

THE NEW BOOM IN AVIATION SOCIETIES

by JOHN SLOAN

During the past two years at least there has been a real renaissance of interest in historical aviation. The awakening has been influenced to some degree by the Journal and the activities of the American Aviation Historical Society. Many of us have read, in these pages, Ross Fenn's "Passing Targets" which describes the new publications on WWI aviation; and new aviation books are frequently reviewed in the Journal. There are among the A. A. H. S. members a large number who contribute to other aviation and popular men's magazines. We recall easily the names of Pete Bowers, Mauno Salo, Truman Weaver, Jack Bruce, Ken Molson, Greg Kohn, and many others; and quite a number have written books, including the founder of the A. A. H. S., Bill Larkins.

The need to get together personally to share in their hobby has led small groups of persons to organize. In Los Angeles the A. A. H. S. members, meeting under the name of the Spad 'N' Gun Club, has grown to a mailing list of over 250. It is now continuing under the leadership of Harry Gann. In the eastern United States Tim Miller, Kim Brown, Peter Grosz, Eric Hildes-Heim and others have informally called their group The New England Chapter of the Spad 'N' Gun Club. The Los Angeles section of The Institute of the Aeronautical Sciences has an Historical Committee which arranges special meetings of historical aviation significance. Thus, under various names, but for the same purposes there are many active local groups.

Then there are the formally organized societies. The Aviation Historical Society of New Zealand, and of Australia have begun in the last two years, and each is already publishing a small journal. You are nearly all acquainted with Air Britain, the society of aviation enthusiasts generally holding meetings in London. Its journal is called Air Britain Digest. Also, there is of course the Experimental Aircraft Association. Although primarily an organization for the home-builders and flyers of aircraft, its magazine Sport Aviation frequently carries articles of historical interest. The Antique Airplane Association publishes the American Airman; and since it caters to the antique aircraft builder and/or restorer, much of its content is of historical interest.

Two new organizations have recently been formed with more limited interest than the A. A. H. S. The Cross and Cockade, or Society of World War I Aero Historians, was formed by a small Los Angeles area group and is now publishing a quarterly journal confined to World War I only. Details about the Society may be obtained from Hugh Wynne at 1106 N. Wright St., Santa Ana, California. The Connecticut Aviation Historical Association has been formed in Hartford to foster the association, education, study, research and preservation of the aeronautical history of Connecticut. Material is being accumulated toward the day when an aviation museum can be established for that state, and Connecticut industry has offered recognition and encouragement to the group. Membership information can be obtained from Vernon R. Muse, 591 W. Middle Turnpike, Manchester, Connecticut.

And now comes an openly addressed letter to the A. A. H. S. :

" It is my pleasure to announce the founding of a new society of world-wide appeal to all those enthusiasts whose interests are primarily in the field of aviation heraldry, civil or military. It will be a privilege to reply to any member of the A. A. H. S. who desires information concerning this society, its aims, and method of operation. Thank you for your attention and assistance. Peter B. Walton, 34-41 77th St., Jackson Heights 72, N. Y. "

All of this activity displays the growth of interest in aviation history. In these days of button-pushing, and of gigantic rockets with their awesome noise and speed, it is difficult to single out any personal names. Perhaps the first man to land on the moon may become as famous as a Lindbergh or Doolittle. But with the supporting army of scientists and technicians required to complete a single count-down, it is doubtful. It is therefore, refreshing, and inevitable, that many individuals and groups should want to renew and deepen their knowledge of the past sixty years of aviation history and of the men who made it.