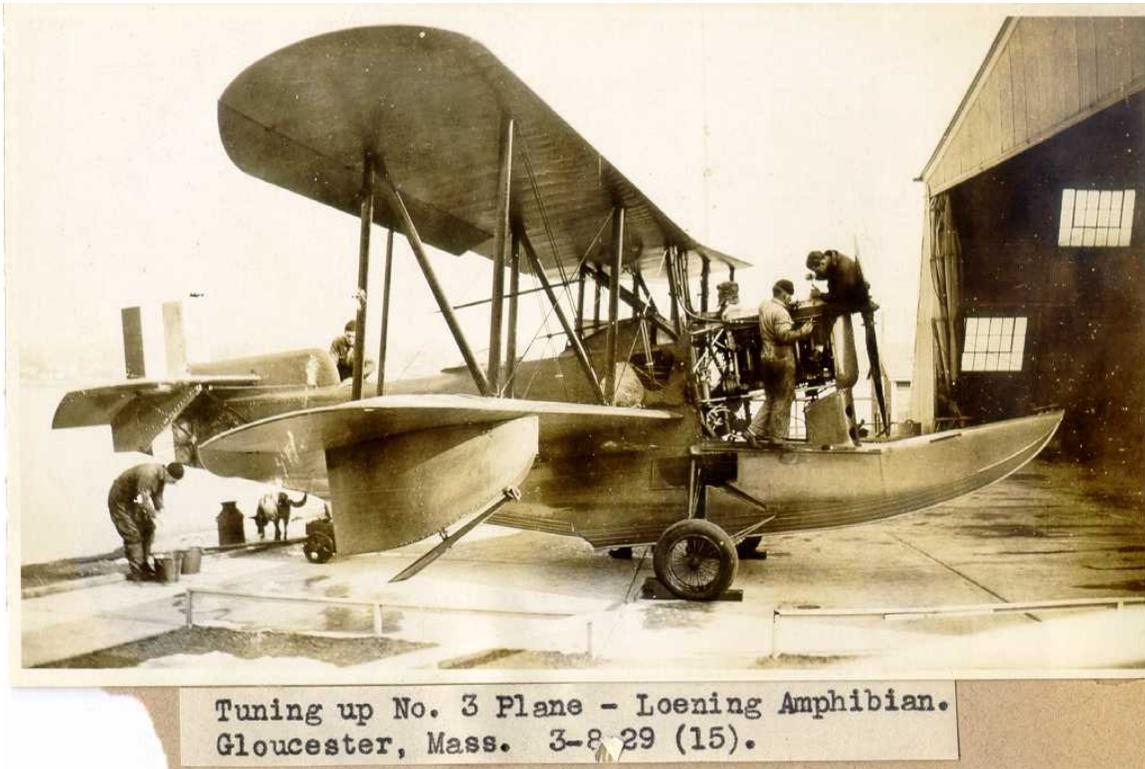


## Loening OL-5



### **Historical Information:**

The Coast Guard purchased three Loening OL-5 amphibians in October 1926, soon after Congress appropriated \$152,000 to establish a permanent aviation detachment for the Coast Guard. These three amphibians, along with two Chance-Vought UO-4's, were the first aircraft purchased by the Coast Guard and their purchase marks the true "beginning" of Coast Guard aviation. Prior to this time the Coast Guard had merely borrowed surplus Navy aircraft.

These three Loening's had been specially constructed for the Coast Guard and therefore differed from their Navy and Army counterparts. They had a strongly reinforced hull bottom and keel. The wing-tip floats were protected by special skids and they had higher rudders and extra fins to enhance directional stability

and maneuverability. They also had increased fuel capacity. Additionally, these amphibians were painted with a "high-visibility-over-water-chrome yellow" that was developed specifically for the Coast Guard OL-5.

The Coast Guard pioneered a number of activities and techniques in carrying out the service's missions using these Loenings. One of the most important for search and rescue was the experimentation in performing landings at sea. In support of law enforcement operations the Coast Guard armed the OL-5's with machine guns. The Coast Guard also experimented with air-ground communication utilizing pigeons! When that proved impracticable, they developed a battery-powered radio set capable of long-range reception and transmission. Additionally, the Loenings were even used to spot schools of fish for local fishermen.

Commander C. G. von Paulsen told the designer of the OL-5:

"That airplane of yours was a real departure at that time. It was a leader--a good, sound plane with a sound engine that gave no trouble if properly cared for. As for the plane--it flew so easily that I never gave its 'deadbeat' flying characteristics much thought. The last one was in use in 1935 and then had been used so much it got worn out. Two had been in crashes--one by clear pilot error and the other by an unavoidable collision with the yacht 'Minx' at the New London boat races in June 1930. That one was fully repairable." [Loening, pp. 93-94.]

The amphibians were given tail numbers of CG-1 (later 101), CG-2 (later 102), and CG-3 (later 103), with the Vought UO-4s being given the numbers CG-4 and CG-5. Two of the Loenings crashed while the third, 102 (CG-2), was retired in April 1935.

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Loening OL-5, running up the engine, no caption/date, Photo Number 07-01-56 (03); note: the pilot in the rear cockpit appears to be ENS M. Melka, USCG.

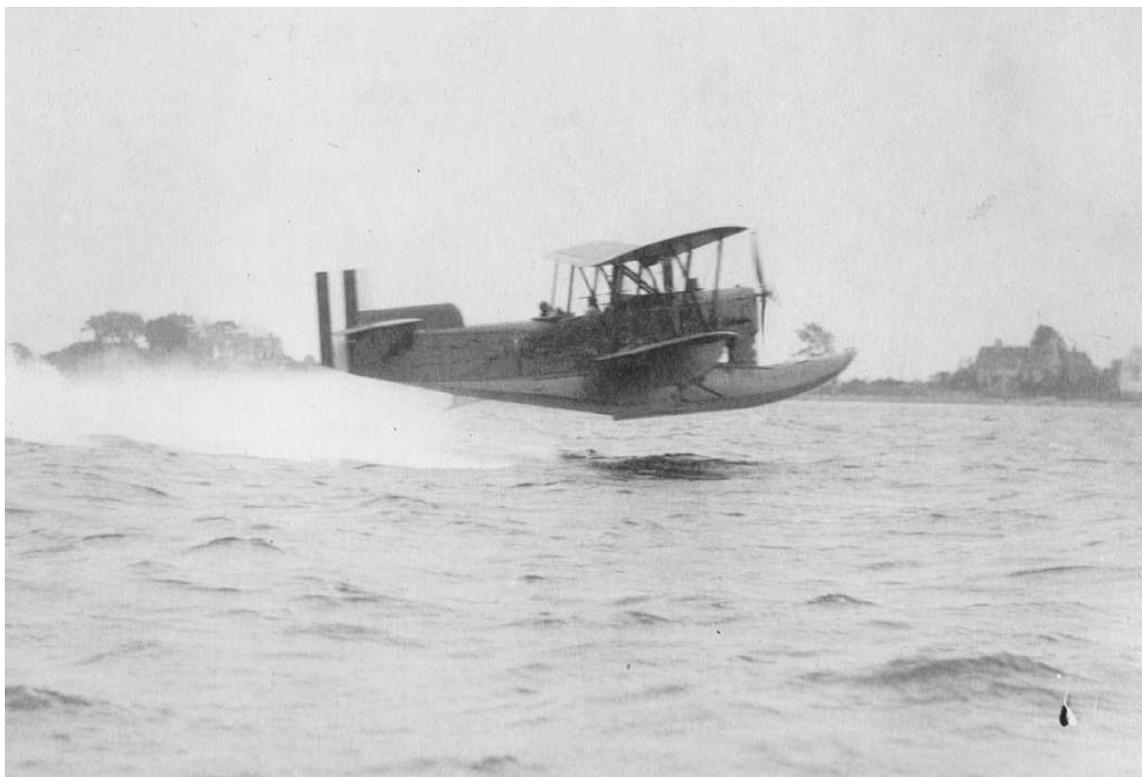


Loening OL-5, "The first airplane constructed for the U.S. Coast Guard Air Service Loening amphibian model OL-5 No. 1, delivered Oct. 1926 - autographed at the bottom of original photograph reads: 'To Secretary Mellon with best regards, Mr. Grover Loening.'" October, 1926; Photo Number 10-30-26 (n).



Ready to heave the runways - showing observer  
and operator in their seats. Gloucester, Mass.  
3-8-29 (10).

Loening OL-5, "Ready to heave the runways - showing observer and operator in their seats. Gloucester, Mass.," 8 March 1929; Photo Number 3-8-29 (10).



Loening OL-5, waterborne take-off, OL-5 No. 1(?), no caption/date/photo number.



Radio operator, holding mouthpiece of  
transmitter - wearing ear-phone helmet.  
Aviation Unit, Gloucester, Mass. 3-8-29 (9).

Loening OL-5, "Radio operator, holding mouthpiece of transmitter - wearing ear-phone helmet.  
Aviation Unit, Gloucester, Mass.; 8 March 1929; Photo Number 3-8-29 (9).



Loening OL-5, "Machine gun and rung mount ready for action - showing magazine and shell catcher in place. Gloucester, Mass."; 8 March 1929; Photo Number 3-8-29 (14).

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#### **Sources:**

Grover Loening. *Amphibian: The Story of the Loening Biplane*. Greenwich, CT: New York Graphic Society, 1973.

Arthur Percy, *U.S. Coast Guard Aircraft Since 1916* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1991), pp. 320-321.

Gordon Swanborough & Peter M. Bowers. *United States Navy Aircraft Since 1911* (Annapolis: Naval Institute Press, 1990) (revised), pp. 432-435.

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