

FROM THE COCKPIT

President's report, by John Lawson

20 YEARS AND COUNTING

2018 is a significant year in the history of MAM that should not pass without recognition. It marks the 20th anniversary of the formation of the Canadian Aviation Heritage Centre (CAHC) which we now know as the Montreal Aviation Museum (MAM).



It all started with our Founder, Godfrey Stewart Pasmore, seeking a way to memorialize the aviation history of his father Hubert Martyn Pasmore, a WW I pilot, a bush pilot and the senior executive of Fairchild Aviation Canada Ltd. in Longueuil, QC. Godfrey's plan was to commission a series of paintings by noted Canadian aviation artists commemorating Fairchild's history and aircraft, and to create a museum where Quebec's civil and military aviation heritage could be preserved and presented to the public.



The art collection quickly began to grow but finding a home for the museum was a problem. Godfrey started on the South Shore, then Dorval, exploring four possibilities without success before locating Macdonald College's Old Stone Barn (OSB) which was suggested to him by Frank Hofmann who was then running an aviation program at John Abbott CEGEP. Godfrey used charm and persuasiveness to obtain access to the premises for a one dollar a year lease which continues to this day. The commitment was to undertake the renovation of the OSB to modern code standards for a public museum.

Thus in 1998 the embryonic CAHC came into being with a small group of volunteers who faced the daunting task of raising the money and finding the skills to convert the derelict structure that had been condemned, even for animals, into an up-to-date building that met the building codes for public access. The original barn owned by Sir William C Macdonald had burned to the ground in 1907 but had been rebuilt in granite, concrete and steel by 1911.

We struggle even today to raise sufficient funds to operate and expand MAM. Imagine the challenge of creating a new organization and a team with the requisite skills to plan, design, and execute the conversion of the building in parallel with seeking restoration projects, artifacts and displays, in anticipation of an eventual museum. Godfrey's vision was accepted and amplified by the dedication of local aviation aficionados who gave of their time and money to realize the dream of the only aviation museum in the Montreal area. A conservative estimate of 25 -30,000 volunteer hours and a total investment in labour and materials of upward of a million dollars were required to get the CAHC to its official opening to the public in 2009.

At great risk of overlooking individuals, I want to mention some of the key people who launched the project and made the dream a reality. The CAHC began in 1998 with Godfrey, Suzanne Rolland, John Hussey, and Bill Doran. They were quickly joined in 1999 by Michael Fish (architect), Patrick Campbell, Jake Wilmink, Stan Cogdell, Peter Rochester, Harvey Thurston, Peggy Lohse, Jack Greal, Al Scammell, Bill Gordon, Mark Whittaker, John Cabot, Don Newman, Ross Turner, Eric Bentley, Ross Richardson, Jim Bugdale, Keith Meredith, Jim Bruce, and Marshall Lambert. By 2000 these individuals were followed by a host of others that brought specific skills to bear: Ray Cassidy, Robert St Pierre, Robert Sumner, Tsuji Toshihiko, Richard Plante, Matt Carson, Ralph Emery, James Pearmain, Ian Jamieson, Marc-Andre Valiquette, Guilbert Lafleur, Terry Capener, Frank Wilson, Erica-May Pasmore, Gerry Van Der Weijden, Jacques Brouillette, Anne Renwick, George Fuller, Billy Walshe, and many others who followed. Substantial help came from the Macdonald College in the person of Deborah Buszard, Greg Weil, Pat Blue and Robert Broughton. Important financial contributions were also made by Pamela Stirling, Penelope Baudinet and Eric and Stephen Molson, Lorne Trottier, the Macdonald Stewart Foundation, and "Biff" Wheeler.



It is to these people that we owe a debt of gratitude for paving the way. Many of the names will be unfamiliar to today's members as many have passed away or moved on. Still others you will recognize as colleagues still labouring to improve MAM and to expand its profile within the community and the Province.

My sincere apologies to anyone left out from this list of early "Founders" as it has been difficult to assemble, and we offer our collective thanks to the many, too numerous to mention, who have joined since 2000 and have made their substantial contributions to our legacy.

It is on the shoulders of this early group that our current success has been built. They are to be honoured for their vision and commitment as are those of you who strive today to make MAM an even greater success than we have achieved so far. As we look back over 20 years we can take pride in what has been accomplished. A spectacular art gallery housing two major collections of aviation art, a substantial technical library housing well over 6000 books on technical subjects and aviation history, five completed replicas/restorations (Fairchild FC-2, Bleriot XI, Fleet Canuck, ½ scale Silver Dart, Curtiss Reid Rambler, and three ongoing projects, a Bristol Bolingbroke Mk IV, a Nimmo homebuilt and a Noorduyn Norseman), as well as many outstanding dioramas, displays and artifacts tracing Quebec's aviation heritage both civilian and military.



Looking back over 20 years we have much to be proud of. Our focus now shifts to what MAM can become in the next 20 years. We still need your vision, ideas, and commitments to expand the role we play in the community and with the public in making our aviation heritage come alive.

A few pictures of the early days

