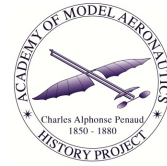




The AMA History Project Presents: History of the CLOUDBUSTERS MODEL AIRPLANE CLUB (Prev. ROYAL OAK THERMITES CLUB)



Since 1939

Written by MW & GL (c. 1980s) and MW (2022); Reformatted and edited by JS (12/2022-01/2022); Updated by JS (04/2024)

The following was submitted to the AMA History Project by Mike Welshans in October 2022. The original article was written by Mike Welshans and George Lewis in the 1980s, and appeared in the Cloudbusters handbook and guidelines. A version of this has also been published in a Michigan newspaper. This is Mike Welshans' latest revision of that work.

The Cloudbusters

Early in 1939, a group of teenage model airplane enthusiasts from Royal Oak, Michigan gathered at the hobby shop of Jack Willett and under his sponsorship formed the Royal Oak Thermites Club. Meetings were held on a regular basis at Willett's store, but the records of these activities have been lost through the years. Club members were, for the most part, involved in Free Flight models, which included rubber and gasoline engine powered model airplanes of the scale and endurance type. Radio Control and Control Line models were still in development at the hands of experimenters during this period.

The favorite flying site for weekend contests was the huge vacant area at 9 Mile Road and Northwestern Highway, now the city of Southfield. This was also the home field for the Sky Guys Model Airplane Club of Detroit.

The years immediately following America's entry into World War II would see membership drop off due to older Thermites joining various branches of military service. This resulted in a consolidation of the Royal Oak Thermites with other clubs from Warren, East Detroit, and Fraser, MI, and ensured a continuing membership.

In 1944, the Thermites name was dropped in favor of the Cloudbusters, and the name has endured to the present.

The club grew in the postwar period as former members returned from service and once again were free to pursue the model airplane hobby. Control Line flying was by now an established modeling discipline and was popular with members of the revitalized Cloudbusters Club. Most of the Control Line flying took place in Royal Oak between Normandy Road and 13 Mile Road, then an open field.

The Plymouth Motor Corporation sponsored a large contest known as the Plymouth International Model Plane Contest. This well-attended contest was once held at the Cloudbusters flying field.

From 1946 to 1948, the Cloudbusters had no regular home and meetings were held at the homes of various members. For a short time they met at Dunn's Hobby Shop in Royal Oak. In 1948, Jake Drake started a business known as the Hobby Hanger in Royal Oak. This provided the club

with a stable meeting place until 1957, when the business was closed. Clodbusters met at various locations through the year, the most stable was the Christ Memorial Presbyterian Church in Royal Oak. In 2009, when our last meeting place closed its doors, we found a new site to hold our meetings, in Ferndale, MI. Since Covid, we now meet online (Zoom), fly indoors at ReImagine Recreation's UWM Sports Complex in Pontiac, MI, a site that is very friendly to modelers of all modeling disciplines, and outdoors at Alkay Public Airport in Clio, MI, a grass strip with three runways.

In 1965, the Clodbusters were incorporated under the laws of the State of Michigan. A constitution and set of bylaws were adopted to give the club its direction. The club closely follows the principals as outlined in Article II of its constitution; "This club will be organized for the purpose of promoting Model Aviation, to procure and disseminate information of pertinent natures to its members; and to indulge in all activities necessary to its existence."

Although individual members had belonged to the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) through the years, it wasn't until September 1982 that the club applied for charter status in the national organization. Clodbusters now operate under Charter number 1911, issued in March of 1983.

The passage of time has brought with it the inevitable change in personnel. A very few of the original members are still with us; most have gone west to the big flying field in the sky.

The club still thrives on competition in Free Flight and Control Line events, and boasts many of this country's premier modelers and fliers as members.

Today, the Clodbusters have a membership of about 125 and are one of the few non-Radio Control clubs that can boast that. We have members who fly Free Flight, Control Line, and Radio Control, along with many others who just like aviation and airplanes. Clodbusters currently sponsor two of the larger model contests in the USA, the Indoor Fling in April/May and the FAC Outdoor Championships in September.

The spirit and dreams of the club's founders back in 1939 still remain today and are being cared for by the present membership.

Mike Welshans - Clodbusters Board of Directors



*Members gathered at Clodbusters Model Airplane Club event.
Image provided to the AMA History Project by Mike Welshans.
Photograph by Bruce Thoms.*



Clodbusters Model Airplane Club members. Image provided to the AMA History Project by Mike Welshans. Photograph by Steve Kanusik.



Clodbusters Model Airplane Club display at a local library. Image provided to the AMA History Project by Mike Welshans. Photograph by Mike Welshans.



Clodbusters Model Airplane Club logo. Image provided to the AMA History Project by Mike Welshans.



Clodbusters patch, circa 1950s. Image provided to the AMA History Project by Mike Welshans. Photograph by Mike Welshans. [Editor's note: Original image cropped.]

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