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Griswold Airport



Griswold Airport 1999

In 1928 Frank Cooper of New York and Madison purchased 45 acres of land in the Scotland District to be used for an airport. At Griswold and Dowd's Garage on Main Street a sport plane was being built and so began the long history of the Griswold Airport.

First located off what is now New Road just behind the MacDonald's Restaurant on I-95, Griswold Airport got its start with a streamlined Byrd airplane pictured above. In 1930 Frank Snyder conducted a flying school giving lessons to fifteen to twenty students including Vernon Willard, Ralph Husted and Edward Buell.

Jack Griswold flew to Florida in the winter of 1930-31 to enter a series of air races returning to Madison having won several races and, according to him, the honor of having the fastest plane in his class.

Jack Griswold was born in Killingworth going to California as a young man. In 1910 the "flying bug" bit him and changed the course of his life. He returned to the east coast in 1927 and settled in Madison starting a garage with his friend A. C. Dowd. As the business grew he built a handsome brick building on Main Street with living quarters for his family on the second floor. That building is now home to Madison Hose Company # 1.

Shortly after the opening of the airport on New Road, Mr Griswold bought 40 acres of land in the Hammonasset District adjacent to Hammonasset State Park and moved his airport operation to that site where it remains today.

Sherman Griswold, Jack's son, eventually took over the operation of the airport. In the 1960 hard times fell on the airport and Mr. Griswold appealed to the town for help in preserving the airport as a valuable asset to the town. After considerable discussion and the establishment of a committee to study the airport, in 1969 the Town signed a contract with the Griswold's to pay the costs of paving the runway and provide tax relief. In return the Griswold's promised to continue operating the airport.

The Town created the Madison Aviation Commission to oversee the airport operation and to work with the Griswold's in maintaining and improving the airport to ensure the greatest benefit to the Town.

In 1986 the Griswold's began to consider selling the airport and actively sought bids for the property. The Town, encouraged by the Economic Development Commission and the Madison Aviation Commission considered purchasing the property for \$5,000,000. The Board of Finance voted to reject the purchase. Throughout 1986, 1987 and 1988 the debate continued. In April, 1989 the issue was closed when the Town decided not to buy the property.

In 1997 Business and Legal Reports of Madison considered building their new facility on the airport property. Plans were approved by the Planning and Zoning Commission but in 1998 BLR decided to build elsewhere.

The airport remains - its future uncertain although the prospect of homes replacing hangers looms large on the horizon. Whatever the outcome of the current negotiations regarding Griswold Airport, the legacy of the Griswold family will remain. They gave us a building now home to one of our two fine fire departments, the first sidewalk on the north side of Main Street (in front of the former Griswold's Garage), and our own airport.

Directions: From the center of Madison drive east toward Clinton on Route One. Pass the entrance to Hammonasset State Park on right. Continue on, passing a Mobil Station on the right. The airport is on the right a short distance past the Mobil Station.

Please Note: This property is privately owned and not open to the public.