

Finding Amelia

by Lynne Belluscio

Sometimes I just have to shake my head. I don't know really what to say. Last week, I'm watching Channel 8 out of Rochester and they say that they will be showing a recently discovered movie of Amelia Earhart which they think is at the opening of the airport in LeRoy. Hmmmm. Amelia was not at the opening of the Woodward Airport. So I watched the 11 o'clock news with Maureen McQuire and sure enough, there's Amelia standing in front of a radio microphone with the call letters of a Syracuse radio station. It looks like a hot summer day, with men in their shirt sleeves. And then it's over. But the story continues to say that Mike West of Livonia acquired several reels of film that had been taken by Dr. Harold Trott who was an aviation enthusiast. West had been given the reels of film by a descendent of Dr. Trott's and had put them on a shelf and had forgotten about them. But a while ago, he dug them out and became curious about the reel that had a note about LeRoy and Amelia Earhart. He turned the film over to Glenn Galbraith of ROC Archive who digitalized the film. At some point they contacted Channel 8 with the hope that if the film was aired, they might solve the mystery.

No sooner than I watched the film, I emailed



Channel 8 and said that indeed it was Amelia Earhart, but #1 She did not attend the opening of the Woodward Airport. Her plane the Friendship was in LeRoy on the opening of the airport, but Earhart was not in LeRoy. #2 When she did visit LeRoy and the Woodward Airport, it was in the winter on January 24, 1929. She did not fly into the airport. She came by car from Rochester . . . and that we had photos of her visit. She was wearing a winter coat and everyone that day had winter coats. I even said that the little girl in the photographs of the January visit, was still alive and could be contacted to share her memories of meeting Earhart. But the next night, at the next broadcast, it still seems that they were still talking about the mystery of the film. I suspect it was to attract more viewers.

In the meantime, Brian Duddy, who wrote the book on the Woodward Airport, weighed in and posted his comments on facebook. He had just read Justin Murphy's article in the Rochester Democrat and

Chronicle about the film and Brian was surprised that they had not even searched their own newspaper's archives to find the article about Earhart coming to LeRoy in January 1929. Murphy's article also stated that Dr. Trott was co-owner of Amelia Earhart's airplane. I'm not sure where they got that information. Brian Duddy has done a lot of research on the Friendship. He knows that it was owned by the Mechanical Science Corporation, and Brian is pretty sure Donald Woodward owned the Mechanical Science Corporation. And there is speculation that Woodward owned the airplane before Earhart crossed the Atlantic. Brian does not even mention Dr. Trott.

At this point I'm not sure where the whole mystery stands. But I do know that the 30 seconds which shows Amelia Earhart at the microphone, was not taken in LeRoy. Last Friday, Mike West called the Historical Society and said that he wants to visit LeRoy soon to look at our photographs. In the meantime, he's waiting for

more films to be processed. He mentioned that in one film he is pretty sure he can identify Franklin D. Roosevelt.

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