

# N3N-3 *Yellow Peril* Joins the Museum Collection

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At first look, the newest jewel in the Museum's collection would appear to many to be "just another *Stearman*" an aircraft that helped thousands of cadets become aviators in World War II. But a closer look reveals that it is not a *Stearman* at all, but something completely different. The newest arrival in the Aviation Museum is a Naval Aircraft Factory N3N-3, affectionately known as a "*Yellow Peril*." While the N3N was designed to perform the same mission as the more famous

*Stearman* PT-17 (or N2S in Navy parlance), it was a unique design that incorporated many advanced features for a trainer of its day.

The N3N came about because of two simultaneous needs within the United States



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Navy during the early 1930s. Naval aviation was expand-

ing and needing new, more sophisticated airplanes to replace the "long-in-the-tooth" consolidated NY-2s for basic pilot training. At the same time, the Navy needed to dispose of a large supply of extruded aluminum angle material left over from the building of the airships *USS Akron* and *USS Macon*. The Navy decided to design its own aircraft utilizing the angled aluminum, solving both problems.

The N3N was unique in that it was the only aircraft both designed and mass-produced by an aircraft firm wholly-owned and operated by the U.S. Navy;



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not a private company. More than 900 were built, in two variants; the N3N-1 and the -3. Either could operate from land, or be converted to operate from water on floats, which was helpful in training the pilots who would catapult from cruisers and battleships as naval artillery spotters. The N3N first flew in August 1935, and the last one would be retired by the Navy in 1961. Its robust construction helped it survive the beating given to it by student pilots, and served it well after the war when many were converted to crop dusters.

The name, "*Yellow Peril*," came from its bright yellow paint scheme that warned everyone in the area that a student pilot was at the controls.

The Museum's N3N, (serial number #2831) was built in March 1941 and was delivered



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to Naval Air Station Grosse Ile, Michigan on April 17, 1941. Transferred to Naval Air Station Squantum, Massachusetts, it was wrecked in a landing accident that December, giving it a short Navy career of only nine months. It was rebuilt in 1972 and purchased by Museum board member Ernest McCall. He flew it up until its delivery to the Museum in October 2008.

As McCall says of the N3N, "Planes like the N3N-3 invite Museum visitors to ask questions. It was an aircraft that saw the Navy transition from a battleship Navy with one or two catapulted aircraft, to a carrier Navy with whole squadrons of

planes. The *Yellow Peril* catches the eye as well as the imagination." Indeed it does.



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