

September 21, 1939

Mr. W. S. Hallanan, President
Plymouth Oil Company
Charleston, West Virginia

Dear Mr. Hallanan:

Our good friend, Mr. Anon G. Carter, has written to me concerning the questions raised in your letter to him about increased service for Charleston.

Quite a few problems are presented with respect to any immediate increase in the service rendered on this route and we would like to explain some of these problems to you.

The operation through Charleston is a part of the operation on our route between Washington, Cincinnati and Chicago. The company operates on all of its principal routes Douglas DC-3 21-passenger airplanes and it has been our desire to standardize on that type of equipment for all routes. Standardization of equipment not only effects a somewhat simpler operation, but it also permits a higher standard of service for our patrons.

Neither the airport at Charleston nor the one at Elkins is up to the standards required by both the company and the Civil Aeronautics Authority for operation of Douglas DC-3 type aircraft. Our service through Charleston and Elkins was commenced with 8-passenger Stinson airplanes, but we were able later to substitute the 14-passenger Douglas DC-2 airplanes by installing some special engines in them for that operation.

Due to the lack of adequate airports at Elkins and Charleston we have to maintain an especial type of equipment solely for operation on the route between Washington, Elkins, Charleston and Cincinnati. The equipment used on that route is not used on any other route operated by the company and it is not possible to interchange and use also on the Cincinnati-Charleston-Elkins-Washington route the DC-3 equipment which is standard on our principal routes.

The operation of the route in question has continuously been conducted at a loss ever since American commenced operation in that territory. Quite frankly, it is going to be difficult to put that operation on a profitable basis until such time as more modern airports are available at Charleston and Elkins, modern enough to permit operation with the larger planes and to permit interchange of equipment on that route with equipment on other routes operated by the company.

Mr. W. S. Hallanan

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It is easy enough to say that a more adequate airport should be provided for Charleston and similarly that a better one should be provided at Elkins, but due to the terrain around both of these cities it is difficult, first, to locate a suitable site, and, second, it is very expensive to construct an airport in that territory. In conjunction with some of the citizens of Charleston we have conducted quite a few surveys in the vicinity of Charleston looking for a potential airport location where a modern airport could be constructed at a price within the reach of the community. So far our efforts have not been very successful, for all of the available sites seem to be in a type of territory where considerable money would have to be spent for the construction of a modern airport.

Not only do the airports at Charleston and Elkins restrict the type of aircraft which can be operated therefrom, but our entire plan of operation for the cities of Charleston and Elkins must be predicated upon the limitations of the facilities available there.

For instance, at the present time we are operating into many airports with complete safety of operation under low ceiling conditions due to the fact that the size of the airports is adequate and that too many obstructions are not present to prevent a safe operation.

At Charleston not only is the size of the airport limited, but there are many obstructions around it, including one of the highest electric transmission lines I have ever seen around an airport, and including further rather high mountains within the immediate vicinity of the field itself.

Further, the CAA has not completed the airway across West Virginia and there are not now present on the route between Cincinnati and Washington the usual federal airway aids which must be present if a normal operation under all reasonable types of weather is to be conducted. An airway is being built across that section serving both Charleston and Elkins, but even after it is completed it will not be possible for us to operate in and out of either of these airports under adverse weather conditions, and when instrument approaches are required, for the reason that the operation cannot be conducted with safety. There is even some doubt in the minds of our operating department that an operation from either of the airports after dark can be conducted with safety until quite considerable improvements have been effected there.

Mr. W. S. Hallanan

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The limitations on rendering the most effective type of service may be summarized to include:

1. Instrument approach operations cannot be conducted with safety at either the Charleston airport or the Elkins airport.
2. Operations after dark cannot be conducted with safety at either of the airports due, first, to the absence of federal airway aids, and, second, due to the obstructions around both of the airports.
3. Due to the lack of adequate area and the lack of unobstructed approaches at both airports, there is no opportunity for rotation of equipment which contributes to economy of operation, for an especial type of aircraft entirely must be provided for operation on that route.

In the matter of schedules, you will quickly note how the absence of suitable aids both along the airway and at the airports has dictated entirely the schedules which can be operated on the route. All schedules serving both Charleston and Elkins must be operated in a manner which will permit them to arrive either at Cincinnati or at Washington during daylight hours, for no after-dark operation is permitted across the route either by the company or by the CAA.

You might reasonably ask how our through flights are operated with such conditions obtaining across the route from Cincinnati to Washington. We do make flights from Cincinnati to Washington across the direct route during daylight hours and when weather conditions are good, but when we have either a flight in darkness or a flight under adverse weather conditions our entire operation from Cincinnati to Washington is routed via Cincinnati, Columbus, Pittsburgh and Washington where airway aids and adequate airports are available.

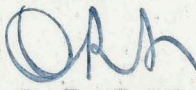
This is a long letter and I fear that we may weary you with too long a discussion of the problems which confront us on the route. You might reasonably ask that we recommend some method for making these conditions better.

Mr. W. S. Hallenan

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A federal airway is being constructed from Washington to Cincinnati at this time. That will provide for adequate navigational aids, but it will not cure the defects of the airports at Elkins and Charleston. Quite frankly, we would always be handicapped in our efforts to provide a more adequate service for both of these communities until such time as airports are available suitable for the type of operation similar to that conducted at many other cities where airport facilities are more adequate.

Sincerely yours,


C. R. Smith
President

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Mr. Amon G. Carter

