

# *TIGHAR TRACKS*

THE JOURNAL OF THE INTERNATIONAL GROUP FOR HISTORIC AIRCRAFT RECOVERY





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## About TIGHAR

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TIGHAR (pronounced "tiger") is an acronym for The International Group for Historic Aircraft Recovery, a 501(c)(3) non-profit educational foundation.

TIGHAR's activities include:

- Investigating aviation and aerospace historical questions and mysteries through archival research, forensic data analysis, and archeological expeditions.
- Producing papers, publications, and videos to further the foundation's educational mission.
- Providing expert historical and archaeological research to government agencies for evaluation of cultural resources related to aviation/aerospace.
- Advocating for accuracy, integrity and professionalism in the field of aviation historical investigation and the preservation of the material culture of flight.

TIGHAR's activities are conducted primarily by member volunteers under the direction of a small full-time professional staff. The organization's research is publicly available via the TIGHAR website.

## On the Cover

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Patrick "Patsy" Judge  
1912-1989

Screen shot from "Land and Sea,"  
CBC documentary about the Cape  
Shore, 1981

[https://www.youtube.com/  
watch?v=Elb-rVI2Eg0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Elb-rVI2Eg0)

## On the Web

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<https://tighar.org>

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# PROJECT MIDNIGHT GHOST

## EXPEDITION XXXIII

On June 13, 14, and 15, 2023 a TIGHAR team carried out search operations in Gull Pond on the Newfoundland Cape Shore under an Archaeological Investigation Permit issued to archaeologist Roy Skanes by the Provincial Archaeology Office. The objective of the expedition was to test the hypothesis that an aircraft crashed in the immediate vicinity of the small rocky island in the middle of the pond.



## The TIGHAR Team



*Ric Gillespie, Oxford, PA, expedition leader. Photo by A. Marshall.*



*Mark Smith, Jersey City, NJ – digital tech support, video documentation and drone pilot. Photo by R. Gillespie.*



*Robert Schott, Cranfield, NJ – searcher. Photo by R. Gillespie.*



*Bill Mangus, Colorado Springs, CO – daily log. Photo by R. Gillespie.*



*The TIGHAR Newfoundland Contingent, L to R: Alfred Marshall, Portugal Cove, NL, searcher; Roy Skanes, Portugal Cove, NL, project archaeologist; Russ Chafe, Mt. Pearl, NL, searcher. Photo by R. Gillespie.*

Logistical support for the expedition was provided by Thomas “TJ” Green of ASL Energy, and Newfoundland Helicopters Ltd., pilot Peter Jefford.



The American members of the team arrived in St. John's on Sunday, June 11. After a planning meeting the next morning, the team relocated to the small town of Placentia at the western end of the Avalon Peninsula so as to minimize travel time to the helicopter pick-up/drop-off LZ at the Canadian Coast Guard station in Argentina.

The Operations Plan worked out by Ric and Roy called for a thorough search of a box 200 meters square encompassing the island, the locations of magnetic anomalies P1 to P5 detected in the 2021 Pioneer Exploration drone survey, and suspicious objects seen during a 1994 expedition but never investigated.



## Tuesday, June 13

*Loading gear for the flight to Gull Pond. Photo by R. Schott.*

The weather on Tuesday was forecast to be acceptable so we decided to go ahead with setting up the base camp and beginning search operations. Moving all personnel and personal equipment to the pond required two trips in the Bell 407, after which the helicopter slung in a 14-foot aluminum boat with electric trolling motor packed with the tent and other gear for the basecamp. That was all accomplished by 10:30.







*Slings in the boat. Photo by R. Gillespie.*



*With whitecaps on the water, the team prepares to get wet. L to R, Alfred Marshall, Robert Schott, Ric Gillespie, Russ Chafe, Roy Skanes, Bill Mangus. Drone photo by M. Smith.*



*Expletives deleted. Photo by W. Mangus.*

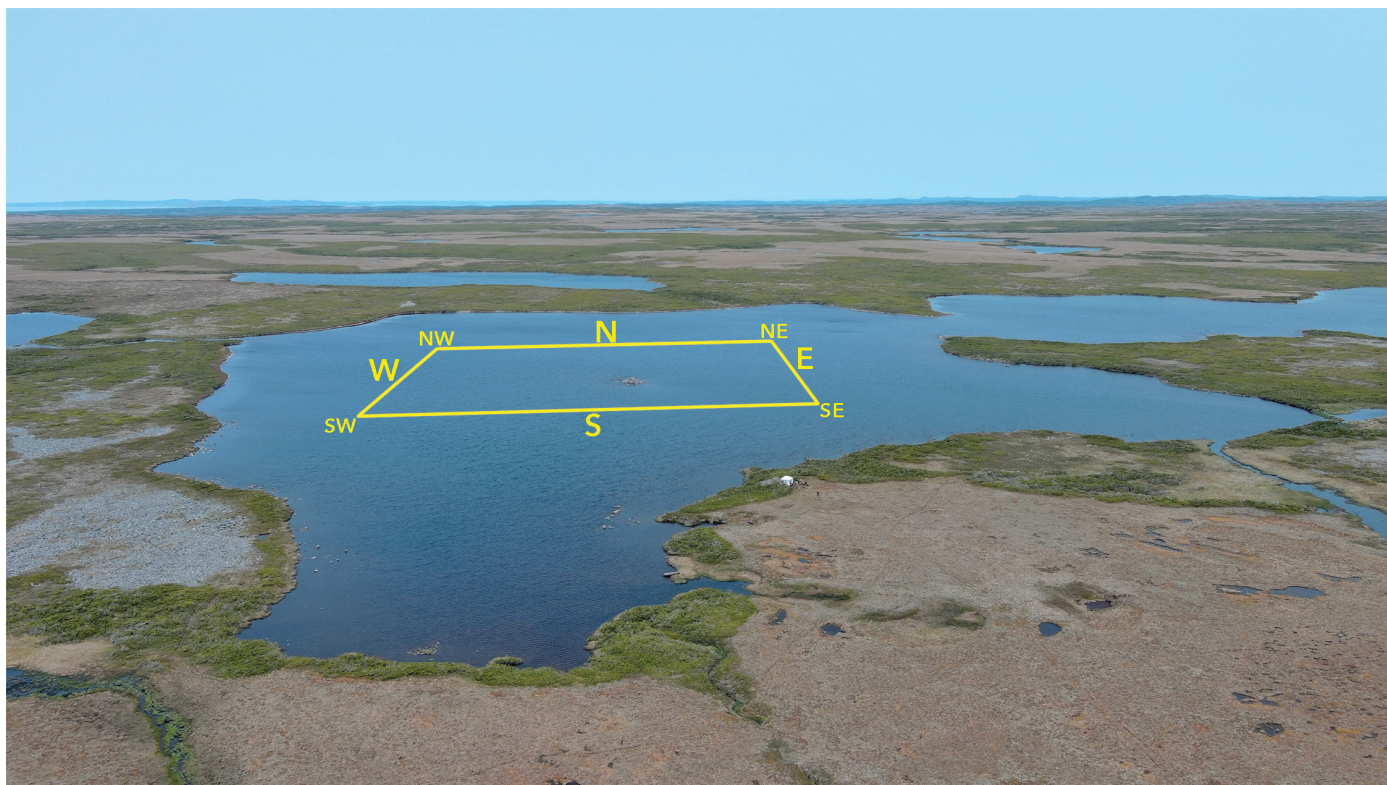
The wind at Gull Pond, as often happens, was stronger than predicted. The plan was to use the boat to set out buoys marking the boundaries of the search area and ferry swimmer/waders to their assigned sector but, with wind speed at an estimated 25 – 30 knots with higher gusts, the boat could not make headway upwind. Without the boat, there was no choice but to wade out over the tangle of large, slippery rocks in the knee-deep shallows near the shore.

Suited up against the 50° water, sometimes the would-be searchers were literally blown off their feet to bounce painfully off the rocks but most succeeded in reaching deeper water and even making it all the way to the island. Although little meaningful searching was accomplished on Tuesday, the searchers were able to test their personal gear and become familiar with the pond environment.

At 15:00 the helicopter arrived and by 15:40 we were all back at the LZ in Argentina.



# Wednesday, June 14



*Navigating the boat to specific GPS positions to set buoys proved to be tricky, but the markers allowed us to later draw the search area on a drone photo. Drone photo by M. Smith*

All on site by 09:00. A rare perfect day of clear skies and relatively calm winds at Gull Pond. Ric and Mark used the boat to set out buoys marking the boundaries of the search area and the location of magnetic anomalies. The boat was also useful for transporting swimmer/waders to specific areas and communicating with them while they were searching. Roy Skanes and Russ Chafe wore Garmin Etrex data loggers that recorded their GPS position once every minute.

The water was clear and, though cold, was free of the vegetation that grows later

in the summer. The clear view of the pond bottom from the surface in both the rocky and sediment-covered areas made the use of hand-held metal detectors superfluous. Remarkably few manmade items were seen – a beer bottle, sardine tins, fishing tackle lost by ice fishermen – but no aircraft debris.

An unexpected discovery illustrated the thoroughness with which the searchers were covering their assigned sectors. Russ Chafe hailed Ric to come see what he had found – a pristine American Express card, complete with chip, lying on the bottom of the pond. Incredulous, Ric squinted at the name embossed on the card and read “Robert E. Schott” who was, at that moment, working in a completely different part of the pond. A few hundred meters away, Alfred Marshall found Robert’s expired New Jersey driver’s license. As it turned out, Robert had lost track of both cards two years ago. They had been in a pouch now dangling from his wetsuit.



*Commuting to work. L to R: Mark Smith, Roy Skanes, Russ Chafe, Robert Schott, Alfred Marshall. Photo by R. Gillespie.*





*Much of the pond is shallow enough for wading but the rocky bottom makes it easier to search by snorkeling on the surface. Drone photo by M. Smith*



*In deeper areas the bottom is covered in up to 2 feet of silt which, when disturbed, clouds the water. Drone photo by M. Smith.*



That evening, after checking the weather forecast, we could see that Thursday would be our last day at the pond. Low clouds and rain would move in on Friday and continue for several days. In planning the expedition, we had made arrangements to remain in Newfoundland

through Monday the 18th but there was no point in hanging around watching it rain for three days so we changed our reservations. TIGHAR board member Ernie LeRoy was scheduled to join us on Thursday but we were able to give him a wave-off before he started traveling.

## Thursday, June 15

Although overcast with slightly more wind, Thursday was another good day but there were minor casualties. Russ was not feeling well and wisely decided to stand down. Robert needed help suiting up due to a badly bruised rib from a fall on the rocks the first day. Roy's ancient dry suit could have done a better job keeping him warm, Ric's new dry suit had a leaking zipper, and Bill had an allergic reaction to the small biting gnats that annoyed everyone. Expeditions are like that. "What went you out into the wilderness to see? A man clothed in fine raiment?" (Matthew 11:8)

On Thursday we had Roy, Alfred, and Robert in the water, Bill keeping a log, Mark flying drone missions, and Ric directing operations from the boat. Roy and Alfred wore data loggers and, by the end of the day, all of the targeted specific locations and suspect areas west and north of the island had been covered without any trace of aircraft debris.

A few meters beyond the northwest corner of the search box, while looking for a possible crater-like feature suggested by a circle of emergent vegetation in aerial photos (See *TIGHAR Tracks* Vol. 38 #3, Oct. 2022, page 12, "What Went Wrong?") Robert came upon a steel auger of the type used by ice fishermen to drill a hole in the ice. It was lying in six or seven feet of water, clearly visible from the surface, about half buried in silty sediment. He was too buoyant to dive down to inspect it closely so he called Alfred and Roy over to look at it, but his flippers had stirred up the silt and it took a few minutes to relocate the object. Alfred was able to dive down and bring it to the surface. The auger was between three and four feet long with a drill diameter of three to six inches. It was painted blue and had areas of rust. Alfred later likened it to an auger he owns.

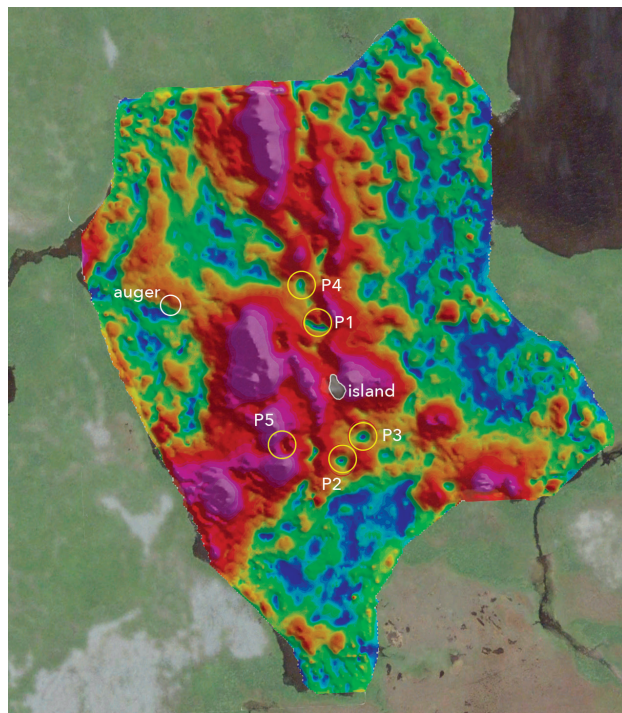


The data loggers made it possible to map the exact movements of the searchers who were wearing a device. The dark blue "snailtrails" trace Roy on 6/14; black is Russ on 6/14; pink is Roy on 6/15; and light blue is Alfred on 6/15.



Alfred's ice auger (left) is 31 inches long with a diameter of six inches. Photo by A. Marshall.





Above, at the end of the day, while waiting for the helicopter, the team discussed what they'd learned. Drone photo by M. Smith.

Left, Pioneer targets and auger on magnetic survey map.

That an ice fisherman lost an auger is not surprising. What is worth noting is that this mass of steel was not seen by the Pioneer Explorations magnetic survey of the pond done in September 2021 for the Discovery Channel “Expedition Unknown” TV show. The Pioneer report says, “The targets have been selected based on size and sharpness of anomalies generated in the magnetic gradient that could indicate the detection of a relatively small

object of high magnetic susceptibility. Due to the strong magnetic signal detected from the lake bottom, which is primarily geological in origin, these targets do not definitively represent distinct metal objects.”

Indeed, we found nothing of interest at the five target areas identified by Pioneer. That the survey did not detect the auger suggests their survey resulted in false negatives as well as false positives.

## Conclusions

It's possible the auger was lost after the survey was done, i.e. during the winter of 2021/2022 or 2022/2023, but the rust suggests otherwise.

Ice fishing activity at the pond reportedly has been down in recent years because the pond is “fished out.” In the 30.5 man-hours of searching done during this expedition, no fish were seen.

Although no aircraft wreckage was found, the expedition moved the investigation forward in several important ways.

Two days of highly effective search operations confirmed there is no debris field of aircraft wreckage where there should be if the aircraft crashed on or near the island – so that hypothesis can be dismissed.

June is the right time to conduct search operations at Gull Pond. Searchers have a clear view of the bottom from the surface in both rocky and sedimented areas before the growth of obscuring marine vegetation.

A flat-bottomed 14-foot aluminum boat powered by an electric trolling motor, although more difficult to transport, is far superior to an inflatable as a support platform.

Searchers in the water have a hard time keeping track of their position because the shoreline all looks the same. The cairn of rocks on the island is the best landmark but with your head in the water it's hard to keep track of where you are, and impossible to search accurate transects.



A flat-bottomed 14-foot aluminum boat with large transparent Lexan panels and powerful lights to illuminate the bottom should be an excellent search platform. The driver could steer straight and accurate transects by maintaining a compass heading while observers in the boat watched the bottom, ready to drop marker buoys on suspicious objects to be investigated later by divers. Not only would this minimize the need to have people in the cold water, but

a boat could cover a wider swath at greater speed than a swimmer.

Search operations in winds greater than 15 knots are impractical and predicting wind conditions at Gull Pond is always difficult, but we now have a core group of dedicated and experienced Newfoundland volunteers who can take advantage of the rare good days without gambling thousands of dollars in airfare a week in advance.

# THE PROCESS



For all of our projects, TIGHAR follows the scientific method of inquiry:

- Collect data.
- Formulate a hypothesis.
- Test the hypothesis by experimentation.
- If experimentation finds the hypothesis to be unsupported, re-examine the data, construct a new hypothesis, and test it using what you've learned.
- Repeat the process until you find a hypothesis supported by experimentation.

At TIGHAR, experimentation often takes the form of an expedition, and the recent work in Newfoundland was our latest test of the hypothesis that l'Oiseau Blanc crashed on or near the island in the middle of Gull Pond on the morning of May 9, 1927. The experiment found the hypothesis to be unsupported. The expedition was expensive, difficult, uncomfortable, at times dangerous, and the results were frustrating – but none of that is relevant to the process. The next step is to re-examine the data and construct a new hypothesis.

## Folklore or Fact?

The first question we must re-examine is whether there is reason to believe there ever was a “plane in the pond”? All but one of the accounts of airplane debris being seen at Gull Pond are anecdotal recollections, in many cases second-hand, related after a local 1969 newspaper article linked debris allegedly found at Gull Pond to the French flight that famously disappeared in 1927 (see page 20). Were it not for one man, it would be easy to conclude the whole plane-in-the-pond legend is a fable concocted from half-remembered incidents embellished to fit a famous mystery, much like the recollections that make up the Amelia Earhart Japanese Capture fantasy.

## A Very Dependable Man

A surviving letter Patrick “Patsy” Judge wrote in 1948, and the archived response by the Newfoundland Civil Aviation Division, turned folklore to fact.

Obsessed with solving the mystery of what plane crashed in the pond, but having little formal education and living on the isolated Cape Shore, Patsy Judge turned to Claude Noonan, a businessman in St. John's for whom he had worked as a hunting guide. On April 6, 1948, he wrote to Noonan, describing the puzzle and asking for help. “You may know someone who could throw light on this for me. If so I would be very thankful. I am sure it must be fifteen or twenty years ago since the plane fell as the iron is rusted out.”



EXTRACT FROM LETTER FROM MR. PATRICK JUDGE OF GOOSEBERRY,  
CAPE SHORE, TO C. NOONAN, DATED APRIL 6TH, 1948.

I was in the country last week, accompanied by Leo McGrath, and came across what appears to be parts of an aeroplane, which have been there quite a long time. I was wondering if it would be the plane called the BLUEBIRD, as it has spots of blue paint still on it.

We found the wreckage on the Island of Great Gull Pond, nine miles south southeast of Gooseberry.

You may know someone who could throw some light on this for me. If so I would be very thankful.

I am sure it must be fifteen or twenty years ago since the plane fell as the iron is rusted out.

The reason the wreckage has not been found before is you cannot reach the Island only when the pond is frozen.

Noonan forwarded the letter to the Commissioner for Public Utilities in St. John's because "your Department is in a better position to throw light on the matter than any other authorities here." Noonan knew that a government official might doubt the credibility of a Cape Shore Irishman so he included an endorsement of Patsy's character. "I may say that Judge is a very dependable man who I feel certain would not report as he has done without being sure of what he is talking about."

The Commissioner, in turn, forwarded the query to the Director of Civil Aviation who was "inclined to agree with the report submitted by Mr. Patrick Judge that the plane might have been at Great Gull Pond for 15-20 years as we have no knowledge of any civil aircraft being missing in this area in recent years. It will be recalled that there were a number of aircraft that left Europe about twenty years ago of which no trace has yet been found."

## Traces

The historical correspondence reliably establishes the presence of unexplained, badly weathered airplane debris on the island in 1948 but does not, in itself, prove there was ever a plane in the pond. In theory, someone could have moved pieces of debris to the island from a crash site on land or in a different pond – but a crashed airplane on the wide-open Cape Shore barrens would soon be found by hunters, and a wreck on the bottom of another pond would be invisible and inaccessible. Even if someone found wreckage they considered to be valuable, putting it on

the island in Gull Pond for safe-keeping makes no sense. The pond was visited primarily by caribou hunters in the winter when the surface is frozen and the island is easily accessible.

One story illustrates that the island was not seen as a safe place to stash recovered wreckage. In the winter of 1940, Anthony McGrath, 27, was hunting caribou in company with Ronald McGrath, 14, when he saw a five-foot tall piece of metal sticking up out of the ice in the northwest part of the island in Gull Pond. The metal was lightweight, riveted, painted robin's egg blue on both sides, and attached to wood framing. Anthony twisted the metal back and forth until it broke free. Burdened with caribou meat, he and Ronald were unable to take the metal home to Patrick's Cove so Anthony stashed the piece

in a stand of "tuck" (tuckamore — a tangled of stunted trees) near the southwest end of Gull Pond. Apparently, the tuck was not a good place either. When he later went back to retrieve the salvage, he couldn't find it and assumed it had been found and stolen. In any case, the theory that the airplane debris on the island came from a crash site on land or in another pond (pardon the expression) doesn't fly.

The available evidence strongly suggests a plane did, indeed, crash in the pond. If it did not hit on or near the island, which seems to be the case, the pieces of debris found at the island must have arrived there on floating wreckage. To test the plausibility of that explanation, we needed to take a close look at exactly what was allegedly seen and/or recovered.

## Catalog of Reported Debris

### Artifact One

While trapping muskrat on the Branch River in May 1927, Nicholas McGrath 40, heard 2 or 3 unexplained explosions. The next winter, while hunting caribou, he was crossing the frozen Gull Pond when he saw a piece of blue-painted metal through the ice in the shallow water near the northwest side of the rocky island.

### Artifact Two, 1932

Patsy Judge, 20, recovered a light metal piece measuring 12 to 14 inches by about 3 inches, bright and shiny, no corrosion, no rivets, bent and somewhat crumpled, with numerals stamped on it.

### Artifact Three, 1940

In the winter of 1940, Anthony McGrath, 27, was hunting caribou in company with Ronald McGrath, 14, when he saw a five-foot tall piece of metal sticking up out of the ice in the northwest part of the island in Gull Pond. The metal was lightweight, riveted, painted robin's egg blue on both sides, and attached to wood framing.

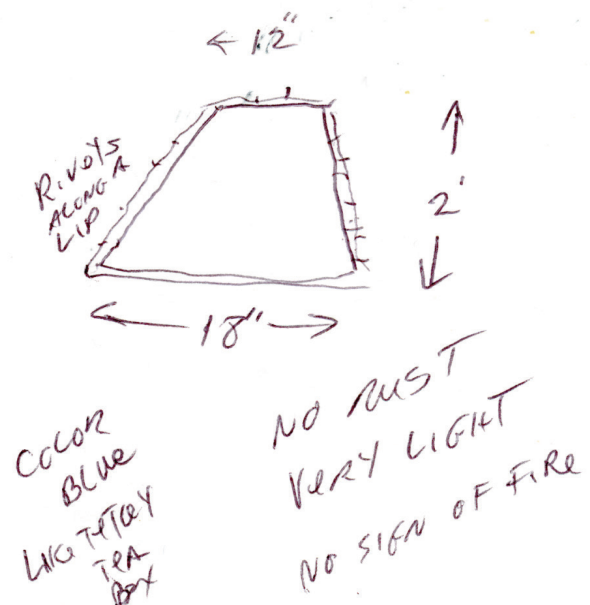
### Artifact Four, no date.

John McGrath, born 1900, found a piece of very light metal, 18 to 20 inches long, torn apart as if it had been in an explosion or had hit something very hard.

### Artifact Five, 1942

In 1942, Patsy Judge, 30, with Patrick McGrath, 19, and two of Patrick's cousins, Ignatius (age unknown) and Leo McGrath, 22,

Sticking up out of the ice near the island was a sheet of very lightweight metal, "the [dark blue] color of a Tetley Tea box," no rust, trapezoidal in shape and measuring approximately two feet tall by eighteen inches along the bottom and twelve inches across the top. There was a riveted lip around the edges.



*Sketch of artifact drawn by Patrick McGrath in 1992.*



## March 1948

Patsy Judge, 36, in company with Leo McGrath, 28, and George McGrath, 16, recovered three more pieces from the island, chopping them out of the ice with an axe.

### Artifact Six

Light metal, rusty, roughly six inches by six inches, could not be bent by hand, burnt in places, with spots of blue paint.

### Artifact Seven

Light V-shaped piece of metal, about twelve inches by eight inches, could not be bent by hand, burnt in places, with spots of blue paint.

### Artifact Eight

A third piece was given to George McGrath. No description.

### Artifact Nine, no date

In 1959 Patrick McGrath told George Lannon they also found a coat with brass buttons on it. They brought it home and sewed the buttons on another coat because the coat was rotten.

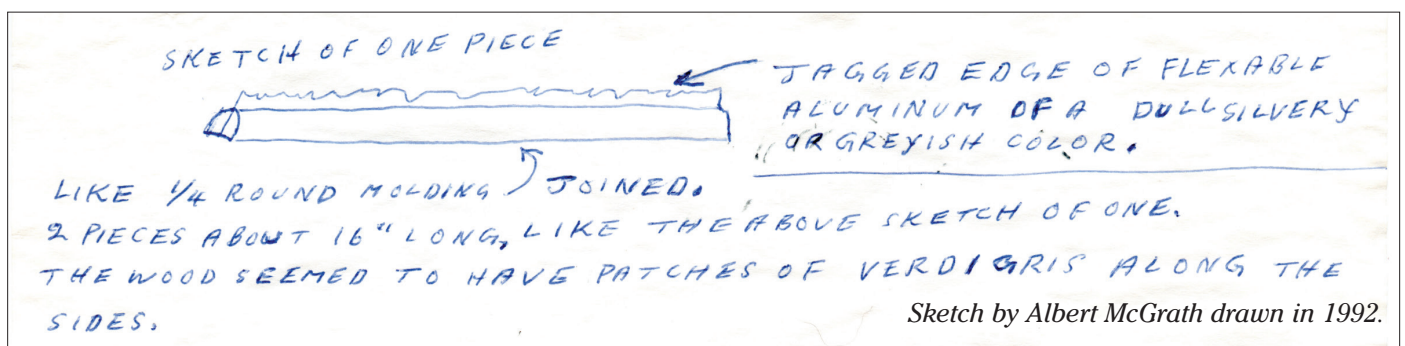
Nungesser and Coli wore civilian clothes under their flying suits, but may have had their WWI uniforms with them for celebrations in New York.

*The brass buttons on French WWI Air Service uniforms featured a winged propeller. Is there a coat with such buttons hanging in a closet somewhere on the Cape Shore?*



### Artifacts Ten and Eleven, 1950

In July 1950 Albert McGrath found two pieces along the Branch River he took to be pieces from the plane carried by ice. They were jagged strips of very flexible bluish-white or gray aluminum attached to bleached quarter-round wood molding. Patches of verdigris (a bluish-green encrustation formed on copper or brass by atmospheric oxidation) on the molding suggests it was once up against a copper or brass structure.



### Artifact Twelve, no date

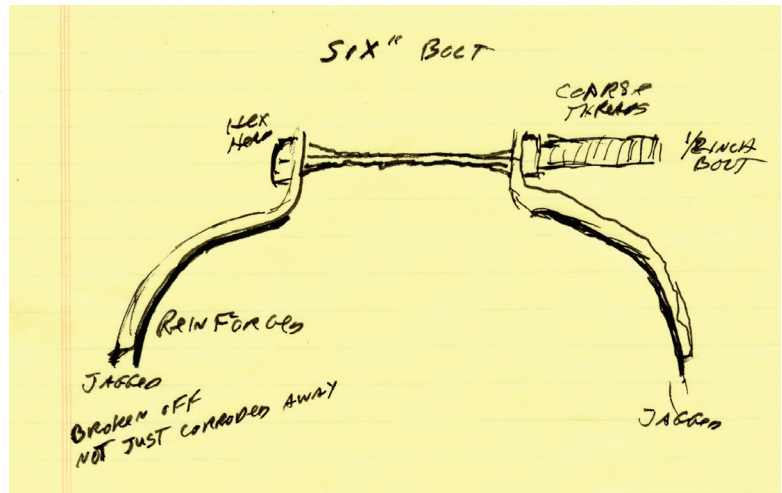
Rumor, no name. "Canvas on wood framing too big to pick up" found on Branch River. The White Bird's wings were doped linen on wooden spars and ribs.

### Artifact Thirteen, 1970

In July or August of 1970, the Cape Shore parish priest, Father Charles McCarthy, 35, and Hubert McGrath, had Patrick McGrath, 47, show them where Patrick had seen wreckage many years before. Wearing a wet suit, mask and snorkel, McCarthy searched parts of the pond. On the rocky bottom in about one foot of water near the island, McCarthy found two metal bands connected with a six inch threaded bolt and nut. The ends of the bands were jagged as if broken

by force, not corroded away. He thought it looked like something that might have been used to secure a tank or some heavy object.

*Sketch of object found by McCarthy,  
drawn by Ric Gillespie guided by  
Hubert McGrath in 1992.*



## Patterns

All of the nine metal artifacts found on or near the island were relatively small and very light weight. Even lightweight metal does not float, so the metal must have originally been attached to something buoyant such as wood or, for Monty Python fans, a duck.

Only one metal object found on the island was described as being attached to wood, so either other artifacts being attached to wood was simply not mentioned or the wood rotted away.

Most of the artifacts exhibited damage indicative of impact and/or fire, supporting Nicholas McGrath's report of hearing explosions in May 1927.

There is no mention of fabric or cables in any of the accounts of debris found at the island. If the plane was l'Oiseau Blanc, the pieces that floated to the island were probably parts of the plywood and wood frame fuselage.

The only mention of debris that sounds like a section of wing or tail surface was "canvas on wood framing" rumored to have been found along the Branch River which flows out of Gull Pond. The structure was (supposedly) so big the finder couldn't pick it up.

Almost all of the people who spoke of finding airplane debris at or near Gull Pond were named McGrath (pronounced McGraw).

The reason is a simple matter of geography.

The Cape Shore was first settled in the early 19th century by immigrants from Ireland. At the turn of the 20th century, there were four settlements scattered along the unpaved road that ran down the western side of the peninsula: Gooseberry Cove, Patrick's Cove, St. Bride's, and Branch.



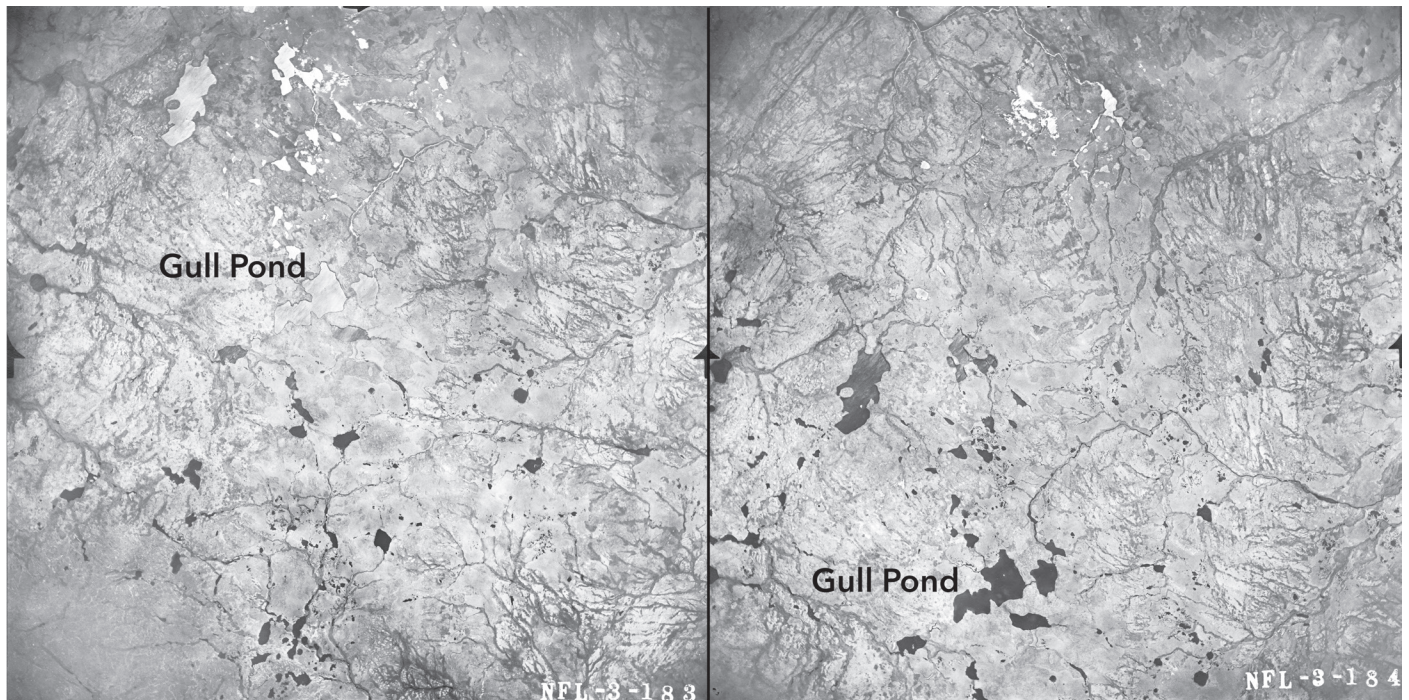


The Cape Shore Irish eked out a living fishing for cod from the coves along the shoreline and farming the arable land along the coast. They ventured into the barren, boggy interior, known simply as “the country,” only to trap beaver and muskrat along the rivers and streams and hunt caribou. Travel was difficult and they didn’t go any farther than necessary.

The country around Gull Pond was closest to Gooseberry Cove and Patrick’s Cove. Patsy Judge was from Gooseberry Cove. Nearly everyone in the forty families living in Patrick’s Cove was named McGrath.

## Photographic Evidence?

Earlier this year, through the GIS and Mapping Division of Newfoundland Fisheries, Forestry, and Agriculture, TIGHAR obtained aerial mapping photos of the Cape Shore taken during surveys in 1941, 1948, 1951, 1966, and 1995. The surveys were flown at high altitude and extracting detail about an individual pond is difficult, but mapping surveys take overlapping photos, so we have two images of Gull Pond from each survey taken roughly one minute apart. If an anomaly is visible in both photos it’s a real thing, not a fleck of dust on the negative.

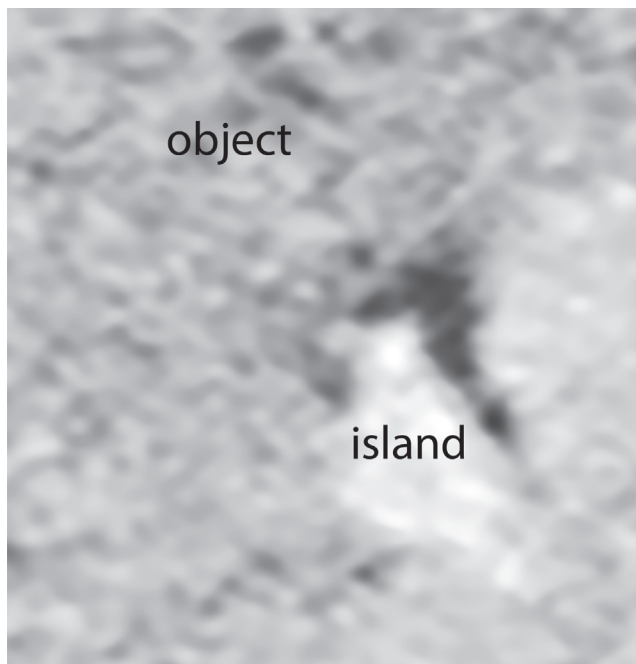


*The 1948 survey was flown at 20,000 feet. In Frame 183, sun reflection makes Gull Pond hard to see. The plane, probably a PBV from the Naval Air Station in Argentia, traveled about two miles before taking the next image and Gull Pond is free of reflection in Frame 184.*

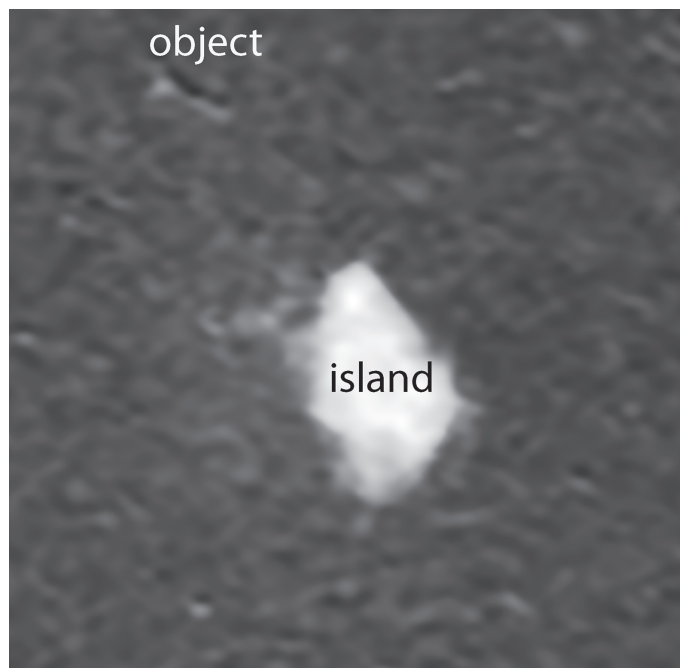
We closely examined the photos in all five surveys and saw nothing of interest except for an object in the 1948 imagery (the same year Patsy Judge wrote his letter).

The object is puzzling. It is present in both photos, but it has moved, so it is floating. It is not a log. (See photos next page.) The only trees anywhere near the pond are the dwarf spruce of the tuck. The pond was rarely visited until the advent of all-terrain vehicles and snowmobiles in the 1970s. In 1948, the only event that would produce a large floating object was the airplane crash, but it seems remarkable that a piece of airplane wreckage would still be floating around twenty-one years later. It’s nowhere to be seen in the 1951 and later photos. Is this a section of wing that eventually made its way through the outlet and down the Branch River to become the rumored Artifact Twelve, “canvas on wood framing” too big to pick up?





*In Frame 183, there is a linear object 28 feet long in the water 60 feet northwest of the island. Both the object and the island are throwing shadows.*

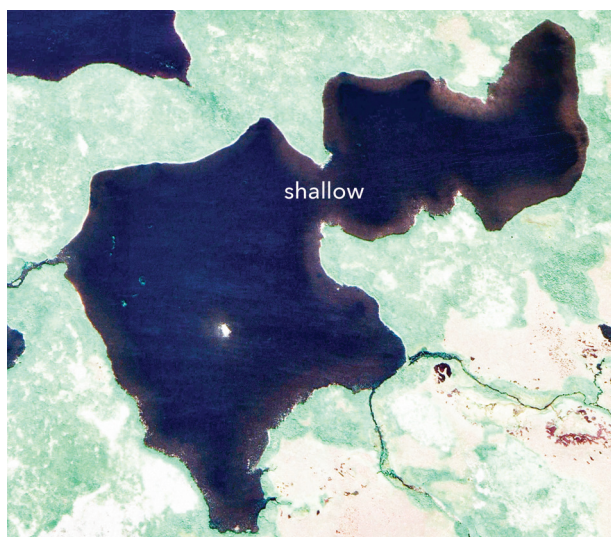


*In Frame 184 the linear object has moved about 18 feet.*

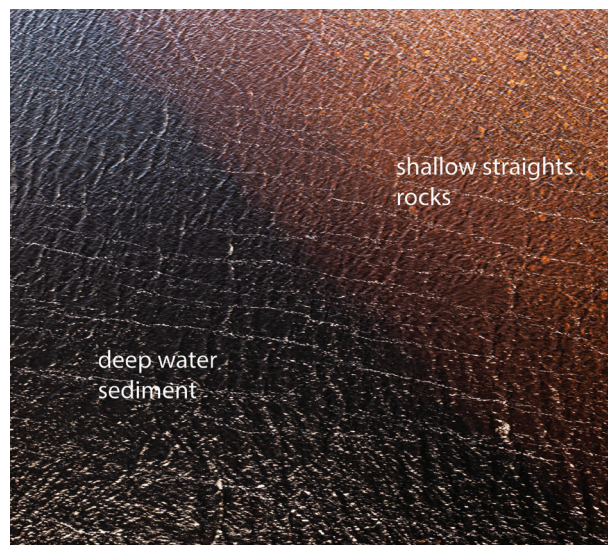
## Why Did It Crash?

The White Bird was designed to land on water. If it did not hit the rocks around the island, why did it not land safely? One answer might be that it hit rocks in another shallow area. Most of the rocky shallows are along the shoreline, but there is one place where a pilot attempting to land on the pond could get a nasty surprise. If Nungesser made his approach to take advantage of the longest stretch of open water, he would have no way of knowing a band of rocky shallows connects the sides of the narrow straights between the two lobes of Gull Pond. Given the prevailing winds, a landing to the west is most likely. Striking the rocks could rip out the belly, rupturing the fuel tanks, and causing the reported explosions.

TIGHAR's August 2022 drone photo survey shows an abrupt drop off west of the straights to deeper, sediment covered bottom. The engine and prop could carry into the deeper water beyond the straights. The deeper area could easily hide the engine, prop, and non-buoyant wreckage.



*In this lightened Google Earth image, the shallow rocky area in the narrow straights between the two sections of the pond is clearly visible.*



*This drone photo shows the western edge of the shallow rocky straights and sharp drop off to deeper water.*



# New Hypothesis

In attempting an east to west landing on the long axis of Gull Pond, the aircraft struck rocks in the shallow straights, resulting in explosions that destroyed the aircraft and killed the crew. The engine, propeller, and associated components came to rest in the deep sediment west of the straights. Some buoyant wreckage washed up on the rocky island in the middle of the pond and other pieces were carried down the Branch River in the spring flood.

We'll test the new hypothesis with Project Midnight Ghost Expedition XXXIV, scheduled for June 2024.

In the coming months we'll be refining our search techniques based on the lessons learned, exploring new technologies, and raising the money it takes to continue TIGHAR's effort to find history's most important lost airplane.

There is every reason to believe the crash site is somewhere in Gull Pond. Finding it is just a matter of looking in the right place.

A new search box laid out to the northeast of the box covered this year will encompass the area of the new hypothesis.



# BOOK PROGRESS

## ONE MORE GOOD FLIGHT

The axiom that any major project will take longer and cost more than originally anticipated certainly applies to investigations, expeditions, and book publishing.

We're eager to get TIGHAR's new book *One More Good Flight – The Amelia Earhart Tragedy* into the hands of the many TIGHAR Literary Guild members whose contributions continue to fund our commitment to produce the most thorough, factual, and engaging chronicle of Earhart's character, career, and demise ever written. We had hoped the book would be available this year, but the publisher said the publication date would be in 2024 – provided we submitted the finalized manuscript in August. A brief review of the process for publishing a work of this magnitude will help explain why it takes so long and why we still need your help.

Many, if not most, books about Earhart's disappearance are self-published, meaning the author pays a publisher to produce the physical book. There are advantages to self-publishing:

- 1.) It's easy. You don't have to convince anyone your book is worth publishing. The publisher is happy to take your money.

- 2.) You can write anything you want and choose whether or not to meet conventional standards such as providing citations, a bibliography, and an index.

- 3.) You get to keep 100% of any proceeds.

The downside of self-publishing is the considerable cost of producing the physical book and promoting it. The public also generally views self-published works as less credible than books from a respected publishing house.

In traditional publishing, a publisher buys the publication rights to your book and covers the cost of production and marketing. For them, your book is an investment. They're gambling that revenue from sales will exceed the cost of production, marketing, and the royalties they pay you (an agreed-upon percentage of the sales price, usually 10%).

For works of fiction (novels, collections of short stories, etc.), the publisher wants to see a manuscript of the entire book. For non-fiction, an outline and a few sample chapters are sufficient.

The publisher usually helps fund the completion of the book with an up-front advance on royalties, based on how well they think the book will sell. The author won't receive anything more until the royalties have paid off the advance. When you read about someone getting a "book deal" for X dollars, they're talking about an advance on expected royalties.

The trick is getting a publisher to take on your book. Most will not even consider a manuscript submitted "over the transom," i.e. unsolicited, and most authors hire a literary agent to pitch their book to potential publishers where they have contacts. For TIGHAR's first book, Ric was able to act as his own agent. He already had a track record with the Naval Institute Press in Annapolis, MD, with well-received articles published in their periodicals, *Naval Institute Proceedings* and *Naval History* magazine.

In 2004, Ric saw a need for a book about the post-loss radio signals. When a TIGHAR member on the Naval Institute board introduced Ric to the director of the Press at a social function in the spring of 2005, Ric was ready with a proposal and a few sample chapters for a book to be titled *The Suitcase In My Closet* (from a quote in Betty's Notebook). By July we had a contract and an advance of \$15,000. As Ric got into the writing, it became apparent Earhart's distress calls were at the heart of a larger story about Earhart's world flight and the 1937 search that failed to find her. He expanded the scope of the book and changed the title. To fund the additional research and writing, we instituted the TIGHAR Literary Guild. *Finding Amelia – The True Story of the Earhart Disappearance* was published the following year and became a top-seller.



Fast-forward to 2013. Ric recognized a need for a book about the Earhart Electra. From its delivery in July 1936, to its disappearance a scant year later, the “Flying Laboratory” was probably the world’s most-photographed airplane, but inaccurate dating of photos fueled baseless claims about its equipment and capabilities during the world flight. The TIGHAR membership and Literary Guild enthusiastically supported the idea of a new TIGHAR book to be titled *The Earhart Electra – The True Story of History’s Most Famous Missing Airplane*. Like Ric’s first book, this one took on a life of its own.

As the research and writing progressed, Ric could see that the airplane’s convoluted evolution was caused by the avarice and amateurism that led to its ultimate disappearance.

In 2021, Ric queried the Naval Institute Press about their possible interest in a book that would cover the entire arc of the Earhart tragedy. It would be a larger, longer work than they typically produced but they were interested. We submitted a book proposal on November 11, 2021 and, after five months of negotiations, we signed a contract on April 6, 2022. Contributions by the TIGHAR Literary Guild made it possible to forego an advance in exchange for better-than-normal terms. With no advance to repay, TIGHAR will start to receive royalties as soon as the book starts selling.

The contract for *One More Good Flight*, subtitle *The Amelia Earhart Tragedy*, called for a manuscript of at least 175,000 words (roughly double the length of *Finding Amelia*) to be submitted not later than December 1, 2022. With your help, we met that deadline. The next step was for a “reader” assigned by the publisher to evaluate the manuscript and make recommendations about any needed changes. That task was given to a history professor at a major university who had, himself, authored aviation historical biographies published by the Naval Institute Press. He found the manuscript “an impressive piece of research” but he suggested expanding the scope of the book to examine how her flying career, and her celebrity, evolved in the socio/economic context of the

1930s. Ric embraced the idea, researching and writing additional chapters that provide new insights into who Amelia Earhart really was and how she became the legend she is today.

While Ric worked on expanding the manuscript, Pat cleaned up the 37 historical photos and created the 13 maps to be included in the book. The final, and most tedious but absolutely essential, tasks were to ferret out the typos, check each of the more than 1,200 citations for accuracy, and make sure the notes and bibliography were in the precise format specified by the publisher. Most of that mind-numbing work fell to Pat.

Winston Churchill said,

Writing a book is an adventure. To begin with it is a toy and an amusement. Then it becomes a mistress, then it becomes a master, then it becomes a tyrant. The last phase is that just as you are about to be reconciled to your servitude, you kill the monster and fling him to the public.

TIGHAR’s nearly 700-page beast was submitted on August 21. The Press will now review it and, after any needed editing, lay out the physical book. Once that is done we can construct the index. Still to be done, the title and sub-title of the book must be finalized. Normally the publisher reserves that right but we insisted that any change from the working title and sub-title be by mutual agreement. The cover design is the publisher’s call, but we’ll certainly play a role in that.

Once the book has been produced, copies will be sent to selected “notable individuals” who have agreed to read the book and write short “blurbs” that can be included on the back cover of the final product.

If all goes as planned, the Naval Institute Press will offer *One More Good Flight – The Amelia Earhart Tragedy* in its Fall 2024 catalog and we should be able to send Literary Guild members their signed copies at that time.





# The Newfoundland

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## HERALD EXCLUSIVE

# A KEY TO WORLD AVIATION HISTORY LIES BURIED NEAR PATRICK'S COVE

By JACK FITZGERALD

A secret undisclosed for the past forty-eight years may lie hidden below approximately 10 feet of water in a small lake six miles, East-south east of Patrick's Cove.

In 1921 a small blue and white aircraft named "The White Bird" set out from France with two pilots on board in the first attempted east-west crossing of the Atlantic.

Nothing has been heard of the two men or their aircraft since that time. It was a general feeling in France during that year that the aircraft crashed at sea during a heavy storm killing both pilots on board.

### Trouble

However, on the day following the take-off of the "White Bird" the engines of a plane were heard flying over the Patrick's Cove area of Placentia Bay. Suddenly the engines stopped. It was a stormy day, visibility was nil and people only possessed a limited knowledge of air-

sticking up out of the pond. Before they had the opportunity of examining the structure, when the ice on the pond began to break up, the item sunk into the water.

There the matter ended until seven years later when a well known guide, hunter and trapper, James J. Doyle and his companion Patrick Judge (who still resides at Patrick's Cove) discovered the under carriage

A search of the pond now known as Big Gull Pond could result in the discovery of information of great significance to world aviation history. The pond is located about six miles from Patrick's Cove.

McGrath formerly of Patrick's Cove now residing at Colinet.

### Time Yet

Mr. McGrath told the Herald that even at this late date it would not be too late to investigate the pond and determine once and for all if this plane lying at the bottom is the "White Bird".

The "White Bird" is reported to have been a blue and white plane. Blue and white are also the same colors of the plane carriage discovered by the two trappers.

### Skeletons

If Mr. McGrath's theory is right then the first east west

lies at the bottom of the lake entombing it's two pilots.

He suggested that if an attempt is to be made to find the plane and the skeletons of the two pilots thereby effecting a change in world aviation history, sonar equipment should be used.

### Sonar

He said the pond in its deepest part is only 10 feet down. A boat combing the pond with sonar equipment would easily detect the exact spot where the plane lies. The find, he said could make world headlines.

A resident of the area pointed out that in spite of the incident being brought to the attention of government authorities in the 1920's nothing was ever done about it. He suggests that the screening of the pond with Sonar devices could turn up the important information which could make headlines around the world.

craft in those aviation pioneering days.

No move was made to check into the possibility of the plane having crashed, simply because that possibility had not entered the minds of anyone in the community.

### Discovered

A couple of weeks after the incident some residents venturing six miles into the woods to a pond now known as "Big Gull Pond" and saw what they believed to be part of a plane

of what was identified as belonging to a plane.

### Nothing!

This information was sent on to government representatives in St. John's at the time. But, again nothing was done about the incident. In those days according to one resident people were not so concerned with search parties, and history as they are now, because it was such a struggle to keep body and bones together.

This information was given the Herald in an exclusive interview this week by John

crossing of the Atlantic was made by these two French pilots Nungesser and Cole whose skeletons should be located at the bottom of Gull Pond.

Another resident of the area told the Herald that many residents of the community can verify the story of a plane having gone down in Big Gull Pond in 1921 and of the events following the incident.

### Bottom

They point out that since no attempt has ever been made to recover the plane, it still

**The Plane  
in the Pond  
became  
The White  
Bird for the  
first time on  
October 26,  
1969.**

