



HISTORIC BRIGHTON NEWS

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HISTORIC BRIGHTON MEETS OCTOBER 22

The fall meeting of Historic Brighton will be held on Monday, October 22 at 7:30 PM in the auditorium of Council Rock School, 600 Grosvenor Road, Brighton.

Bob Marcotte, the *Just Ask* columnist for the *Democrat and Chronicle*, who is writing a book on the Rochester connections to the Civil War, will be the speaker. Marcotte, a native of Lawrence, Kansas, will discuss the key roles that several Rochester regiments played in the battle of Gettysburg. Brighton sent several soldiers into their ranks. His book is completed and is expected to be on the shelves within the next year.

Many people who visit Gettysburg may not realize the key roles that several regiments and artillery batteries from this area played on each of the

three days of the battle, from the initial stand by Buford's Cavalry west of town to the repulse of Pickett's Charge. Marcotte will identify these regiments, discuss their role in the fighting, and use maps to show their location

on the battlefield, so visitors will be better able to appreciate Rochester connections to the battlefield. There will be a question and answer session after the talk. Marcotte will also discuss how a relative's involvement in the war can be researched.



Local hero, Col. Patrick O'Rorke, was killed at Gettysburg leading his regiment of the 140th New York Infantry to Little Round Top.



FRISBIE'S FLIGHT FROM THE BRIGHTON AERODROME

BY LEO DODD



The appearance of the name "Frisbie" may make some of our readers think of that great playground located in Brighton, known as the Frisbie Golf Course of Ellison Park. Ah ha! I can tell from the reaction of a few, that you were unaware of its existence. I can assure you that it does exist, and yes, in the Brighton section of Ellison Park, Frisbies fly in Brighton today.

However our story is about the great John J. Frisbie (Captain Jack)—pioneer aviator who flew with the best the world had developed and was the first man to pilot an airplane over the city of Rochester. Today's Brighton residents rarely look skyward at the many planes that fly over our town; but this account takes place in the early history of flight, in the year 1911, and to that date no one had seen an airplane in the skies over Rochester. Brighton then contained its own airfield known as "Brighton Aero-

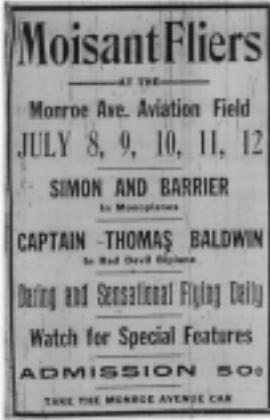
drome,"—described in detail in our last Historic Brighton News—and located at the corner of Highland and Monroe avenues, Captain Jack's historic flight began and ended at this Brighton Aerodrome on July 7, 1911.

There was cause for celebration, for the Rochester skies were captured, and a local boy was the hero. John J. Frisbie, born in Oswego in 1869, and a Rochester resident from 1908 to 1911, lived at 187 West Ave., Rochester, with his wife, Ruthella, and their three children. John's brother David, also a balloonist and airman, lived in Rochester, too.

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FRISBIE'S FLIGHT FROM THE BRIGHTON AERODROME



These were the happiest of times for the Frisbie family, but tragedy was but weeks away.

Frisbie was well known among the aviators that flew at Belmont Park, NY—site of numerous air shows. The International Aviation Tournament there was the top

event of 1910, drawing contestants from England, France and the U. S. and as many as 25,000 spectators. John B. Moisant, founder of the air-show (and later killed in an airplane crash in New Orleans) employed Frisbie after he had spent 26 years as a balloonist and a parachute jumper in the U. S. and Europe. Frisbie toured with Curtiss aviator Thomas A. Baldwin, giving exhibitions in balloon ascensions and parachute drops and attaining quite a reputation for his daring exhibitions. When it was proved that flying in heavier than air machines was a possibility, Frisbie dropped his experiments with balloons and started immediately learning the newer game of flying. After months of studying the mechanical parts of aeroplanes, he went to Mineola to become proficient in the operation of biplanes. Then on to Garden City, L.I, where he repeated his successes. Late in the summer he returned to Rochester and attempted several flights before his townspeople. Due to machine trouble, he failed, and thus few of his feats at the famous flying places in the east were given any credence. He left here late in 1910 for the Southwest, with frequent reports of his flying reaching home.

Although Frisbie flew a Curtiss machine, he flew under the direction of the Moisant Fliers. He was the first successful aeroplane operator produced in this city and with Walter Johnson the only local aviator to attain an outside reputation. A newspaper described his flight from the Brighton Aerodrome,

“Captain John J. Frisbie, in a Baysdonfer, Curtis type Biplane, powered by a 60 horsepower Gnome engine, was the first man to view the Flower City

THE EXCITEMENT AND DANGERS OF EARLY AVIATION

Early flights generated immense enthusiasm among Americans who wanted to see these wondrous new machines and share in the adventure. It did not take entrepreneurs long to realize that there were enormous profits to be made in taking the airplane to the public. While the promise of adventure undoubtedly drew flyers to risk their lives in these early flimsy crafts, the lure of princely wages provided a powerful incentive for both pilot and promoter alike. A pilot could earn more in one day of flying in an air show than a skilled craftsman could in two months. This probably was well deserved, because the life span of an early pilot was measured in weeks and months. Air shows and exhibitions sprang up almost overnight. Large crowds would gather wherever the “birdmen” landed to stare in amazement, see them fly, and, all too often, see them crash.

from a heavier-than-air flying machine. He made a graceful start and upon reaching a satisfactory altitude flew toward Cobb’s Hill. After crossing Cobb’s Hill he attempted to turn above the intersection of Main and Culver when the engine stalled. He was able to restart the engine. After circling the reservoir he went on a beeline towards Baseball Park (Bay St.) and from there to the New York Central Station. He started for the Pinnacle Hills, passing over the Hotel Seneca and Convention Hall en route toward his starting place. For three minutes he was out of sight but soon reappeared. Instead of circling or spiraling, the way most aviators effect a landing, he shot from the dizzy height, with increasing velocity. The spectators expected to witness a calamity but when about 15 feet from the ground he turned his machine so as to be parallel with the earth and gradually sank until he had touched terra firma. It was a great triumph for Frisbie. The spectators stood open mouthed until they realized what they had seen. They gathered around the successful flyer and showered him with handshakes and congratulations and not a few queries as to his trip through air.

“In reply he said that during the greater part of the journey he was from 1,500 to 2,000 feet above

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THE FABULOUS WALTER HAGEN— BRIGHTON GOLFER



Walter Hagen plays an exhibition round at the Country Club of Rochester in Brighton in 1932, long after he had gone on to an illustrious national career. Among the spectators at left are CCR neighbors, Margaret Woodbury Strong and daughter.

BY ELIZABETH BRAYER

Historians generally agree that the game of golf was introduced into this country in 1888.

Four years later Walter Charles Hagen was born in the Corbett's Glen section of Brighton.

Three years after that, golf was being played at the new and nearby Country Club of Rochester, also in Brighton. Hagen's father, who worked at the railroad carshops of East Rochester, took a job as a greenskeeper at the new club.

There are several apocryphal versions of how young Walter, the second of five Hagen children and the only boy, became acquainted with the game he would dominate for quarter of a century. One of the most appealing is that at age five (1897) he picked up a discarded hickory-shafted golf club left at the Hagen home by Andy Christy, CCR pro. Walter caused so much havoc indoors, that he was moved outside to his father's cow pasture. (Cows

in Corbett's Glen?) There he herded all those cows to one spot where they would eat the grass, thus producing a close putting surface. Hagen would later be renowned for his impossible 30-foot putts.

Soon the young golfer had moved to CCR where he was observed batting apples about the dusty caddie pen with a wooden-shafted mashie. He took his first job there as caddie at age seven, earning the going rate of 10 cents a round plus a 5-cent tip.

At age 15, he broke 80 on the CCR course. (In the 1930s he would retire from golf with words: "I can't stand the thought of possibly shooting an 80.") At age 19, he rode the day coach to Buffalo to play in his first tournament. By 1912 (age 20), he was the assistant pro at CCR under the aforementioned Andrew Christy.

Meanwhile at age 13, boredom with academic learning set in and he literally leapt from the classroom window, never to return. In addition to his

THE FABULOUS WALTER HAGEN—BRIGHTON GOLFER

golf duties—he succeeded Christy as head pro at CCR—he worked successively as piano finisher, taxidermist, and garage mechanic.

In 1913, Hagen entered the U. S. Open in Brookline, Massachusetts. He needed a 37 on the final nine holes to win, but blew his score to 41.

Hagen played semi-professional baseball in Rochester, then tried out in Florida spring training with the Phillies. “Why not give up that sissy pastime and take up a real ‘man’s’ game,” the Philadelphia manager goaded Hagen. Ernest Willard, publisher of the *Democrat & Chronicle*, got wind of this and countered: “Don’t leave golf. You’re a champ.” Willard then sponsored Hagen as a participant in the 1914 U. S. Open in Chicago.

Still only an assistant pro, Hagen won the Open in 1914, shooting 68 in first round to break the course record, leading all the way to win with 292. There was no great stir in Brighton. Hagen received \$300 for his efforts, resuming his usual schedule of teaching club members not only the basics of golf but those of tennis and ice skating as well.

He remained in Brighton for the next four years as CCR pro before accepting the same position at The Oakland Hills—“a new millionaire’s club in Detroit,” Hagen told newspaperman Henry Clune.

He was reputed to have been the first athlete to earn \$1 million and his lavish living habits earned him the sobriquet “Sir Walter.” People said that he dressed like a statesman, lived like royalty, drank like a sailor, swore like a trooper, and played golf like a hustler. Asked many times if this were really the case, Hagen answered honestly, “For the most part, yes.” “The Matchless Haig” was supremely confident of own abilities

Hagen attended the U. S. Open at Oak Hill in 1956 and until a few years before his death in 1969 made annual visits to renew old acquaintances.

Forty-three years before that, he was one of two key figures in the most exciting challenge match ever played. The legendary Bobby Jones of Atlanta—suave, sophisticated, educated, and the quintessential amateur—was his opponent. Hagen held most PGA titles to date, Jones wore the British and U. S. Open crowns. (The Masters had not

yet come into being.)

In what would be Hagen’s most satisfying victory, a one-sided 72-hole match with Jones took place in Florida in 1926. “Everybody was saying that Jones was the greatest golfer in world and I was second,” Hagen recalled later. The first 36 holes were played on Jones’ course in Sarasota. These were followed by 36 holes in St. Petersburg. Hagen played conservatively, Jones blasted to win. With an eight-hole lead leaving Sarasota, Hagen went on to win with a devastating 11 and 10, pocketing all of \$6,800. It was, Hagen crowed gleefully, “my greatest thrill in golf,” but also the worst shellacking ever absorbed by Jones. (In 1950 the sportswriters of America voted Jones the best golfer ever, with Ben Hogan a distant second and Hagen third.)

The first time Hagen entered the British Open (1920)—as only the second non-British contestant—he finished 55th. Yet he predicted prophetically, “I’ll be back.” In 1922 he became first American-born entrant to win the British Open. In 1924 he became the first to win both the British Open and the PGA titles in the same year.

It was the British Open win of 1922 that made Hagen a millionaire. In all, he would win 11 national championships, repeating the U. S. Open win of 1914 in 1919; winning the British Open in 1922, 1923, 1928, and 1929, and the PGA in 1921, 1924, 1925, 1926, and 1927. Not bad for a Brighton boy who gained celebrity for his magnetic personality.

For the 1937 Ryder Cup, Hagen was the non-playing captain, helping to outline future rules. As part of his duties, the Babe Ruth of Golf arrived early in London to greet arriving players and their wives. As each London boat train from Liverpool arrived, Hagen greeted the wives with a bear hug, offering later, “I didn’t know their names but I didn’t offend anybody, because I called `em all `Sugar.’”

Asked if a difficult lie on the course upset him, he replied, “Not at all. After all, I put it there.”

One of the strangest chapters in Hagen history deals with the time in 1927 in which he owned the Rochester Red Wings baseball team—or so he claimed. Hagen sent his manager to Rochester with \$10,000 and found that he had purchased 53 play-

THE FABULOUS WALTER HAGEN—BRIGHTON GOLFER

ers and a rinky-dink stadium. In a deja vu glimpse of that period, what was needed, Hagen told reporters, was a new ballpark. “I breakfasted with my friend George Eastman,” Hagen further asserted, urging him to build a new stadium. Eastman, another seventh grade dropout, demurred and a year later Hagen got out of the deal, having lost \$37,500.

Hagen stories abound. One day he put a dent in the wall of the Oak Hill Country Club locker room after pointing his sand wedge at the wall clock and predicting he would hit it “right in the middle.” Fortunately he was off the mark—low and to the right. The indentation remains as talisman of Hagen’s Brighton connection—along with tales about how he gave his opponents the hex sign when they weren’t looking, or about how he was a great scrambler and putter without much form.

The flamboyant master of the most frustrating game ever invented starred on the fairways of five continents with majestic dignity for a quarter of a century. “The Haig” possessed princely charm, ready wit, and sartorial elegance. Along with General Oscar Solbert, first director of George Eastman House, he was friend to the Prince of Wales. “Hey Eddie, hold that flag, would you please,” Hagen was reputed to have said to the horror of British audiences. (Never mind that “Eddie” was known as “David” until his accession to the throne in 1936.)

A jazz age clone of Rudolph Valentino—handsome features bronzed by the sun, black hair pomaded to iridescence—Hagen revolutionized wearing apparel on the golf course. In an era when most golf pros dressed in sack suits and brogues, he wore silk shirts, florid cravats, alpaca sweaters, screaming argyles, black and white shoes custom made at \$100 a pair. Yet his hedonistic code was deceptive. He may have had “the philosophy of a butterfly, the appetites of a pasha,” as one commentator noted, but he also had “brains like a barber’s sheers.”

He garnered 60-odd tournaments, 11 national championships, and played in more than 1,500 paid professional exhibitions—but only ever had one hole-in-one. “Lots of holes-in-two,” he liked to say. Once at a CCR exhibition he produced a left handed shot with a putter that traveled 200 yards.

“He made as much money as Babe Ruth and

spent more than the entire Yankee outfield,” one awed observer wrote. During 11 exhibition matches, Hagen equaled five course records, and broke six. “One got the impression that he invented the game,”

But no photographer was he. The Eastman Kodak Co. once provided him with free camera equipment for an overseas tour. Hagen proceeded to consume 4,600 ft. of film without getting one recognizable exposure.

The author of this article owns a set of Walter Hagen clubs (to no golfing avail, alas), inherited from her mother-in-law, Edith Sheldon Brayer, who achieved a hole-in-one at the Country Club of Rochester, thus equaling Hagen’s own record on that score.



This certificate, featuring the Pear Valley Farm of Robert Bell in Brighton, will be presented to owners of Brighton landmarks so designated by the Brighton Historic Preservation Commission.

HISTORIC BRIGHTON

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A BRIEF HISTORY OF BRIGHTON CENTRAL SCHOOLS

The origins of the Brighton Central School District date to the early 1800s when the town of Brighton, then geographically much larger than today, contained several common school districts. Each provided a school, identified by a district number, to serve its respective constituency. While documentation of these pioneer schools is incomplete, we do know that by 1836, twelve common school districts enrolled a total of 781 students.

District No. 1 was organized in 1815 with a school at Elmwood Ave. and Clover St. District No. 3 was organized in 1828 in a brick schoolhouse on Westfall Rd. near South Clinton Ave.; today a medical complex occupies the site. District No. 8, organized in 1829 in a brick building on Monroe Ave. near Highland Ave., was close to three Native American settlements. All of these buildings served area students into the 1920s.

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District No. 9 erected its first school at the corner of Edgewood Av. and Hillside (now French Rd.) in 1819. A two-room structure replaced the original building in 1902 and served students through the 1930s. Now a private home, its distinctive bell tower reminds passers-by of school days long past.

The pioneer schools of the early 1800s provided only elementary levels of education. During the mid-1800s the need for public secondary education was recognized by the state and laws were passed to encourage the merger of common school districts. However, it was not until the 1920s that the state provided financial incentives for consolidation.

At that time, Common School Districts No. 1 and 8 joined together to form Brighton Union Free School District No. 1. A brick school designed to house grades 1-8 was constructed by the new district at Brighton's Twelve Corners in 1925. Secondary classes were added to the curriculum sequentially, beginning in 1929.

Over the years (1928,1930,1933,1938,1996) numerous additions were made to accommodate an ever-expanding school population. Now known as Twelve Corners Middle School, this building currently houses almost 900 students, grades 6-8.

A charter for Brighton's first high school was granted in 1931 and ground was broken for a new



School No. 9, French Rd. and Edgewood Av., has been a private home since 1949.

building in 1938. The Class of 1940 attended the Twelve Corners School but had their graduation ceremonies in the new Brighton High School. Enlarged in 1950 and renovated in the early 1970s and again in the 1980s, Brighton High School continues to serve as Brighton's only public high school.

The 1950s ushered in an era of real change for the community's school districts. The post-World War II baby boom necessitated the construction of Twelve Corners Elementary School on Monroe Avenue and consolidation again emerged as an issue when it became expedient for common school districts to align themselves with high schools.

During this era, three districts merged with other communities: West Brighton (Common School District No. 4) joined Rush-Henrietta; Allens Creek (Common School District No. 6) joined Pittsford Schools; and Indian Landing (Common School District No. 7) joined what is now the Penfield School District.

A vote to consolidate Brighton's Union Free School District No. 1 with Common School Districts Nos. 3 and 9 was soundly defeated in 1955. The latter two schools subsequently merged to form Union Free School District No. 2 and opened Brookside School in 1957. Continuing population growth resulted in the addition of a junior high wing to Brookside and the opening of two new buildings in the new district—French Road School in 1959, Meadowview in 1960).

During this same period Union Free District No.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF BRIGHTON CENTRAL SCHOOLS

1 expanded Twelve Corners Elementary School and constructed Council Rock Elementary School (1958).

Enrollment projections for the future and financial incentives from New York State ultimately led to the consolidation of Union Free School Districts Nos. 1 and 2. On July 1, 1966, the Brighton Central School district was formed.

BRIGHTON SCHOOLS TODAY

Student enrollment reached a peak of 4,500 at the time of consolidation and held steady until the 1970s. Enrollment began to decline through the 1980s down to a low of 2,650 students in 1989. During this period several schools were closed and the district was reconfigured. Meadowview School was sold in 1977 and is currently home to Hillel School. Brookside School was closed to students in 1987 and is now leased to pre-school programs and Brighton Recreation as a community center. Twelve Corners Elementary School is the site of the district's administrative offices.

The district is currently organized to provide a centralized program. Council Rock Primary School houses grades 1-2, French Road Elementary School grades 3-5, Twelve Corners Middle School encompasses grades 6-8, and all 9-12 students attend Brighton High School. There are now 3,300 students in the district and enrollment is increasing.

Over the years the district's student body has evolved into a culturally diverse community. Approximately 10 percent of the students are foreign born and represent 35 nations. Such diversity is valued and fostered through annual cultural exchanges with students and schools in Europe and Asia and participation in the Urban-Suburban Program that has enabled a cross section of city students to enroll in the district's schools since the 1970s.

The district is committed to preparing students to meet the technical demands of today's world. Computer use is encouraged at all grade levels. In addition, the Rochester Area Interactive Telecommunications Network (RAITN) provides an interactive telecommunications system linking most area high schools and three colleges. RAITN classes

enable students to study subjects their districts cannot offer, either because there are too few students to fill a class or there is no teacher available. Russian is taught to other school districts from Brighton, and Brighton students take college courses in subjects like computer programming or advanced mathematics.

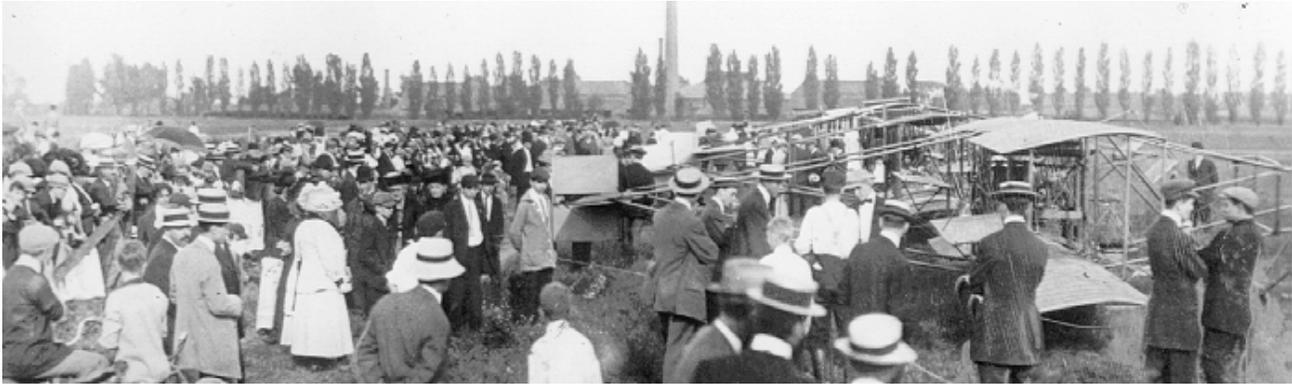
For nearly 200 years, the Brighton community has provided facilities and programs in the quest to educate our young. That we as parents, teachers, and staff have been successful is evidenced by our students' considerable and varied achievements reflected across grade levels in chess championships, academic competitions, musical performances, sports championships, and the pursuit of higher education. In every regard, as a community and as individuals, we continue to strive for excellence, carrying on a tradition begun many, many years ago.

Information excerpted from the Brighton High School Alumni Directory (1932-1997) by the Board of the Brighton Education Fund (BEF) of The Rochester Area Community Foundation. This article was made available to Historic Brighton News by Pat Aslin, Historic Brighton board member. More at www.bcsd.org and www.brightoneducationfund.org.

Once upon a time, in 1817, Brighton reached to Lake Ontario on the north, the Genesee River on the west, and included what is now Henrietta. In those halcyon days, Rochester occupied only 100 acres—the tiny striped parcel west of the Genesee. The Erie Canal changed all that.



FRISBIE'S FLIGHT FROM THE BRIGHTON AERODROME



Was one of the chimneys mentioned by Frisbee located in the Brighton Brickyard adjacent to the Brighton Aerodrome?

8 the house tops. The city appears more beautiful from this altitude than one can imagine. The many trees made the city look like a great green carpet with dots and lines here and there. The streetcars and automobiles seemed to creep along and the pedestrians looked like insects. As I flew over Baseball Park I saw several men in white uniforms running around. All at once they stopped and looked up. The engines at the station looked very funny with the smoke rolling out of them.

“I encountered two bad spots, both while flying over chimneys. The heated air caused the machine to dip a little. During the greater part of the trip I was going at the rate of 60 to 70 miles an hour.”

After the triumphant accomplishments in Rochester, John J. moved on to the Midwest, becoming the first man to fly over Detroit. In Chicago in August, he was in the air every day and popular with the spectators—winning the bomb throwing and quick starting contests for prize monies totaling \$1,500. John and his family then moved on to Norton, KA. Alas, the headlines of the Rochester *Democrat & Chronicle* of Sept. 2, 1911 blared,

“FRISBIE FALLS TO HIS DEATH.

“Rochester Aviator Killed at Exhibition in Norton

“JEERED BY CROWD

“Literally Taunted To His Death By Spectators

“FIRST TO FLY OVER CITY

“Daring Aviator Flew Over His Home City Last July and was Seen In Several Successful Flights

“Began As Balloonist Parachute Jumper

“...The Curtiss aviator was killed today by a fall at the Norton County Fair. He met with an accident yesterday and went into the air again today

only when driven by the taunts and jeers of the crowd. Frisbie fell about 100 feet and the engine of his machine fell upon him crushing his left side and chest. He lingered for about an hour before he died. His wife, son and little girl saw him fall.”

This is not the way we would like to end our Brighton Aerodrome history, but history is not always gentle. Yet it does reflect the very dangerous condition of early flight. Brighton played a part in that history, by providing land for use as an aerodrome, encouraging and supporting aviation progress—the human price of which was enormous.

References:

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“Rochester Democrat & Chronicle,” Sept. 2, 1911

“Rochester Evening Times” July 8, 1911

“The Union & Advertiser,” Sept. 7, 1911

1911 AVIATION ELSEWHERE



This snapshot by George Eastman of a 1911 airshow—his first—probably at Great Barrington, MA, shows that aviation was developing apace throughout the country and in Europe.