

# ESSINGTON SEAPLANE BASE



1915-2015

PREPARED BY THE AERO  
CLUB OF PENNSYLVANIA



# HISTORY

- 1915, Robert Glendenning, members of Aero Club of Pa. purchase Curtiss flying boats and hire Frank Mills. Start Philadelphia School of Aviation
  - 1917, War breaks out.
  - 1936, Frank Mills buys property
  - 1945, Mills brothers re-start ops
  - 1970's, Downtown Airlines
  - 2000, Bob retires. Property sold
- 2006, Tinicum township buys property intent on improving





# TODAY

- The oldest continuously operated seaplane base in the world.
- But instruction ceased in 2013 with sale of the last seaplane. Hank retired. No instructor.
- No hangar space, ramp in disrepair, floating dock is in ok shape.
- Tree height on Tinicum island can make approaches difficult
- Slow progress on improvements, but state B.O.A. interested in helping.





# GOALS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

- Provide a tourist attraction
- Maintain this unique feature of the community
- Provide economic benefit to community
- Maintain the historical significance of the base
- Limit encroachment by Philly International (?)
- Because it's cool



# OTHER BASES

- Tavares, FL - "America's Seaplane City"
- Rising Sun, Indiana
- Seattle
- Manhattan
- Sunbury, Pa
- Havre de Grace, Md
- Maine, Alaska, Minnesota and Florida
- Approx 300 public bases nationwide





# OPPORTUNITIES

Flight Training

Charter Service

Sightseeing

Private operations

Hangar rent

Fuel sales

Transients

Museum

Community events

Splash-Ins



# IMPORTANT SITE DETAILS

Ramp

Security

Floating docs

Office

Hangars

Classroom

Fuel Farm

Museum



# TRAINING

- Proximity to Philly International brings airline pilots to get seaplane rating
- Availability of training generates interest by local pilot community
- Requires available instructor, plane, examiner, maybe office and classroom
- May be revenue neutral, but provides many other benefits



# CHARTER SERVICE

Nationwide seaplane charter / air service ops:

- Manhattan to Hamptons
- Seattle Vancouver
- Florida to the islands
- Wilderness flights, Minnesota, Alaska, Maine

Serious undertaking. Usually profitable.



# SIGHTSEEING FLIGHTS

- Proximity to Philly a plus and minus
- Requires coordination with Philly tower to head toward the city
- Might not be close enough to center city to attract best customer base
- Serious operation requires office, regular availability of pilots, aircraft, fuel, insurance.
- Profitability depends on many factors



# PRIVATE OPS

- Creates activity and interest
- Attracts potential pilots, instructors and local seaplane organization to help run things
- Might attract private capital
- Income from hangar leasing, fuel sales
- Might provide aircraft for other operations
- Requires hangars, fuel, ramp, tractor, dolly



# TRANSIENTS

- Opportunity to sell fuel, generate interest, and maybe bring some revenue to local businesses
- Ramp probably needed for overnight stays
- Fuels sales limited to locals and a few transients
- However, can be tricky for transient pilots to navigate to the base due to airspace and local conditions (tide, winds, Tinicum island, boats.
- Water is fresh; only brackish in extreme drought.



# MUSEUM

- Provides additional tourist attraction
- Helps preserve historical significance
- Millville might share some of Mills collection
- Requires a small space, likely in Lazaretto



# EVENTS & SPLASH-INS

- "Splash-in" attracts regional seaplanes
- Could coincide with community event(s). Mutual benefit.
- Large events usually include displays, food, flying contests, and sometimes camping.



- Typical regional event attracts 5-20 aircraft
- Ramp allows amphibians out of water to leave space for floatplanes.



# RAMP

- Ramp needed to pull local aircraft and transients from water
- Ideal ramp has unique requirements compared to boat ramp (slope, width, transition, obstructions)
- Combined boat A/C ramp may not be ideal
- Tavares had to eliminate boat traffic from their ramp (boats and trailers created too much washout, a major hazard to amphib gear)



# DOCKS

- Optimal dock design depends on aircraft type
- "Flying boats" are usually moored, beached, or they taxi out of water
- "Floatplanes" are usually high wing and can approach docks without high posts
- Winds, tide and river flow affects docking
- Square floating docks are the most versatile
- Best design allows multiple approaches and ability to go around if conditions are not ideal.



# OPERATING ENTITY

- A seaplane base authority or advisory group could develop, lease and operate the base
- Has potential to accelerate development, increase interest by local seaplane group, and perhaps offer liability protection.
- Could be a private or public airport organization
- Township can retain final authority

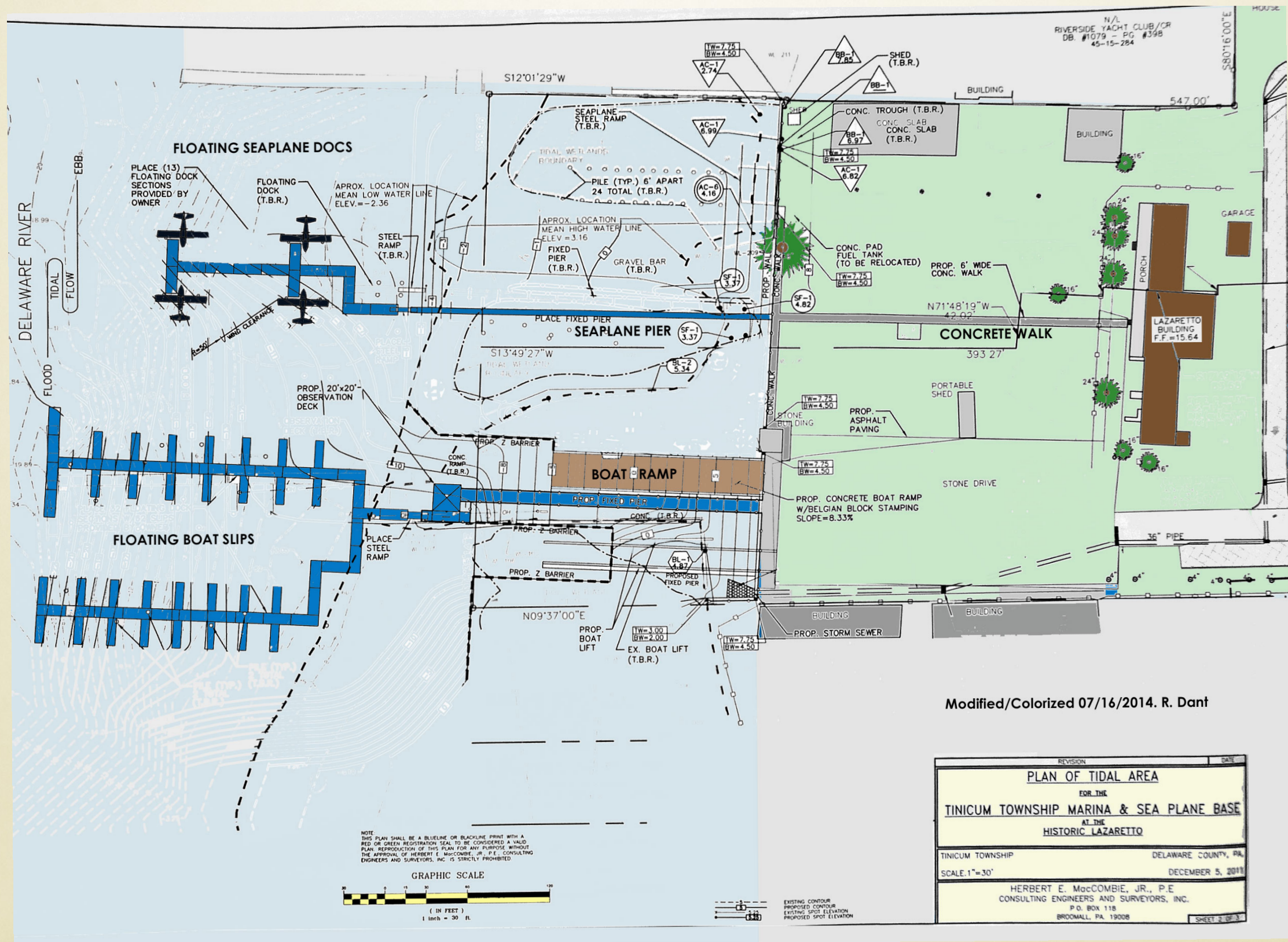


# TAVARES, FL

- City embraced seaplanes as a major attraction.
- On fresh water lake with clear approaches.
- Co-located with city park and boat slips. Pavilion and gazebo available for rental
- Local company provides training, sightseeing
- Marine and aviation fuel available
- Annual "Splash-in"
- Has attracted numerous aviation businesses to community
- [www.tavares.org/899/Seaplane-Base-Marina](http://www.tavares.org/899/Seaplane-Base-Marina)



# CURRENT TOWNSHIP PLAN



Modified/Colorized 07/16/2014. R. Dant

REVISION	DATE
PLAN OF TIDAL AREA	
FOR THE	
TINICUM TOWNSHIP MARINA & SEA PLANE BASE	
AT THE	
HISTORIC LAZARETTO	
TINICUM TOWNSHIP	DELAWARE COUNTY, PA.
SCALE: 1" = 30'	DECEMBER 5, 2011
HERBERT E. MACCOMBIE, JR., P.E.	
CONSULTING ENGINEERS AND SURVEYORS, INC.	
P.O. BOX 118	
BROOMALL, PA. 19008	
SHEET 2 OF 2	



# CONCERNS / SUGGESTIONS

- No seaplane ramp - ramp provides significant benefits
- No hangars - hangars not critical, but would attract local pilots and local operations
- Current dock design offers difficult approach angle and difficult go around
- Square or rectangle docs are most versatile



# NEXT STEPS

- Present to township board (this presentation)
- Foster idea of airport development group
- Seek help of an experienced airport manager
- Solicit interest from local pilot groups
- Develop more detailed proposals
- Solicit funds for possible capital improvements
- Plan a 2015, 100th Anniversary Splash In.