It was similar to the Curtiss pushers of that era, however it differed in some notable respects. It had a unique four-wheel undercarriage (best seen above). It also appears to incorporate some features from French designs, namely, side curtains like the Voisin machines, and apparently ailerons cut into the wing, as on Farman machines. Like most biplane pusher types of the time, it combines the Wright brothers’ forward elevator with an additional horizontal surface in the tail. Their next machine, in 1911, had dual controls and eliminated the forward elevator; it retained the four wheel landing gear and had ailerons cut into the wings. This machine may have been the first training aircraft to feature controls that were separate and identical for instructor and student. It was powered by a Kirkham B-6 engine. With this machine, they soon started an aviation school.

(Continued on page 2)
Kirkham aircraft engines of Savona, NY, the Thomases’ first power plants
In 1904 Charles B. Kirkham and Glenn Curtiss had recently begun building engines together when they found an odd customer. A “New York aeronaut” wanted one of their engines for his dirigible. Curtiss and Kirkham rode their motorcycles out to Franklin, NY, to deliver it. Not yet seeing a future in aviation engines, Curtiss began manufacturing motorcycles and Kirkham founded a company in Bath, NY, to build automobile engines. This company was the source of the engine for Thomas’s first machine, in 1909. By 1910, New York’s southern tier had not one, but two airplane manufacturers, Curtiss and Thomas, so after taking a correspondence course in mechanical engineering, Kirkham designed and built his first aircraft engine, the B-6. The Smithsonian Air and Space Museum displays a Kirkham B-6 model with a placard stating the engine was used in the Aerial Exhibition Company’s Burgess Hydroplane Model F, the Kirkham tractor biplane, and the Thomas Model TA, shown above. It was a water-cooled, 55 hp in-line six. The Thomas Brothers continued using Kirkham engines until 1913.

NEXT ISSUE: Part Two, the Thomas flying boats; the Thomas School of Aviation begins.

Did you see the article on our Tommy in the Fall 2011 edition of “Life in the Finger Lakes”? If you missed it, checkout the ‘Made In The Finger Lakes’ section at www.lifeinthefingerlakes.com and look for the article “Tommy Comes Home” by Kimberly Price.

Or, the digital issue at: http://digital.turn-page.com/issue/38926/3

Spring is in the air...so is the sawdust. After a very mild winter (we should have been working in March) I came home to a ‘Snow Day’ followed by a cold spell which caused us to postpone activities for a couple of days after an initial start on April 19th.

We are now at full stride with a good number of projects underway. Having completed most of the work on the wings last year, we are now well into the restoration of the fuselage. This opens up a number of interesting projects that offer volunteers of any skill level an opportunity to join in the fun.

Woodworking, mechanical tasks, cleaning, painting, machining, you name it, come on over and join our volunteers in the fun. No special skills required. Bringing this historical relic back to life can be a very satisfying past time.

Call at (607)-275-7176 or e-mail tomasaero@aol.com and let us know if you would like to join us. We’ll find a schedule and a project that will interest you.

-By Don Funke

From the Restoration Shop

‘More than one way to skin a cat” (above)

Turtle Deck comes off for repair (below)

Our Dryden friends pay us a visit on May 1st (above)
**Our Restoration Volunteers**

Our restoration efforts would be fruitless if not for the generosity of our volunteer’s time and expertise. Here is a list of our current volunteers:


**Did You Know?**

- Our S-4C Tommy was built in Ithaca in April 1918.
- The Tommy was built by the Thomas-Morse Aircraft Corporation in Ithaca, NY. Formerly the Thomas Brothers Airplane Company, Inc.
- Tommy was unique in that it was the first single seater designed for the purpose of training pursuit pilots.
- The success of the Tommy model S-4B, and the need for additional advanced training planes led the U.S. War Department to place an order for 400 of the improved S-4C model on January 9th, 1918.
- The first 50 S-4Cs built had a Gnome engine. That engine was replaced in production with a Le Rhone engine.

(info taken from Profile Publications “The Thomas-Morse Scout—Number 68”)

**Tommy Gets a New Shop … Just In Time!**

Being able to restore the wings in the original Thomas-Morse plant on S. Aurora Street where they were built almost 100 years ago was a rare privilege indeed.

When Emerson Power Transmission decided to close the doors on the South Hill Plant we were left with the question: “Where do we go now?” With the restoration well underway and EPT willing to donate much of their vintage wood working equipment, we had an urgent need for sizable space with heavy floor loading and adequate power.

Mr. Albert Heidt comes to the rescue. An avid collector and restoration buff, he threw us a life raft by offering a large part of his beautiful 60ft X 100ft facility in Dryden. Not only that but he helped move tons of donated equipment to his shop from EPT.

That was in December of 2010. By the spring of 2011 we were up and running and back in business. In fact we were able to keep the project on schedule in spite of the move.

Mr. Heidt, better known as ‘Skeeter’, is always involved and willing to share his vast experience in restoration techniques.

We are deeply indebted to Mr. Heidt for all he has done.
I T H A C A A V I A T I O N
H E R I T A G E
F O U N D A T I O N

c/o Randy Marcus, Treasurer
119 E. Seneca St.
Ithaca, NY 14850

I T H A C A A V I A T I O N
H E R I T A G E
F O U N D A T I O N

I'd like to help get the Tommy Project off the ground by making a gift of:

☐ $50.00  ☐ $100.00  ☐ $250.00  ☐ $500.00  ☐ $_____

I'd like to make my gift in ____ installments of $______.

Please make your check payable to Ithaca Aviation Heritage Foundation, Inc. and mail to 119 East Seneca St. Ithaca, NY 14850.

Your gift can also be made by credit card through our secure PayPal account by visiting our website, tommycomehome.org

IAHF, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) not-for-profit corporation; your charitable donation is considered tax deductible under the IRS Code.

I would like to volunteer my time to the Tommy Project

NAME

EMAIL

ADDRESS

TELEPHONE

CITY

STATE

ZIP