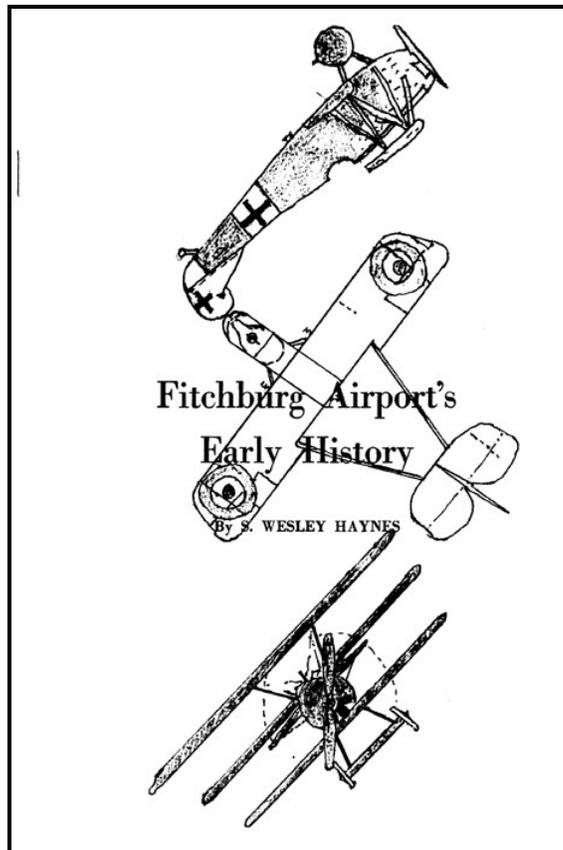


The Fitchburg Airports Early History  
By S. WESLEY HAYNES



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is a pleasure to thank some of the people who assisted at one time or another in the preparation of this Fitchburg Airport Early History Book.

James J. Flathers, Lyle E. Halstead, Mary Kluk, Alfred Woollacott, Robert L. Hunt, Carmine Marchetti, Richard J. Egan, Arthur J. Kissner, Ernest Sparks, Malcom R. Fortune, and Raymond F. Godin, Jr.

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To C. T. Crocker III, I offer my appreciation for his editorial assistance.

Stephen Wesley Haynes



S. WESLEY HAYNES

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November 11, 1918, World War One was over. Our fighter pilots knew only 650 American pilots had seen combat, and 110 of these were former Lafayette Corps men. Had the war lasted another six months, it would have reached full maturity and our Pursuit Squadron would have seen combat.

Our discharge from the Air Force did not come until January 20, 1919. Our Commanding Officer called us together, and urged us to do everything we could to develop an airport in our area. So to be more prepared with airports in case of another war.

After returning from duty as a fighter pilot, I began looking for a location for an airport in my area. I found out that wasn't going to be easy in this hilly country and I must work harder than I ever did before. The Geological maps were of great help.

It was found after the earliest statistical information, such as adaptable area, large enough, locational description, drainage, service, communication, meteorological data, obstructions within a 20 to 1, gliding angle and several other requirements, that the only adaptable area large enough for an airport was the Pigeon Swamp area in Fitchburg and Leominster.

Finally on April 30, 1924 I purchased the Pigeon Road property, and on May 7, 1924 I purchased the Crawford Street Farm, both having the best area for an airport. I rented the Crawford Street Farm for the time being to Domonic Quadrale.

The following are notes from "Standard Dairy's" I made from April 7 to December 28, 1924.

April 7, 1924 Looked over Pigeon Road area and farm with very flat area for an airport.

April 30, 1924 Looked over farm and Pigeon Swamp Road with my friend P. H. Killelea.

May 7, 1924 Pa and I checked boundaries of Pigeon Swamp area. The deed of this property had the note that one corner was marked "by a poplar

tree stump"! Evening saw P. H. Killelea.

June 2, 1924 Lots of inquiries to rent the Crawford Street Farm.

June 8, 1924 All day at farm on Crawford Street getting same ready for renters.

June 11, 1924 Evening at home figuring Crawford Street Farm work, and signed a lease for Crawford Street Farm at Mr. Patrick H. Killelea's office.

June 17, 1924 Evening at home and Crawford Street.

June 19, 1924 Cleaned the spring at Crawford Farm.

June 25, 1924 Pa and I worked at Crawford house.

September 6, 1924 Afternoon went to Boston and saw ships of the Round World Flyers just after they came in.

December 14, 1924 Went to Crawford place and had pump repaired.

December 28, 1924 Pa and I put on storm door on the Crawford place on Crawford Street Farm. My father Willis R. Haynes and I spent considerable time caring for the properties as noted above. It took a long time to get the men together, that were interested in an airport at that time.

In 1926, the following group of seven men met and organized - S. Wesley Haynes, Leominster, Edward H. Hall, Fitchburg, C. T. Crocker, 111, Fitchburg, Bartow Crocker, Fitchburg, Joseph A. Lowe, Fitchburg, Winthrop M. Mayo, Leominster, and Judson C. Richardson, Leominster.

We first got together and decided that the first thing we should do was to purchase all the land for an airport, being used more and more by business airplanes coming in and going out, not only to serve Fitchburg but to serve Leominster and all surrounding towns.

Several areas of land needed were purchased by different men of the Airport Commission. These were turned over to the airport, so we could go ahead with Airport construction starting May 6, 1928.

Edward H. Hall and I spent considerable time getting information about airport's early history, and all the experience from aeronautics. Ed was a former World War I Royal Flying Corps Pilot of Canada.

So that when we started the airport construction Ed became the Clerk of the Corporation. I was tied up with my Architectural Firm, and did not have time to take care of all the details of the Fitchburg, Leominster Airport. Our Airport Commission of seven men took on two more men. They were Arnold Dickenson and Alvin Simonds, making an airport commission of nine men.

In 1925, Igor Sikorsky was making some remarkable aeronautical advances. He reorganized and refinanced under the name of Sikorsky Manufacturing Company with Arnold Dickinson as President.

C. T. Crocker III, known as Tom, having served with the U.S. Signal Corps, which in 1917 was the Air Service, for two years in . Ln France, was a pilot in the 94th Aero Squadron of the 1st Pursuit Group. Upon his return home he realized the important future of commercial aviation and therefore became interested in helping to establish an airport in Fitchburg. His role in this regard developed into financing the building of the airport. Through his effort, private loans from the bank were arranged so that more land could be purchased and construction started. Tom became Clerk of the Works.

Bartow Crocker gave several lots of land which he willed to the airport.

June 1, 1943, the two cities separated the airport's name from Fitchburg-Leominster to Fitchburg Airport. Leominster gave part of Leominster to Fitchburg and Fitchburg gave Leominster Notown Reservoir in exchange.

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May 6, 1929

Mr. C. T. Crocker, III. Fitchburg, Mass.

The following is an outline of progress to date, on financing and policy of the Fitchburg - Leominster Airport, Inc.

Proposed to raise a total of \$36,000 as follows: \$12,000 on Guarantee Note already signed by directors. \$900 by selling share of stock to each director. Voted. \$3,000 purchase of stock now pledged.

\$10,000 additional pledged by two directors.

\$10,100 additional needed to complete program.

When pledges are received by you, for purchase of any of the remaining \$10,100, please advise E. Hall, Clerk, so that we may avoid over-subscribing.

The above total of \$36,000 to be expended as follows:

\$15,000 Approximate total cost of land.

\$7,000 Approximate total cost of hangar.

\$12,700 - Approximate cost of contract already signed, for grading 1st unit of airport. This leaves a balance of \$1,300 for incidental expenses.

Work of grading has already started and with good weather part of field will be ready for first flying about the middle of June.

We have received written proposal from Curtis Flying Service, offering to pay us an annual rental of \$1,200 plus 5 % of gross receipts from the taxi end of their business. Lease to run for three years. Under this proposal, we have the right to lease other surrounding land to other transport companies for hangar and office space.

E. Hall

Clerk of Corporation

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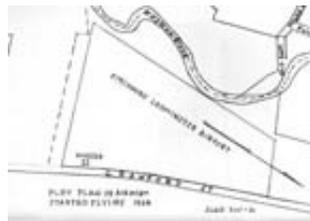
July 27, 1927, the Chamber of Commerce was invited to see if Fitchburg should have an Airport. Chamber of Commerce recommends airport for Fitchburg.

June 10, 1929, Crocker Snow, Director of Massachusetts Aeronautics Commission made the first landing on the airport. I took pictures of the landing. One is in this book. E. H. Hall who was accompanying Snow to Fitchburg to discuss development of the field. Before the plane could land, Snow had to buzz the field and chase off two grazing horses that may be seen in the picture in the distance.



Crocker Snow met S. W. Haynes, owner of the property, E. H. Hall of the Corporation and C. T. Crocker, 111, Clerk of the Works to discuss development of the land. Was it suitable to be changed into an airport. After looking the area over and checking the area and surroundings, Crocker Snow said the property was superficial and unusually adaptable - good for an Airport!

May 6, 1929 airport construction at the bequest of the Fitchburg City Government. Grayline started and with good weather part of the field was ready for first flying about the middle of June. After this part was ready, the contractor left it and completed and seeded the balance of the field. After this balance is ready for flying, the contractor closed first mentioned area and seeded it. This method gives us flying at the earliest possible time in 1929.



August 2, 1929 Wachusett Airways Company owned by Ed H. Hall was the first local outfit to operate on the field. G. Bancroft Hall, Judson C. Richardson and Bartow Crocker made up the firm. Among the first pilots hired by the company was Capt. Jack Langlev. His mechanic was Joseph Fluet, who was chief investigator for the Civic Aeronautics Board. As the time went on the company acquired more planes and flying lessons, joy rides and flying circuses became the center of activity. As indicated on the "Plot Plan of Airport" and an air view photograph" of same.

Many people ask what kind of pigeons were in the Pigeon Swamp area we are using. They were Passenger Pigeons that are now extinct. They nested in vast colonies, where they were slaughtered for food and feathers. The

Passenger Pigeons in large flocks were hunted in the swamps. Even taken with nets.



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## AVIATION EVENTS

### FITCHBURG AVIATION

May 8, 1929 Airport Construction started.

July 23, 1929 July - Wallie Backus lands plane at new port in Gypsy Moth Biplane.

August 2, 1929 Parker lands Crocker's Curtis Moth Bi-plane from Boston, will operate port. Lt. Hay chief pilot and Ken Ackerman, mechanic.

August 2, 1929 Miss Anna Kivimaki, former Fitchburg girl to fly alone from Newark Airport to Mason, N.H. Capt. Knox lands a Vought Corsair, stunts over city. Ray Tait lands a St. Louis Robin Duplicate. J. Whittal lands a Waco.

August 7, 1929 General Tire fleet of 8 Monoplanes is landed at port. Exhibited and fly in V formation over city and vicinity.

August 16, 1929 Airship "Los Angeles" over city. Ken Ackerman in Travel - chased it into Leominster!

August 16, 1929 Ed Moodie succeeded Lt. Hay as chief pilot. August 17, 1929 Mr. H. Clark, age 93, in Travel Air over city. August 20, 1929 Airport Corporation visits Dartmouth field for light system.

August 22, 1929 "Red" Harrigan, Lindy's teacher, lands in Ryan Mon similar to Spirit of St. Louis.

August 22, 1929 Travel-Air makes Ackerman - Pilot, round trip to Boston in half an hour.

August 30, 1929 Anna Kivimaki makes parachute jump at Milford, N.H.

September 3, 1929 Mrs. H. Blood, 76, in Travel-Air over Mt. Wachusett.

September 3, 1929 Ken Ackerman in Wachusett Travel-Air drops flowers over Townsend on Townsend Legion Day.

September 7, 1929 Hangar finished. To house Travel-Air. September 29, 30, 1929 Air Circus at Airport - T Planes arrive. Joe Baltrum in a Gates-Day Standard Bi. Plane. Russell in a Com-Chan. Len Pewey in a Ryan Brougham (sistership "Spirit of St. Louis"). Swede Parrer, a Fleet-

Air. S. Berry in a Trav-Air owned by Bob Fogg. A F O F F Plane took off from Port Louisville, Kentucky with Myor Stone of Gardner. 300 passengers were taken up and 5,000 were at Port to see the circus. Anna Kivimaki (former Fitchburg girl) made a parachute jump. Russell Baltrum won "Bomb" throwing contest from flying planes.

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#### 1930 EVENTS

March 22, 1930 G. Bancroft Hall, manager of Wachusett Airways, L. T. Jack Langley as chief Pilot and Joe Fluet, mechanic.

May 29, 1930 Tri-Motor owned by Curtis Publishing Co. lands first Tri-Motor to land on the new field - Gastor pilot.

June 24, 1930 Benny Hall, Wachusett Airways Manager, invites 4 Army ships for 4th of July event.

July 4, 1930 Army ships fail to compete. Langley and Fluet in Moth and Stearman go through stunts.

August 4, 1930 Torpey lands in Amer-Eagle, inspects airport. September 12, 1930 Marshall Hoppin inspects port, says it's in A-1 condition.

September 29, 1930 Businessmen's Luncheon at airport. September 29, 1930 E. W. Wiggins buys Spartan Mono-Plane. Now operates port with two planes.

September 29, 1930 G. Bancroft Hall, resigns as Wachusett Airways manager, served 6 months with Airways corporation. Capt. Langley fills office.

October 21, 1930 Wachusett Airways adds Sikorsky Amphibion to its fleet. Now operates 3 planes.

January 5, 1931 Petition No. 2 for relocation of Crawford Street.

January 19, 1931 Ed Hall solos on skiis (moth).

January 24, 1931 40,000 miles flown by Wachusett Airways without accident, what a record.

February 19, 1931 Mator Edwin talks about developing airport.

February 19, 1931 Langley talks of operations at port.

March 9, 1931 Capt. Langley and Fluet drop grain in woods for starving birds. Birdmen help birds, Ha, Ha, used Stearman. Local planes not to fly over 3 miles from port - U.S. order.

May 22, 1931 U.S. Air Corp Air Fleet, 672 of them to fly over city.

June 18, 1931 Langley resigns as chief pilot and manager of Wachusett

Airways. He was one of the most active pilots that the airport has seen. Completes 1 year and 1 month of excellent service.

July 1, 1931 E. W. Wiggins Airways officially opened. Will operate at Fitchburg-Leominster and prov. ports. G. B. Hall joins Wiggins to house Spartans - Cal-Mon., Bipl., low wing, in his newly constructed Hangar No. 2.

July 8, 1931 L. Halstead - Wachusett airways chief pilot flies Sikorsky Amphibion (Wash Air) to Beverly air show.

July 19, 1931 L. Halstead flies Sikorsky Amphibion to Lake Sunshine, N.H.

July 29, 1931 L. Halstead forbidden to land Sikorsky at Lake Contoocook in Jaffrey, N.H. "High Tone" summer vacationists say plane keeps them from peaceful snooze.

August 30, 1931 L. Halstead makes first night flight. Used Stearman in hazardous attempt - mellow moon and auto headlights.

September 17, 1931 Wachusett Airways dissolves.

September 17, 1931 Fitchburg Paper Co. buys Sikorsky and will use L. Halstead.

September 17, 1931 Stearman and Moth sold to Joe Fluet. September 17, 1931 Fluet and Breadoin organize Fitchburg-Leominster Airways.

September 19, 1931 Fitchburg-Leominster Airways operates with 2 ships. Joe Fluet chief-pilot.

September 29, 1931 Mrs. R. G. Smart solos Moth at Fitchburg-Leominster for 10 minutes. "Handled it like a vet." - Joe Fluet.

February 5, 1932 Fluet, Fitchburg and Leominster pilot flies Stearman with Skiis.

February 16, 1932 Wiggins Fairchild cracks up when Fletcher (chief pilot Wiggins Airways, in case you do not or are not in the habit of trying to find out to know of it. Lets get down to brass tacks. Fletcher attempted to land on lump of snow. Used quick action when he killed motor of the Fairchild. Began to be operated at local Fitchburg and Leominster port day of the crackup.



April 9, 1932 Stearman, Fitchburg and Leominster, after two years excellent service, sold to Royal Little of Providence. The Stearman was the most popular the airport had ever seen.

April 19, 1932 "Los Angeles" Dirigible over Lexington, visible in Fitchburg.

April 21, 1932 Joe Fluet in from Chicago with a new States Hi Wing Monoplane. Fitchburg-Leominster Airways now operates with two ships - Stinson Cub and States.

April 28, 1932 L. T. Halstead flys Army Falcon to port.

April 28, 1932 Bob Fogg visits port. (Will fly Atlantic?)

May Army ships fly low to obtain Army Photos;.

May 16, 1932 Joe Fluet makes Night Flights with Stinson and States.

December 9, 1932 Club formed to promote Aeronautics, called Wachusett Airmen. L. T. Halstead, President; Curry, Vice President; K. Francis, Secretary; and Bedu, Treasurer. December 18, 1932 Joe Fluet flies Bird, Fitchburg with skis. December 24, 1932 Sportsmen use plane to hunt Cougars. December 24, 1932 Chick Brown (Swansea, N.H.) and W. W. Lord leave port for Phoenix, Arizona. Browns Fairchild to be used in 2,600 miles travels.

December 24, 1932 Bird, Fitchburg and Leominster flies in low clouds, Warlike Atmosphere.

December 29, 1932 Wiggins cub races automobile on Airport Road.

January 3, 1933 Kirks Bird Biplane noses over into Nashua River after successful night landing at Fitchburg-Leominster Pigeon Swamp Airdrome! Badly damaged, was taxiing to hangar. Kirk comes. Hangar lights aid.

January 4, 1933 Oscar Johnson pilots his moth over Sunny Hill fire.

January 10, 1933 Wachusett Airmen see aeronautical pictures at Plymouth Theater in Leominster.

January 17, 1933 Wachusett Airmen close Charter with 70 members. No I'm not a member.

February 1, 1933 Wachusett Airmen meet again. (When will they cut having these meetings. My fingers are numb from writing so much!) Well anyway, Curry gave an air talk at this meeting.

January 30, 1933 Wiggins first plane, Spartan Birdplane lands at port after a long stay away from it. The first landing it made at Fitchburg-Leominster Airport was on July 10, 1930. (1933 Events still hanging on!)

April 21, 1933 Big Air Show to be held at Port on June 3 and 4. Features - a Race to Wachusett Mountain, Bomb Breaking, Stunts, Exhibitions, etc., etc. Frank Hawks invited. G. B. Sporster Plane mav participate.

May 2, 1933 Ed Jena, native of Fitchburg, killed in air crash at East Boston. Was soloing on pleasure ride. Controls Froze.

May 3, 1933 Polano (Transatlantic Flyer) to pay tribute to Jena from airplane. To drop flowers over grave. (Bah! Excuse the language, but the

Atlantic Flyer to do it failed.)

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#### WACHUSETT AIRMAN

January 17, 1933 Kramer shows aviation motion pictures. February 19, 1933 S. G. Ross talks on weather for flyers. March, 1933 Lt. Harris talk on 18,000 ft. flights. February 20, 1933 Hoyt talks to Wachusett airmen. (Please turn to next page and get thrill of your lifetime.) April, 1933 Kirk buys Junior (not a Kid) from Wiggins. Sells Bird and Fairchild.

May 3, 1933 Three U. S. Army ships will stunt at Air Show on June 3 and 4. Other features added for Air Show - Parade of Peaks, Gliders, Gee Bee Low-Winger, Chinese Aviatrix, Frank Hawks, Autogrogyro, Bomb Dropping.

May 31, 1933 Program at monument. Fluet, Fitchburg-Leominster flies Waco and drops Poppies.

#### 1933 EVENTS

June 34, 1933 Montachusett Air Show

Thrills. Thousands. Activity busiest Airport opened in 1929. 20,000 at Port. 14 Massachusetts and Conn. National Guard participate. G. Benny Hall puts on comedy with Spartan L. W. Joe Fluet shows skill with shabby moth. Lyle E. Halstead makes dead stick landing on purpose. 30 planes at Airport!

VISITORS PILOTS FROM SHIP Janukis Romanich Norwood Commandaire Sergt Layman Mitchell Field Curtis Fledging Long Island, N.Y. Cowan (also local Stinson (Wigg.) Prov.) Berry Skowhegan, Me. Travel-Air O'Conner Springfield Curtis Robin Thompson Beverly Spartan Maloney & Washburn Springfield Eaglerock Russell Athol Curtis Robin Wheeler Boston Travel-Air Josh Crane Pawtucket?Waco Wilson Boston Curtis Robin Martin H. Wong? Boston Curtis Fledging Becker & Potter Hillsgrove, R.I. Fairchild Estes Boston Curtis Robin Shobe Boston CuWaco

The airport Commission is looking forward to enlarging the airport. In order to do so it will be necessary to relocate a section of both Crawford St. and the Nashua River. November 13, 1930 Petitioned Leominster City Council for relocation of Crawford Street. January 5, 1931 Petition No. 2 for relocation of Crawford Street.

In 1933 work was started on remodeling of the second airport, after getting permission to relocate a portion of Crawford Street. Some work was done on the Nashua River. The field was ready for first flying in 1935. As indicated on the "Plot Plan of Airport", and two "air view photographs" of same.



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THE FOLLOWING ARE A FEW NOTES OF INTEREST IN  
THE FITCHBURG AIRPORT'S LATER YEARS AFTER  
"THE FITCHBURG'S EARLY HISTORY."

December 30, 1940 The Fitchburg Airport Commission gave to the City of Fitchburg for one dollar. Signed by Mayor Alfred Woolacott, Charles T. Crocker, Clerk of the Works and Everett H. Dudley, City Solicitor. Fitchburg is very fortunate to have an Airport given to them.

March 5, 1941 The Fitchburg Airport Commission was formed by ordinance by the City Council. There have been many good and faithful members. The aims and goals of the Commission over the years have been to make Fitchburg a better place to work through Air Transportation. In 1941 and 1942 the Fitchburg Airport was developed according to specifications of the Civil Aeronautics Authority. Two paved runways.

March 2, 1941 Break ground for first long runway - 4,500 feet.

March 3, 1942 Break ground for second long runway 3,500 feet. The runways were lined on both sides by grass safety strips. The field is a flat six thousand feet long and three thousand feet wide, and 418.7 acres. Administration buildings, hangars and lighting systems for the field were installed.

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THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS

AERONAUTICS COMMISSION

September 8, 1969

To: Messrs. C. T. Crocker III

E. H. Hall

VS. W. Haynes

Gentlemen:

I understand that the City of Fitchburg has asked you, as surviving members of the group that gave land occupied by the Fitchburg Airport to the City, to waive the provision of the instrument of transfer which provides that the land may only be used for airport purposes.

The recent years there have been several proposals to dedicate a part of the airport property to industrial development. We have opposed any such action until and unless the City satisfies us that adequate alternative airport facilities will be provided concurrently, because we feel that an appropriate airport is a necessary part of the overall transportation requirements of the community. We have not as yet been given such a plan.

Under the circumstances, I hope you will not take any action which would permit the airport to be reduced in size or eliminated.

Very truly yours,

Crocker Snow

Director of Aeronautics

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OFFICE OF THE MAYOR

September 10, 1969

Mr. Stephen W. Haynes

128 Ryefield Road

Fitchburg, Massachusetts

Dear Mr. Haynes:

This is to confirm my telephone conversation with you relative to Fitchburg's Short Term Community Program and it's relationship to the Fitchburg Airport. Mayor William Flynn has scheduled a meeting for discussion with you on Tuesday, September 16, 1969, at 3:00 p.m. in his office at City Hall.

Thanking you for your interest, I remain

Very truly yours,

Thomas J. Conry, Jr.

Administrative Assistant

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We attended the meeting for discussion and we all agreed with Crocker Snow, Director of the Aeronautics Commission of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts.

Today the airport is a virtual beehive of Commercial and Pleasure flight activity. A number of privately owned aircraft, plus many executive or company planes are hangared at the Airport today at different times.

On the year of 1929 there were 5 airplanes.

On the year of 1979 there were 102 airplanes.

Some growth!

Wes. Happy Landings.