

# ATA Memorial in Millville, PA

By Brian Karli

During my research looking for some of the first pilots in my home town of Lebanon County, PA., I found an article about one of them who mentioned “A war museum to honor the ATA in Millville, PA.” This was very intriguing to me, because having lived a large portion of my life in Central Pennsylvania, I had never heard of such a memorial. I started flying when I was a kid in the 1980s, and none of the pilots ever mentioned it either.

My first step was to reach out to the local Historical Society in Columbia County. Dani Crossley responded to my inquiry with a response from George Holdren, one of the volunteers who said:

*“This is so special!! Ben Warne owned a farm at Pine Summit. He was a member of the Air Transport Auxiliary. He enlisted the aid of Millville Boy Scout Troop 58 who gathered mountain stones in the vicinity to build a small museum to honor the ATA. On the day it was dedicated Troop 58 arrived to help him greet visitors. Mark Reiner, my wife's son-in-law, helped both gather the stones and assist at the dedication. Ben Warne drove an old red pick-up truck to the top of the hill on his farm where the museum was located. When he prepared to leave at the end of the day his truck was nowhere to be found. When he returned home he found the pick-up inside of his barn. It had rolled down the hill, crashed through the side of the barn and come to rest there. Ben has flown his last flight. Mark believes his wife returned to her birthplace in England. It is unknown what happened to those items in the museum. At one time Ben Warne gave me a personal tour of his beloved museum. I believe Dan Reiner, Mark's father, was the Scoutmaster of Troop 58.”*

So, there really was a “war museum in Millville.” You might ask, “What is this ATA and why did someone build a museum about it?”

Back in World War II, Germany quickly conquered Western Europe. Separated by a channel of water, England alone stood to repel the invaders. Every British citizen was asked to help save their island. Young men became soldiers. Women worked the factories. Even the elderly pitched in to aid the war effort.

British manufacturing moved into high gear. They were producing fighter planes, bombers and training planes as fast as they could. There was one problem. Pilots were needed to fly the planes from the factories to the frontline air bases in the south. England could not spare a single pilot. Every one of them was needed to fight the German Luftwaffe bombing their cities.

The Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) was formed to ferry new, repaired, and damaged military planes from the factories to where they were needed. The ATA recruited pilots from wherever they could find them, attracting pilots who were considered unusable by the Royal Air Force because they were too old, physically unfit or female. A unique feature of the ATA was that physical disabilities were ignored if the pilot could do the job. There were some one-armed, one-

legged, short-sighted and one-eyed pilots in the group. Playing on the three letters ATA, they humorously referred to themselves as "Ancient and Tattered Airmen."

Millville, PA's own Ben Warne was part of this group. Like the Lebanon County pilot I was researching, many of these American pilots went to England not because they were unfit, but because they wanted to help, and America had not yet entered the war. Being private pilots already, their services were welcomed by the ATA.

Nearly 1300 pilots volunteered for the ATA. These pilots delivered more than 300,000 aircraft during the war years.

Another unique feature of the ATA was the use of women pilots. Female ATA pilots, nicknamed "Attagirls" had a high profile in the press. There were 166 women pilots from Britain, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Poland and the United States. Fifteen of them lost their lives. Women also received equal pay, which was unusual for the time. One of these female pilots was linked to a flight with Ben Warne, as we will see.

Ben Warne sailed to England in April, 1941 on the USS Mercier with several other volunteer American pilots. I found a note that poor Ben developed appendicitis and was sick the entire month of May.



*Here is a picture of Ben, seventh from the left. No. 1 Ferry Pool Ferry pilots and instructors L-R; 'Bill' Harben, W. J. White, Jim Mollison, P. L. Burnett, Joan Hughes, Stewart Keith-Jopp, 'Ben' Warne, 'Doc' Whitehurst; J. Shoemith, 'Red' Imes, R. H. Henderson, Harry Ellis, Lettice Curtis, Klemens Dlugaszewski, Vic Pieper.*

I was able to find a website containing many stories and records from the ATA. I searched Ben's name. Since there was a database of monthly accidents, I found him there. Now, don't think because I found two entries, Ben was not a good pilot. The ATA had to fly in awful English weather, under the pressure of wartime and often jumping from a fighter to a bomber with little to no training. The accident list was long. I saw several names

repeated. Even my Lebanon County pilot was there too. Flying was a hazardous business back in 1941.

Ben was flying a Harvard, which was a two-place intermediate trainer when this happened:

*Harvard P.5812 White Waltham, 4.1.42, 12.15 hours. F/O G. B. Warne, American, Uninjured. Pilot landed aircraft with undercarriage retracted due to bad cockpit drill during an instructional flight.*



Remember, ATA pilots were thrust into flying an airplane they had never even seen before. Accidents happen. Ben's second incident involved a Hudson Bomber:

*AFTS112, Hudson I N.7238, Mr. White Waltham, 13.8.44, 10.35 hours. Flt/Capt. G. B Warne, American, S/O (Miss) J. Plant, American, Both injured. The pilot was commended for his skillful handling of the aircraft and for his prompt and courageous action after the accident in rescuing his pupil from the burning wreckage. Shortly after take-off the port engine was seen to be on fire and in spite of thick smoke in the cockpit, the pilot force landed the aircraft with the undercarriage retracted, in a field. The cause of the fire is being further investigated.*



His copilot on this ill-fated flight was ATA pilot Jane Plant. She was born in Lock Haven, PA and started flying as a 12-year-old girl. She personally delivered 185 Spitfire fighter planes during the war. Her writings and memorabilia survive at the Hoover Institution Library.

Ben Warne was given a medal for his actions that day.

Of the 1300 pilots of the ATA, 174 men and women did not make it home. You can see why, when Ben returned to Millville in September 1945, he wanted to honor his friends.

Lets' go back to the original newspaper clipping, the one which started this whole thing. The one about my Lebanon County ATA pilot named John Yingst. It was published in March 1984. John said:

**"a war museum to honor the ATA in Millville, PA., was dedicated in October 1983. President Reagan, Canadian Prime Minister Pierry Trudeau and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher sent flags from their respective nations to fly at the memorial"**

People/Leisure **SUNDAY Pennsylvanian** Section **C**  
March 4, 1984

### Early Aviator Recalls Barnstorming Days

By MARGARET MOYER Staff Writer

John Yinger is a good-looking American. There would seem to be little chance of his being a barnstormer. In fact, he is a history teacher at a place in Lebanon County, Pa. But Yinger, an early aviator from Lebanon County, has a story to tell.

Yinger later, nevertheless, compared his life to that of a barnstormer. In 1918, Yinger flew the first airplane out of Lebanon County, Pennsylvania, Harrisburg.

It was the first and possibly only airplane to leave Lebanon County to serve during World War II, joining the Air Transport Auxiliary, a flight service based in England and employing pilots from many countries.

He was one of 100 of the "barnstormers," young airplane pilots who were needed in that role for the transport of the country.

"We did without radio, instruments or maps," he recalled. Yinger flew a group of five planes which delivered mail to the front lines. They carried out 100 missions, including 100 flights in 100 days.

Yinger, who is now 70, is a resident of Lebanon County, Pa. He was born in Lebanon, Pa., and is a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh. He is married and has three children. He is a member of the Air Transport Auxiliary, a flight service based in England and employing pilots from many countries.

He was born in Lebanon County, Pa. He was born in Lebanon, Pa., and is a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh. He is married and has three children. He is a member of the Air Transport Auxiliary, a flight service based in England and employing pilots from many countries.

John Yinger is pictured in front of a Travelair biplane in which he flew the first airmail from Lebanon to Harrisburg in 1918.

Yinger examines his old flying helmet, a reminder of barnstorming days.

He was born in Lebanon County, Pa. He was born in Lebanon, Pa., and is a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh. He is married and has three children. He is a member of the Air Transport Auxiliary, a flight service based in England and employing pilots from many countries.

He was born in Lebanon County, Pa. He was born in Lebanon, Pa., and is a graduate of the University of Pittsburgh. He is married and has three children. He is a member of the Air Transport Auxiliary, a flight service based in England and employing pilots from many countries.

Yinger in a British Spitfire fighter plane, during his 'Clark' Cable tour.

Yinger in a British Spitfire fighter plane, during his 'Clark' Cable tour.

Yinger was later impressed by Camp's "loner revolutionist" activities. Yinger and his wife occasionally travel to England for ATA meetings and visit the ATA Memorial Museum at Stoneham, Hampshire, a war museum to honor the ATA in Millville, Pa., was dedicated in October 1983. President Reagan, Canadian Prime Minister Pierry Trudeau and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher sent flags from their respective nations to fly at the memorial.

Along with Yinger's photos, newspaper clippings and letters in an album is a small book that has been made up by Yinger. The book contains letters and photos of Yinger's family and friends. The book is a collection of letters and photos of Yinger's family and friends. The book is a collection of letters and photos of Yinger's family and friends. The book is a collection of letters and photos of Yinger's family and friends.

Yinger was later impressed by Camp's "loner revolutionist" activities. Yinger and his wife occasionally travel to England for ATA meetings and visit the ATA Memorial Museum at Stoneham, Hampshire, a war museum to honor the ATA in Millville, Pa., was dedicated in October 1983. President Reagan, Canadian Prime Minister Pierry Trudeau and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher sent flags from their respective nations to fly at the memorial.

Along with Yinger's photos, newspaper clippings and letters in an album is a small book that has been made up by Yinger. The book contains letters and photos of Yinger's family and friends. The book is a collection of letters and photos of Yinger's family and friends. The book is a collection of letters and photos of Yinger's family and friends.

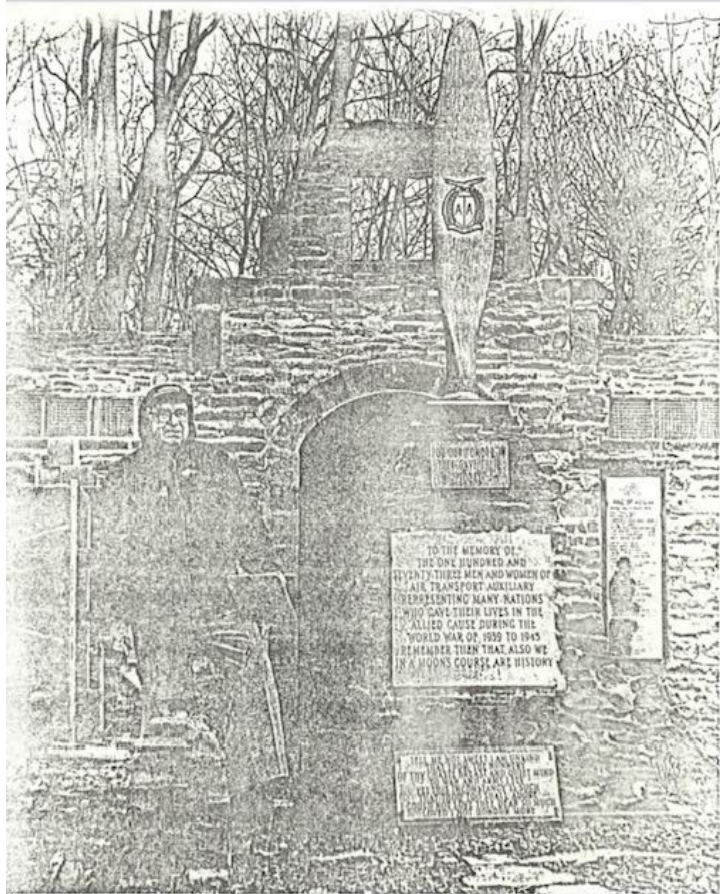
Yinger was later impressed by Camp's "loner revolutionist" activities. Yinger and his wife occasionally travel to England for ATA meetings and visit the ATA Memorial Museum at Stoneham, Hampshire, a war museum to honor the ATA in Millville, Pa., was dedicated in October 1983. President Reagan, Canadian Prime Minister Pierry Trudeau and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher sent flags from their respective nations to fly at the memorial.

Along with Yinger's photos, newspaper clippings and letters in an album is a small book that has been made up by Yinger. The book contains letters and photos of Yinger's family and friends. The book is a collection of letters and photos of Yinger's family and friends. The book is a collection of letters and photos of Yinger's family and friends.

Yinger was later impressed by Camp's "loner revolutionist" activities. Yinger and his wife occasionally travel to England for ATA meetings and visit the ATA Memorial Museum at Stoneham, Hampshire, a war museum to honor the ATA in Millville, Pa., was dedicated in October 1983. President Reagan, Canadian Prime Minister Pierry Trudeau and British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher sent flags from their respective nations to fly at the memorial.

Along with Yinger's photos, newspaper clippings and letters in an album is a small book that has been made up by Yinger. The book contains letters and photos of Yinger's family and friends. The book is a collection of letters and photos of Yinger's family and friends. The book is a collection of letters and photos of Yinger's family and friends.

OK, so George Holdren provided proof the memorial existed. But where? What did it look like? Back to the internet. At the Ronald Reagan Library website, I found something:



I know it is not the greatest photo, but there is Ben and so is the memorial.

Also, I found a letter to the White House about the dedication:



Murray F. Holdren  
Box 262,  
Millville, PA 17846

(717) 458-6159

May 19, 1983

Assistant to the President for Public Liaison  
Executive Office of the President  
The White House Office  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue  
Washington, DC 20500

To the Assistant:

I am writing this letter in behalf of Ben Warne, RD #1 Millville, PA 17846. Phone (717) 458-6593.

On October 1, 1983, a museum will be dedicated to the memory of 174 men and women of the Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) who gave their lives in the Allied cause during WWII. The building will be the repository for memorabilia associated with the organization that linked these people with about 3500 survivors from 24 nations. The dedication will be witnessed by at least 100 survivors or their families representing at least 16 nations.

The ATA traces its origins to September 8, 1939 when a group of civilian pilots met in the Royal Hotel in Bristol, England to consider what contribution they could make to the British War Effort. As a result of that meeting an international call was issued for volunteers to ferry aircraft to the RAF, and the response gave birth to the ATA that logged 309,011 aircraft movements that took the lives of 27 Americans.

An earlier monument and now the museum were conceived and built through the dedication of Ben Warne, a pilot with the ATA, who is determined to leave behind a lasting memorial in the United States to the heroic efforts of those volunteers 275 of whom were from this country.

Enclosed are some clippings related to the monument that was dedicated in 1981 and a photograph showing Mr. Warne, the monument and the museum that is nearing completion.

Also enclosed are copies of correspondence with 10 Downing Street that has resulted in the donation of a 3x6 Union Jack for display at the ceremonies.

This letter is a request for a similar or appropriate form of recognition from the government of the United States. Any efforts you make will be warmly appreciated. You may contact me or preferably Mr. Warne himself.

Murray F. Holdren

The White House responded:

THE WHITE HOUSE  
WASHINGTON  
September 12, 1983

MEMORANDUM TO: DODIE LIVINGSTON  
FROM: Morton C. Blackwell *MB*  
SUBJECT: Presidential Message, Re: Dedication of Air Transport Auxiliary Museum

Attached is a copy of correspondence we have received regarding the dedication of a museum to commemorate the Air Transport Auxiliary on October 1, 1983.

The American Legion strongly supports this request and has made arrangements for an American flag flown over the Capitol to be presented at the dedication ceremonies. Since this flag will be presented on behalf of the United States, it would be appropriate for the Presidential remarks to include such a reference.

Please draft an appropriate Presidential message and send it to Mr. Ben Warne, RD #1, Millville, PA 17846.

I would appreciate receiving a copy of the greeting so that I may inform Mr. Holdren of the fact that the Presidential message is forthcoming for the event.

MCB:jet

Attachments a/s

Dodie Livingston was the Special Assistant to President Reagan and Director of the Office of Special Presidential Messages at the White House.

From 1981-1984, Morton C. Blackwell was the Special Assistant to President Reagan.



Maybe someone from Millville knows Murray F Holdren?

Who would have thought one little article about a hometown pilot would have yielded so much information. John Yingst passed away in 1991 before I got to meet him. Ben Warne is also gone, and with them are stories I wish I would have heard.

If anyone can shed some light on the memorial, or if it still exists, please let us know.