

FORT WORTH STAR-TELEGRAM

MORNING

EVENING

SUNDAY

AMON G. CARTER
Chairman of the Board
and Publisher

FORT WORTH, TEXAS

February 4, 1953.

Mr. Ed. Travis
P. O. Box 1689
Fort Worth, Texas.

Dear Ed:

Thank you very much for the letter and information from Walter Betsworth. I have had copies made of this and am having someone look up some of the pioneer data regarding the early aviation activities in Texas. While we do not claim to have been the originator of aviation, we did have the distinction of entertaining six of the United States entire fleet of 25 army planes in 1915 when they moved the complete squadron from Fort Sill, Oklahoma, to what later on became Kelly Field in San Antonio. Their Squadron Commander, who was here, was Captain Bennie Foulis.

Later, this squadron joined General Pershing in his expedition to catch Villa in Old Mexico. As indicated, I had the pleasure of entertaining Cal Rodgers, who came through here, in 1911 and my data shows he was flying from Chicago to the Pacific Ocean representing a drink being produced by Armour & Company called "Vin". I do recall he made the statement in Fort Worth that the time would come when a man could fly from Chicago to the Pacific Ocean in thirty days. As I remember he cracked up in Pasadena on the twenty-eighth day after his departure from Chicago and failed to make his goal, as indicated at the dinner given in his honor at the old Metropolitan Hotel in Fort Worth in 1911.

I am trying to look up copies of our files to verify the above information as being in keeping with my remembrance of the facts that transpired at that time.

We are not trying to claim any of the glory due the early pioneers of aviation, Douglas and others, but we do claim to be one of the first cities that had the privilege of entertaining at a dinner approximately 25% of all the planes that the Army had at that time.

There was a story in the March issue, 1951, of the Readers Digest covering a part of these

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-2-

✓ details. Anyway, it brings up interesting memories and recollections and I am not going to quarrel with either Walter or California, or try to claim any credit for anything they are due, but I did personally have something to do with the above activities at the time Cal Rodgers was in Fort Worth in 1911, and the Army Air Force in 1915

As per your request I am returning Walter's letter and the "Aviation History of Southern California" copies of which I am having made for my files.

Thanking you for permitting me to see these papers and with best wishes, I am

Sincerely,

P. W. Carter

AGC:kd

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AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF AIRPORT EXECUTIVES

Office of the Executive Secretary

P. O. Box 718
Waterloo, Iowa.

January 15, 1953.

To: ALL MEMBERS OF THE AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF AIRPORT EXECUTIVES

From: THE DESK OF THE EXECUTIVE SECRETARY

We are enclosing herewith a very fine paper which our Past President Woodruff DeSilva, Manager of the Los Angeles International Airport, recently delivered at the Kitty Hawk Day Luncheon in the Biltmore Hotel, Los Angeles.

The paper came to our attention and we wrote to Woody and asked if he would duplicate sufficient copies so that we could mail it to the Membership. If nothing else this paper proves that California has played and continues to play a far greater part in aviation development than does the great State of Texas.

If any of our good Texas Members dispute this statement, we invite them to prepare a paper on the Aviation History of Texas to be delivered to the AMERICAN ASSOCIATION OF AIRPORT EXECUTIVES in Kansas City, Missouri, on March 24. The gauntlet is down, you Texas Mavericks, -- Woody DeSilva, Cec Meadows, Mike Doolin and the rest of the California Gang say that no one in Texas can write a speech as truthful as this one which logs the development of aviation.

If anyone in Texas thinks he can tie or beat this one, we would like to hear from you by FEBRUARY 15.

Have you marked the last week of March on your calendar? Be sure and plan to attend the annual Convention in Kansas City, Missouri, March 23 to 26 inclusive.

Cordially,

/s/ WALTER

Walter E. Betsworth
Executive Secretary
A. A. of A. E.

WEB:vs
Encl.

AVIATION HISTORY OF SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA

Paper delivered by Woodruff De Silva,
Manager of Los Angeles International
Airport - Kitty Hawk Day Luncheon,
Wednesday, December 17, 1952 - Biltmore
Bowl - Los Angeles, California.

My subject today is the historical background and development of aviation in Southern California, particularly the Los Angeles area.

In researching this subject, I find that credit goes to Gabriel De La Landelle of France (1812-1886) for originating the word "aviation" when he startled the world with the design of a steam air liner utilizing the air screw principle basis of the present helicopter.

De La Landelle along with others organized the "Societe d'Autolocomotion Aerienne" in 1862. Two years afterwards this became "Societe d'Aviation", the first record in the world of the word "aviation".

The early beginnings of aviation in California centered around Santa Ana and Glenn L. Martin. In 1908 Martin started constructing his own plane in an abandoned church. Then he taught himself to fly in this pusher. Martin is said to be the third person in the country to teach himself the art of flying.

As early as 1904, Roy Knabenshue flew a balloon from Chutes Park at Main and Washington Streets on a circular course over Los Angeles and returned to his point of takeoff.

The late Colonel Henry Hersey, for many years head of the Los Angeles Weather Bureau, in the company of Lt. Frank P. Lahm, now General Lahm, retired, and living in Los Angeles, won the first balloon cup race in the Gordon Bennett event held in Paris, in 1906. Colonel Hersey made many balloon ascensions from Chutes Park. Charles Coey, a well known aeronaut took off from the same location on March 25, 1909, in the first balloon honeymoon in America and landed in San Fernando.

Historically speaking, Dominguez Field, south of Los Angeles proper, received world attention for the first international Air Meet in the United States. This was held from January 10th to the 20th, 1910. Glenn Curtiss broke several world records at that time and Lewis Paulhan, the premier French flyer, established a new altitude world record of 4165 feet for which he won a large prize, it is stated. At the same air meet Roy Knabenshue and Lincoln Beechey were flying semi-rigid dirigibles.

Arch Hoxsey, one of the first students of the Wright brothers, was killed in the second meet at Dominguez Field on December 31, 1910. During the two subsequent meets at Dominguez Field in 1911 and 1912, Walter Brookins, who has lived in Los Angeles many years, and was the first student of the Wright brothers also participated.

The first international Meet was actively supported by William Randolph Hearst and Harry Chandler and was a financial success. Many local residents remember this great air show.

On November 5, 1911, Calbraith Rodgers made the first trans-continental flight flying a Burgess-Wright biplane from Sheepshead Bay in Brooklyn to Pasadena. The time was 49 days, of which actual flying time was 103 hours. He led the Rose Parade of that year with the same plane. Two American girls identified with early aviation are Ruth Law and Matilda Moisant, both learned to fly in 1912, and now are residents of Los Angeles.

In 1916, an airport was established at Venice, California. One year later, Cecil B. DeMille formed the Mercury Aviation Company and founded an airport on Wilshire Blvd. at Fairfax.

In 1918 Syd Chaplin and Emery Rogers established the Chaplin Field on the south side of Wilshire Boulevard, adjacent to DeMille Field. Later Rogers took over the interests of DeMille and the airport was known as Rogers Airport.

Other familiar names to us are Eddie Bellande who was an instructor at DeMille Field and Art Goebel who learned to fly at the same location. This field was closed in 1922, and Rogers Aircraft Company, with Jim Webster managing the company, moved to 125th and Western Avenue, remaining there until 1926. Then they moved to Angelus Mesa Avenue now Crenshaw Blvd., near Exposition Blvd. From the Rogers Airport at its new location, we find the Maddux Airlines carrying passengers in the first tri-motor Ford plane brought to California in 1927.

Maddux later operated scheduled service between San Diego and San Francisco. Bellande along with Larry Fritz were prominently identified for many years afterwards with air transportation.

In 1912 Martin flew the first air mail from Dominguez Field to Compton, California, and in that same year Martin moved from Santa Ana to Los Angeles. He used Griffith Park as his flying field which was later to become the California National Guard Airport.

In 1914 he established a flying school and did considerable test work on what is now the site of the Los Angeles International Airport. At the same time he was testing flying boats in "Nigger Slough" at 122nd and Main Streets.

Donald Douglas joined the Martin organization in August 1915, where he met up with Eric Springer, Larry Bell, now president of Bell Aircraft, Edward Doak and George Stromple. Glenn Martin had not met Donald Douglas who was a graduate of the Naval Academy and MIT, prior to August of 1915. Martin employed his chief engineer by exchange of letters. His remark on meeting Donald Douglas for the first time, was, "You, why you are just a boy, a boy engineer!" He remained with Martin a little over four years. There was a break of service of one year for tour of duty as Chief Engineer with the Signal Corps, Aviation Section. In June of 1920, Douglas returned to Los Angeles and formed the Davis-Douglas Company. His office was in the back of a barber shop in Los Angeles and he rented loft space to build the Cloudster which Davis proposed to fly from Los Angeles to the East Coast. Eric Springer and Davis did not make the East Coast but it is interesting to note that this plane was later used by Claude Ryan in operating a passenger service out of San Diego.

Shortly after the failure of the Cloudster in its transcontinental flight, Donald Douglas obtained an order from Washington for three torpedo planes. However, he was in need of financing and his friend, Bill Henry of the Los Angeles Times, introduced him to Harry Chandler. Chandler interested nine other local business men to join with him to advance the necessary \$15,000. Chandler recognized the need of new industry for the community and was willing to gamble on aviation.

On November 26, 1923, Long Beach Municipal Airport was dedicated and Earl Daugherty landed the first airplane on that site. At about this same time, Clover Field in Santa Monica received world attention when the first round-the-world flight was started from Santa Monica on March 17, 1924 in Douglas built aircraft. And a new milestone in aviation was established.

Once again in 1926, when Western Air Express was organized, we find Bill Henry and Chandler prominently identified with this enterprise. On April 17, 1926, C. N. "Jimmy" James took off from Salt Lake City for Los Angeles in a Douglas D-M-2 -- the Los Angeles terminus being Vail Field on the easterly edge of Los Angeles where a 4,000 foot oiled runway bisected a hay field and a hangar of sorts had been constructed.

During the first year of operations there was a grand total of 71,414 pounds of mail, 209 passengers, and 263 pounds of air express carried by this company.

On September 5, 1926, Pacific Air Transport started operations from Seattle to Los Angeles under air mail contract No. 8, the Los Angeles terminal point being Crenshaw Blvd., just south of exposition Blvd. And along about the same time, Aero Corporation was established and the names of Jack Frye, Paul Richter, William Hamilton, and Lee Flannigan appear on the scene.

In 1927 they formed Standard Air Lines and established passenger service between Los Angeles, Tucson, and El Paso. The base of operations was 98th and Western Avenue.

At the end of '29 and the early 30(s there were more than fifty airports in Los Angeles County. One of these was Metropolitan Airport near Van Nuys, California, founded by Waldo Waterman in 1929. This airport is now known as San Fernando Valley Airport and is operated by the City of Los Angeles, Department of Airports.

At this time many things were taking place in the field of aviation, both nationally and particularly in Los Angeles. Lindbergh had completed his trans-Atlantic crossing in 1927, and the great National Air Races were held in September, 1928, at the present site of Los Angeles International Airport. Here the famous Navy team, the Three Sea Hawks, and the Army Three Musketeers gained world renown. One of the army team was killed during this meet and Slim Lindbergh took a wing position for the balance of the Air Meet.

With the passage of the Watres Bill in 1930, and with Postmaster General Walter Brown issuing ultimatums to the various air lines, many mergers, amalgamations, and re-organizations took place in the scheduled airlines field.

Western built the Alhambra Airport on Valley Blvd., and moved there on July 7, 1929. Bert Kinner opened the Glendale Airport in 1923, when he established his airplane and motor company at that location and it was formally dedicated on February 22, 1931, as the Grand Central Airport and Trans-Continental & Western Air Lines started operations from that location. Prior to that time United Airport, now Lockheed Air Terminal, was dedicated on May 30, 1930.

In 1927, Jack Northrop, former employee of the Douglas Company, along with Alan Lockheed and his brother began building airplanes in Los Angeles on Citrus Avenue, just off Santa Monica Blvd. The first Lockheed Vega called the "Golden Eagle" was built by these men. The plane was purchased by William Randolph Hearst as an entry in the Dole Flight from Oakland, California, to Hawaii to take place on August 17, 1927.

The plane was trucked to the present site of Los Angeles International Airport and was test flown by Eddie Bellande after barley stacks were moved aside to clear the so-called runway. The performance was so good, and running out of time to make the entry date at Oakland, Bellande took off with a minimum of testing. His passengers were Jack Northrop, Kenneth Jay and A. M. Rochlen. While flying over Santa Susana Pass, Rochlen felt something damp on his neck and looked up to discover a gasoline leak. A note was passed to Bellande to immediately return to the barley field. Here the necessary repairs to a leaky gasoline tank were made and the flight resumed.

Then in August of 1929, the Graf Zeppelin made a trip around the world, anchoring the dawn of August 26 at the Los Angeles Municipal Airport after a non-stop flight from Japan. This location had become the Municipal Airport on October 1, 1928. The same field was used for the National Air Races in 1933, and 1936. Pages of aviation history were written at these events by such men as Doolittle, Hawks, Goebel, Turner, Udet, Falsoni, and a host of others. J. H. Kindleberger brought N.A.A. to Los Angeles in 1935. The Municipal Airport was nearly a hayfield even then.

This can only be the briefest of summations. Only the high points can be touched for so rich is aviation history in this area that it would take several volumes to do the subject justice.

The world knows that aviation came into full accomplishment here. The names of Douglas, Lockheed, Northrop, Martin, and Kindleberger are household words. Our air routes now stretch to every corner of the globe.

It seems only a few years ago that the daring aviators had the Southern California skies to themselves.

In 1926, when Western Air Lines began operation, 209 hardy souls joined the flying fraternity as passengers.

For the fiscal year of 1951-52 - 2,709,421 passengers, 31,107 pounds of air mail and 74,960,470 pounds of air freight were carried in and out of Los Angeles, through Los Angeles International Airport and Lockheed Air Terminal.

As we celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Wright brothers flight at Kitty Hawk, we look back and we look ahead. We know that aviation has far exceeded the fondest hopes of the early pioneers and we know that in the future aviation is the hope of mankind for a better and more peaceful world.

I can think of no better words of prophesy, than these words of a famed scientist who played a part in the early stages of aviation -- Thomas Alva Edison, and I quote:

(Date - Early 20th Century)

"The new age is here. Time and space are being eliminated -- the world is in the air. It is a magnificent age in which to live. It is a magnificent age in which to live. No one knows what tomorrow may bring forth.

"To every man who has contributed, and will contribute in the future, to the development of human progress in all its phases, I extend the hand of fellowship.

"To the Montgolfiers, to Zeppelin, to the Wright brothers -- and to the thousands who brought about this new world which is constantly being re-created by science, invention, and discovery, I pay tribute."