

Dallas Lead in Airmail Is Strong Reason for Fair Deal on Port Site

Huge Volume Another Argument For Square Treatment in Location

By Felix R. McKnight.

Negotiations on the badly bruised Midway Airport date back over the years, but for all practical purposes the germ started spreading in the middle of 1940.

The story of Midway Airport, its terminal sites and its continuing uncertainty is interesting, if involved, and should be known by all.

The official record, as compiled by City Attorney Henry Kucera, is now bound in a thick volume with the story of Dallas' fruitless fight splashed over its pages.

But before diving into that record, one more stout brace in Dallas' argument for a fair deal on the midway terminal site was nailed in Wednesday by Postmaster J. Howard Payne, who cited these figures to prove Dallas' dominance in the patronage field:

In January, 1943, the Dallas post office handled 1,088,680 pieces of air mail, a tremendous volume that was 17.4 per cent more than that of January of 1941—an indication that Dallas is becoming increasingly the air-mail center of this sector.

In the week of May 15 to 21, 1938, when a national air-mail week was proclaimed, the following results were obtained from Texas' four principal cities.

Fort Worth 18,271 pieces of air mail, San Antonio 96,455, Houston 143,565 AND DALLAS 200,708!

It is that kind of patronage the City of Dallas asks the commercial air lines and the Civil Aeronautics Administration to recognize and shift back to the north side of the Midway Airport the terminal site that would be equally accessible to both Dallas and Fort Worth.

Far back in the middle of 1940 Fort Worth turned down the Midway Airport idea on the specific motion of its chamber of commerce and Dallas itself felt cautious in the matter, with Love Field being developed extensively at the time.

Arlington Enters Field.
L. C. Elliott, regional CAA director, tried to get the two cities together, had early success and then ran into difficulties.

Little Arlington, near the proposed site in Tarrant County, came into the picture Aug. 27, 1941, when it signed an agreement with the American and Braniff air lines and got a \$490,000 grant from the CAA for initial development. American and Braniff had agreed to purchase the land and deed it to Arlington in return for a lease and operating contract on the field.

The contract still left a way for Dallas and Fort Worth to come in as sponsors and the two cities started moving. Efforts were made to have enabling legislation passed

at Austin for the approval of cities jointly to sponsor airports. But the special legislative session adjourned without passing it and negotiations continued.

On Sept. 20, 1941, the three cities expressed "complete unanimity of purpose" in a resolution passed. All that remained to be settled were lease agreements with air lines.

Meanwhile Dallas had filed a protest with the CAA in Washington against granting Arlington the \$490,000, and a hearing was set for Oct. 9, 1941. But little Arlington and the air lines held a surprise Oct. 7 conference and the deal was closed, leaving out Dallas and Fort Worth.

Back to Dallas and Fort Worth.

The CAA threw the whole thing back into the laps of Dallas and Fort Worth. Another meeting was called for Oct. 16, 1941, at Fort Worth. Everybody attended, everybody agreed. The only hitch was for both Dallas and Fort Worth City Councils to put it in writing.

Meanwhile, government engineers made cost surveys of the conversion of several tracts into a great airport. One month after the Oct. 16 meeting, the Dallas City Council approved the new agreement. Fort Worth approved the resolution passed on Oct. 16, but lagged on approval of the contract.

Not until the CAA had selected a terminal site, said Fort Worth city officials, would they approve a contract. Many more weeks plunged by and then—the United States was at war. Immediately the Midway Airport became a military project.

On Dec. 23, 1941, Elliott informed Dallas, Fort Worth and Arlington that all previous contracts were not satisfactory to the CAA and asked that all be renovated. Nothing was done.

Elliott waited several days and then set a dead line.

Dallas City Council passed a

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Airport

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resolution Jan. 7, 1942, agreeing to joint operation of the airport with Arlington and Fort Worth, but insisted on its rights being preserved and carefully inserted a clause which would keep the terminal site on the north side of the field, "that being the location originally recommended by the CAA and the interested air lines."

At the same time Fort Worth insisted on the terminal site being on the west side. Mayor Rodgers protested violently, but the CAA

recommendation went forward, with Arlington sole sponsor and the administration building site on the west side.

Throughout the negotiations this point was evident:

Many efforts to get Fort Worth's City Council or any other representative body to meet with Dallas failed, according to Mayor Rodgers and other interested Dallas parties.

Now Dallas is out on its own, demanding fair play even though the runways for the field have been partially completed. It isn't too late, they contend, and the terminal still can be placed back at the old stand, where Dallas contends it belongs if the whole thing is to be fair and equitable.