



Reflections

The Quarterly Journal of the Northwest Airlines History Center



December 2020

Volume 18, number 4

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Wisconsin Central photo memories from the Hal Carr Collection

Revisiting Brainerd on WIS' cold, snowy opening day

Former NWA sales rep has a laser focus on celebrating airline history

When corporate pronouncements don't agree: detective work in the archives

Our mission:

To preserve and display the memory of Northwest Airlines' colorful history.

To tell the stories of carriers merged and allied with NWA, and the stations and regions they served.

To show how the legacy of NWA carries on into the future.



Demonstrator units for the original World Business Class seats have returned to Minnesota through the generous contribution of free air freight on Delta, after being in storage at the Delta Flight Museum in Atlanta for the past ten years. Plans are being drawn to put these fully-powered units on display (see article below).

Present, tense

Working in the moment, adapting, and trying to plan for the future

—by Scott Norris

“Failure to plan is planning to fail,” goes the modern proverb and consultant sales pitch. One might argue in this year of chaos and COVID, though, that a nonprofit or museum trying to set any long-term goals and budgets is taking its eye off the more important task of immediate survival.

And that task is starkly serious. A June survey from the American Alliance of Museums said up to 1/3 of respondents are at some risk of closing permanently without additional financial relief. UNESCO reports nearly 13% of museums worldwide may not reopen after the pandemic has passed. Your NWAHC views the current crisis soberly, but also as the right reason to adopt strategies that will let us emerge more securely in the “After Times.”

PLANS AND PLANES to page 10

Preflight Checklist

The Northwest Airlines History Center, Inc.

We are an independent, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation registered in the State of Minnesota. Volunteer-staffed and volunteer-managed. We have no organizational or financial tie to Delta Air Lines.

Founder: Henry V. "Pete" Patzke (1925-2012)

Directors:

- Executive Director and Collections Manager: Bruce Kitt
- Museum Director: open position
- Directors: Bruce Kitt, Fay Kulenkamp, Bill Marchessault, Vince Rodriguez, Jeff Schwalen, Mike Vetter, Scott Norris
- Director Emeritus: Jerry Nielsen

Museum Address:

Crowne Plaza AIRE Hotel

3 Appletree Square, Bloomington MN 55425

(952) 876-8677

Archives and Administration:

10100 Flying Cloud Drive, Ste A-306, Eden Prairie MN 55347

(952) 698-4478

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Visiting the Museum

The NWAHC Museum is located inside the Crowne Plaza AIRE Hotel in Bloomington, MN, just south of MSP International Airport.

Current schedule: Check our website, Facebook, or Twitter for schedules as COVID restrictions are ever-changing.

Admission and parking are FREE. (Special events may incur a charge.)

Directions:

From the airport: Use METRO Blue Line light rail from either Terminal 1 or Terminal 2 southbound and exit at the American Boulevard station. The Crowne Plaza AIRE is immediately east, across the street from the station. Trains run every 10 minutes and fares are \$2.50 peak / \$2 off-peak. Tickets are good for 2.5 hours of unlimited travel, so depending on the length of your visit, a separate return ticket may not be necessary.

From the Mall of America: Take the METRO Blue Line light rail outbound; American Boulevard is the third stop.

In the Twin Cities Metro area: Head toward MSP International Airport. From Interstate 494, exit on 34th Ave. S. and go south one block to American Blvd. Turn left (east) on American and then immediately right into (and under) the hotel. The parking ramp is on the left - follow the signs for free hotel parking (do not use spaces not reserved for the hotel.)

The museum is located on the third floor, above the pool area on the second floor, and across from the Fitness Center.

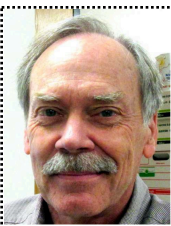
Annual Membership

Membership is the main source of funding for the NWAHC; please join!

\$30 level - receives REFLECTIONS digital edition early access via email

\$35 level - receives REFLECTIONS print edition by U.S. Postal Service

Boarding Announcements



From Director Bruce Kitt

COVID Ground Stop #2.

On November 18th, Minnesota Governor Walz issued an Executive Order dialing back a number of targeted social activities in response to the surge in coronavirus cases. In Minnesota, museums are classified as “places of public accommodation” and are specifically included on the listed of businesses that had to close again.

Not unlike the airline industry, the Northwest Airlines History Center (NWAHC) was beginning to see a slow climb in our visitor count since we reopened on July 15th, after the first COVID restrictions were lifted. While nowhere near the

numbers we were greeting in mid-March, our visitor capacity was trending upwards. Like altitude over mountainous terrain, more is better.

Our new reality is that normal is going to be anything but consistent as we head into 2021. The partnerships with St. Catherine and St. Thomas are in holding patterns while they update their teaching methods; I am hopeful we will retain our status as a learning archive and museum for their students. Much of what we do in the near future will be on the fly. The archive/office has become my out-of-house ‘safe place’ as I’m the only one there. I’ve been able to work on several projects to organize access and finding aids for our growing collection, and to answer several outside requests for information.

Let us hope social considerations for one another – and an effective vaccine – turn the tide on this pandemic. Until then, please stay healthy. The museum volunteers are looking forward to greeting you when we re-open. CAVU.



From Editor Scott Norris

The theme of this quarter’s issue is “improvisation in times of uncertainty” but that was not the case several months ago when I first started sketching out the story order. But of course all of us have had to make changes to our everyday lives and working arrangements as the virus exploits peoples’ behavior to cause suffering and hardship.

While the feature article of this issue talks about efforts the NWAHC is taking to come through this crisis better, more able to tell stories, and to be a stronger resource for our communities, here I’d like to share the stories I’m plotting for future issues of REFLECTIONS.

2021 is going to be full of key dates for the NWA Family:

- The 60th anniversary of Boeing 720B operations - the photo gallery for this type was recently posted on our website
- The Northwest-KLM Alliance began in April 1991 (the World Business Class seats were an example of the collaboration)
- Will the Airliners International show happen in Phoenix this July? A Bonanza retrospective would be in order, then
- 35 years will have passed since the Republic-Northwest merger - difficult times but important to examine
- 20 years since the September 11 terrorist attacks which changed the airline industry forever
- 70 years since Northwest helped Japan Air Lines get off the ground - will JAL still exist for its October 25 birthday?
- And the 50th anniversary of the D.B. Cooper hijacking

Your recollections and insights about these topics and more are valued and critical to telling these stories well. I invite your contributions, and look forward to hearing from you!

Shop online and support the NWAHC!

- Treasure hunt! We offer surplus materials and new apparel and pins for sale on **eBay** under the handle “cyberglitz” - the assortment changes every week!
- Buying on **amazon.com**? Of course you are. Sign up for Amazon Smile and 1/2% of every purchase is contributed to our museum. Use the link at smile.amazon.com/ch/41-2020975 to specify the NWAHC!

Interested in donating materials?

Please contact our collections manager, Bruce Kitt, at bruce.kitt@northwestairlineshistory.org with details of your items, photos if possible, and how we can reach you.

We are especially interested in items that help us tell stories or demonstrate concepts and procedures; records and correspondence; video, audio, and photos; training materials; and union communications. Items from Hughes Airwest & its predecessors, and Southern are especially appreciated.

Compass Readings

Logos don't speak for themselves (Part 1)

By Bruce Kitt

There are historical facts...and then there is the fog of history, where facts have become confused, forgotten, and mis-stated. Some have been repeated enough times, enough years, that they are now accepted, repeated in stories and print and accepted as true. The NWAHC's archive has achieved a degree of depth that is useful in examining some of these 'facts' to determine which are truly true, as opposed to what is accepted as true because, well, everyone says so. A 'recent' 2006 error I found in the employee newspaper, Passages, has created a line of questions that will correct some facts in Northwest's history.

The error that caught my eye involves Northwest's logos. To the side are three illustrations of NWA logos from 1926 – 2008:

First, notice that illustration #1 does not include the Regal Eagle design, which is included in #2 and #3. The Regal Eagle was only applied to the tail of Lockheed L-188 Electra turbo-prop airliners in the early 1960s. It was used extensively in print, but was not applied on other types of aircraft in Northwest's fleet. (I'll be returning to this in a later segment.) That fact seems to be acknowledged in 1996.

In these illustrations, note the logo that followed Clarence Lee's 1969 design (See: Reflections, Spring 2013). In 2002 (illus. #2), the logo has an introduction date of 1989, but in 2006 (illus. #3) it states 1987, and it can't be both years. (If only Northwest had valued its history more and had a company archivist to keep these facts...true.) So which year is it? The correct/true answer was reported in the June 1, 1989 Special Edition of Passages (illus.#4) that featured a center page spread of the new Landor designed logo and livery on planes and ground equipment (See: Reflections, Dec 2015). The new logo and livery was also the subject of a Minneapolis Star Tribune Marketplace article on May 24, 1989, p1D, "Northwest's Flying Colors".

Given this official debut confirmation by NWA, the NWAHC recognizes 1989 as the correct logo date in all future timelines. In my next installment I'll hop back to 1934 as we fly westward in the airline's logo history.

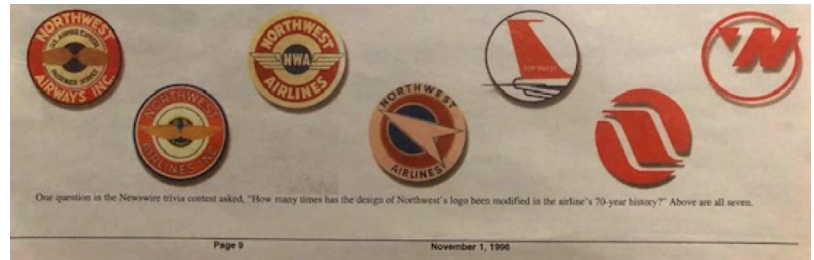


ILLUSTRATION 1: Nov. 1, 1996 Passages clipping (page 9)



ILLUSTRATION 2: July 2002 Passages clipping (page 14)

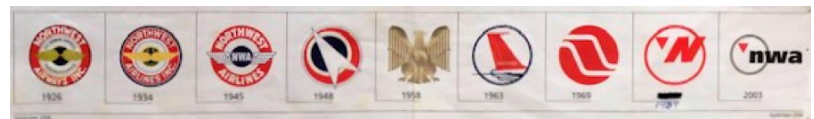


ILLUSTRATION 3: Sept. 2006 Passages clipping

ILLUSTRATION 4: June 1, 1989 Passages special edition for the Landor intro



Introducing our new director, Capt. Mike Vetter

Encouraging the growth of a broad volunteer base is vital for any museum. When representing the legacy of an organization as vast as Northwest Airlines was, being able to call on many perspectives is essential to help us tell well-rounded stories and to connect those stories with today's audiences.

In the past year we've brought several of our directors into these pages to share their diverse backgrounds in hopes of encouraging others to come on board. That tactic was effective in the case of our newest board member, Mike Vetter, who joined us this summer. Let's learn more about Mike in this interview excerpt - and look for more on our blog!



REFLECTIONS: Mike, you hired on at NWA in 1979. What was your career path?

MV: When I started college in 1974, there was a huge recession and thousands of pilots were on furlough, including NWA which had hundreds. It was pretty bleak to choose the piloting profession at that time as all flying jobs were scarce and working conditions poor. I chose to pursue a business degree just in case this flying thing did not work out and received my BS in Business Administration. Around 1977, the hiring started back up, albeit at a very slow pace, but things were happening! The Navy recruiter came to campus and promised me a flying slot out of college and I almost signed on the dotted line. Something told me to wait on signing and my plan was to pursue to airlines and if this didn't happen by age 27, I could join the service and make a career as my father did.

While in Texas, I started prepping to become qualified taking the Flight Engineer written exams and acquired my Airline Transport Rating (ATP) when I turned 23. Feeling qualified to apply now, I started to send applications to all the airlines and in May of 1979, I received an interview with Northwest Orient Airlines and the rest is history! My career path with NWA began in June 1979 as a Second Officer (Flight Engineer) on the Boeing 727. I sat there for 5 years as I slowly moved up the seniority list until things busted loose. In March 1984, I received a bid to the DC-10 SO in SEA and then the 747-200 SO in SEA in November 1984. Moving up to Co-pilot (FO) on the 747-200 in 1986 and then my first Captain checkout as B727 in 1988. Things were moving so fast at that time at NWA, I was constantly in training every year for a new position; B757 CA in 1989 and A320 CA in 1990, being dual qualified on both aircraft at the same time.

In 1995 I received a bid to the DC-10 CA in DTW! This was the big time, wide body Captain! My life changed the following year as I was recruited to become an instructor on the DC-10 at NATCO. Another upgrade came to the B747-200 CA in MSP in 1998 and the best plane ever, a 747-400 CA in DTW. On this airplane I was a simulator instructor, operating experience (OE) instructor as well as an APD (qualified to certify new captain type ratings). Eventually, with the Delta merger I became a Lead Line Check pilot (LLCP) and member for the 3 engine ferry team for the -400. Unfortunately, all things must pass and sadly, the -400 was retired by Delta in December 2017. I was fortunate to have flown a couple of the farewell flights and took a few to the desert where most of them are still in storage in Arizona. About to turn 63, I did not wish to retire yet and was trained to fly the Airbus 350-900. I finished my career as an A350 CA and took an early buyout from Delta in October due to Covid.

REF: Your LinkedIn biography notes you've made volunteer work a personal priority. What kinds of projects have you worked on?

MV: Retirement has not been what I expected. With Covid, everything I thought I would be doing is on hold. I do volunteer at a number of non profits:

1. Northville Rotary: Past President, Foundation Board of Directors
2. Yankee Air Museum: I skipper the North American B-25D to various airshows mainly during the summer months.
3. Counselor at Crossroads of Michigan in Detroit
4. Volunteer at Northville Civic Concern, a local food bank.
5. First Presbyterian Church Northville: Former Elder, Endowment Committee
6. NWAHC: Board of Directors
7. While not a non-profit, I own an aircraft appraisal/consulting LLC

REF: That brings us to the NWAHC. How did you find out about us? And how would you like to use your skills to help us evolve?

MV: Not sure how I first heard about NWAHC, but I joined in 2010 as a life member and saw the opportunity to become a board member in Fay's column in Reflections. Some goals I'd like to see would be expansion of the museum, increasing donations and affiliating with related (aviation) and national museums, such as the Smithsonian family.

Wisconsin Central Memories

From the Hal N. Carr Collection

The early days of Wisconsin Central may feel familiar to the modern-day reader: a chronically underfunded startup with a charismatic founder, trying to do the impossible in an inhospitable territory with a core group of dedicated staff - with more than a few eccentric characters - who had to (quite literally) wear many hats just to get the job done. The winters of 1948 and 1949 were both starkly cold and ridiculously snowy - and the team was headquartered at Madison, Wisconsin's Truax Field in a surplus military hangar so drafty that it was colder inside than out. Through it all they improvised and bonded, and their spirit held the fledgling firm together until profit eventually came through.

This could be the premise of an episodic situation comedy. It could also work as an allegory for families, nonprofits, and companies trying to manage in the time of the coronavirus.

In the NWAHC archives, we have been gifted by the family of Hal Carr, the initial #2 at Wisconsin Central who would become the leader of North Central, with a number of Bankers' Boxes containing personal work items, extensive financial documents, and a great number of photographs, from the earliest days of the company all the way into his time at Republic.

Some of these pictures were used in Robert Serling's 1973 corporate biography of North Central, *Ceiling Unlimited*. But many were unpublished. Through them, the sense of family, humor, and resourcefulness from the early days rings true.

All the photos have been cataloged, but we are now working through the collection to digitize them so they can be used in reporting and exhibits by the NWAHC as well as by researchers and the general public.

On the NWAHC website, many of these vintage pictures will be posted soon in our Aircraft Galleries - the Lockheed 10 Electra gallery will be coming online this winter, and the DC-3 gallery is scheduled for next year. Carr's photo collection also included Convair propliners, and Douglas and Boeing jets, as well as training sessions and airport interiors - we look forward to sharing them with you!



Gerry McAdams, Wisconsin Central secretary in FA uniform, appears with Brainerd, Minnesota mayor Leir Johnson in February 1949 to promote the introduction of upcoming service in March. The white patch over Herman in the posters is a copy of the service schedule. Why a TWA attendant cutout when WIS did not link Brainerd with Chicago? That's a mystery, though Carr came from TWA...



Minnesota Queen of the Snows Joan Schellar (of St. Paul) was a guest at the March 1, 1949 inaugural activities in Brainerd. Escorting the Queen to her waiting new Mercury limousine were William Van Essen in the fur hat, and Joe Faust, Secretary of the Brainerd Civic Association.



BELOW LEFT: Pearl Schroeder (L), Teletype Operator, and Gerry McAdams (R) model flight attendant uniforms used for publicity programs (as WIS did not have female staff flying at the time!) This photo is from February 1948, shortly after scheduled operations began. BELOW RIGHT: Joan Schellar presides at BRD's first flight arrival while Leo Schoeder, Commissioner of the MN Dept. of Aeronautics, speaks on KLIZ 1380 AM Radio.





TOP LEFT: Wisconsin Central's entire reservations and teletype department in its early days at Madison is presented in this photo. Each numbered clipboard corresponded to an aircraft and each page displayed its planned schedule and reserved passengers. From left, Nancy Grab, Ruth Geist, and Pearl Schroeder (who we saw on the previous page in a publicity photo.)

BOTTOM LEFT: In the literal nerve center of the company, Schoeder and Grab are demonstrating both the teletype for inter-station communications, and a ticker-tape feed for receiving syndicated news and commodity pricing information. The fabric wall covering helped buffer the sound of these machines from the rest of the office. It's amazing to consider from today's digital-media perspective that these late-1940s communications technologies were still used through the 1970s.



BOTTOM RIGHT: At a regional airline conference in Boise, Idaho in the early 1950s, Hal Carr takes notes while Gavin Hicks, Vice President of Empire Airlines, demonstrates how to deal with a little bull, certainly a useful skill in the air transportation business.



Community Interview

Tim Haskin of Airline Time Machine

The legacy of NWA carries on through companies big and small and sometimes in novel ways. We are delighted to share these extended community connections! Recently we met Tim Haskin, an NWAHC Member who has started the gift site AirlineTimeMachine.com: (for even more content from this interview, check our blog!)

REF: What’s your experience in the airline industry? Did you work for NWA / predecessors?

Tim: I was hired by Northwest for reservation sales in the spring of 1986, and after the 5-week training course at the MSP GO, I selected Cleveland for my first work assignment. Reservations was a wild ride during the merger activity that began in October of that year, and I transferred to MSP after the CLE reservations office was consolidated in '87.

From there I worked in Inside Sales, then became a Sales Account Manager in Detroit, worked in sales administration back in MSP, spent time as the station manager in La Crosse, Wisconsin, then in ground ops sales in MSP for a total of 12 years with NWA. After Northwest, I had opportunities to work for Carlson Companies, Sun Country Airlines and AirTran, all in the Twin Cities area. I've been in the airline software industry for the last 15 years.

REF: Tell us about your laser cutter and how your setup works!

Tim: I've been a collector of airline and airliner memorabilia since I was a kid, and in early 2019 decided to try out Instagram as a social media outlet for my aviation interests. I wanted to create a way for people to connect with past airlines by creating new products that featured airline logos that just can't be found anywhere else. Late last year, I learned about Glowforge digital laser "printers" that are really very slick cutting, etching, and engraving tools. I bought a Glowforge machine, taught myself how to use Illustrator software for creating the designs I wanted to produce, then rolled out a small website to sell what I had made.

Because these items have a specific, limited audience, I make one example of each item, photograph that single example for the website, then cut each order "on demand" as they come in. That requires keeping a stock of raw materials on hand in my basement "factory", but I work primarily with maple and cherry hardwood, and a half dozen colors of acrylic.

There has been a lot of guesswork around which type of products to create, and which airline brands to feature. I know that folks aren't eagerly visiting my website every day to see if I've added an item for the small, obscure airline they worked for in Idaho in the 1970s, so there's a big dose of online promotion through social media (like Instagram and Facebook), and initial experiments with paid advertising, to promote new items.

I was looking forward to hitting several of the airliner shows this year, but the rescheduling of those shows into 2021 has given me a good opportunity to build up my product catalog to get ready for them!

REF: How would you like to develop the business? Is this more of a side-line or do you see it being a full-time endeavor?

Tim: Today, this is definitely a passionate "after work" hobby for me, but I'm working to expand the products I offer, and to grow my reach to other aviation history fans.

Eventually, this could be a great focus for my post-retirement life, but that's still a few years away. Until then, there are hundreds of additional departed airlines to feature, a century's worth of notable aircraft to draw, and lots of new products ideas to try out!



Feature Article

Strategic Situation

The NWAHC is an all-volunteer organization, which has been a plus in terms of not having to worry about paying staff while the museum location has been ordered closed during the pandemic. Membership is by far our largest source of financial support, so we have not been subject to cutoffs of corporate funding or shifting priorities of large institutional donors. Our space arrangement with the Crowne Plaza AIRE Hotel essentially is a rent-free situation. And our cash position is reasonably good, under the circumstances - about two years' reserve.

The absence of the Fall Airliner show and the lack of visitors to our museum's shop have dried up new revenue, however. And without an open museum to walk through, we aren't making as many new impressions on visitors to the Twin Cities or the community at large.

Our Membership numbers have been thankfully stable. But to be sustainable for the long term - to maintain and grow the collection, care for our artifacts and pay the bills, and properly interact with the community, we want to see our Membership roughly doubled (or consistent new revenues equivalent to that.)

Engaging Millennials and Generation Z

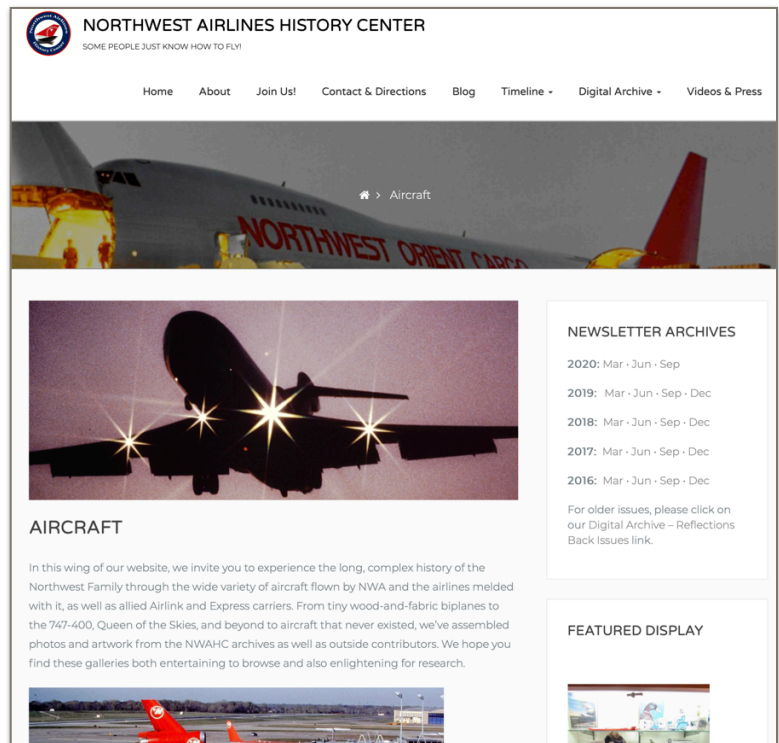
Also in the long run, there aren't any new Baby Boomer generation former NWA staffers - while we will keep getting the word out among this cohort, to grow our membership means we need to talk to current airline employees, aviation and transportation enthusiasts, educators, and travelers - especially those in their 20s, 30s, and 40s.

This means interacting with these audiences in the ways they are used to, which brings us to:

The Digital Pivot

Museums everywhere acknowledge anywhere from 70-90% of their collections never get displayed to the general public for lack of space, staffing, or awkwardness. A printed timetable means nothing if you can't read through it, for instance. Only so many photos can be hung on a wall.

The NWAHC is making it a priority to digitize high-interest materials like timetables, fleet lists, and photos and making those files freely available on our website. Staff newsletters are another rich vein for us to tap - and interested volunteers can aid this effort with their home or work scanners. These efforts help us get well-indexed on search engines, and so help us grow views and visitors.



ABOVE: The NWAHC website has been significantly expanded in the past two years, with the Aircraft Gallery being this year's signature effort.

BELOW: Snip from our first new video this year on YouTube.



BELOW: Merchandise on display at our museum shop in Bloomington, MN.



E-commerce

Our museum's gift shop uses a cash register powered by the Clover e-commerce application. This has worked well for in-person sales, but not so well for the Fall Airliner Show - and the app cannot support online merchandise sales.

Our Board has voted to transition over to the Shopify platform in 2021. About half the e-commerce sites in the USA use this app and it is both well-supported and more affordable than Clover. The first use for Shopify will be to handle online Membership processing - over 2021 we will gradually build out an e-commerce shopping site.

Refreshed Exhibits and Support Materials

We've been in the Crowne Plaza AIRE for several years, and it's time for our exhibits to start cycling through. The World Business Class seats we just received will jump-start that process. We intend to apply for grants to assist us in building new displays and will be looking for outside support in creating lesson plans and teaching materials based on them.

YouTube videos will also be important to introduce, explain, and extend our physical displays in the future.

Community Outreach

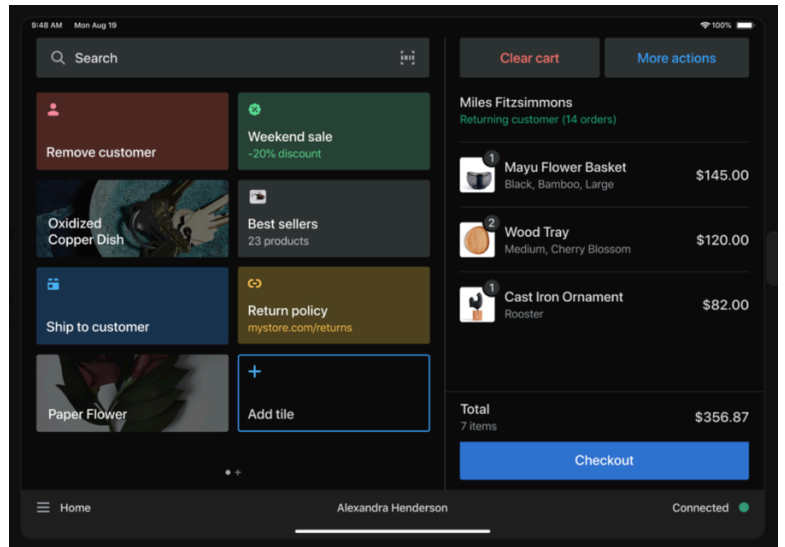
We want to tap into Minneapolis/St. Paul's network of social and ethnic organizations, museums, and universities for help and to share in research and publicity - not restricting ourselves to just aviation/transportation interests. This process should also extend to other key NWA bases.

When in-person events are again possible, we can better engage in shared exhibits, celebrations, and interviews that will expand our audience and potential Membership.

Building our Volunteer Base

With each of these efforts, the NWAHC offers current and potential volunteers ways to use different skills - not all involve working in the museum itself, and many could be performed "off hours." We hope this variety and flexibility will help us attract people with diverse interests and backgrounds - that will again better connect us to the broader community and drive awareness of our mission.

From education to medicine, shopping to worship, experts are saying COVID is only speeding up trends that already existed. This is true for museums as well. The NWAHC has shown its pluckiness and ability to improvise many times - being resourceful and strategic with Membership dollars and material contributions. Those skills and the trust we've built over time are the key to ensuring we can continue to tell your stories well into the future.



ABOVE: a sample checkout screen on a Shopify-app enabled iPad.

BELOW: rear view of World Business Class seats, just arrived to our Archive.



