



HARVARD AVIATION CLUB HISTORY OUTLINE

1886:

- ❖ Harvard's first efforts originate from Edward Pickering, director of the Harvard Observatory, with studies in meteorology.

1909:

- ❖ Harvard students, faculty members and scientists found the Harvard Aeronautical Society on November 11

1910-1920:

- ❖ *Harvard I* biplane completed
- ❖ Second aviation meet to take place in the United States—Harvard-Boston Aero Meet
- ❖ Harvard's home-built glider exceeds New England records of speed and altitude
- ❖ *Scientific America* declared that Harvard's Aviation Meet was the "most important held thus far in the United States"
- ❖ "Crowd-pleasing fun" and interesting science merging. Dirigible piloted by Cromwell Dixon had motor stop and almost floated out to sea. It defied President Lowell's orders that no flights take place on Sunday.
- ❖ Club devoted to "promote the advance of aerial navigation [and] to contribute both in theory and practice to the conquest of the air"
- ❖ Nearly 250 members joined at the outset
- ❖ Harvard first university to seek to build airplane. *New Haven Palladium* editorialized that "The higher scientific minds of those connected with universities are just what is needed to further develop the flying machine and other universities should follow in the footsteps of Harvard"
- ❖ Field originally planned at present-day Soldiers Field Road but moved to Squantum Harbor in Boston and christened as the "Harvard Aviation Field"



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- ❖ Boston businessmen raised \$50,000 for the competition, attracting pilots from around the world, including the Wright brothers and their chief competitor, Glenn Curtiss (first person to fly more than a kilometer in an airplane)
- ❖ More than one million spectators came and witnessed the event, including President Taft, Secretary of the Navy and Russian Ambassador
- ❖ First show to demonstrate the war capacity of airplanes (event featured bombing range)
- ❖ Lost \$20,000 the first year due to field improvements; continued the following year and the next, but in 1912, in the first event with women aviators, two persons fell out of an airplane with thousands of watching spectators. The air meets ceased.
- ❖ 1915: Club reorganized
- ❖ The club's activity (and membership) declined until 1919-1920, when active participants revived the organization.
- ❖ Municipal airdrome is proposed for Boston in 1920. It is never built.

1925-1948:

- ❖ The Harvard Flying Club is born.
- ❖ Freddy Ames loans the Harvard Flying Club \$2,000 to lease an OX-5 Travelair from the Boston airport. Club members disassemble and refurbish the aged aircraft.
- ❖ Air racing becomes a popular pastime, and schools along the East Coast, including Harvard, Yale and Brown, participate.
- ❖ Yale President Angell retracts Bulldog aviators' permissions to compete in air races in 1928.
- ❖ From 1930-1932, the Flying Club captures the first three Victories for the Loening Racing Cup.
- ❖ The University Flying Club, appealing to students at Harvard, Radcliffe, MIT, Wellesley and Babson, is formed in 1934.
- ❖ Harvard's Flying Club is one of the top organizations in the world. Club membership surges and sags, and the war effort at first diminishes, but later replenishes, the members' ranks.



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1949-1960:

- ❖ 1949 the Harvard Flying Club reorganizes.
- ❖ Harvard Flying Club resurfaces and offers members flights to destinations. Other flying clubs, including Brown's, join in the efforts.
- ❖ Club has hotbed of activity.
- ❖ The Harvard University-MIT (HUMIT) Flying Club is established.

1960-1982:

- ❖ Harvard Aeronautical Society dissolves in the 1960s

1983:

- ❖ Another Harvard Flying Club is established. A few events are organized, including a commemoration of the Harvard-Boston Aero Meet. Nothing else is reported.

2007:

- ❖ The Harvard College Aviation Club is established.
- ❖ In its inaugural year, the club offers helicopter rides, offers flights for undergraduates and graduates, showcases movie nights and begins collaboration with the MIT Flying Club.

-Sources of information include The Harvard Crimson, Harvard Magazine, Harvard University Archives, and Log Book. Additions always welcome. Please contact Ben Brinkopf '11 (bbrinkop@fas.harvard.edu).