

# The Flying Gourmet

By Roger Pascoe

We survived another sortie in the mostly clear New Hampshire Skies once again, braving newly minted spring weather to cover the 51.7 NM to Dillant Hopkins Airport (Keene). Terrain offered her best obstacles and required circumnavigation of Mount Monadnock. Early spring warm moist air from the gulf did obscure visibility somewhat on our approach, but alas our experience and skill overcame the minor obstacles nature and terrain threw our way. This was my first visit to Dillant Hopkins, and I discovered a truly fantastic airport with not just great runways, but a Fantastic FBO and Airport Management staff, more on that later.

This visit was to the “The Flight Deck” Restaurant at Keene, Dillant Hopkins Airport. It is located in the Main terminal building on the West Ramp of the airport.

*Open only just several weeks now*



**Entrance to the restaurant inside the main terminal building**

One of the biggest frustrations in flying for me has been finding new and great places to fly to in a relative short hop, and experience great food and service, making the whole

outing memorable. Having the opportunity to discover new and old GEMS, sharing them with the NHPA, all the while having a great time is something I consider worthwhile. So here is another GEM for all of you to try out. I think it is important for everyone to remember that if you plan on going as a sizable group it would be best to call ahead so they can be ready. New businesses usually wrestle with staffing and coordination stresses until they are established and know what to expect from the GA and the local community. We discussed this with the new Owner of “The Flight Deck”, Tracy Keating. We shared that some of our members have descended upon other restaurants we have reviewed and overwhelmed them with as few as ten people. Tracy told us it would be best if a large group were coming to let them know with a little advance notice so they can “make it happen for you”. Tracy is a Dynamo with about ten years of experience in the restaurant and food service business. The Airport Manager is turning on afterburners to get Tracy established with all kinds of backup and support. Tracy opened the doors about two weeks ago and is serving what I would call **Excessively awesome quality food in good portions**. Normally “Airport Faire” even when it is good, is generally not fine dining. The Flight Deck only uses the very best of food and ingredients in all of its preparations and serves quality approaching a fine dining experience. For instance, all sandwiches use Boars Head Products. Tracy uses the best Wraps and Breads in the sandwiches, you will be amazed! I went for the oldest standby known, (Burger and Fries) affectionately called the B-52. I added Mushrooms to the burger, which already was a divine treat. Usually Restaurants tend to overcook Mushrooms, or over sautéed, but at the Flight Deck everything was much better than I make at home. The appetizer list is generous in offerings with some unusual items. For the big eaters the main courses include Steak, Chicken, Shrimp, and Pasta. The Salad offerings are more than complete for variation and are generous in size. We ate with the airport manager, Jack Wozmak, who ordered a Wedge Salad, my personal favorite. It was visually an awesome work of art. Jack said he loved the Wedge salad at the Flight Deck. The restaurant includes a full sit down bar area for your passengers if you want to partake. They have a full selection of Beer, Wine, and Mixed Drinks available at the Bar or for diners. I should point out that the Menu does not emphasize they are a full service Bar including draft Beer, but they absolutely are. I know I do not need to say it, but we all must to comply with the FAR’s when consuming alcoholic beverages. Be sure to save room for the long list of homemade deserts, which will satisfy the most discerning diner. Just forget the calories and indulge! We also had the opportunity to meet the Chef, Brandy, who was “stolen” from a local establishment by Tracey. Brandy is genuinely an awesome chef and I encourage you to ask her to come out to meet your group if you appreciate the meal, and let her know! Everyone at the “Flight Deck” has an outstanding attitude!

Seating in the Restaurant is expansive with plenty of tables indoors. The hostess (often Tracy) will seat you upon arrival. Tracey is expanding in her final floor configuration and just in time for summer, onto a deck outside adjacent to the ramp, with full service seating. She tells me she will be able to seat 53 diners in the outdoor section. Credit to Jack Wozmak (Airport Manager) for making the “Outdoor Deck”, at the “Flight Deck”, become a reality in the next few weeks. Tracey also included an Ice Cream Sundae facility in her plan, so for the sweet tooth crowd they will dish up ice cream and you can go wild adding all the toppings from a big selection that your heart desires (likely your

eyes). This is a natural extension for Tracey since she owns a successful long term Self serve Candy store in downtown Keene. Right now Tracey is totally focused on The Flight Deck and has turned over her Candy Store business to her employees to run. Check out the schedule for hours of operation below and figure Tracey and crew are covering all that window of opportunity for all of us! WOW

**Soon to be FAMOUS, the Ice Cream Sundae Bar, just waiting for you to indulge!**



**SWEET TOOTH ALLEY at the "The flight Deck"**

**The Flight Deck  
Hours of Operation are as follows**

<b>Tuesday-Thursday</b>	<b>11 AM – 8 PM</b>
<b>Friday</b>	<b>11 AM- 9 PM</b>
<b>Saturday</b>	<b>8 AM – 9 PM</b>
<b>Sunday</b>	<b>8 AM- 4 PM</b>

**Call them in advance if necessary at 603-358-3325**

**BIG OPEN HOUSE DATE  
JUNE 23, 2016 5:30 PM TO 7:30 PM  
Local Radio Station WKNE will be there to cover the event (103.7 FM)**

***More important information , read on.....***

For those of you that have yet to visit Keene, the runways can handle anything you fly, runway 02/20 is 6200 X100, and runway 14/32 is 4101 X 150. The elevation is 488 MSL. Even on HOT days the DA is not a factor. So no excuses from the guys with the B-58 Hustlers or other such equipment. Bring your Jet, Piston, Turbine, Glider, or lighter than Air to Keene for one fantastic meal.

***Do not miss one great FBO while you are there.....***

Monadnock Aviation is the FBO on the field and is located in the terminal. The FBO is owned and operated by Beth Bendel, retired from the US Navy as an intelligence Officer. Beth in her second life was employed by the Federal Government as a Special Agent working criminal investigations. Beth was United States Law Enforcement Officer of the Year prior to resigning to start a civilian career (third life). Beth obtained her pilot license on her own and used flying as an entertainment and hobby passion. Today she spends all of her waking hours running what has to be one of the finest FBO's in New Hampshire or New England for that matter. Monadnock Aviation has produced more new pilot "hatchlings" through The Out Of The Blue Aviation Scholarship Foundation than any other FBO in NE. Monadnock Aviation provides a full service suite to the aviation community. They offer flight training, beginner to instrument and aerobatic programs. A complete maintenance department with twenty plus year experienced mechanics, Jet fuel and 100 LL. A crew car is available, as well as AVIS rentals. They can also provide overnight aircraft storage if needed.

Monadnock Aviation gives back to the community in significant ways by supporting airshows, community events and activities, Collings foundation events, New England Aeronautical Society, among others. Beth does this out of operating revenues and sometimes struggles to break even but feels it is important to "BE INVOLVED in the COMMUNITY". When you fly into Keene it is important to remember to support the GA community. Purchase fuel or services from Monadnock Aviation whenever you can. Fuel is \$4.99 right now at the self-serve pump.

Monadnock Aviation also is a CATS/LASAR test facility. Which means that virtually all most all types of test for all kinds of certifications are administered right on airport property. They handle Pilot testing, Medical field technicians, animal handlers, and a slew of professional certifications. Beth says a lot of astonished "Testees" show up on her doorstep wondering what they are doing at the Airport. It is great for the FBO though.

*FUN FACT: C & S Wholesale Grocers is an 85 year old company located in Keene. I understand they are the 10<sup>th</sup> largest privately held company in the USA. They generate a lot of Jet traffic for Monadnock Aviation.*

**If you have not had enough yet, keep on reading for more fun info.....**

## **History Of Dillant Hopkins Airport**

**The land upon which the airport sits was purchased in 1942 and was dedicated October 31, 1943, before a crowd of five thousand. Among the officials dedicating the land were Governor Robert O. Blood and senators Styles Bridges and Charles W. Tobey. The new airport was named to honor Thomas David Dillant and Edwin Chester Hopkins, from Keene and Swanzey respectively, who had both died fighting the war.**

**In 1945 a steel hangar was constructed at the airport which would also see local operations moved to it from West Keene. At about this time Lee Bowman became the manager of the airport and would run a flight school out of it. Regular air service from Dillant–Hopkins Airport began in 1946 when Northeast Airlines opened a route from Keene to Springfield, Massachusetts. As the inaugural flight from the airport, a Douglas DC-3 carried 2,600 letters, 11 passengers, and a fresh apple pie sent from the mayor of Keene to the mayor of New York.**

**Initially Dillant–Hopkins provided air service of two flights a day before being forced to fly a single flight a day. From January to May 1948 all air service from the airport was suspended. When regular air service resumed in May an air freight service was added. Lights for the runways were put in place in 1948 to 1949, and two years later the airport's signal beacons were added. By 1952 several industries were maintaining private airplanes for business purposes, and it was estimated that 200 planes a month were serviced by the airport.<sup>[1]</sup>**

**In 1953 Dillant–Hopkins hosted an air show which brought flying teams from the US Air Force and US Navy to Keene. This air show coincided with other events in Keene including the historic pageant *The Happy Valley* and a visit by then Miss America Neva Jane Langley. That same year Wiggins Airways ceased servicing Keene after losing a battle to do business with the city.**

**1954 would see Northeast Airlines begin its air freight service out of the airport, six years after air freight service first began there. Mohawk Airlines joined Northeast Airlines flying out of Keene, making the city of Keene the first in the state to be serviced by two airlines which offered flights to New York, Albany, Boston, and Lebanon, NH. All this before April. The runways would be extended in 1956 and night lighting and other improvements installed in 1958. By the second half of 1958 Keene would become the third largest city in the state to offer passenger service and the second largest to offer air freight service.**

**In May 1961 Mohawk ceased servicing Keene using the DC3 and switched to the Convair 440 for its passenger service into the city. With the ability to carry fifty-four passengers, the Convair 440 became one of the largest aircraft to land at Dillant–Hopkins. From 1962 to 1963 further additions were added to the airport, perhaps brought about by the new passenger planes. Northeast Airlines would begin the first turboprop service to Keene with the 48 passenger Fairchild Hiller FH-227 in 1966. The first turboprop arrived in September after a fifty-minute flight from**

**John F. Kennedy Airport where it was greeted by five hundred people which included city officials and airport personnel.**

**In 1967 the FAA recommended a \$1.8 million series of improvements which would include further extending the runways, the construction of a control tower, improved buildings, and other facilities. The recommendation was brought on by increased activity at the airport and nearly 24,000 aircraft operating out of the airport on a yearly basis. Also in 1967 both Northeast and Mohawk Airlines began to study routes that would include flights to Chicago from Keene.**

**1967 would also see Vice President Hubert H. Humphrey make a brief stop in Keene while on a trip to attend a concert in Vermont. A crowd of two hundred were on hand to greet him.....well not sure what happened.....it was going well.....**

**and better yet if you still are not bored, try this info out.....**

## **Former airlines Serving Keene**

- **Air New England (Boston, Lebanon, New York)**
- **Allegheny Airlines (New York)**
- **Atlantic North Airlines (Boston, Laconia, Newark, Rutland) Hub**
- **Colgan Air (Rutland, Newark)**
- **Continental Airlines**
  - **Continental Connection operated by Colgan Air (Rutland, Newark)**
- **Delta Air Lines (Manchester, New York, Philadelphia and Miami)**
- **Eastern Airlines**
  - **Eastern Express operated by Precision Airlines (Boston, Lebanon/Hanover/White River Junction, Newark, New York)**
- **Executive Airlines (Boston)**
- **Mohawk Airlines (Albany, Boston, New York)**
- **Northeast Airlines (Hartford, New York)**
- **Northern Airways (Burlington, Hartford/Springfield, Rutland)**
- **PAC Air (Nashua, Boston)**
- **Pilgrim Airlines (Hartford/Springfield, Manchester)**
- **Precision Airlines (Boston, Lebanon/Hanover/White River Junction, Newark, New York) Focus City**
- **Rainbow Air (Hartford/Springfield, Boston, Manchester, Nashua) Focus City**
- **Rutland Airways (Albany, Rutland)**
- **SkyMaster Airlines (Boston, Laconia, Newark, Rutland) Hub**
- **Trans New England Airlines (Boston, Lebanon)**
- **Wiggins Airways (Fitchburg, Orange)**
- **Winnepesaukee Airlines**

**Anyone remember any of these, better yet use any of these for your personal travel.....**