

CLINTON MUNICIPAL AIRPORT

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DOWN



SATURDAY, SEPT. 13TH

FLY IOWA AIRSHOW

GATES OPEN AT 3PM | DAYLIGHT, TWILIGHT, AND NIGHT AIR SHOW

A full day and night of flight related activities will be at the Clinton Municipal Airport as part of the Fly Iowa 2025 and the airport's 80th anniversary.

There will be explosions, simulated bomb runs, pyrotechnics, night time shows, and it all ends with a custom drone show/fire work show!

OVERVIEW OF EVENTS

This year's Fly Iowa features many planes from the Vietnam Era. As such, the show will feature simulated bomb runs and bring the heritage of the Vietnam War to the forefront.

- **Featured Performer Randy W. Ball of Fighter Jets Jet Demonstration Team**
 - **Trojan Phylers**
 - **Erik Edgren (One Day Show and One Twilight Show)**
 - **Michael Vaknin Extra 300**
 - **Susan Dacy Big Red**
 - **Smoke on Air**
 - **Aviation Heritage Foundation: Skyraider, Bird Dog, T28, and Huey**
 - **Vanguard Squadron**
 - **Night ends with a custom drone/fire work show (First time in the area)**
-

FLYING AROUND

History of Aviation in Clinton County

A PUBLICATION OF THE CLINTON HERALD & GATEWAY HISTORY CLUB

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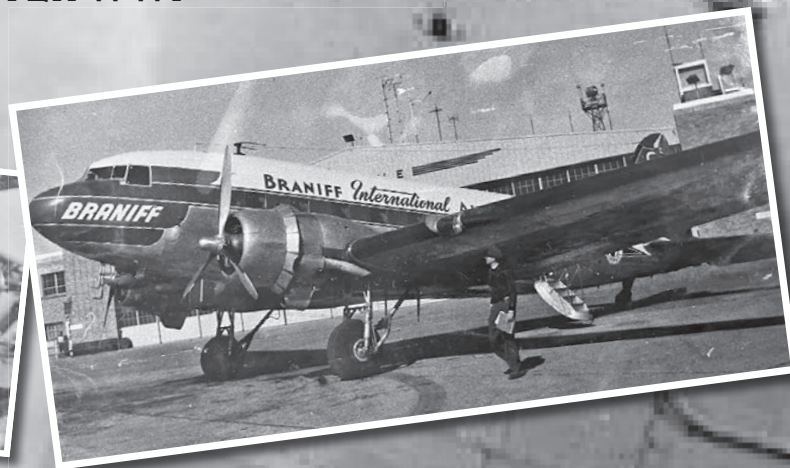
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John Rowland's main source for these articles was the Clinton Herald. The research material was gathered at the Clinton Public Library, Clinton County Historical Museum, and the DeWitt Central Community Historical Museum. Photos of airports and planes at Grand Mound and DeWitt were courtesy of the DeWitt Central Community Historical Museum. The others are courtesy of the John Rowland collection.





AVIATION FLASHBACK 1911

First flight takes off, crashes in Clinton County

JOHN ROWLAND
Gateway History Club

People gather next to the crashed Curtiss biplane flown by pilot Morris Rosenbaum in 1911 in DeWitt. Photos from DeWitt Community Historical Museum.

According to the Clinton Herald, “the first airplane flight in the county occurred at the DeWitt Fairgrounds on Tuesday, September 19th, 1911. Morris Rosenbaum, age 27, was the first pilot to fly a plane at DeWitt. The plane was shipped from Chicago on the Chicago Northwestern Railway and arrived in DeWitt on Wednesday, September 13th, 1911.

The International Aeroplane Company of Chicago owned the plane. The company had a contract to provide a series of exhibition flights at the 31st, DeWitt County Fair. The flights were scheduled for the weekend of September 14-16, 1911. The company decided rail would be the most practical way to get the plane, parts and crew to DeWitt.

The crew members and the plane arrived on Wednesday in DeWitt. The plane was unloaded at the depot and taken to the DeWitt Fairgrounds. The plane was then re-assembled at the fairgrounds by a five-man crew. The crew members tried to get the older model Curtiss bi-plane up and running on Thursday and Friday without success.

The large crowds at the fairgrounds became restless with the delay of each scheduled flight. Talk of fraud was in the air. The first pilot sent out on Wednesday to fly the plane was hesitant to take the older plane up as the crew was having great difficulty in getting it to run or fly.

Morris Rosenbaum was sent from Chicago to help. He was known as a top pilot. After days of delays, Rosenbaum and crew finally got the plane running properly. The flight was re-scheduled for Tuesday, September 19, 1911, at the Fairgrounds. An additional purse of \$200 dollars was raised to help with the flight expenses. Around 4:30 in the afternoon of Tuesday, Sept. 19, Rosenbaum made the first flight in Clinton County history with the Curtiss bi-plane.

According to the Herald, “Rosenbaum was nearing completion of his 20-minute exhibition flight at the fairgrounds and was coming in for a landing. It was estimated that around 3,000 people were on hand to witness the exhibition flight when the crash occurred killing Rosenbaum instantly.”

Rosenbaum’s tragic flight resulted in not only the first airplane fatality in Clinton County, it was also the first airplane fatality in the state of Iowa.

The Herald noted that “Rosenbaum started his approach to the landing on a long glide path from a distance out with the engine shut off. As his plane

descended, he executed a series of dips with his plane dropping 15 or 20 feet each time. Officials estimated the plane was about to land and was about 60 feet off the ground.”

According to witnesses: “Suddenly the plane took an unexpected final dip and the pilot failed to right the plane. The plane crashed to the ground killing the pilot instantly.”

Rosenbaum’s body was pinned by the engine in a twisted pile of canvas and lumber. The Herald stated “the Coroner’s Inquest was held on Wednesday, September 20, 1911, in DeWitt. The jury reached a verdict that the accident was probably due to the pilot’s mis-judgement in making his descent and was not the fault of any airplane equipment.”

Many thought the plane was hit with a sudden gust of wind that probably caused the plane to drop unexpectedly.

Most people born before 1903 never envisioned that people would actually be able to fly. Anything to do with airplanes or exhibition flights in 1911 was still considered a big deal and always attracted large crowds. Large crowds are often considered un-predictable and at times can be dangerous.

Such was the case at the DeWitt Fairgrounds on the day of the fatal plane crash. The Herald noted two unusual events occurred that day. “First, management had a hard time keeping the runway clear of people in order for the plane to take off or land.”

Second, the Herald reported that after the body of the aviator was removed from the plane wreckage “the crowd rushed to the wrecked machine tearing it to pieces in a mad hunt for souvenirs.” Numerous sources indicated that almost nothing was left of the wrecked plane.

Shortly after the DeWitt airplane accident the International Aeroplane Company of Chicago ceased operations. The president of the company Dr. E.M. Spates thought flying planes was too dangerous. Several reports indicated this was the second pilot the company had lost in a relatively short time.

Around this same time, the Herald ran some ads stating “Rosenbaum was scheduled to fly at the Lyons Fairgrounds in a few days, for a series of weekend exhibition flights. The exhibition flights were canceled.”

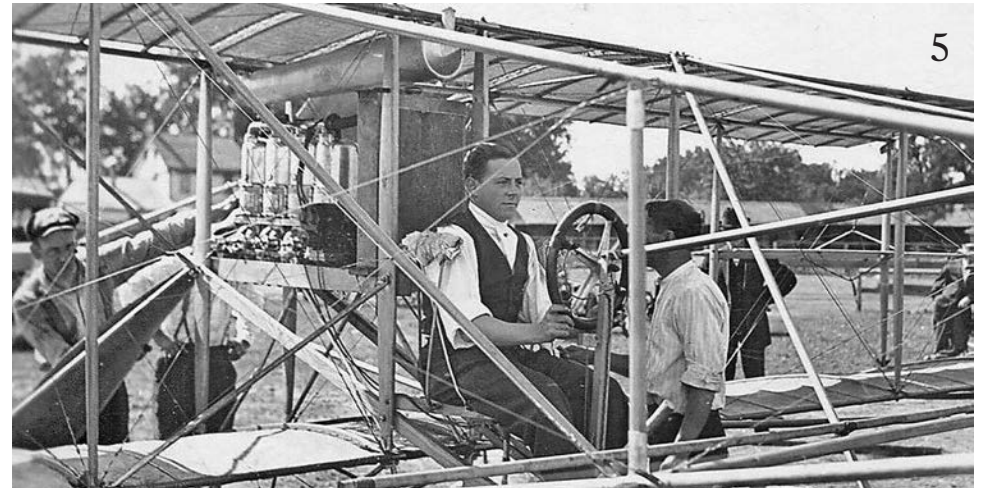
Flying airplanes in 1911 was a very dangerous business. Less than 30 days

after Rosenbaum's fatal accident the New York Times ran a front-page story showing that 100 pilots had died between 1908 and 1911 flying airplanes. This was a significant number of deaths considering how few planes and pilots there actually were during this time period.

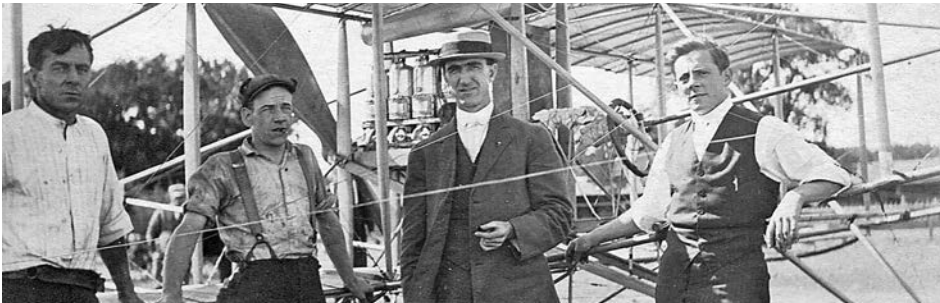
The Wright Brothers first historic flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, occurred near the end of 1903. On the final attempt, the Wright Brother's plane only traveled around 850 feet on that historic day. In 1911, the field of designing and building better aircraft was still in the infancy stage.

Early designed planes were light in weight and many of the parts were quite fragile. The engines lacked significant horse power and were not advanced like today's high-performance engines. Flying was still a relatively dangerous business with many unforeseen accidents occurring like the one that took the life of Morris Rosenbaum at DeWitt.

Note: The DeWitt Community Historical Museum provided many photos and research material for this article.



Pilot with black vest is Morris Rosenbaum at the DeWitt Fair 1911. Rosenbaum was employed as a pilot by the International Aeroplane Corporation Chicago, IL.



Pilot Morris Rosenbaum, at right in a black vest, poses with crew members, at left and fair manager, center, in DeWitt in 1911.



Pictured is wreckage of the Curtiss biplane that crashed in DeWitt in 1911. Photos courtesy of the DeWitt Community Historical Museum

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Daredevil makes first landing in Clinton



JOHN ROWLAND
Gateway History Club

Hugh Robinson on an early model Curtiss bi-plane.

The first airplane credited with landing in Clinton occurred on Oct. 20, 1911. The plane was flown by Hugh Robinson an experienced pilot. Robinson's historic landing in Clinton happened just 30 days after the fatal plane crash that took the life of young Morris Rosenbaum at the DeWitt Fairgrounds. Robinson was considered the third pilot to fly a plane after the Wright brothers. Robinson's stop in Clinton was part of a well-planned historic promotional flight from Minneapolis to New Orleans, a distance of around 1900 miles. This was the first time anyone had ever attempted to fly an airplane that far. Around 35,000 people turned out in the Minneapolis area on October 17, 1911, to see Robinson's departure to New Orleans.

EXCITED CROWDS GATHERED

Flying airplanes was extremely new and exciting in 1911. Few people had ever seen an airplane. Anything related to airplanes and exhibition flights attracted large crowds. Local residents were well aware of Robinson's pending arrival.

This would be the first attempt by a pilot to land a plane in Clinton. The DeWitt plane accident was on the minds of many. Crowds that day swarmed to the riverfront to see Robinson.

The Clinton Herald reported the big event as follows. "The first airplane that landed in Clinton was on Friday, October 20, 1911.

The plane arrived around 1 p.m.

Schools were dismissed early so that students could attend the celebration. Crowds started gathering several hours before the plane arrived."

The Herald added: "Crowds estimated at around 10,000 people swarmed to the riverfront to watch a hydroplane flown by Hugh Robinson land on the river at about 4th, Avenue South. Robinson then taxied the plane down the river to 6th Avenue South and docked the plane near the current Clinton County Historical Museum. Police were hard pressed to restrain the crowd and were concerned about damage to the plane."

Robinson's promotional flight from Minneapolis to New Orleans was front page news. A prize of \$15,000 to \$20,000 was to be paid for the first aviator to complete the journey with local stops putting up prize money. Stops in the area were planned for Bellevue, Clinton and Rock Island. The Clinton Booster Club put up \$500 for Robinson's stop in Clinton. Robinson was averaging about 60 mph on his slow-paced trip South.

A luncheon for Robinson was held at the Kehoe Hotel. The Kehoe Hotel later called the Clinton Hotel was located at the corner of 7th, Avenue South and Second St. The luncheon was hosted by E.M. Kehoe and T.I. McLane.

Robinson was given a bag of mail from Clinton for his next stop in Rock Island to show that air mail delivery was possible. Robinson is credited as the first person to deliver mail by plane.

Hundreds of people milled around the hotel. When the luncheon celebration was over the crowd followed Robinson back to the river. Robinson taxied the plane back up the river several blocks so that he would have adequate clearance over the South High Bridge and the Northwestern railroad bridge.

Robinson revved up the engine and accelerated rapidly down the river toward

the South Bridge as the crowd looked on breathlessly.

His bi-plane easily cleared both bridges and flew off into the distance as the crowd cheered. His next scheduled stop was Rock Island.

TROUBLES AHEAD

In order to finance the Minneapolis-to-New Orleans trip funding was to be provided by various communities along the route. After landing at Rock Island. Robinson was informed that St. Louis and other communities further South along the route had not been able to raise the necessary funding.

Due to Robinson's many expenses and lack of funding from various communities, he decided to cancel the flight to New Orleans.

It was reported earlier on Wednesday Oct. 18, 1911, that when Robinson landed at Winona, Minnesota, he had damaged a pontoon. Repairs were made that day. On Thursday, Oct. 19, 1911, during Robinson's take-off a sightseeing boat got in the way of his plane.

Robinson had no choice but to fly under the Winona railroad bridge. It was estimated that the distance from the water to the bridge deck was 25 feet. Robinson flew under the bridge and off into the distance. The crowd was left awed by his flying skills as his plane headed down the river toward LaCrosse, Wisconsin.

A LONG, DANGEROUS LIFE

Robinson was an early aviation pioneer, test pilot, aviation inventor, and motorcycle stunt daredevil. In 1910, Robinson was hired as a pilot and chief engineer for Glen Curtiss at the Curtiss School of Aviation at Rock Well Field in San Diego, California. Robinson worked with Curtiss on numerous developments for seaplanes. In 1911, Robinson took a seaplane on an exhibition circuit; flying at demonstrations and fairs across North America. Robinson designed the tail-hook system used when planes land on ships. Robinson also helped design the first successful parachute drop of a man from a plane in March 1912.

Robinson was the first person to complete a 360-degree vertical loop in an airplane and the first right turn. It was previously thought these maneuvers would tear a plane apart.

In 1912, Robinson took a Curtiss Model E seaplane to Europe and flew impressively in an aviation meet there. His 1914 "Circle of Death Motorcycle Act" was the highest paying act for Barnum & Bailey Circus in the country at that time.

Robinson's life was filled with danger. He survived 15 major crashes and a massive train wreck. Yet, he lived a long life. Robinson was born May 13, 1881, in Neosho, Missouri, and he died on March 23, 1963 at Tacoma Park, Maryland. He was days short of being 83 years old.



Aviation pioneer Glenn Curtiss, pictured here, worked with Hugh Robinson on numerous developments for seaplanes.

Hotel Kehoe, Clinton, Iowa.

7



This illustration shows the original Kehoe Hotel, which later became the Clinton Hotel, at the corner of South 2nd Street and 7th Avenue South. A luncheon was held there for pilot Hugh Robinson after he landed on the Mississippi at Clinton.



Pilot Hugh Robinson landed at Prairie du Chien on Oct. 18, 1911, with the first mail carried on a seaplane from St. Paul, Minnesota.



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Buzzing and barnstorming in Clinton

Early pilots set out to entertain break records

JOHN ROWLAND
Gateway History Club

During the early days of barnstorming (1911-1927) the Clinton/Lyons area continued to attract top flight airplane acts for entertainment, and was home to a pair of ambitious builders.

WIFE KEEPS HUSBAND FLYING

On Monday Aug. 2, 1915, E.M. Kehoe announced in the Clinton Herald that he had hired Lt. Oscar Solbrig of Davenport to do a series of flying exhibitions here on the weekend of Aug. 9, 1915. Solbrig flew a Curtiss Headless Pusher into Clinton on Friday August 7, 1915. He buzzed the town and completed numerous passes over the community.

There were a series of events lined up for Solbrig.

"He was to appear at the Lyons Fairgrounds on Saturday August 8th, 1915 to give a series of exhibition flights and provide some bomb dropping exhibitions," a Herald article stated. "The airflight exhibition at the fairgrounds would be followed by automobile and motorcycle races. A large crowd was expected with a number of people coming from out of town."

On Sunday Aug. 9, 1915, "Solbrig completed a flying exhibition at Ringwood Park shortly before the Clinton Baseball team took on the Waterloo nine. Upon completion of Solbrig's exhibition flight at Ringwood Park he landed his plane a short distance away at Champlin's pasture." This would be in the general area of around North Fourth St. and Thirteenth Avenue North.

Solbrig gave a lecture on flying safety and why aero planes flew. Solbrig claimed to have the first brakes on a plane. The brakes were little more than a claw hook similar to what many bobsleds used at the time. There is no record of Solbrig flying after 1916.

Solbrig is listed as an "Iowa Early Bird of Aviation," who flew a Curtiss bi-plane and was based out of Davenport. He was born in 1870 and died 1941.

Solbrig's wife Mary accompanied her husband on his flying exhibitions. His plane was often shipped by rail to long distance events. She was his sole mechanic and helper. Mary Solbrig is thought to be the first female airplane mechanic in the country. Mary worked not only on the airplanes, she also repaired bikes in their bicycle shop.



Katherine Stinson, one of the early female pilots, is pictured here with her Curtiss airplane. She performed a lighted night flight in Clinton in 1916.

When they traveled to air exhibitions Mary was always in charge of re-assembling the plane and making sure the landing field was ready for take-off and landings. At nights Solbrig's wife was credited with always removing the planes propeller so the night air would not harm it.

Mary proudly wore a golden pin only given to early aviators flying before 1916. She was born in 1869 and died 1954.

FIRST FEMALE FLYER IN CLINTON LIT UP THE SKY

Katherine Stinson was the first female pilot to fly in Clinton. Stinson was part of the entertainment hired for the Oct. 26-28, 1916, Clinton Fall Festival and Corn Show. She was noted as being the fourth woman in the United States to obtain a pilot's license, which she did on July 24, 1912 at just 21 years of age.

According to the Clinton Advertiser: "Stinson arrived late Thursday and made only one flight. On Friday she performed three flights. Stinson performed a 9:15 evening flight from Riverfront Park that dazzled the crowd. Her plane was lit up with lights that changed from red, to green, and back to red as she completed two double loops and did a series of dips across the night sky."

"Stinson awed the crowd with her night landing in Riverfront Park where four large bonfires were lit," The Advertiser stated. "She descended slowly coming in from long distance out and settled the plane down smoothly in the center of the four huge bonfires."

Stinson set flying records for aerobatic maneuvers, distance, and endurance. She was the first female pilot employed by the U.S. Postal Service and the first civilian pilot to fly the mail in Canada. She was also one of the first pilots to



Mary Solbrig is thought to be the first female airplane mechanic in the country

ever fly at night and the first female pilot to fly in Canada and Japan.

Katherine Stinson was born Feb. 14, 1891. She died July 8, 1977, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and is buried in Santa Fe National Cemetery.

LOCAL BROTHERS BUILD FOR SPORT

According to the June 29, 1920, Clinton Herald, Frank and Henry Neumann were two prominent local flyers that had been building and flying their own airplanes since 1914. Their first plane was a crude monoplane with a Ford engine. Another machine was a bi-plane equipped with a twin cylinder motor-cycle engine. They thought both machines were practical, but somewhat risky to fly. Both planes were flown at San Diego, California, and in Lyons.

The Herald noted that the Neumann brothers “are now planning on building the fastest plane in the world. The plane is under construction in Lyons and is of the biplane type designed for speed. One of the many features of the plane will be the fire-proof corrugated aluminum construction in place of canvas used for the wings. The plane is expected to attain the maximum speed of 160 miles per hour.”

The plane was constructed at Neumann Brothers Shop, which was located on Wilcox Avenue and across the street from the Clinton Aviation Club's new airfield in Lyons.

“The Neumann brothers are both considered mechanical geniuses and practical flyers,” the Herald article stated. “Building airplanes is a hobby for them and they are constructing this new plane for the sport of it.”

In the early days of aviation, the Curtiss Jenny's OX-5 engines were not considered very reliable. Improved engines were always a priority. Neumann Brothers would need a powerful engine in order to break the air speed record, so “the new airplane would be equipped with one of the best engines available a 200-horsepower Hispano-Suiza V-8 engine.”

Whether they broke the speed record is not clear in local coverage of the time.

LAWS CATCH UP TO DAREDEVILS AND BARNSTORMING

Flying exhibitions, aerobatic maneuvers, and individual rides in planes continued to grow in popularity and large crowds turned out for the air exhibitions. However, the glory days of daredevil pilots and barnstorming ran from around 1912 until 1927 when new federal regulations adopted went into effect.

On May 20, 1926, President Calvin Coolidge signed the Air Commerce Act of 1926 into law. The act instructed the secretary of commerce to foster air commerce; designate and establish airways; establish, operate, and maintain aids to air navigation (but not airports); arrange for research and development to improve such aids; license pilots; issue airworthiness certificates for aircraft and major aircraft components; and investigate accidents. The regulations also prescribed operational and air traffic safety rules. The days of buzzing the town, circus loops, and flying under the local bridge would soon be coming to an end.



Ringwood Park, pictured here in the late 1880's, was the location of Lt. Oscar Solbrig's exhibition flights in 1915.



Lt. Oscar Solbrig of Davenport was hired in 1915 to do a series of flying exhibitions in the Clinton/Lyons area.



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Funeral parlor owner played key role in its creation

JOHN ROWLAND
Gateway History Club



Schick Hospital, pictured here in 1945, was a major military installation in Lyons, which is now Clinton's north side. It was built on the site of the former Shadduck Park, which in 1920 had the town's first airport.

In 1920, the Clinton Aviation Club opened the first airport in town. It was located in Lyons at Shadduck Park. Some may recall years later during WWII the Veterans Administration acquired Shadduck Park and other nearby land in this same area in order to build Schick Hospital.

The Clinton Aviation Club was incorporated on May 26, 1920. The corporation listed nine board of directors members: W.B. Disbrow, G. Gradert, L.C. Moeszinger, J.D. Dierks, T.R. Stapleton, H.A. Holm, O. Korn, and L.B. Brandt. Vice-president was J.D. Dierks. Willis J. Shadduck was listed as President of the corporation.

Shadduck was a prominent north end leader. He owned a funeral parlor on Main Street in Lyons since 1909 and was a strong supporter of the new airport. He was president of the Clinton County Territorial & State Pioneer Association, often in charge of the Old Settlers Reunion, and the owner and manager of Shadduck Park.

According to a June 1920 Clinton Herald, the "Clinton Aviation Club operated the airfield as Shad-Oak Airfield in Lyons and held a grand opening at the airfield on June 13th, 1920. Shad-Oak Airfield contained about 35 acres. There was a large hanger under construction estimated at 42 feet and about 84 feet long. Lights were installed for night landings."

The landing field was in tight quarters. Planes generally flew in from the east or west for landings. On difficult days, planes landed two miles west of Lyons at McDermott field. McDermott Field was frequently used since at least 1916 as a north end landing field. It was across the street from the former Clinton Drive-In Theater near the intersection of Highway 136 and 16th Street Northwest.

The main purpose of the Clinton Aviation Club was to transport passengers, goods, baggage and express matters. The company purchased a Curtiss Oriole Bi-plane at Fort Dodge, Iowa for \$9,500 and hired two pilots. The company owned and operated planes for hire and also conducted a general delivery business in the Clinton area. Shadduck held aviation promotions to attract airplanes to the air field. He also held events to display merchandise as well as sell gasoline and airplane rides.

AVIATION CLUB'S SHORT TENURE

The Clinton Aviation Club was in business for around 18 months. During this time period, the primary airplane the company used was the Curtiss Oriole plane they purchase from Fort Dodge. The plane carried passengers and freight from Clinton to nearby towns. The Curtiss Oriole plane also provided rides and air exhibitions at local community celebrations in the area.

The Oriole plane was involved in several minor crashes that were often times caused by the pilots landing too fast. One was at Andover and another was at Preston. The plane was taken back several times to Fort Dodge for repairs. Some of the minor repairs were completed in Lyons.

Several sources indicated that the reason the Aviation Club closed was because a couple of their pilots died in plane crashes. So far, I have been unable to find any specific stories verifying that any pilots employed by the Clinton Aviation Club died.

It's clear the Clinton Aviation Club along with the investments of local citizens collapsed. At this point, there is no specific reason listed. Shadduck's interest in local aviation also wavered and the Clinton Aviation Club eventually disbanded in the fall of 1921.

MANY AVIATORS FLEW FROM HERE

There were numerous aviators and planes that flew out of Shadduck Airfield even though the airport had a very short life for being an operational airfield. One of the more noted aviators that W.J. Shadduck hired was W. L. Schaffer. Schaffer a former WWI pilot was hired to provide airplane exhibitions and rides at the Lyons airfield. A ride was \$10. In today's dollars that would be \$158.84 for a ride.

A headline in the Monday, Aug. 9, 1920, Clinton Advertiser set the tone for weekend excitement at the Lyons airfield with the bold announcement "Flys Big Plane under Lyons Bridge."

The Advertiser article goes on to state that "after buzzing Lyons and Fulton

ERIK EDGREN

Erik can't remember his first airplane ride...because he wasn't born yet! He began "training" at the age of 6, sitting on his father's lap and flying on instruments. Erik was ready for solo at the age of 8 through the use of a tailor-made seat and control extensions. At age 10, he learned spins, which sparked his lifelong passion for aerobatics.

Erik has worked as a Flight Instructor, an Instructor/Pilot for an air combat school in the AT-6/SNJ and as a Corporate Pilot in Lear Jets, Kings Airs, and more. He has flown more than 5800 hrs in over 180 different makes and models of aircraft. Erik is a full-time farmer, living on the same farm the original settlers log cabin was built... now with a grass runway and airshow practice box!



SUSAN DACY

Susan Dacy is one of only a few females performing airshows in a biplane, and is the only woman flying exhibition in the Super Stearman.



MICHAEL VAKNIN

Michael Vaknin will bring his Extra 300 to the show, flying with precision, speed, head dazzling Gyroscopic and high G maneuvers on airshow center.

JODY GRUFFUNDER

Jody Gruffunder will perform in his Yak 52, which was developed and used in the Soviet Union during the 1970's as a primary trainer for the Soviet military.



THE NIGHT ENDS WITH:



A DRONE SHOW!!

FLY IOWA AIRSHOW 2025





The Trojan Phlyers own and operate two T-28B aircraft. Both aircraft have Wright Cyclone R1820-86B nine-cylinder radial engines rated at 1425 horsepower. The fully aerobatic aircraft can takeoff in less than 800 feet of runway, climb to 10,000 feet in less than 90 seconds, race level above 335 MPH, and dive faster than 380 MPH. In fact, the T28 can outperform most World War II fighters at low altitude.

PHOTO BY GARY DANIELS

FLY IOWA PLANES & PILOTS



Featured Performer: Randy W. Ball of Fighter Jets Jet Demonstration Team

Randy Ball will perform both a day and night show with his Mig 17. Randy W. Ball is the ONLY Unlimited DAY and NIGHT jet fighter Aerobatic pilot in North America. He's performed more night shows in Jets than any other performer in North America airshow history. From the second the Afterburner kicks in on his takeoff, to his signature pass down the 500 foot show line in the deep twilight light with a 30 foot afterburner flame behind him, all while only 20 feet off the ground and traveling over 600 mph. RANDY W. BALL and his MiG-17F Has left Airshow fans and sponsors speechless for years now.

AVIATION HERITAGE FOUNDATION

Aviation Heritage Foundation featuring the Skyraider, Bird Dog, and T 28 performing simulated reconnaissance and bomb-run missions, complete with on-the-ground pyrotechnics to create the illusion of explosions beneath the aircraft. Following this, a helicopter will enter the scene, performing a simulated search-and-rescue operation for a fully immersive experience.



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The Trojan Phlyers, the world's only formation aerobatic T28 team. They have been thrilling crowds for over 25 years, with a combined 2850 horsepower the noise and smoke of the Phlyers are always a fan favorite.



around 4:30 in the afternoon of Saturday, August 7, 1920, W. L. Schaffer circled high over the Lyons High Bridge and then with one big swoop piloted his big Curtiss Oriole bi-plane underneath the center span of the Lyons Bridge almost clipping the water's edge with his wings."

The Advertiser noted that when Schaffer was in the army, "he was credited with flying a record 22 consecutive loops during one flight. On Sunday morning August 8, 1920, Schaffer performed more loops over Clinton in one day than Katherin Stinson did during her three-day 1916 exhibition in Clinton."

According to the Advertiser, "Schaffer is credited with being one of the best pilots in the United States. In 1918, Schaffer flew a big Italian Caproni Airplane underneath three bridges on the east river in New York. Schaffer is booked to fly at the Low Moor Fireman's Field on Tuesday. On Wednesday, Schaffer will put on a flying exhibition at the Soldiers Reunion and Homecoming at Charlotte. On August 23, 1920, he will return to Clinton and provide rides out of McDermott Field."

Around a year later, the Oct. 8, 1921, edition of the Herald stated that "the Clinton Aviation Club had leased/sold the Curtiss Oriole to the Wallace Brothers aviation."

The Wallace Brothers had a 100-acre airfield at Bettendorf. The Wallace Brothers planned to install a new engine in the plane and hoped to have the plane back in the air within a short time.

The sale of the Oriole airplane closed the chapter on the Clinton Aviation Club and ended the hopes of the Clinton Aviation Club having a north end airport in Lyons. Willis J. Shadduck, the dedicated Lyons promoter, would go on to have numerous other events at Shadduck Park including dances, motorcycle races, auto races, boxing exhibitions, carnivals and circus acts.

Willis J. Shadduck was born near Almont, March 5, 1864. He married Grace Walker January 21, 1891. They had five children. They moved to Clinton in 1909 and opened their funeral parlor business. He died on Friday, Jan. 14, 1927 and is buried in Oakland Cemetery.



Willis J. Shadduck



Pictured is an Old Settlers group at Shadduck Park. North end promoter Willis J. Shadduck was often in charge of the Old Settlers Reunion, and the owner and manager of Shadduck Park.



The Clinton Aviation Club purchased a Curtiss Oriole Bi-plane, like this one, at Fort Dodge for \$9,500 and hired two pilots.



In 1920, pilot W. L. Schaffer swooped his big Curtiss Oriole bi-plane underneath the center span of the Lyons Bridge, pictured here.



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Need for local landing strips booms after WWI

Aerial View of the Grand Mound Airport early 1950's. The airport hanger building in the center was just destroyed in a fire March 22, 2025.

JOHN ROWLAND
Gateway History Club

When World War I ended on Nov. 11, 1918, around 16,587 cadets had graduated from ground school and around 8,700 pilots from flight school, plus more than 65,000 airplanes had been built. Most of the pilots returned home and a large number of surplus planes were placed on the open market. For those thinking about owning a plane, it quickly turned into a buyers' market.

CAMANCHE AIRPORT

The first official airport in Camanche was established in 1927 by the Clinton Chamber of Commerce. The airport was on a portion of the Wallace Lum farm. Camanche also had two early small landing strips. One of the earliest landing strips was reported in 1916 to be near the DePue Plant. A 1939 government report described the Clinton airport as being located just off Highway 67 and 3/4 miles south of the Lincoln Highway. This would clearly be within the Camanche city limits in the general area of where the former Fox Roller Rink building is now located with the airfield extending west toward DePue Blvd.

The 1939 report shows the airport as having 62 acres, with a grass field. There was a 24-inch rotating light on a 75 ft. tower operating from dawn to dusk at the airport. Nineteen red and two white boundary lights surrounded the field. There were two hangers at the airport.

The entire field was listed as being available for landing. There were no landing strips or runways. There was a standard 100 foot white circle in the middle of the field. The wind direction cone was an illuminated cone on the 75ft. beacon tower.

The airfield did not sell fuel or oil. An unusual oddity in the report shows that the name of the airport was listed as the Clinton Airport Company. However, the airport was actually located in Camanche as mentioned. The contact address provided for the Clinton Chamber was shown as the Coliseum Building which was located in the 400 block of South First Street.

After World War II, the 1945 Herald noted, "The Camanche airport had a very active group of twenty-five young flyers. One group was called the Clinton Flying Club and the second group was called the Wings Flying Club. The club has four airplanes at the airfield. Hangers were being added and the field is being enlarged."

Instructors were "Charles Stamp from East Moline and a Mr. Gillette an employee at the DuPont plant. Homer Smith Chairman of the new Clinton Airport Commission, a local attorney, and former WWI pilot was also involved with the new flying clubs. The airfield attracts a large number of visitors on Sundays to watch the young amateur pilots."

Perhaps the most famous person to land at the Camanche airport was national WWII war hero Col. Russell W. Volkmann. He landed at the Camanche airfield south of town on Friday Dec. 7, 1945. Col. Volkmann had planned to land at the new Clinton Airport but due to low visibility landed at the old airfield. A large number of local, state, and national reporters were on hand at the Camanche airport and at his Clinton home to cover Volkmann's home coming. Volkmann was gone nearly 66 months.

PRIVATE AIRFIELDS

An undated bulletin from the Department of Commerce (probably the 1940's or 50's) listed three private airfields in the county. Reynold Harsen, in Camanche Township, Robert Vickers DeWitt Township, and A.H. Wheeler DeWitt, Township. Airfields no longer in use list the Wallace Lum Farm, Camanche; and the Ralph Green farm, DeWitt. The Henry Meints farm Orange Township, and the Ira Scott farm Sharon Township. The Clinton Chamber of Commerce airport listed in Camanche operated from 1927 to around 1947.

DEWITT AIRPORT

According to the October 4, DeWitt Observer in the spring of 1928 "Alvin Wheeler began plans to build an airport east of the city limits on land that he owned. Early in the fall of 1928 work was completed on a landing strip. In 1929 boundary lights and a beacon light were placed on the field."

The Observer noted later: "In 1930 the hangar was built and a glider club was established. There are now three planes stationed on the property. The planes are owned by O.C. Capper of DeWitt, Tom Puryear of Clinton, and Pat Miller who gives flying lessons. Alvin Wheeler owner of the airport also purchased a plane in 1930."

For approximately 14 years, the DeWitt airport generated considerable interest in local aviation and was doing quite well. When WWII started the military's need for pilots and aviation mechanics soon changed everything for most small airports, local pilots and airplane mechanics.

According to the Nov. 12, 1942 DeWitt Observer "the government demand for skilled pilots, flight instructors, mechanics, and skilled workers has drained local personnel from the DeWitt Airport. It was announced that the airport will soon close." The Observer noted "the loss of personnel to military service and the new government emergency regulations requiring 24-hour guards on the local airfield would be costly. Alvin Wheeler owner of the airport leased 40 acres of the airport property to William Mohr to meet wartime production."

The Observer listed "those now serving as aviation instructors for army cadets were W.R. Mockridge, Joe Torpey, Frank Stone, Herb Elliot, Don Herman, Lester Larson, and Dr. Christiansen. Others taking a refresher course for flight instructor include Ray Herkes and George Kiess Jr. Kenneth McDonald also anticipates leaving soon to qualify for flight instructor."

After the war ended, the May 2, 1946, DeWitt Observer reported that "Alvin Wheeler was ready to open a private airfield on his property. The 1815-foot north / south runway have been plowed and seeded. He expects to have gasoline and oil at the airfield by June. A cement floor has been added to the hanger which can accommodate six to eight planes. George Kiess and W.R. Mockridge both home from the service have been retained as instructors."

Alvin "Chalkie" Wheeler ran the DeWitt Airport from 1928 until 1942. After the war Wheeler maintained a private airport from 1946 until well into the 1960's. He was an Air Force veteran from WWII. Wheeler also ran an Insurance Agency in DeWitt. Wheeler was born May 5, 1906 in DeWitt and died September 7, 1986. He is buried at Elmwood Cemetery in DeWitt.

GRAND MOUND AIRPORT

W.H. Gilmore ran the Grand Mound airport for 37 years. During this time, he sponsored numerous aviation events at the airport including Fly-Ins, instructions, plane rides, spot landing contests and air shows. Perhaps, one of the more interesting services offered at the Grand Mound airport was aerial photography of farm buildings and landscape photography. Gilmore also took numerous aerial photos of houses, schools, bridges, commercial buildings, and industrial buildings that are still in demand today.

Gilmore took a large amount of Clinton County aerial photos during the 1950's and 1960's. Many of the Gilmore photos were related to farm conservation practices during that time period. Gilmore and Clinton pilot Don Krambeck both worked with members of the Clinton County Soil Conservation District. Aerial photography gave farmers an overhead view of terraces, contouring, and strip

cropping. Today farmers use drones, aerial maps, high tech farming equipment, along with a large assortment of data to monitor their fields.

William Harold Gilmore operated airfields in Grand Mound and Lowden for 37 years. He was a licensed pilot for more than 50 years and retired from flying in 1979. In his early years he managed the airport at Cherokee, IA. During WWII Gilmore spent four years as an instructor at St. Ambrose College with Naval Students. He was born September 16, 1910 in Kimball, S.D. He married Ester Peters October 8, 1953. Gilmore died January 12, 1994. He is buried in Evergreen Cemetery in Grand Mound.



This Ford Tri Motor airplane landed at the Camanche airport in 1936.

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Pictured from left: A 1949 Piper Clipper flown by Marlana Nass, Clinton Airport manager; a 1941 Waco UPF7 flown by J&A Aviation.; and a 1946 Aeronca Champ flown by Tim Hood.



Clinton Airport thrives after WWII

JOHN ROWLAND

Gateway History Club

When Larry Straley took over as manager of the Clinton Airport in July 1945, he announced that he would schedule a grand opening at a later date as there was a lot of work to be completed. The airport officially opened for business on Sunday, Sept. 1, 1945, with very little fanfare. Straley was busy from day one renting space for new planes, working on construction of the new hangers and overseeing the runway work.

FIRST AIRSHOW

The grand opening date was still not determined, but Straley was hopeful of having a big event. When the grand opening day arrived, it exceeded anything he could envision. The Clinton Herald was on the scene and provided coverage on one of the largest crowds in Clinton history to attend an outdoor event.

The Herald reported that on Sunday May, 21, 1946, the Clinton Airport held its first airshow. "Despite alternate weather conditions of clouds, rain, wind, drizzle, and sunshine the airshow attracted a record crowd of more than 20,000 people."

The Herald went on to describe the traffic nightmare created by 20,000 people as follows: "Traffic was backed up along Highway 30 from the airport all the way into Clinton. Cars were parked on both sides of Highway 30 and many reported delays of over an hour to reach the airport. The show produced what veteran drivers called the biggest traffic jam they had ever seen. The American Legion, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, the Civil Air Patrol, Boy Scouts, the Iowa National Guard, and local police all assisted with traffic control."

The show was sponsored by the National Aeronautical Association and it was hoped that it would become an annual event. More than 100 visiting pilots flew in from several different states. The show featured numerous small planes and several commercial aircraft.

"One of the featured aerals acts the crowd enjoyed the most was the Glider demonstration. Ellis Eno of Ft. Dodge performed a series of loops, rolled, and banked his glider through a series of aerial maneuvers before swooping in for a graceful landing that thrilled the crowd."

The glider was towed aloft by Glenn Rohrer of Ft. Dodge. Rohrer was flying a Stearman army type trainer. Later in the show Rohrer would perform a series of exhibition flights with his Stearman aircraft that also wowed the crowd.

What started out as a drawing to give a free plane ride to the oldest lady attending the air show turned into one of the highlights of the day for those attending.

The announcer stated that airport manager Larry Straley would now escort the registration winner, a 99-year-old lady, into a nearby plane for her first plane ride. The crowd swarmed around the area to get a better look at the elderly woman.

After placing her in the plane Straley stepped down to pick up some papers he had dropped. The plane took off down the runway and flew off into the blue sky. Straley's attempt at a chase was futile. The elderly lady put the clipped wing Mono-Coupe plane through a series of death-defying stunts that would be highlights on any circus poster. Later, the crowd was told that the woman in the plane was actually well-known stunt pilot Ren Kendall of Moline, Illinois. The act went over well with the crowd and Kendall's flying exhibition was a great act to end the Clinton Airshow with. The first airshow at the Clinton Airport was clearly one of Clinton's most successful outdoor events of the year.

CONSTRUCTION PROJECTS

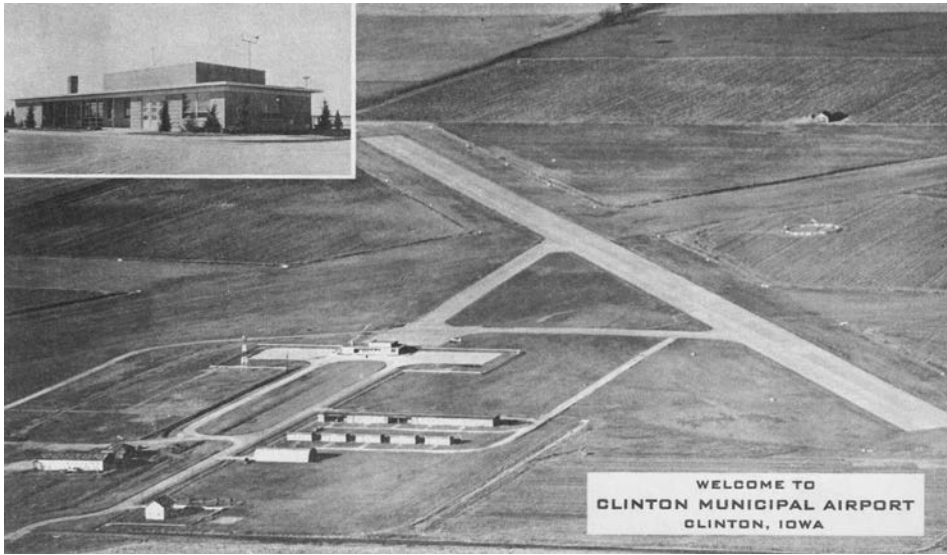
Another project that Straley worked on was completing the new Clinton airport administration building. The building was completed in 1950 at a cost of around \$60,000. The new administration building was 90 feet long and 34 feet wide. The building contained a waiting room, restrooms, offices, and a snack bar.

Shortly, after the building was completed, the runway lighting system was installed. A new parking area was developed and more roadwork was completed.

Transitioning from a Class 1 Airport to a Class 3 Airport by 1950 was estimated to cost around \$520,000. The federal government allocated \$240,000 for local airport improvements and the remaining balance of \$280,000 was paid from local Clinton funding. After the 3,700-foot main runway was paved, the airport qualified for use as an airport feeder stop for larger commercial planes. The 4,000-foot runway was listed as sod. A third runway with sod was used for light aircraft. There was a warmup apron and taxi strips for each runway.

COMMERCIAL AIR SERVICE BEGINS

On May 1, 1952, a new chapter in Clinton aviation history started when a 24-passenger Mid-Continent DC-3 Douglas aircraft landed at the Clinton Airport. Mid-Continent would now be flying one eastbound and one westbound flight daily out of Clinton. Mid-Continent officials were hopeful that more flights would soon be added to the Clinton schedule and they were extremely pleased with the local terminal facility.



A historic aerial view of Clinton Municipal Airport.



Mrs. Homer Smith christens a Mid-Continent Airlines in May 1952.

The plane had "City of Clinton" inscribed on the left side and was held over for a brief christening ceremony. Mayor Don Allison and Airport Commission Chairman Homer Smith provided welcoming remarks. About 10,000 air mail letters were dispatched from the local post office for the first inaugural flight. Stamp collectors loved to collect envelopes marked with first flight air mail stamps.

Mid-Continent soon merged with Braniff Airlines in August 1952. The new company was called Braniff International Airways. In 1955 commercial air service in and out of Clinton was provided by Ozark Air Lines instead of Braniff based on a decision by the Civil Aeronautics Board. Later Mississippi Valley Airlines served the Clinton Airport.

Commercial air service in Clinton continued into the mid-1980s. The Official Airline Guide in February 1985 showed a total of five weekday departures to O'Hare International in Chicago. Three flights were via American Central and two via Great Lakes. Scheduled passenger service to Clinton was discontinued by the late 1980's.

STRALEY'S STORY

Larry Straley managed the Clinton Airport from 1945 until 1980. Straley was the driving force behind the steady growth of the Clinton Airport for more than 35 years. During WORLD WAR II, he was an instructor and pilot for a Naval Training Program. He was the first designated pilot examiner in Eastern Iowa. In November 1945, it was noted shortly after the Clinton Airport opened that Straley had more than 50 students enrolled as students in the Flight Instruction Program.

Straley was born May 24, 1911, in Rome, Iowa. He married Virginia Gottschalk December 30, 1941 in Minburn, Iowa. He died February 8, 1997. Straley and his wife Virginia are both buried in Pine Grove Cemetery, Clinton.



L.A. Straley, manager of the Clinton Municipal Airport and owner and operator of Straley Flying Service, Inc., stands by one of the planes used by his flying service for air charter flights.

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Curtiss No. 1 aircraft. Rear view of aviation and motorcycle pioneer Glenn Curtiss' first aircraft the Curtiss No. 1, or 'Curtiss Golden Flyer', in a field. Curtiss produced over 500 inventions. The Curtiss Golden Flyer was designed and built by Curtiss. His subsequent design, the Curtiss Pusher, was among the very first aircraft in the world to be built in any quantity and was the first aircraft type to take off from and land on the deck of a ship. Photographed in 1909.



Photo left: DeWitt Airport circa 1945 after WWII. George Keiss on left. Bill Mockridge center. Originally opened in 1928, the airport closed during WWII due to all employees entering military service.

Photo top-right: In 1919, a replica of a 1912-style Curtiss Headless Pusher was constructed at a Curtiss research facility in Garden City, New York, under the personal direction of Glenn Curtiss. Photo taken with "Charles S. "Casey" Jones, Curtiss test and racing pilot.



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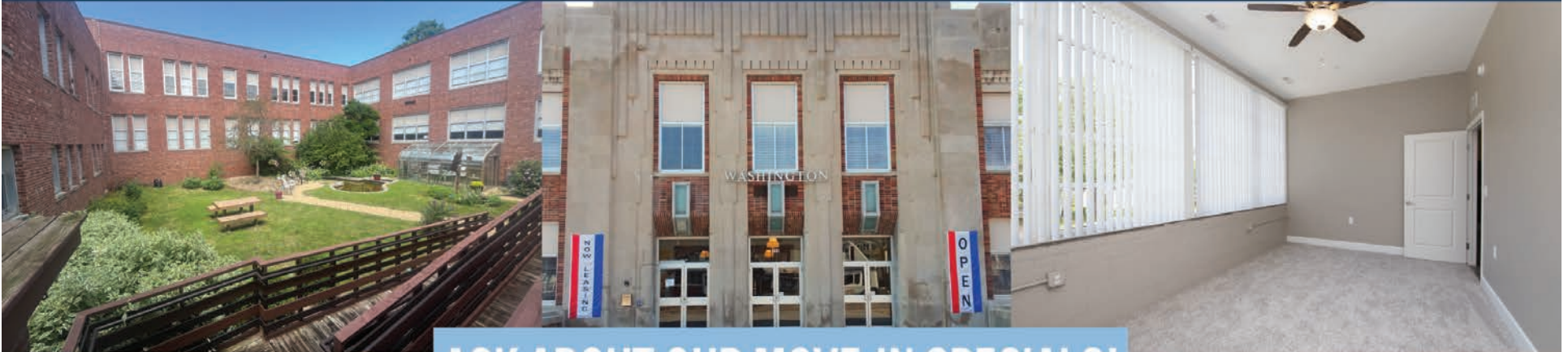
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