

BELLANCA AIRFIELD MUSEUM
Annual Report – Review of 2011 Activities

1. Friends of Bellanca Airfield, Inc. (FOBA) completed their first full season of exhibits during 2011 with 15 free open houses from April through October, on the second and fourth Saturday of each month, with an additional Saturday held in October. In addition, special request open houses were held on other days, both during the day and in the evening. The largest was for 70 members of the Experimental Aviation Association. Other groups included The Aero Club of Pennsylvania, First State Radio Control Club, Civil Air Patrol Wing, both Girl and Boy Scout Troops, and senior citizens.
2. FOBA entered into a partnership with the Delaware Aviation Hall of Fame for the permanent display of their inductees. Each year since 2000, six or so Delawareans have been inducted into the Hall of Fame. Photographs of each inductee and a narrative of their exploits have been framed in one large frame for each class. To date there have been 67 inductees. Also, one young person has been recognized each year, and their photos are also displayed. G.M. Bellanca was the first person inducted into the Hall of Fame as were two of his test pilots, Elinor Smith and Holger Hoiriis. Another partnership involved the First State Radio Control Club. Members fly their battery powered airplanes and helicopters inside the hangar and give demonstrations for visiting groups.
3. In addition to the main exhibits covering G.M. Bellanca and the Bellanca Aircraft Corporation, a number of the special displays were added. Colin Hunt, son-in-law of Holger Hoiriis (who was a Bellanca test pilot and first commander of the Civil Air Patrol created at the start of World War II) donated an attractive and extensive display of photographs and memorabilia about his father-in-law. An extensive display about Elinor Smith has also been added. The display about George Welch, a World War II ace who shot down four Japanese planes and possibly two others during their attack on Pearl Harbor, will be enlarged this year, the 70th Anniversary of the attack. A display celebrating the 100th Anniversary of Army Aviation was added, as well as the 100th Anniversary of Air Shows in the United States. The second oldest Air Show was held in Berlin in 1909. Another display featured the 100th Anniversary of the Delaplane, the first plane built in Delaware in 1910.
4. This year, a display will be added commemorating the 100th Anniversary of Naval Aviation, that will be prepared by Jane Churchill, a founding member of FOBA and former Navy Pilot. She will also prepare an exhibit on the New Castle County Airport based on the book she has written on the subject and a second book about the First Airplane to land at the South Pole. Exhibits will also be prepared on the Delaware Air National Guard and the Aviation Detachments of the Delaware Army National Guard. More display boards will be constructed to permit additional coverage of the Bellanca to include showing photographs of all models of these airplanes.
5. Restoration of the hangar continues apace. A theater was completed to facilitate representations and showing of films and DVDs. Cadets from the William Penn High School Air Force Junior ROTC detachment painted the exterior of the hangar. Boy Scout Patrick Baker of Troop 27 in New Castle, had his Eagle Scout Project, painting all of the interior of the hangar, restoration of glass on two main windows, and construction, painting, and installation of twenty-four 4' x 8' display boards. Bill and William Wilson electrified the West Wing, the theater, the store room, and four display cases to commercial grade standards. William contributed untold hours for other projects. Carl Spirito donated and installed a dehumidifier and exhaust fan in the store room. Work will commence on completing the West Wing, to include restroom facilities.
6. A wide variety of Bellanca related memorabilia continues to be donated. James Mutchka of Delaware City donated 16 model airplanes for display in the hangar. A twenty foot long aerial gunnery target used by the Delaware Air National Guard was donated and will be restored by members of the Delaware Air Guard when they return from Afghanistan. A radio controlled aerial target (of the type used by the Delaware Army National Guard for air defense training) was also used.
7. Our website (www.friendsofbellancaairfield.com) is being enlarged and improved. It contains, among other things, the Open House Schedule for this year.
8. Anyone wishing to volunteer for any of the restoration projects or other FOBA activities is asked to contact Elliott Smith at epsmith@comcast.net or Frank Ianni at 302-762-9057 or Iannifa@aol.com.