeps the machine warm.

The entire nose, including engine, hood and instrument board in front of the pilot, can be removed as a single unit and another installed in its place within twenty minutes. In fact, the machine has been simplified to an extreme both in structure and maintenance. The small flying Fords will be similarly constructed.

Meanwhile the market for the large transport and passenger planes will be developed. More than 9,000 Ford agencies will play an important part in this. District managers will exploit their territory and act as consultants in organizing air routes, and establishing landing fields, marking towns so that they can be seen from the air, establishing radio stations and weather bureaus so that the pilots may have the advantage of advance information before setting out from a field.

To Eliminate Fire Hazard

The fire hazard will be eliminated in these transport and passenger planes. Invented [*sic – Inverted*] Liberty engines will be used until the Ford engines are available. By inverting the Liberty any fire

in the motor can be immediately drained out underneath the plane without touching it. While they are perfecting engines, the Fords will also develop new methods of handling aircraft on the ground. The Ford Airport at Dearborn is, [*sic*] being made into a model that will astonish people who visit it late in the summer.

A huge permanent steel and brick hangar is being completed. It will shelter the machines and crew while they are “servicing” the planes, for the Ford fleet is to be increased until machines are leaving and arriving on the field every hour of the day and night. The name Ford will lie in the center of the field, in white letters 200 feet wide. It will be illuminated at night, and be visible at an altitude of 10,000 feet. Grilled lights set in the runways will show pilots where to touch their wheels to the ground in landing. Flood lights will mark the boundaries of the field, and aerial beacons, illuminated wind cones, and other auxiliaries for night flying will be installed.

Will Also Build a Dirigible.

The Fords are as interested in airship production as they are concerned with producing economical planes. They are principals in the Airship Development Corporation, which makes its headquarters at the Ford laboratories in Dearborn and will employ the facilities of the Stout factory in producing the world's first all-metal dirigible, which will be comparable in size to the navy Los Angeles. The metal airship is the idea of Ralph Upson, formerly chief engineer of the Goodyear balloon department. Upson and Mayo have been conducting laboratory experiments at Dearborn for more than three years, and today the Fords are preparing to build a metal airship and apply to it the same rigid flight tests that proved the worth of the Stout airplane.

The Fords are not seeking financial support from the public in their aeronautical ventures. They believe that small investors,

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[Compiled & Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

for the present, at least, would do well to let commercial aviation alone until it has passed the development stage. Nor do they believe in Government subsidies, as so many others in the aircraft industry have demanded. They are convinced that people will use aircraft where they are profitable and reasonably safe. They are basing their program on that theory, at any rate. But they also believe that the Government can help by placing its ground facilities at the disposal of operating companies.

Advocate Public Landing Fields.

The Ford resources are capable of producing all the necessary raw materials for the equipment. The Ford plants now manufacture everything required in the construction of aircraft and auxiliary apparatus. But they cannot make landing fields. They believe that the Federal Government should provide landing fields, weather data, wireless service, aerial beacons wherever possible, just as harbors and lighthouses are provided for surface craft.

Edsel Ford agreed last week to become a principal in a nation-wide air transport company now being organized with a capitalization of \$5,000,000. He and some of the others have already deposited in a Detroit bank their share of the money as evidence of good faith. The company is being formed to carry mail and express at first with the idea of instilling confidence in the public before it is asked to ride through the air. Among the other principals are Howard Coffin, Vice President of the Hudson Motor Car Company, Detroit, William Wrigley Jr., and Marshall Field of Chicago and C.M. Keys, President of the Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor Corporation of New York.

New Mail Routes a Possibility

This company will organize new air mail routes in view of the success of its first

experimental line between New York and Chicago. It has been definitely decided, but there is strong possibility of the first route branching off to Detroit, later on extending to St. Louis and to New Orleans. Under the Kelly act, passed at the last session of congress, the postmaster general is authorized to let out the flying mail contracts to responsible operators who have proved their ability to carry the mails. The law authorizes payment to the operators of four-fifths of the special air mail postage.

The new company expects to operate other routes between Boston and Buffalo, New York and Atlanta, via Washington; Chicago to Salt Lake City and thence to Los Angeles; *[sic - ,]* San Francisco and Seattle. The Fords are interested in this project because it will be the first extensive and organized air line *[sic – airline]*, and they hope to produce the planes with which it will be operated. Later they hope to make airships that will carry passengers on non-stop flights between the Atlantic and Pacific and across the water to Europe.

The plans of Henry Ford and Edsel are not confined to the United States. It is reliably stated that they will enter the South American market, where an increasing demand for aircraft is apparent. In the larger republics of the South and in many European centres *[sic]* they have established assembly plants for their products, and these, it is planned, will eventually be used for the assembly of Ford planes.

Speaking of Europe, the entry of the Fords into aviation is looked upon as one of the biggest events since the armistice. When the Ford Motor Company was reorganized in 1919 its charter provided for aircraft construction, and observers from foreign governments have been trying to ascertain to what extent the company will produce aircraft equipment. They have

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[Compiled & Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

followed the manner in which the Ford Liberty engines have won a reputation for reliability both in the United States and elsewhere. The British air force and even the Russian Soviet are using Liberty engines built at the Ford plant in Detroit. The Army Air Service and the Navy Bureau of Aeronautics have depended upon Ford Liberties for unusual work over long distances, and today the company is reputed to be in the first class in aircraft motor production.

Those same observers visiting the Ford plants have been amazed at the capacity for production. Many of them are in Detroit today trying to glean enough information to warrant comprehensive reports to their respective governments. For a flying machine is an important military weapon whether it is created for transport or fighting. And all the large powers are now competitors in the world race for aerial supremacy. If the Fords enter the production field on a large scale, America will have facilities for turning out thousands of airplanes in the quickest possible time, far more quickly than any other nation could produce them, even by devoting all its available resources.

They're Doing It

Henry Ford and his son, Edsel, the latter president of the Ford Motor company, have given commercial aviation a tremendous aid by the starting of an air line [*sic – airline*] linking the Detroit, Chicago and Iron Mountain factories. Edsel Ford is also one of the backers of a new proposed air line [*sic – airline*] that will engage in outside business. The Fords have taken a big field at Dearborn and turned it into an airport. The factory of the Stout Metal Airplane company, which the Fords are also backing, is located at this field.

[NOTE: The above account is in a box in columns 5-6, along with bust photos of Henry Ford and Edsel Ford.]

Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, Volume 5, Number 12 [Friday, April 24, 1925], page 7, columns 3-4

AIRFORDS BEAT DARIUS' TEAM

Filvver King's Air Plan Includes Light Machine

[Need to copy beginning portion of article in column 3.]

passengers in addition to the seat reserved for the pilot.

It is the intention of the "filvver king of the air" to ultimately produce these machines at the low figure made possible by "quantity" production. The first two or three planes, being in the nature of experimental machines, were quite costly, as is the case in all initial production of any sort of machinery. The speed of these "Airfords" will be 10 miles an hour for pleasure cruising, and a capacity of 40 to 50 miles an hour in addition to that, for war use.

It is Mr. Ford's intention that the first commercial lines of his activity will be the transportation of letters, express and valuable freight.

The dream of Darius Green and his flying machine fell far short of what the Fords expect to accomplish. In addition to these airplanes, or rather "Airfords," the

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[Compiled & Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

Fords are building an all-metal, lighter-than-air machine. The portion containing the gas will be made of duralumin, which is 90 per cent aluminum, 4 per cent copper, and a little cobalt. These gas containers will actually weigh less than the silk bags with their interior "cells" now used in the everyday dirigible. The great advantage of this metal container is that it is non-combustible and practically safe against lightning.

FONTANA'S SCHOOL OF AERONAUTICS AT FORD AIRPORT DURING WORLD WAR II

Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, _____ Year, Number _____ [Wednesday, April 15, 1942], page 2, column 5

Park Board Authorized To Lease Airport

Authorization to lease the Dickinson county airport to a recognized flying school, if possible, was given the board of park trustees yesterday by the county board of supervisors.

This step was taken as a means of reopening the field, closed since the declaration of war imposed new regulations on civilian flying. It was given at the suggestion of M.C. Connolly, county engineer, after George Best, of the Dickinson County Pilots' association, asked the board what it proposes to do about the field.

The board appropriated \$500 in February to provide guards at the port. Subsequently adopted CAA regulations

require telephone service, lights and ship-to-ground radio communications, before the field may be operated.

Cost of equipping the field to meet CAA regulations and operations for a year was estimated by Best at \$2,500.

"City Is Broke"

"We started you off with \$500," Supervisor Colantonio told Best. "why don't you go to the city of Iron Mountain and the village of Kingsford for money?"

"We were told the city was broke," Best replied.

"The city's been broke for 40 years," Colantonio observed. "Why don't you try the water department? It's got money."

Connolly proposed that an effort be made to lease the field to a private flying school, which would make needed installations for opening the airport.

Authorization for the lease was adopted by an unanimous vote, after it was specified that the lease contain no discrimination against members of the Pilots' association.

Several planes which had been flying here have been taken to the Escanaba field, and that others have been dismantled, Best reported.

Meanwhile the Pilots' association, meeting last night at the Riverside club, appointed a committee to raise money for opening the airport.

Claude Frickelton, Iron Mountain pilot, has received a CAA instructor's rating, and is teaching students at Escanaba, among them several Iron Mountain men.

Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, _____ Year, Number _____ [Tuesday, May 26, 1942], page 3, column 1

Fontana To Train U.S.

DICKINSON COUNTY HISTORY – TRANSPORTATION – AIRPLANES

[Compiled & Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

Glider Pilots

Selection of Rochester, Minn., for an Army air force pre-caDET glider training school, and the designation of the Fontana School of Aeronautics there for all flight instruction has been announced at Washington.

Mario Fontana, former Iron Mountain man, who has conducted flying schools at Laurium, in the Copper Country, and at Rochester for some time past, returned last week from Washington, where he received full instructions. Designation of the Fontana school for the instruction is a singular honor, and recognition of the high quality of the work since the school was established at Laurium two years ago and at Rochester a year ago.

Forty light Army planes are reported already at Rochester and a caravan of several large Army trucks, jeeps and ambulances; 30 flight cadets and eight or 10 officers is [*sic – are*] said to be en route to the new training center.

One of 20 Schools

Rochester airport, where Fontana has his school, will be the main base, with actual glider instruction to be given at three auxiliary fields leased from Haverhill and Viola township farmers, starting June 1. The Fontana school is one of 20 civilian pilot training centers of Civilian Aeronautics Authority selected by [*the*] Army to give preliminary glider training. Light Army airplanes will be used – not gliders, at present.

Thirty students will be assigned to the school weekly until 210 have been trained, and it is believed likely the training will be extended. Each student group will get four weeks' training at Rochester before going on to more advanced glider training, so that at the peak 120 cadets will be in training.

Plans call for the construction of temporary facilities, including one or two buildings, depending on the size, at each field selected for the training. These will be for maintenance, storage of supplies and office work. All fields will be under 24-hour guard and strict military discipline.

To handle the new program, the Fontana School of Aeronautics will engage 16 additional instructors and about 35 other personnel, including mechanics, guards, truck drivers and administrative employes [*sic – employees*]. Fontana said that persons who can qualify for positions other than instructors may contact the Fontana school at the airport.

First Student Group

The first group of students is comprised of glider pilot candidates from the regular Army air forces. Flight instruction at Rochester will be with light Army planes. From there the students will go on to schools giving instruction in large types of gliders. A feature of the light airplane instruction will be that all landings will be "dead-stick" landings, with power off. In this respect the landings will simulate those made with gliders.

While the first group of students is from the Army air forces, the program is open to men from 18 to 35 years of age, who have had training as civilian pilots and who have been ineligible for aviation cadet training. A recent War Department report indicates that light airplane and glider schools are being established in various parts of the United States, chiefly in the Midwest, to train Army air forces as glider pilots. The Rochester school is one of them.

Civilian applicants for the course will be enlisted in the Army air force enlisted reserve and assigned to the training course. Students who complete the glider course will be promoted to the grade of staff sergeant; given the rating of glider pilot and

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[Compiled & Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

assigned to active duty. They will receive flight pay.

Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, _____ Year, Number _____ [Tuesday, February 9, 1943], page 2, columns 1-3

Approval Near For Transfer Of Flight-Training School

Pending final approval by the board of control, Michigan College of Mining and Technology, the Fontana School of Aeronautics, now situated at Laurium in the Copper Country, will be transferred to the Ford airport here, effective May 1, and a minimum of 30 cadets will begin training, it was stated here today by Joseph Fontana, director of the school.

It is the pilot-training program under the War Training Service of the Civil Aeronautics Authority, conducted in conjunction with the ground school extension course of Houghton Tech and the Fontana School of Aeronautics.

Dr. Grover C. Dillman, president of Houghton Tech and secretary of the college control board, here today with Fontana to look over the ground and confer with local officials, said he is "confident" of approval by the board, although final action has not been taken.

The county board of supervisors, in special session this morning, granted a 10-year lease on the county-owned Ford airport to the Fontana school, with specific provisions which will mean the immediate expenditure of about \$10,000 by the Fontana school, for extensions and improvements at the field.

Release of critical materials for the construction of a light and power line to the airport has been granted by the War Production board to the Wisconsin

Michigan Power company, and work will begin at once. Other work involves the laying of a concrete floor and apron at the 80-by-100-foot hangar; sinking and housing of a well; building of a machine shop, pilots' quarters, warehouse and other structures, and improvement to the field itself.

Permanent Improvement

Under the county lease, the concrete floor and apron at the hangar, water supply system, light and telephone lines and electric light fixtures will be left intact after expiration of the lease, or abandonment of the school. The Fontana school is authorized to maintain all business at the airport, including sale of gasoline and other concessions. The airport will be open to properly-authorized civilian use, and the county agrees to maintain the road leading thereto, winter and summer.

All expenses for improvements must be met by the Fontana school, which accepts pilots for training on assignment from the Army and Navy. Likewise, all improvements – except buildings which may be removed upon expiration of the lease – will remain as a permanent benefit to the county-owned field.

Control of the Ford airport, deeded to the county some time ago by the Ford Motor company, passed recently from the county road commission – as the board of park trustees – to the county board of supervisors, which acted today on the lease. Ray Derham, Iron Mountain attorney, was spokesman for Fontana at the supervisors' meeting.

Reasons for Transfer

Efforts towards transfer of the Fontana School and the Houghton Tech ground course to the Ford airport were begun by Fontana some time ago when it became apparent that winter weather conditions in the Copper Country proved a serious drawback to qualification of the air cadets within the prescribed eight weeks' period.

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[Compiled & Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

Transfer to Iron Mountain was sought for the same reason that a similar school at Marquette was moved several months ago to Escanaba, where weather conditions are similar to this community.

Other important factors are the large hangar here, capable of housing 20 ships, compared with only five or six at Laurium; the larger and improved runways for takeoff and landing; adjoining open areas, such as the Pine Grove golf course, where emergency landings could be made, and other advantages.

Course Is Shortened

At the outset of pilot training, under the former Civilian Pilot Training Service, the Fontana school was allowed four months to complete the preliminary phase of pilot training – primary and secondary. Today the prescribed training period is eight weeks, "and," Fontana said, "the Army and Navy insists [*sic – insist*] on it. They accept no excuses. Weather or no – the course must be completed within the contract period. When, for instance, we ran into 36 consecutive days of snowfall out of 40 – as we did at Laurium this season – it is impossible to complete the course within the eight weeks' period. Since we contract for only an eight weeks' course, the school itself must defray the expense for any training beyond that period required to complete the work."

Snowfall this winter over the Laurium airport has reached a volume of 144 inches, compared with about 60 at the Ford airport here, Fontana said. Snowfall here this year, however, has been heavier than for many years past, and the average is more nearly one-third – instead of half – of the volume at Laurium. Depth of snow on the airport itself is of little consequence, since skis are substituted for the running gear. Sustained snowfall, however, holds back the actual flight-training, for the fledgling

pilots are not sent into the air during snow or rain.

Setup Of School

Under the existing setup, authorities at Houghton Tech are in charge of the ground school, including military and physical training, and a room will be made available at the Iron Mountain senior high school. All equipment in the ground course will be brought here from Houghton Tech.

Prof. A.N. MacIntosh, director of pilot training for the college, will be assigned here, with seven flight instructors, all with CAA ratings. Flight instructors now at Laurium are Clarence f. Cass, chief pilot; Charles E. Kemp, John C. Averitt, Harvey A. Lynch (formerly of Iron Mountain), Joseph C. Andeini, Frank e. Blake and John M. Keener.

Joseph Fontana will be manager of the school here, as a partner in the flight school with his brother, Milo, now director of the advanced flight course of the Fontana school at Rochester, Minn. Thirty men are now in training at Laurium, and about the same number are expected to begin the new period here May 1, although this will be stepped up if facilities permit.

The Laurium school, begun in 1939, has turned out 375 graduates, and had a peak enrollment of 50 in one session. More than 1,000 cadets have completed the advanced course at Rochester, started in October, 1941. The top enrollment there was 250.

Ten Ships Here

Ten ships will be quartered at the Ford airport, compared with only seven at Laurium, and there is room for 20 in the Ford hangar. Three ships will be flown here from the Rochester school, where 12 are now stationed. All ships, maintenance units and other accessories are the property of the Fontana school.

Licensed mechanics who will also be stationed here are Kenneth E. Richardson, aircraft and engine mechanic, and Louis

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[Compiled & Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

Mosea, engine mechanic. Ground school instructors will be assigned here by Houghton Tech, which now has 12 men in this work at the college.

The Harding hotel has been designated as quarters for the cadets, and accommodations in Iron Mountain and Kingsford will be found for the flight and ground school instructors, mechanics and other supervising officers.

As stated heretofore, the school here, as at Laurium, will offer two preliminary phases of flight training – primary and secondary. Advanced flying – cross-country and the instructor course – is at the Rochester school, under Milo Fontana and his staff.

Method of Assignment

Since enlistments in the Army and Navy are closed, assignment to the Fontana school will be by Army and Navy examining boards. Quotas for the several services are now assigned to state induction boards, which fill the needs as required. Thus, a young man qualified by age and physical test, and who has previously signified flight training, may be assigned cadet training here. He must, however, be assigned by either the Army or Navy, which designates the type of preliminary training he is to receive – combat, service-pilot, instructor, etc., depending upon age, physical condition and other qualifications.

A definite advantage of the training center here, in addition to permanent improvement of facilities at the Ford airport, will be its availability for public use, under established and well-defined Army and Navy restrictions. The airport will be available, for instance, to Ford Motor company officials arriving on business in connection with the Army's glider contract at the local plant.

Students now entered in the ground school course being taught by Principal Bruce Guild and others at the high school

will find added opportunities for advanced instruction.

Further Instruction

Although cadets who finish the training course here do not necessarily go to the advanced school at Rochester, they are eligible, then, for advanced training at Rochester or a comparable school, as combat pilots – if qualified by age – or as service-pilots, assigned to glider and target-towing, transport work, instructing and other duties given older men.

Pilots completing the advanced course at Rochester, or any other comparable school, may be assigned to any Army or Navy school of advanced flight-training, to prepare for commissions and assignment to active duty.

Youths 17 years of age may enlist in the Navy, and ask to be assigned to flight training. Men 18-to [sic – 18 to] 26 may specify combat duty in the Air Force, of the Army or Navy, and be assigned here for preliminary training, while men over 26 may similarly ask for flight training, and be assigned for schooling as service pilots, mentioned heretofore.

The program for the Ford airport extends beyond the ground school course of Houghton Tech and the flight training of the Fontana school, however, it was indicated today. If accommodations can be found, and other local arrangements made, some 400 to 500 enlistees may eventually come here for test training to determine their adaptability for the Flying Forces. From these men, each to be given about 10 hours of instruction, would be selected men believed suitable for the regular, preliminary course at the school.

The latter plan is tentative, however, and looks to the future when the present plan is in full swing. Before that is done, also, considerable preparation must be made here, particularly in providing suitable quarters. The proposal was likewise

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discussed today with officers of the chamber of commerce and others.

Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, _____ Year, Number _____ [Tuesday, March 30, 1943], page 2, column 1

Five Planes Due Today At Airport

Five Government training planes were to be flown to the Dickinson county airport today for storage, pending the opening in May of the Fontana School of Aeronautics here under the War Training Service of the Civil Aeronautics Authority.

The planes were to arrive, weather permitting, this afternoon, according to Joseph Fontana, director of the school, formerly located at Laurium in the Copper Country.

The last class of student pilots at Laurium completed their training late last month, and the Fontana school will be opened here as soon in May as the next class is assigned. The date and the number of students are not yet known.

Final approval of the transfer of the school from Laurium to Iron Mountain has been made by the board of control, Michigan College of Mining and Technology, Fontana said. Student pilots will reside at the Harding hotel during training.

Prof. A.N. McIntosh, director of pilot training at the college, will be assigned here, with seven flight instructors, all with CAA ratings. Equipment will be brought here.

Guards At Airport

John Ganga and Ettore Uhmacker[,] guards at the airport, were sworn in as

deputy sheriffs this morning and began a 24-hour a day patrol of the airport until the opening of the school when a staff of guards will be set up.

The five training planes – two from the Laurium field and three from a field at Joliet, Ill. – are the first assigned here of a dozen planes to be used at the field.

Contracts have been let, meanwhile, for installation of a power line to the field, wiring of the hangar and installation of a floor in the building.

With the opening of the school, the Dickinson county airport will be designated as an official landing area and may be used by civilians on authorized flights. The school will maintain facilities for refueling and servicing of planes. The airport has been closed since shortly after the declaration of war, when restrictions were placed on landing fields as a protective measure.

10-Year Lease

The Fontana school was granted a 10-year lease on the airport by the county board of supervisors, with the provision that the Fontanas are to make all improvements.

Joseph Fontana will be manager of the airport here as a partner with his brother, Milo, now director of the advanced flight course of the school at Rochester, Minn. The Laurium school, started in 1939, has turned out about 400 graduates and had a peak enrollment of 50 in one session. It has been operating for four years without a serious accident.

Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, _____ Year, Number _____ [Friday, August 10, 1945], page 2, columns 1-2

Student Plane Pilot Killed, Instructor Injured In Crash

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[Compiled & Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

Irwin Lawson, age about 40, building contractor of Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., was believed instantly killed and Kenneth Muzzy, 31, pilot-instructor at the Fontana School of Aeronautics, is in the General hospital, but not believed seriously injured as a result of an airplane crash which occurred at about 11:45 this morning, when a two-seater light trainer airplane, which Lawson recently purchased from the Army, crashed in a field of the William Broullire farm, about three-quarters of a mile off county highway N, near Niagara.

Lawson, according to an examination by Dr. J.L. Browning, suffered a skull fracture and fractures of the right shoulder, left leg, all the ribs of the left side and internal injuries.

Muzzy sustained a fracture of the left hip; left hand, and contusions of the head, shoulders and body. He also suffered from severe shock.

Lawson's body was removed to the Freeman Funeral home after examination by Coroner Harold Peters, of Florence. Sheriff Glenn Church, Florence county, was also summoned to the scene.

Arrived Here Wednesday

Lawson, who had his preliminary instruction in flying at Lansing, Mich., arrived in Iron Mountain Wednesday afternoon, piloting his own plane. Preparing for his private pilot's license, he came here to obtain, from the Fontana School of Aeronautics, a check on his flying time. Shortly before 11 this morning, he and Muzzy started out from the Ford Airport, Muzzy seated in the rear and Lawson at the controls in front. The two men flew over the area for some time and then set out in a southeasterly direction.

William Broullire, farm owner near Niagara, and his wife, were picking berries in a field near their farm home when they saw the ship circling overhead. Broullire

said the ship circled, and then appeared to be gliding to a landing in a hay field.

Then, at a low altitude, the ship turned sharply and crashed to the ground.

Saw The Ship

Harry Ross, neighboring farmer, with Broullire and John Alstrand, of Aurora, were among the first to reach the scene. They took Muzzy out of the plane and placed him in the Freeman ambulance which had been called by Mrs. Ross, for the trip to the hospital, where Dr. J.L. Browning said his condition was favorable, although suffering from shock.

Mario Fontana, of the Fontana School of Aeronautics, talked to Muzzy shortly before he entered the hospital. The pilot-instructor was not then in condition to explain what had happened.

Fontana today notified relatives of Lawrence at the Sault.

Charles Cornwell, senior inspector of the Civil Aeronautics Authority, making a routine call at the airport today, heard the report of the accident from Fontana. Cornwell called the air safety board at Minneapolis, which will send an inspector to investigate and determine the cause of the accident.

Lawson, who has long been interested in aeronautics, was a lieutenant in the Civil Air Patrol and commander of the Sault Ste. Marie squadron. He was married and the father of a son in service.

*Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain,
Dickinson County, Michigan, _____
Year, Number _____ [Friday, August 10,
1945], page 2, column 2*

Dr. Fontana Tells Of Work In Plastics

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[Compiled & Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

Wartime developments in plastics and metallurgy that will have great significance in peacetime industry were outlined by Dr. Marselio Fontana, research engineer for the Dupont laboratories at Wilmington, Del., at a picnic luncheon-meeting of Kiwanis yesterday, at the county airport. Dr. Fontana is a guest here of his brothers, Mario and Joseph, who conduct the Fontana School of Aeronautics at the airport.

Dr. Fontana traced the development of plastics and metals as applied, first, to wartime production, and prospects for their quick conversion to urgent civilian needs in the immediate postwar period. He emphasized, also, how achievements of science will bring many innovations into the home, and into a wide range of manufactured products.

Prior to his talk, Mario Fontana escorted Kiwanis through the hangar and shop of the Fontana school, describing the various process in the serving of aircraft.

Today, Fontana said, mechanics at the airport are hard-pressed to **need to finish copying this article**

ORION AIRWAYS VS. FONTANA AVIATION

Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, 49th Year, Number 29 [Wednesday, May 14, 1969], page 3, columns 1-2

Special Meeting Held To Air Incidents At Airport

In a special meeting Tuesday night, Ford Airport manager Joseph Fontana and representatives of Orion Airways appeared

before the Dickinson county aeronautics commission [*sic – County Aeronautics Commission*] to give their accounts of indicents that have allegedly occurred at the airport here.

In attendance at the session were chairman Bernard Mainville, Jack Gingrass, Dr. Robert Mellon and Wendell Sanders of the aeronautics commission; David McNair, executive secretary of Orion Airways, St. Louis, Mo.; Paul Muelner [*sic – Peter Muellner*], local Orion operations manager, and Fontana.

McNair appeared before the commission to give his firm's "side of the story" in regards to allegations made by Fontana last week at a meeting of the aeronautics commission, in reference to activities of Muelner [*sic*] and other employes [*sic – employees*] here.

Fontana, at the meeting last week, had accused the local Orion manager of irregularities in operations here and dealings with Fontana Aviation, Inc. He said that Orion pilots were purchasing gasoline in Green Bay and not from Fontana Aviation because they were getting trading stamps at Green Bay.

Cites Load Limitations

At the meeting last night, McNair said the reason for gasoline being purchased in Green Bay was because of load limitations on the airplanes.

Orion Airways operates a mail taxi service at the local airport.

At last Thursday's meeting of the commission, Fontana told of a physical encounter between him and Muelner [*sic*] at Ford Airport Wednesday night. Fontana initiated criminal proceedings against Muelner [*sic*] but no further action has been taken in the matter.

McNair said that his firm will not tolerate any further harassment of its employes [*sic – employees*] by Fontana Aviation at Ford Airport.

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[Compiled & Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

Fontana denied the harassment charges.

Meeting Today

Orion officials and Fontana were to meet today at Ford Airport to seek to resolve differences.

"As far as I can see, this is not a problem for the aeronautics commission," Mainville said today. "Last night's meeting was one of information only and no requests were made and no decisions were given by the commission."

Mainville added that the regular meetings of the county aeronautics commission are scheduled for the second Thursday of every month at the courthouse. The public is invited to attend these meetings, Mainville said, and ask questions or air any complaints they may have on the airport.

Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, 49th Year, Number 31 [Friday, May 16, 1969], page 2, columns 1-2

Federal Funds Released For Ford Airport Improvement

Bid Opening Scheduled For May 28

The final hurdle has been cleared paving the way for the half-million dollar plus Ford Airport improvement project in Kingsford.

Sen. Philip Hart announced this morning that he has received word from the Federal Aviation Administration that the federal funds for the project have now been authorized for release.

Previously, a deadlock had existed between the FAA and Bureau of the Budget on the release of federal funds for airport projects here and in Pellston in the Lower Peninsula.

Last week, Sen. Hart sent a letter to Roberto Mayo, director of the Bureau of the Budget, asking for his personal attention to the matter of breaking the deadlock.

In a statement issued this morning Bernard Mainville, chairman of the Dickinson County Aeronautics Commission, said:

"On behalf of the aeronautics commission, I would like to express our deep appreciation for all efforts from local, state and federal officials and agencies for their assistance in securing these funds.

"In addition, I would like to recognize the efforts of the Dickinson County Area Chamber of Commerce, interested citizens and the news media."

Bid Announcement

The Michigan Aeronautics Commission and Dickinson County Aeronautics Commission announced last week that bids were being accepted on the Ford Airport construction project.

Included in the project is extension of runways at the airport which will enable North Central Airlines to land pure-jet aircraft in Iron Mountain-Kingsford.

EMERGENCY MEETING

An emergency meeting of the Dickinson County Aeronautics Commission has been called for tonight at the courthouse as [*a*] result of continued difficulties between Fontana Aviation, Inc., and Orion Airways.

Orion Airways operates a mail taxi service out of Ford Airport while

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[Compiled & Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

Fontana has a fixed base operations at the local facility.

Joseph Fontana, Sr., operator of Fontana Aviation, also acts as airport manager for Dickinson county.

A representative of the state commission and Robert Peckham, project engineer for Ford Airport, will meet with prospective bidders at the Ford Airport on May 20 from 2 p.m. to 3 p.m.

The bids will be opened at the Michigan Aeronautics Commission at Lansing on May 28 at 2 p.m.

Mainville will attend both sessions.

Earlier, James Popp, district representative of the FAA, informed the county commission that the new Ford Airport manager's contract and fixed base operator agreement between the county and Joseph Fontana were found unobjectionable by the FAA.

Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, 49th Year, Number 32 [Saturday, May 17, 1969], page 2, columns 1-4

Full Scale Investigation Of Ford Airport To Be Conducted

The Dickinson County Aeronautics Commission will conduct a full scale investigation into activities at Ford Airport.

A request for a probe into the airport was made by Supervisor Edward Jansen of Breitung township at an emergency fact-finding meeting of the commission at the courthouse Friday night.

The meeting was called after a fight earlier this week in a Spread Eagle bar

involving employes [*sic – employees*] of Fontana Aviation, Inc., and Orion Airways.

Fontana Aviation maintains a fixed base operation at the Ford Airport, while Orion Airways operates a mail air-taxi service from the Iron Mountain-Kingsford facility.

Joseph Fontana, Sr., owner of Fontana Aviation, also acts as airport manager for Dickinson county.

Tell Of Assault

Appearing at the fact-finding session were Peter Muellner and Wellesley Dickinson. Muellner is local operations manager for Orion and Dickinson is a pilot for the firm.

The two men told of being assaulted in a Spread Eagle tavern earlier this week by Mark Fontana and Gary Mongrain, both of Kingsford. Fontana is a son of the elder Fontana and associated with his father in operations at the airport here.

District Attorney Walter Dalla Grana said that he has authorized warrants for Mark Fontana and Mongrain on charges of assault and battery. The complaining witnesses on the warrants are Dickinson and Muellner., Dalla Grana said.

"We have no right to have anyone testify under oath," Bernard Mainville, chairman of the aeronautics commission, said at the start of the meeting. "We want to get as much information as possible on the incidents of the last few days."

Muellner and Dickinson said they walked into the tavern earlier this week along with Dave Lee Asp. The latter is news director of radio station WMIQ.

Alleged Attack Follows Words

They charged that Mark Fontana directed some remarks at them. Dickinson said that he exchanged some words with Fontana.

Dickinson went on to note that Fontana then "hauled off and hit me." Fontana continued to assault him after the first blow

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[Compiled & Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

was struck and Mongrain attacked Muellner, Dickinson said.

"I made no attempt to strike him (Fontana) nor did I have any intention of hitting him," Dickinson stated.

Dickinson [*sic – Dickinson*] charged the Fontana family with "blackmail." He said they told him and other Orion employees [*sic – employees*] that if they (Orion) didn't do things the way they (Fontanas) wanted, service charges, landing fees and other added costs would be assessed against the Orion operation here.

Asp testified and said that he was a witness to the assaults on Dickinson and Muellner.

After the incident in the Florence county bar, Orion has requested police protection for its pilots at the airport. The Dickinson county sheriff's department and Kingsford police department have stood by at the airport while Orion pilots checked out their planes before leaving on mail trips.

Declines To Discuss Brawl

Muellner and Dickinson said their encounter with Mark Fontana came only eight hours after David McNair, an executive of Orion Airways, had met with the Fontanas to try and resolve differences after an incident involving Muellner and Joseph Fontana at the airport last week. Fontana started criminal proceedings against Muellner after an alleged fracas at the airport terminal.

Joseph Fontana also appeared before the commission at last night's hearing.

"As far [*as*] the the [*sic*] brawl across the river, I don't want to discuss that here," Fontana said.

Fontana told the commission Orion pilots were buying gas in Green Bay because they were given green stamps there. He said Muellner told him that he (Muellner) would not buy any gas from Fontana unless he received stamps.

Muellner did not buy any gas from Fontana Aviation for three days, Fontana charged. Fontana said this was in violation of Federal Aviation Administration and postal regulations. He said McNair admitted that Muellner was wrong in not buying any gas from him for the three days.

Pilots Stay In Apartment

Fontana said after the meeting with McNair Wednesday, he agreed that there would be no harassment of Orion employees [*sic – employees*] at the airport. Fontana also said that the Orion pilots were welcome to use facilities in the terminal building.

However, since the recent incidents, the pilots headquarter at an apartment in Kingsford.

Fontana said that federal authorities have told him the tavern fight has no bearing on operations at the airport.

In response to this Dickinson county board chairman Garland Mainville, who was present at the meeting, said" "Joe, do you mean to tell me that if these fights continue, it would have no bearing on the airport."

"It just involves personalities," Fontana replied.

"Certainly Has Bearing"

"That is about as false a statement as I have heard," Mainville declared. "It certainly has a bearing on the airport and the people of Dickinson county are quite concerned about it."

"I want to cooperate 100 per cent," Fontana said. "I want everything to go on as usual. My employes [*sic – employees*] were told that there would be no more harassment of Orion pilots."

"Can't Stand This Publicity"

"Apparently your instructions fell on deaf ears," Mainville stated, "because Mark didn't pay any attention to them. The people in this area can't stand this type of publicity in big city papers."

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In attempting to defend his airport operations, Fontana said: "I've done a wonderful job out there for the past 25 years."

Supervisor Gilbert LaFave of Iron Mountain questioned Fontana as to whether he had any kind of deal with Orion Airways that if they (Orion) bought gas from Fontana, there would be no landing fee charged.

Fontana said that this was correct.

In asking for the investigation, Jansen said that everything is coming in "bits and pieces" before the commission. He said all parties concerned should be called in to determine all the facts in the situation.

Convene Again

The commission met in closed session before the fact-finding hearing and convened again behind closed doors after the open meeting.

Chairman Bernard Mainville said today that representatives of Fontana Aviation, North Central Airlines, Orion Airways, Avis Rent-A-Car and other parties involved in operations at the local airport will be asked to testify in the investigation.

After the meeting, LaFave said: "All the people of Dickinson county are very much upset over the incidents at the airport and I will be watching this very closely. I feel there is a definite conflict of interest that exists."

Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, 49th Year, Number 37 [Friday, May 23, 1969], page 3, columns 1-6

Fontana 'Guarantees' County No More Trouble At Airport

Ford Airport manager Joseph Fontana, Sr., has "guaranteed" the Dickinson County Aeronautics Commission no further problems in connection with his activities at the local terminal.

Fontana was one of six persons appearing at a special investigative hearing called by the commission Thursday night to seek more facts on the incidents that allegedly have occurred in the past at the county's airport in Kingsford.

Others testifying before the commission were David McNair, an executive of Orion Airways; Joseph Fontana, Jr., who is associated with his father in the Fontana Aviation, Inc., operations at the airport here; Kent Kistler, a regional station manager for North Central Airlines; Robert Baldinelli and Joseph Vaught, both operators of rental car agencies.

The first person appearing before the commission was McNair.

Cites One Violation

Commissioner Wendell Sanders asked the Orion representative whether his pilots had been in violation the many times that airport manager Fontana charged they were at a commission meeting last week.

"Since we have been flying here, we have had only one violation," McNair noted. "That's when papers were not filled out properly for an annual inspection of one of our planes. However, as far as the plane, it was in good mechanical condition. It just happened that these papers were not filled out correctly for this inspection."

"We also had one plane that clipped a tree with its wing and another that ran out of gas but landed safely in Wisconsin." []

McNair explained to the commission that the only violations recorded by the Federal Aviation Administration are those witnessed by certified FAA inspectors.

"We have been inspected by FAA and postal authorities recently and no violations

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[Compiled & Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

were found," McNair said. "All of our crews have excellent records."

Orion operates an air mail-taxi service for the U.S. Post Office from the Ford Airport.

No Written Agreement

"Am I right in my understanding that there is no written agreement between Orion Airways and Joseph Fontana in connection with your operations here?" Commissioner Wayne Nelson asked McNair.

"That is correct," McNair answered.

Dr. Robert Mellon, another member of the commission, questioned McNair as to whether it was at his request that local police make periodic checks at the airport.

"Yes, I felt it was necessary at that time because of the incident that happened only eight hours after I left here," McNair pointed out.

Shortly after McNair left here last Wednesday, following a meeting with Fontana, one of Fontana's sons, Mark, allegedly became involved in a tavern fight with two Orion pilots. Mark is associated with his father in the Fontana Aviation operations at the airport.

"Do you feel that in spite of these incidents, you can still reach an agreement with Mr. Fontana?" Mellon questioned McNair.

"I was optimistic last time and I am optimistic again," the Orion executive declared.

County board chairman Garland Mainville asked McNair whether there have been cases where his pilots have left here on flights in violation of federal and postal regulations. He was referring to charges made by Fontana last week that Orion pilots were in violation when they failed to purchase gas from Fontana Aviation here for three consecutive days.

McNair told Mainville that this was not true and that his pilots went by the gross

weight of so many pounds of gasoline and mail.

Fontana Explanation

The commission asked Joseph Fontana, Jr., if there were charges such as landing fees at the terminal here.

Fontana informed the commission that if someone doesn't buy gas from Fontana Aviation, they are assessed a service charge of \$5. He said this is for use of facilities such as the lounge in the terminal building and other equipment at the airport.

The terminal building is a public facility at the airport since it is leased to the county by Fontana Aviation. However, the money from the service fee goes to Fontana Aviation.

"What if these pilots don't use it?" Sanders asked in regard to the facilities at the airport and the service charge.

"If they are asked to buy gas and don't, they are still required to pay the service charge," Fontana explained. "I think we should have proper documentation on this or you are not going to believe anything I say anyway."

12 Of 31 Charge Fees

McNair said that approximately 12 of the 31 airports served by Orion charge landing or service fees.

"I want to make it clear that no sabotage was involved with your planes, is that correct Dave?" Joseph Fontana, Sr., asked of McNair.

McNair said this was correct and that police were requested more for personal protection of pilots than anything else. McNair noted that it was the second incident concerning his pilots and Fontana Aviation within a week.

"It seems that because of the coverage given this matter that we are guilty before we have a chance to be proven innocent," Joseph Fontana, Jr., said.

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He charged that public opinion and news coverage in the controversy was "all one-sided."

A hassle developed between the Fontanas and McNair on the reporting of alleged violations by Orion Airways.

Prosecutor Interrupts

Prosecutor Francis Brouillette interrupted the proceedings and said: "I don't intend to sit here to midnight again and listen to this. I understand that this hearing was called to see if Joe Fontana was performing his duties as airport manager or not and I don't see where we are going in the right direction."

In testifying for North Central Airlines, Kistler said: ["We have had no more difficulty with Joe Fontana than any other airport manager. He is no better or no worse."]

Kistler said that North Central did not want to become involved in something it is not really concerned with such as the difficulties between Fontana and Orion Airways and rental car agencies.

"Have you had complaints in regard to the facilities here?" Sanders asked Kistler.

"We have had the normal complaints we receive from all airports, such as those pertaining to restrooms," Kistler said. "They have all been referred to Mr. Fontana. I understand some have been cleared up and some are still hanging in the air."

North Central Airlines operates regular daily passenger flights out of Ford Airport.

Baldinelli's Report

Following Kistler's testimony, Baldinelli, owner of the local Avis Rent-A-Car agency, appeared before the commission.

He said he asked for space in the terminal building to rent cars back in 1960. Baldinelli charged that Fontana demanded 20 per cent off the top of all rentals and that his (Fontana's) employes [sic – employees] would handle the renting of the cars.

"I held out for three months but then I went along with this system," Baldinelli said. "I went along with it for eight years although I constantly disagreed with the personnel handling the cars and the methods used."

"I think I was pressured by Joe Fontana as airport manager to do business with Fontana Aviation," Baldinelli stated.

Baldinelli pointed out that all of this finally came to a head earlier this month when one of Fontana's sons leased an Avis car out on a Hertz rental agreement.

"I was called out to the airport by Jim Fontana after this client turned in his car and he had less miles on the speedometer than had been listed in the rental agreement," Baldinelli said.

"The next morning, I went in to talk to Joe Fontana to see if we could reach some other agreement," Baldinelli said. He said he had proposed to rent space in the terminal and have his own employes [sic – employees] rent out the cars.

"Called Crook"

"However, Joe Fontana said I must do business with him," Baldinelli declared. "He called me a crook, and said I set speedometers back and told me he (Fontana) would have me arrested if I didn't do things his way."

Baldinelli went on to note that he failed to reach a suitable agreement with Fontana. His firm now meets all North Central flights at the airport and he rents the cars from the public part of the lounge at Ford Airport and at his downtown office on Carpenter avenue.

"There is no situation at similar airports in the area where any money is paid to the fixed-base operator," Baldinelli stated. "It is paid to the county or municipality."

Baldinelli and Bernard Mainville, commission chairman, then became involved in a heated argument over whether Fontana had the right to take this money from Baldinelli as airport manager.

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[Compiled & Transcribed by William J. Cummings]

After Mainville restored order, Wayne Nelson asked whether there was such an agreement stating that Fontana would receive this percentage.

Brouillette explained that in the lease of the terminal building to the county from Fontana Aviation, the Fontana firm was granted rights to all concessions at the airport.

Would Still Be Effective

This lease would still be effective if Fontana was not airport manager and would keep him in control of the terminal facility.

The next person to appear before the commission was Vaught. He opened an Airways Rent-A-Car agency here two years ago.

Vaught said he wanted to have his cars rented from the airport since this was the most desirable place for rental car business in this area.

He said Fontana Aviation offered him the same proposal as the other agencies (Avis and Hertz) and said each agency's cars would be rented on a rotating basis by Fontana employes [sic – employees].

After more than 30 days Vaught said that not one of his cars had been rented from the airport. He theorized that this was because his cars were cheaper for rental and that the percentage for Fontana Aviation would therefore be less.

Pulled Agency Out

Vaught said he finally took his agency out of the airport.

Sanders told the group commission that W.B. Thompson, owner f a hangar and plane based at the airport, told him (Sanders) his firm was completely alienated with the Fontana firm. Sanders noted the Thompson plane was flown out of town for such things as minor maintenance work.

Appearing before the commission again to answer questions, the elder Fontana claimed that he never used pressure on

anyone at the airport and never forced anyone to buy gas here.

McNair said gas was cheaper in Green Bay than it was here and it was up to the discretion of the Orion pilots where to purchase this gas. He said no trading stamps were involved in the gas at Green Bay but that the concession owner has given his firm a discount.

Nelson asked Fontana whether there has been a decline in the number of planes being based here.

Fontana said that there are now about 10 or 12 planes based here. He admitted that this was a drop from previous years and has resulted in a loss of income to Fontana Aviation.

Sanders questioned Fontana on why the restrooms were not kept clean regularly at Ford Airport.

Fontana claimed that the facilities are cleaned out by his personnel and said the restrooms were sometimes not in the best of shape because the facilities were abused by people using them.

"Do you feel there will be no further problems?" Mellon asked Fontana.

"I can assure you of this," Fontana said.

"We have been assured of this before and then this incident across the river occurred," Nelson pointed out.

"Can you guarantee us there will be no further problems, Joe?" Mellon asked.

"Absolutely," Fontana declared.

Following the hearing, the commission held a closed-door executive session.

It is expected that the commission will meet again in two weeks to question Fontana further on the activities at the airport. Fontana has asked for more time to gather some documents for the meeting.

After the hearing, county board chairman Garland Mainville said: "This meeting tonight was a waste of time. Nothing was proven here that hasn't been discussed before."

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AVIATION-RELATED ACCIDENTS

Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, _____ Year, Number _____ [Friday, August 10, 1945], page 2, columns 1-2

Student Plane Pilot Killed, Instructor Injured In Crash

Irwin Lawson, age about 40, building contractor of Sault Ste. Marie, Mich., was believed instantly killed and Kenneth Muzzy, 31, pilot-instructor at the Fontana School of Aeronautics, is in the General hospital, but not believed seriously injured as a result of an airplane crash which occurred at about 11:45 this morning, when a two-seater light trainer airplane, which Lawson recently purchased from the Army, crashed in a field of the William Broullire farm, about three-quarters of a mile off county highway N, near Niagara.

Lawson, according to an examination by Dr. J.L. Browning, suffered a skull fracture and fractures of the right shoulder, left leg, all the ribs of the left side and internal injuries.

Muzzy sustained a fracture of the left hip; left hand, and contusions of the head, shoulders and body. He also suffered from severe shock.

Lawson's body was removed to the Freeman Funeral home after examination by Coroner Harold Peters, of Florence. Sheriff Glenn Church, Florence county, was also summoned to the scene.

Arrived Here Wednesday

Lawson, who had his preliminary instruction in flying at Lansing, Mich., arrived in Iron Mountain Wednesday

afternoon, piloting his own plane. Preparing for his private pilot's license, he came here to obtain, from the Fontana School of Aeronautics, a check on his flying time. Shortly before 11 this morning, he and Muzzy started out from the Ford Airport, Muzzy seated in the rear and Lawson at the controls in front. The two men flew over the area for some time and then set out in a southeasterly direction.

William Broullire, farm owner near Niagara, and his wife, were picking berries in a field near their farm home when they saw the ship circling overhead. Broullire said the ship circled, and then appeared to be gliding to a landing in a hay field.

Then, at a low altitude, the ship turned sharply and crashed to the ground.

Saw The Ship

Harry Ross, neighboring farmer, with Broullire and John Alstrand, of Aurora, were among the first to reach the scene. They took Muzzy out of the plane and placed him in the Freeman ambulance which had been called by Mrs. Ross, for the trip to the hospital, where Dr. J.L. Browning said his condition was favorable, although suffering from shock.

Mario Fontana, of the Fontana School of Aeronautics, talked to Muzzy shortly before he entered the hospital. The pilot-instructor was not then in condition to explain what had happened.

Fontana today notified relatives of Lawson at the Sault.

Charles Cornwell, senior inspector of the Civil Aeronautics Authority, making a routine call at the airport today, heard the report of the accident from Fontana. Cornwell called the air safety board at Minneapolis, which will send an inspector to investigate and determine the cause of the accident.

Lawson, who has long been interested in aeronautics, was a lieutenant in the Civil Air Patrol and commander of the Sault Ste.

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Marie squadron. He was married and the father of a son in service.

Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, 54th Year, Number 71 [Wednesday, July 3, 1974], page 1, columns 1-4 [2-column photo]

Plane crash takes life of veteran local pilot

By RON KRAMER
Of The News Staff

The crash of a mail plane at Ford Airport here early today claimed the life of a veteran Kingsford pilot, Joseph Fontana[,] Jr., 32.

Michigan State Police of the Iron Mountain Post said Fontana was last heard from shortly before 3 a.m. as he approached the airport for a landing in fog. He was enroute [*sic – en route*] to the local airport from Lansing.

According to authorities, another mail plane piloted by Irving Randall of Quinnesec came in ahead of Fontana and landed at approximately 2:46 a.m. Randall was returning from Chicago.

State Police said Randall's last radio contact with Fontana was when he (Randall) taxied up to the airport terminal. Randall said he heard Fontana fly overhead moments later. Several nearby residents also heard the aircraft.

Both pilots were reportedly flying on instruments.

Both Fontana and Randall were flying for Fontana Aviation, Inc., which is owned by one of the pioneer aviation families in the Upper Peninsula.

Fontana was the son of airport manager Joseph Fontana Sr. An uncle, Mario Fontana of Iron Mountain, is a member of

the Michigan Aeronautics Commission. He had 16 years of experience as a pilot.

Authorities were notified that the plane was missing shortly after 5 p.m. and a check of other airports was made and search parties organized. The Dickinson and Florence County sheriff's departments, State Police and Civil Air Patrol were alerted but were unable to initiate an air search because of the weather conditions.

A North Central Airlines flight approaching Ford Airport shortly after 7 a.m. was alerted to check the area for any sign of the missing aircraft and spotted the wreckage about three-quarters of a mile north of the terminal. The plane crashed in a gully near a wooded area between the two runways at the field.

The wreckage was not visible to search parties on the ground because of the fog and its location. After it was spotted by the airliner, a ground party from the Dickinson County sheriff's department was dispatched to the site. Sheriff Ferdinand Girard placed deputies at the crash site for security purposes, pending the arrival of Federal Aviation Administration and U.S. Postal Service authorities.

The twin-engine Beechcraft apparently burned upon impact, authorities said.

Sheriff Jake Neuens of Florence County expressed appreciation to the volunteers who responded to organize a search party.

Fontana was a classmate of Air Force Capt. Martin Neuens of Aurora, a former prisoner of war in Vietnam for 6 ½ years. Neuens was captured when his plane was shot down in 1966.

Following the release of Neuens in March, 1973, Fontana flew to Wright-Patterson Air Force Base near Dayton, Ohio, and brought Neuens and his mother back to Iron Mountain-Kingsford for a large civic welcome attended by some 30,000 [people].

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Fontana leaves a wife and three children, David, Joseph and Matthew.

PHOTO CAPTION: INSPECT CRASH SITE – Dickinson County Sheriff Ferdinand Girard, right[,] and Deputy Peter Schlitt inspect the scene of an airplane crash at Ford Airport today. Killed in the crash was Joseph Fontana[,] Jr., 32, of Kingsford. (Iron Mountain News photo by Ron Kramer)

Iron Mountain News, Iron Mountain, Dickinson County, Michigan, 54th Year, Number 72 [Friday, July 5, 1974], page 1, columns 5-8

Authorities seek cause of mail plane accident

By RON KRAMER
Of The News Staff

Federal investigators sifted through wreckage and pieced together details in an attempt to learn the cause of an airplane crash early Wednesday at Ford Airport here which claimed the life of a veteran Kingsford pilot.

Killed in the crash of a twin-engine Beechcraft mail plane was Joseph M. Fontana[,] Jr., 32. He had 16 years of flying experience.

Fontana was the son of Joseph Fontana[,] Sr. of Kingsford, airport manager. The family operates Fontana Aviation, Inc., and is well known in Michigan aviation circles.

An uncle, Mario Fontana, is a member of the Michigan Aeronautics Commission.

Fontana was returning on a mail flight from Lansing when his plane crashed as he was apparently attempting to land at Ford Airport in foggy weather.

Investigating the crash are officials from the National Transportation Safety Board, Federal Aviation Administration, Beechcraft, and U.S. Postal Service.

A spokesman for the National Transportation Safety Board said a preliminary report on the crash is expected to be completed within five days, with a final report to be released later.

Most of the mail on the plane was reportedly burned but postal officials will salvage any mail still legible.

According to authorities, another mail plane piloted by Irving Randall of Quinnesec came in ahead of Fontana and landed at approximately 2:46 a.m. Randall was returning from Chicago.

State Police said Randall's last radio contact with Fontana was when he (Randall) taxied up to the airport terminal. Randall told authorities he heard Fontana fly overhead moments later. Several nearby residents also reported hearing the aircraft.

Both pilots were reportedly flying on instruments. The mail taxi service is operated by Fontana Aviation.

Authorities were notified that the aircraft was missing shortly after 5 a.m. Search parties were organized but authorities were unable to initiate an air search because of weather conditions.

A North Central Airlines flight approaching Ford Airport shortly after 7 a.m. was alerted to check the area for any sign of the missing plane and spotted the wreckage near the intersection of the two runways at the airport. The plane apparently burned upon impact.

Fontana was born March 18, 1942 in Iron Mountain.

He graduated from Kingsford High School in 1960.

He became a pilot when he took his first solo flight at the age of 16. He worked his way up the ladder rapidly, becoming vice

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president of Fontana Aviation at the age of 22 and was president of the firm at the time of his death.

His ratings included commercial, multi-engine, land and sea, instrument, instructor, designated FAA examiner, typerater [*sic*] in transport, and flight equipment. Fontana had logged almost 6,000 hours of flight time at the time of his death.

He served in the Michigan National Guard for six years.

Fontana was a member of the Dickinson County Pilots Association.

He married the former Cheryl Jean Silverstone in April, 1969.

He leaves his wife; three sons, Joseph M., David C. and Matthew O. Fontana, all at home; his parents, Mr. and Mrs. Joseph Fondana [*sic – Fontana*,] Sr. of Kingsford; four brothers [*sic – brothers*], Mark of Iron Mountain; Thomas of Kingsford; James of Marquette and Peter at home, and two sisters, Mrs. Robert (Rosalie) Bailey of Barksdale, La., Air Force Base and Mrs. James (Kay Ann) Steinbrecker of Kingsford.

Visitation will be from 4 to 9 p.m. today and until noon Saturday at the Erickson-Rochon Funeral Home.

Services will be held at 2 p.m. Saturday at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church. The Rev. Dale Heikkinen will officiate.

Burial will be at Cemetery Park.

In lieu of flowers, a memorial will be established in Fontana's memory at Our Saviour's Lutheran Church.