

## August Spotlight on Norwalk's Aviation History... Up, up, up and away!

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This month, the Norwalk History Room highlights the history of aviation, a technology that has revolutionized transportation, exploration, military operations and more. The phenomenon of flight is celebrated each year on August 19 as that date is known as National Aviation Day. According to [Nasa.gov](https://www.nasa.gov/feature/langley/national-aviation-day-2018) (<https://www.nasa.gov/feature/langley/national-aviation-day-2018>), this observance, which is recognized on the birthday of aviation pioneer Orville Wright, was first proclaimed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt himself.

In Norwalk, our aviation history, began with pilots taking off and landing in a field in Darien. According to Ed Silk who was quoted in an article from the Norwalk Hour newspaper, "Horses were occasionally getting in the way," which made it difficult for the pilots. Following this revelation, a request was then made of Dr. Alvin Wadsworth, a well-known Norwalk Psychiatrist by some of the fly boys if they may use a field he owned at the top of West Rocks Rd.

As the evolution of aviation progressed, the 1929 Norwalk City Directory has the very first listing for the Norwalk Aviation, Inc. and there was no radio set up at that time! The airport was only one hangar with its name painted on the roof and this was the only way pilots knew the location of the airport. Also in 1929, the Norwalk Women's City Club hosted an "aviation tea" that featured female notable flier Neva Finley Paris.

Another fun fact is that at one time, Norwalk had an airmail service. As the twentieth century forged on, this field was closed in 1940 due to pressure from the residents of the city and the government who did not like recreational flying during the war years. It's interesting to note that the site was then used by spotters during WWII, checking aircraft as it flew over the city.

Norwalk's fascinating aviation history doesn't stop there. Seaplanes, used both transportation and recreational purposes have been parked at the marina since the late 1940s. Helicopters became useful in the 1950s with the advent of helicopter pads. Companies such as Norden (also known for their bombsite) and Purdue Pharma when their offices were at 50 Washington Street used these facilities to the quick transport of certain employees. In fact, the one at Merritt 7 is used to transport patients at Norwalk Hospital.

Interested in learning more? Additional Norwalk aviation history may be found in the Norwalk History Room at the Norwalk Public Library. Come discover photos and additional newspaper stories that are all related to local aviation information. If you have not had a chance to stop by the Norwalk History Room this summer, we invite you to come learn more about your hometown in August!

If you wish to find out more about the Norwalk History Room, please go to our [webpage](http://www.norwalkpl.org/162/Norwalk-History-Room) on the NPL website: <http://www.norwalkpl.org/162/Norwalk-History-Room>

Come and visit! Learn more about your hometown!