



HAMMONDSPORT

Hammondsport, New York, USA

BIRTHPLACE OF NAVAL AVIATION • KEUKA LAKE, NEW YORK

DEDICATED JUNE 2025



Curtiss Park in Hammondsport. The AIAA Historic Aerospace Sites plaque is on the far left.

Hammondsport, New York, is the proud hometown of Glenn H. Curtiss, a legendary figure in early flight and the “Father of Naval Aviation.” Long before he conquered the skies, Curtiss was a renowned builder of lightweight, powerful engines, earning him the title “Fastest Man on Earth” in 1907 on a V-8 motorcycle. It was here, between 1904 and 1915, that Curtiss collaborated with other aviation pioneers, including Alexander Graham Bell, to foster significant advancements in the field.

His unparalleled expertise in propulsion transformed his local shop into an incubator for aerospace engineering, establishing the Finger Lakes region as a vital cradle of American aviation.

Curtiss transformed Hammondsport into a hub of early aviation, collaborating with the Aerial Experiment Association to build the groundbreaking June Bug biplane. Funded by Mabel Hubbard Bell, the AEA team introduced crucial innovations like the aileron for lateral control. On July 4, 1908, Curtiss successfully flew the June Bug 5,085 feet, officially winning the Scientific American Cup for the first public flight of over one kilometer in an American aircraft.



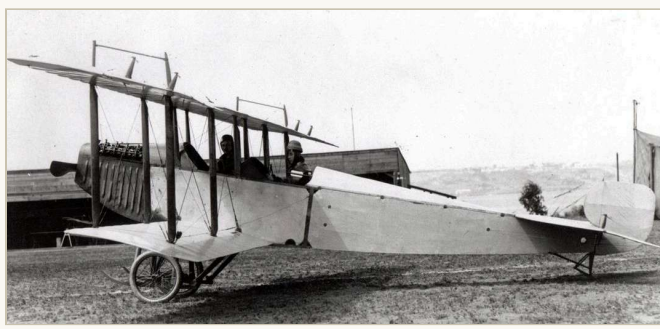
G. H. Curtiss winning the Scientific American Trophy with the “June Bug” over Hammondsport, N.Y., July 4, 1908.



Glenn H. Curtiss at the controls of one of his early machines, whose engineering work on Keuka Lake helped define the earliest years of American aviation.

This highly publicized, pre-announced flight proved to the world that powered, heavier-than-air flight was a practical reality, and it placed Hammondsport at the center of the nation's attention.

Curtiss continued to innovate on Keuka Lake, eventually developing pioneering amphibious aircraft. Recognizing the vast strategic potential of water-based aviation, he introduced the Triad, an aircraft designed to operate on land, sea, and air. Featuring a revolutionary retractable landing gear system, the Triad caught the immediate attention of the military. The Navy took notice and designated it the A-1, making it the first U.S. Navy aircraft and earning Curtiss the 1912 Collier Trophy.



The Curtiss Model J, forerunner of the JN-4 "Jenny," the aircraft that introduced a generation of pilots, and the public, to powered flight.

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Glenn Curtiss is known as the Father of Naval Aviation for his joint efforts with the U.S. Navy and his pioneering designs of the seaplane and flying boats.

Perhaps his most culturally significant creation was the JN-4 "Jenny," which became the most widely used U.S. training aircraft during World War I. The Jenny, powered by the reliable Curtiss OX-5 engine, trained the vast majority of North American pilots during the conflict.

After the war, the Jenny achieved tremendous mass appeal as it was heavily utilized by civilian barnstorming pilots traveling the country. Thousands of surplus aircraft were sold to the public, introducing a generation to the thrill of flight. The JN-4 was also used by the Army to inaugurate the U.S. regular airmail service in May 1918. The enduring legacy of the Jenny helped embed aviation into the public imagination.

The AIAA Historic Aerospace Sites Committee designated Hammondsport to honor these monumental achievements, officially dedicating the site in June 2025. Supported by the Niagara Frontier Section, this designation recognizes Hammondsport as a testament to the ingenuity and perseverance of Glenn Curtiss and his team.

This designation joins a national registry of sites recognized by AIAA for their enduring contribution to the advancement of aeronautics and astronautics.