

Gid Wilber and Duanesburg

In 1929, a young man named Gideon Wilber took over the service station where Route 20 crosses Route 7. The service station had once been the barn that was part of the old Case Hotel (the hotel is now an antique store). Wilber added a garage and store to the service station. By 1947, his daily sales of gasoline topped the 2,000 gallon mark. Then, because he missed lunch one day, he bought a restaurant. His thought was that "there ought to be one beanery open in a town (population: 250) of this size." The Wilber tourist home followed when an out-of-state party could not get accommodations for the night in Duanesburg. Gid worked eighteen hours a day, divided between his store and the Duanesburg Airport, which he began after World War II.

Gid Wilber leased the land to construct the Duanesburg Airport from Hugh MacDougall, Senior in 1945. It was said that Gid began flying and within that day, decided to buy a plane and build an airport. The airport was used in 1946 and the following year he had chartered trips and flight instruction. The next year, he hired Emerson Bericle as flight instructor. By 1948, Wilber boasted that "nearly 10% of the residents of this village fly." His flight school included school kids, farmers, housewives, gas pump attendants, factory and tavern owners and a milk dealer, with the group having an age span of 14 to 50 years old.