



The AMA History Project Presents: History of the ACADEMY OF MODEL AERONAUTICS, NATIONAL MODEL AVIATION MUSEUM & MODEL AVIATION magazine

Since 1936, 1978



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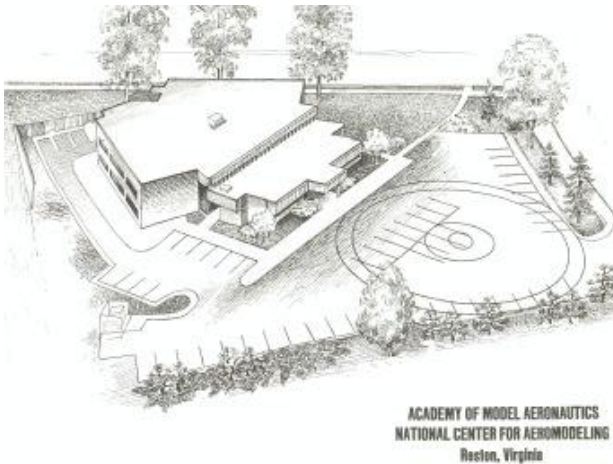
Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) History

Before the Academy of Model Aeronautics (AMA) came into existence, aeromodelers belonged to a variety of organizations, including the Junior Air League, the Junior Aviation League, and the Junior NAA (the aeromodeling branch of the National Aeronautic Association.) The Junior NAA, although sponsoring the first National Aeromodeling Championships (Nats) in 1923, struggled to be a true aeromodeling organization. The idea for the AMA began in 1935 (perhaps even before that) at the Nats in Detroit, Michigan. Leaders and contestants were interested in a self-governing body of aeromodeling experts, the thought being that there should be expert guidance of, for, and by model builders. Modelers wanted a single voice to develop national rules for aeromodeling contests as well as one voice to speak to the government.

First known as the American Academy of Model Aeronautics (AAMA), the organization dropped 'American' from its official title within a few years. The AMA's mailing address, at 1732 RCA Building, Rockefeller Center, New York, solidified its legitimacy in 1936. Later that year, the headquarters of the AMA moved to DuPont Circle in Washington DC as part of the National Aeronautic Association (NAA).

AMA elected officials -an Executive Committee, Advisory Board, and Council - as well as the publication *Model Aviation*, soon followed in 1937. The first issue of *Model Aviation* included a list of these newly elected officials, a two-page description of the 1936 Nationals, and 7 pages listing the eighteen events, contestants, and results.

In 1940, both the NAA and AMA moved their offices to the Willard Hotel, also in Washington DC. While in the same building, it was the first time that the AMA had separate offices from the NAA, along with its own budget and officers. However, it was not until 1966 that the AMA became fully independent from the NAA.



Reston, Virginia Headquarters location

between the AMA and the Maryland National Bank were signed and the loan was officially closed. On September 24-25, 1983, the new Reston location officially opened with over 200 people attending the ribbon cutting ceremony.

In 1979, a little over an acre of land was purchased in Reston, Virginia, just outside of Washington DC, for a new AMA Headquarters and Museum. Design architect and AMA member John Hunton drew the plans for the two-story, 3,000 square foot building. In 1980, a building fund was started, asking AMA members to aid the project, and by April 1982, donations from modelers, aeromodeling clubs, and industry donors reached the goal of \$160,000. In five days, three very important events happened: June 24 - a building permit was issued; June 27 - the official groundbreaking ceremony was held; and June 28 - the loan arrangements



Museum gallery space at the Reston, Virginia Headquarters location

Now that the AMA had a location for a museum, artifacts were needed. Although documentation states a few items were collected by the AMA starting in 1978, serious concern for acquisitions began in the 1980s. Frank Ehling, AMA's Technical Director, spent over a year acquiring donations for the Museum, and today the collection includes over 10,000 objects. These include - but are not limited to - airplanes, badges, pins, kits, parts, and apparel.

In 1988, the AMA Executive Council formed a search committee with the goal of finding properties for a new Headquarters and national flying site. The committee felt that the move would benefit all AMA clubs and the



c. 1992: AMA Headquarters and National Model Aviation Museum

community in which it would reside. The Midwest became the choice region due to location and land availability after over 50 proposals were reviewed. By the end of 1990, Muncie Indiana was the chosen location. On June 13-14, 1992, a Grand Opening was held for the new national flying site.

A year later, after moving the collection from Reston, Virginia, the Museum reopened to the public. The 25,000-square-foot Frank V. Ehling Complex not only housed the Museum, but also the Lee Renaud Memorial Library and all the AMA headquarters staff.

The move to Muncie cramped the entire AMA into one small building; space was needed. Ten years in the making, the new HQ building's groundbreaking occurred March 31, 2000. June 7-10, 2001 marked the opening of the new headquarters building for the AMA. Designed by Gooden and Ellis Architects, LLP of Muncie, this 25,000 square foot building now housed the administration, membership, publication, and special services departments.



c. 2001: AMA Headquarters building, Muncie, Indiana

Model Aviation Magazine History

In 2000, *Model Aviation* (MA) magazine celebrated 25 years of publication in its current format. The magazine existed in many different physical formats since it first appeared in 1936 as a newsletter-type publication. Distribution was originally limited to AMA leaders and subscribers until 1954, when circulation was expanded to all members.

In 1966, the AMA approached the publishers of *American Aircraft Modeler* (AAM) about the possibility of incorporating AMA news into their magazine rather than printing the small but costly MA. AMA members received AAM featuring AMA news as part of their membership beginning with the July/August 1966 issue and ending with the March 1975 issue. AAM went bankrupt in February of 1975, leaving the AMA with no means to communicate with its members. AMA officers realized that a magazine rather than a newsletter was more beneficial to AMA members, and thus resurrected MA as a magazine. To this day, AMA members continue to receive MA as a member benefit.

How did the publication originate? According to an article by Frank Zaic in a special 1980 reprint of the first *Model Aviation* publication (June 1936 issue):

“The publication of the MODEL AVIATION was initiated by Lt. H.W. Alden, Navy Ret. He timed the first issue so that it would be distributed at the 1936 Nationals. By doing so, the participants would know what had been done to form an organization, which would be “theirs.”

Both Issues, No. 1 and No. 2, were prepared in the 10th street loft. Lt. Alden would come on a Saturday afternoon or on an evening, sit down in front of my Underwood portable, and type out the copy. I still marvel at his ability to type out whatever he had in mind with only one try. His first copy was good for paste-up. My contribution, except for excerpts from my correspondence and magazines, was mechanical; layout, artwork, hand lettering the M.A. logo, and bringing the copy to my printer. Lt. Alden paid all the expenses: printing and postage.

Lt. Alden did not originate the MODEL AVIATION title. At one time, he mentioned that it had been used by someone else in Brooklyn, but that he obtained permission to use the title. Whatever the origin, he must have recognized it as being just what we needed. It got us away from the “model airplane” term, which tends to have a “toy” connotation.

He suggested the name “AMERICAN ACADEMY OF MODEL AERONAUTICS.” He realized that we needed a name which would not associate us with the juvenile atmosphere, which had been nurtured by the American Boy “Airplane Model League of America” and, especially, by some organizations which exploited model plane activities for self-promoting schemes. - - The name was on the long side, but it did present us in an adult and dignified manner. He also had an aura of technical and educational aspect of model aviation. Having an organization with such potential qualities, it made it possible for Lt. Alden to invite influential persons to join us. Just look at the Advisory Board list. The Board members were outstanding leaders in their field. I am sure with their help, many doors would open for us to present our cause and needs.

What happened to issue No. 3? - - It was never finished. The Academy’s future almost stopped late in 1936 when Lt. Alden could no longer sustain the momentum. He was physically and mentally drained. In part, it could have been his inability to come to terms with the NAA position. Whatever happened, we do not know the details. All we knew was that our focal point was gone as all communications were through him. (His method of working was to ask for opinions from everyone who had something to say. Then, form a consensus of suggestions and opinions, and reconcile them with his own beliefs.) Also, his personal connections and influences were lost to us.

Judging from Lt. Alden’s personality and perseverance to a cause, and the wide range of friends in aviation and elsewhere, I have no doubt that he would have helped us achieve the aims we had set forth in these two issues of MODEL AVIATION if his health had allowed him to do so. - - Luckily, by now, 1936, we were all united in the cause and were able to reestablish the communication among ourselves, and do the best we could without him. This may account why some of us seem so possessive about “our” Academy.

-Frank Zaic, 1980”

AMA Presidents

1st President	1936-1937	Willis C. Brown (Elected to serve in 1936 by Council, Elected to serve in 1937 by membership ballot)
2nd President	1938	Albert L. Lewis (Elected by membership to serve through calendar year)
3rd President	1939-1942	Edward Roberts
4th President	1943-1946	Irwin G. Ohlsson
5th President	1947-1948	Everett N. Angus
6th President	1949-1950	C.O. Wright
7th President	1951	Kenneth Hold
8th President	1952	Frank B. Bushey
9th President	1953-1956	Keith H. Storey
10th President	1957-1958	Claude McCullough
11th President	1959-1960	Dr. Walter A. Good, PhD
12th President	1961-1962	Peter J. Sotich
13th President	1963-Jan 1964	John Worth
14th President (interim)	Feb 1964-Dec 1964	Maynard Hill
15th President	1965-1966	Howard E. Johnson (Note: Two-year terms were initiated in 1965. The rule lasted through 1970.)
16th President	1967-1968	Cliff Weirick
17th President	1969-1970	John E. Patton
18th President	1971-1978	John Clemens
19th President	1979-1980	Earl Witt
20th President	1981-1986	John Grigg

21st President	1987-1995	Don Lowe
22nd President	1996-2007	Dave Brown
23rd President	2008-2011	Dave Mathewson
24th President (interim)	April 15, 2011 – December 2011	Mark Smith
25th President	2012-current	Bob Brown

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