

The History of Ridgeland Airport

A sixty-nine acre parcel of land one mile northwest of Ridgeland, South Carolina, was purchased by Sanders Jenness from J. Lee Dean on March 12, 1938. The property, vacant at the time, had previously been a flower bulb farm. Shortly thereafter, a small group of aviation enthusiasts approached Mr. Jenness requesting that they be allowed to build an airstrip on his property. Mr. Jenness graciously agreed to this request.

With no funds and no experience in this type of project, the group began the task with a borrowed farm tractor and hand tools. After a lot of hard work, they actually completed a workable landing runway early in 1939. Soon, Mr. L.D. Kleckley, Sr. purchased a two-place Aeronca Chief aircraft, becoming the first to begin flying from the new landing field.

Sanders Jenness joined the U.S. Navy as World War II began and as a result, the property was transferred to H.B. Garbade. A few years later in June, 1943, the newly organized Jasper County Aeronautics Commission purchased two parcels of land with a view toward establishing a permanent airport in Jasper County. One was a 48 acre tract from H.B. Garbade and another from Y.C. Weathersbee of 28 acres. Together, the two parcels totaled 76 acres and cost the County \$4,850.

The new airport was solidly in operation in 1947 when Miller Flying Service began operations there. Herbert Miller owned the three aircraft put in service and was himself the chief flight instructor as well. Over 70 local pilots obtained their initial pilots licenses under the tutelage of Mr. Miller.

In 1960, the popularity of the airport attracted funding from the State of South Carolina. A paved and lighted 3,000 feet long by 70 feet wide runway was constructed and put into operation. During that same decade, the training demands of the Viet Nam War brought the U.S. Army to the Ridgeland Airport. Army helicopter pilot training was frequently conducted there. After the war, U.S. Army Colonel Oscar C. Mack (Ret) established a flying school at the airport. Mr. Mack operated his very successful flying school for a number of years prior to his untimely death in 1998.

The long tradition of grass-roots flight training begun by Mr. Miller and Mr. Mack continues today at Ridgeland Airport. The Lowcountry Soaring Association is home-based at the field and operates two gliders and a tow plane, having provided entry-level and advanced soaring training and flight operations to local enthusiasts for the last 15 years. In addition now, powered aircraft flight training is available from a new operation, Lowcountry Aircraft Management.

Today the Ridgeland Airport is a typical, active county airport with fuel and aircraft repair and inspection services available to both visiting aircraft and the more than fifty light aircraft that call the airfield home. The well-attended, annual "Race to Ridgeland", a light plane fly-in conducted in May of each year, is a highlight of the flying year. Ridgeland Airport is a county-owned, public-use airport. Mr. Claude Dean is the Commissioner of the Jasper County Aeronautics Commission and the manager of the airport.

Acts and Joint Resolutions

OF THE

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

OF THE

State of South Carolina

REGULAR SESSION OF 1949

First Part

of Forty-Sixth Volume of Statutes at Large

PRINTED UNDER DIRECTION OF
JOINT COMMITTEE ON PRINTING
GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF SOUTH CAROLINA

missioners.", so that said section when so amended shall read as follows:

"4376. Said county board of commissioners shall, immediately after qualifying meet and organize by electing one of their number as Chairman and another as Vice-Chairman; and may elect or employ a clerk who shall be subject to removal at any time at the discretion of said county commissioners".

SECTION 2: Repeal.—All Acts or parts of Acts inconsistent herewith are hereby repealed:

SECTION 3: Time effective.—This Act shall take effect upon its approval by the Governor.

Approved the 4th day of Feb., 1949

(R27, S39)

No. 12

AN ACT To Create The Jasper County Aeronautic Commission; To Provide For The Appointment And Terms Of Office Of The Members Thereof And To Prescribe Their Duties And Powers; To Provide That Said Commission May Acquire Property And Rights Of Way By Grant, Gift, Donation, Purchase, Lease, Condemnation, Or Otherwise; To Authorize Said Commission To Lease Property And Rights Acquired By It And To Enter Into Agreements Relative To The Establishment, Operation And Maintenance Of An Air Port And Aeronautical Field In Jasper County; To Authorize Said Commission To Sell, Lease, Trade And Exchange Property Acquired By It.

BE IT ENACTED by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1: Jasper County aeronautics commission—appointment—terms—vacancy—pay—chairman.—There is hereby created a Commission for and in behalf of Jasper County, known as "The Jasper County Aeronautics Commission", which shall consist of three (3) members who are residents of said County and who shall be appointed by the Governor of this State upon recommendation of the Legislative Delegation from said County in the General Assembly of this State. The terms of office of said members shall be two years; PROVIDED, HOWEVER, that the terms of office of the initial

members shall be as follows: one for one year, one for two years and one for three years. The respective terms of office of said initial members shall be specified by the Governor in making the appointments. All vacancies in the membership of said Commission shall be filled by appointment for the unexpired term in like manner as appointments are made for the full term. Members of said Commission shall not receive any compensation for their services. Said members shall from time to time select one of their number as chairman of said Commission.

SECTION 2: Acquire and dispose of property—commission's powers cumulative.—The said Commission is hereby authorized and empowered to acquire by grant, purchase, lease real property and rights of way for air port and aeronautical purposes, and to so acquire approaches and obstruction rights in the matter of air port and aeronautical purposes. Said Commission is further authorized and empowered to sell, lease, trade, convey and exchange property and rights theretofore acquired for such purposes which in its opinion is not needed for the purposes for which same were acquired. The manner of acquiring property by condemnation as authorized in this Act may be the same as is provided by law for the condemnation of rights of way for road purposes by the State Highway Commission. Said Commission is authorized and empowered to receive by gift or donation monies and other property to be used by it in carrying out the purposes of this Act. That the powers and authorities extended to said Commission under the provisions of this Act shall be cumulative to and in addition to all powers and authorities said Commission may have by virtue of the provisions of any other Act, Statute or law.

SECTION 3: Contract with United States.—That said Commission is authorized and empowered to lease to the United States of America or to any agency or any person or firm thereof any and all of the property and rights acquired by said Commission under the provisions of this Act, or under the provisions of any other Act, statute or law. Said Commission is further authorized and empowered to enter into agreements with the United States of America or any agency or any person or firm thereof relative to the establishment, operation and maintenance of an Air Port and Aeronautical Field in said County. That all such leases and agreement shall be valid and binding upon said Commission and said County.

SECTION 4: Operation, maintenance and control of airport.—

It is the intent of this legislation that the said Commission shall have the right to promulgate any rules or regulations in connection with the operation of the said air port. It is the further intention of this legislation that the said Commission has the right to do anything which in their discretion is proper relative to the operation, maintenance or control of the said air port.

SECTION 5: Invalidity.—That if any Section, provision or clause of this Act be declared unconstitutional, such validity shall not affect any other Section, provision or clause.

SECTION 6: Time effective.—This Act shall take effect upon its approval by the Governor.

Approved the 4th day of Feb., 1949

(R29, H1052)

No. 13

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1432

~~AN ACT. To Amend Act # 661 Of The Acts Of The General Assembly Of South Carolina, 1948, Relating To The Open Hunting Season For Deer, Squirrels, And Quail In Clarendon County So As To Extend The Time For Hunting Quail To February 15th, Inclusive.~~

BE IT ENACTED by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

~~**SECTION 1: Act 661 of 1948 amended—season hunt quail extended, Clarendon County.—**That Section 1 of Act # 661 of the Acts of the General Assembly of South Carolina, 1948, entitled "An Act to Fix the Time of the Open Hunting Season for Deer, Squirrels, and Quail in Clarendon County", be, and the same is hereby, amended by striking out at the end of said section "to February 1st, inclusive" and inserting in lieu thereof "to February 15th, inclusive" so that said section when so amended shall read as follows:~~

~~"Section 1: That the open season for hunting game in Clarendon County shall be as follows: open season for hunting deer, bucks only, shall be from September 15th to January 1st, inclusive; open season for hunting squirrel shall be from September 15th to February 1st, inclusive; open season for hunting quail shall be from Thanksgiving Day to February 15th, inclusive."~~