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THE Voice

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ARROW AIRCRAFT OF HAVELOCK 95 YEARS AGO

By Penny Rafferty Hamilton, Ph.D.

Who knew that at one time, Arrow Sport airplanes built in Havelock would have a waiting list of eager buyers from New York to Chicago? Well, in the spring of 1926, the Arrow Aircraft Corporation was formed by brothers, John D. and George E. Moore with partner, Frederick J. Platz. Their vision was to capitalize on the growing interest in airplanes. In 1926, Swen Swanson designed a sporty, small biplane for the Havelock Arrow Aircraft and Motor Corporation. Swanson's plane featured side-by-side seating, and a wide single-strut landing gear that made landing and taxiing in a crosswind more stable.

With the historic Spirit of St. Louis Flight in 1927 by Charles Lindbergh, the demand for small airplanes was sky high. By 1928, the truck body producer, Patriot Manufacturing Company, purchased the budding aviation factory in Havelock. The new company was Arrow Aircraft and Motors. The company grew to 570 employees producing four airplanes a day. The popular bi-planes were built well with Nebraska know-how.

The Arrow Sport was affordable and easy to fly. Described as a great airplane, it was considered "reliable and safe." Although many of the airplane buyers were in larger cities, several were sold in Nebraska immediately. Of course, in the early 1920s, U.S. Air Mail on the North Platte to Omaha route used De Havillands. But, it helped to introduce airplanes to Nebraska's typically rural population.

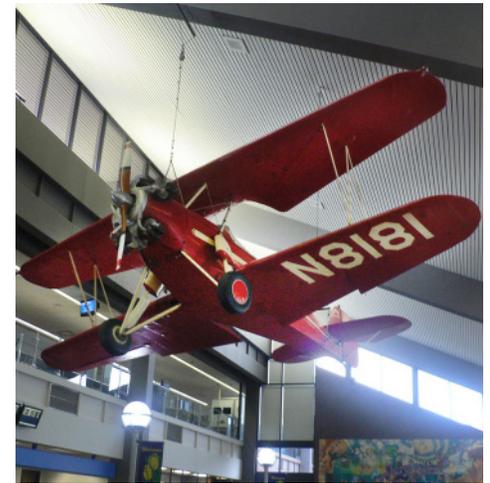
Havelock's Arrow Aircraft Corporation even had a small tech school on-site to train employees in this new industry. By early 1929, 271 orders for the Arrow Sport plane were in hand. Originally, the planes were advertised for \$2,356 (about \$38,000 in 2021). Then, a fire at the LeBlond Company engine manufacturing plant literally threw a wrench in the airplane manufacturing plant. Prices to build the Arrow Sport increased over \$1,300, or in 2021 prices increased \$21,000 overnight. Obviously, wholesale cancellation of existing orders happened.

Then, just a few months later, on October 29, 1929 the stock market crashed, plunging America into the Great Depression. Even with as great an airplane as the Arrow Sport, the Havelock company struggled financially. If only they could have limped along until World War II, the Havelock plant might have become part of the effort to build airplanes quickly.

Over 100 Arrow Sport airplanes were built and delivered to customers during the late 1920s and early 1930s. But, the company, as many in America did in the Great Depression, declared bankruptcy. The few remaining company assets were sold in a sheriff's sale. Several Arrow Sport airplanes are still airworthy across the country today. A static Arrow Sport, owned by the Nebraska State Historical Society, was on display in the Lincoln Airport terminal on our last visit.

Nebraska has a rich history of aviation which is an important part of our legacy.

Author: Penny is a graduate of the University of Nebraska. She punched her aviation ticket at the beautiful Beatrice Airport BIE many years ago. Her web site is www.PennyHamilton.com.



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THOMAS COUNTY AIRPORT: THE AVIATION HUB OF THE SANDHILLS

By Jack Johnston

Thomas County Airport (KTIF), located one mile south of Thedford, Nebraska, is now fully operational after being closed for five months to complete restoration of the runway, turnarounds, taxiway, ramp, and lighting. This improvement was made possible due to a substantial grant of \$4.365 million awarded to the Thomas County Airport Authority as part of the federal government's \$1 billion funding to upgrade rural airports. Of all the rural airports in Nebraska that applied for the state's share of the 100% grant, requiring no matching funds, we were one of only five that received money.

The airport was closed from March 6, 2021 until July 21, 2021 for completion of the rehabilitation project. Paulsen Construction of Cozad, Nebraska, was the general contractor and Olsson of Lincoln, Nebraska, was our engineering firm.

Our old asphalt runway, hammerhead turnarounds, taxiway, and apron were replaced with all new concrete. We currently have a 4,400 X 60-foot runway, 35-foot-wide teacup-handle turnarounds, and a 35-foot-wide taxiway. All lighting is LED, including our new state-of-the-art LED beacon. Our apron was expanded by another 120 feet to give more maneuvering and parking space for the big jets and turboprops.

Large Aircraft

Owned by the Thomas County Airport Authority, KTIF serves as an important hub for larger aircraft. We have two world-class golf courses to the west that bring in a lot of jet traffic, along with King Airs, TBMs, Piper 600s, and the Pilatus.

Thomas County Airport also features an upgraded fuel island with credit card pumps (not grant funded) for both 100LL and Jet A+ aviation fuel. Our fuel is self-serve with single point fueling for larger aircraft if needed. Our airport can service firefighting aircraft in the Halsey National Forest and neighboring ranch lands with both water and fuel. For additional airport security, we have installed a 12-camera security system (not grant funded) to monitor the facility. A Ford van is available as a courtesy car and all donations are appreciated!

Aviation Hub

We are the "Aviation Hub of the Sandhills," as there's not another lighted field within 65 miles in any direction that can handle jet and turboprop traffic. The new runway, turnarounds, and taxiway LED lights are on all night; however, pilots can control runway lights on 122.9 megahertz (MHz), day or night, for instrument approaches.

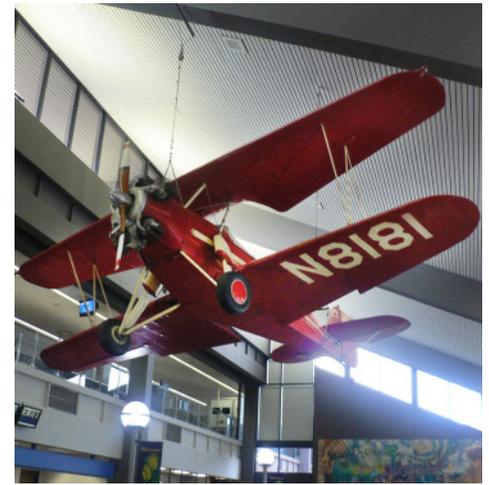
Because the Nebraska Sandhills are among the top regions in the U.S. for beef cattle production, with grazing land and rolling hills, ranchers from other states have purchased property in the area, with some having their own airplanes – usually turboprops that use Thomas County Airport. Yet another source of air traffic, breeders of purebred cattle have people fly in from all over the U.S. for their heifer sales in the fall and bull sales in the spring.

The airport does not have a Fixed Base Operator (FBO), but that is on the wish list, as are additional hangars and another 600 feet on the runway. We recently finished construction of a new hangar with Hackel Construction of Ord as our contractor. Already full, the large box hangar and four T-hangars are fully insulated and heated. We have room for more hangars, but as a small county with Halsey National Forest covering almost a quarter of the land, our tax base is small, and we must rely on grants and donations to do expansions or upgrades.

Continued Success

Special credit goes to The Thomas County Airport Authority Board for the airport's continued success. They are forward thinkers and all but one are pilots. The longest-serving board member does not fly, but his dad flew B-17s during World War II and he loves aviation. Also, thank you to the Aeronautics Division of the Nebraska Department of Transportation (NDOT) and Olsson for their help in guiding us through the legal paperwork. Our grand opening will be October 1st at noon with prime rib sandwiches served. The ribbon-cutting ceremony is not only for the project just completed, but also for the new hangar. We hope to have representatives from Olsson, Paulsen, Hackel, the Aeronautics Division of NDOT, the Governor's office, our Washington representative, and senators, along with our state senator representing us in the 43rd district. Everyone is welcome, come and enjoy a meal and view our new airport facilities.

Jack Johnston is President of the Thomas County Airport Authority and Airport Manager.



AG AIRCRAFT DUSTY CROPHOPPER MAKES PUBLIC DEBUT AT SMITHSONIAN'S NATIONAL AIR AND SPACE MUSEUM, ADORED BY SWARMS OF FANS

By Andrew Moore, NAAA CEO

Animated ag plane sensation Dusty Crophopper—the star of Disney's 2013 movie *Planes* and 2014's *Planes: Fire & Rescue*—made his Smithsonian Institution National Air and Space Museum debut at the Steven F. Udvar-Hazy Center's annual "Innovations in Flight Family Day" Saturday, Aug. 21. Austin and Emily Daniel, an ag pilot couple from New Jersey, along with Andrew Moore, NAAA's CEO, answered questions and informed swarms of young and old adoring fans of Dusty about the benefits of agricultural aviation to farmers. They also discussed the now 100-year-old history of the industry to the curious attendees.

Innovations Day allows visitors to the museum to explore the engineering and design innovations that have taken place during the last century of flight and talk directly with pilots of vintage and modern aircraft. The event featured 28 aircraft on the ramp, including Dusty Crophopper, and drew over 4,700 visitors.



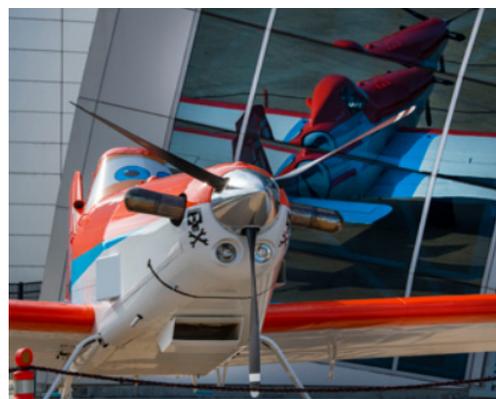
"What a treat it was to see young fans first set eyes on Dusty, scream his name aloud and rush over to get a closer look," Moore said.

"To see that Dusty had fans who were not born when the movie was released eight years ago, and older fans that look like me," the 55-year-old Moore added, "shows that Dusty is an icon and his representation fares well for ag aviators to be positively seen by the public into the future, as they should be."

Moore and the Daniels informed Innovations Day attendees who were unaware about the *Planes*' movies that they could watch them on the Disney+ streaming service. Disney+ has over 116 million global subscribers.

The Dusty Crophopper aircraft is an Air Tractor AT-301/400A—the same model the Daniels fly. At the request of Disneytoon Studios, the aircraft was fixed up to look like the Disney animated plane by Texas agricultural aviation operator Rusty Lindeman. In 2013 he flew the aircraft at air shows nationwide to promote the film. Now the aircraft is owned by the Smithsonian Institution after NAAA facilitated the donation made by Rusty and Lea Lindeman as part of a commemoration of the 100th anniversary of agricultural aviation. The Udvar-Hazy Center, located near Washington's Dulles Airport in Chantilly, Virginia, is the second-most-popular aviation museum in the world after the main National Air and Space Museum on the Mall building in Washington, D.C. According to the Themed Entertainment Association Museum Index Report, the Udvar-Hazy Center receives more than 1.6 million attendees per year.

The real-life replica of Dusty will now become part of the permanent collection of the Smithsonian's National Air and Space Museum, Udvar-Hazy Center, where he will join the Space Shuttle Discovery, SR-71 Blackbird and other icons of aviation history in the museum's collection. "With Disney+ and the Smithsonian having Dusty Crophopper to view, millions of people will be positively exposed to agricultural aviation's contribution to food, fiber and biofuel production," Moore said.



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