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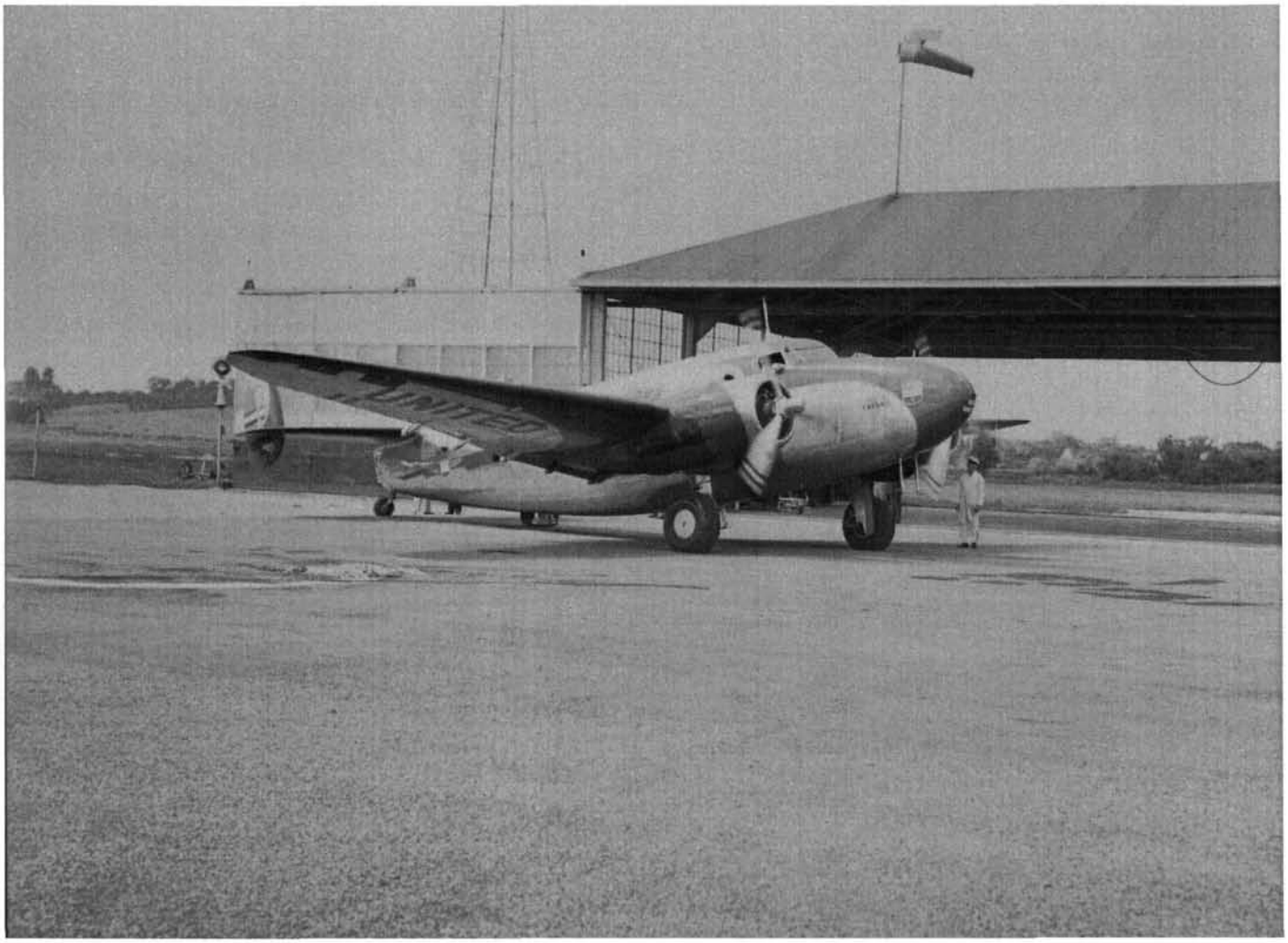
Iowa City
MUNICIPAL AIRPORT

Opening the West to Aviation, 1918-2007



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ON THE COVER: Aerial view of the Iowa City Municipal Airport, looking southwest, c.1980s, photographer unknown. Iowa City Municipal Airport collection. ABOVE: United Air Lines – Lockheed *Lodestar*, at the airport, August 28, 1940. *Iowa City Press-Citizen* photograph collection, State Historical Society of Iowa (Iowa City). RIGHT: *Frivol* (1928), Special Collections, University of Iowa.

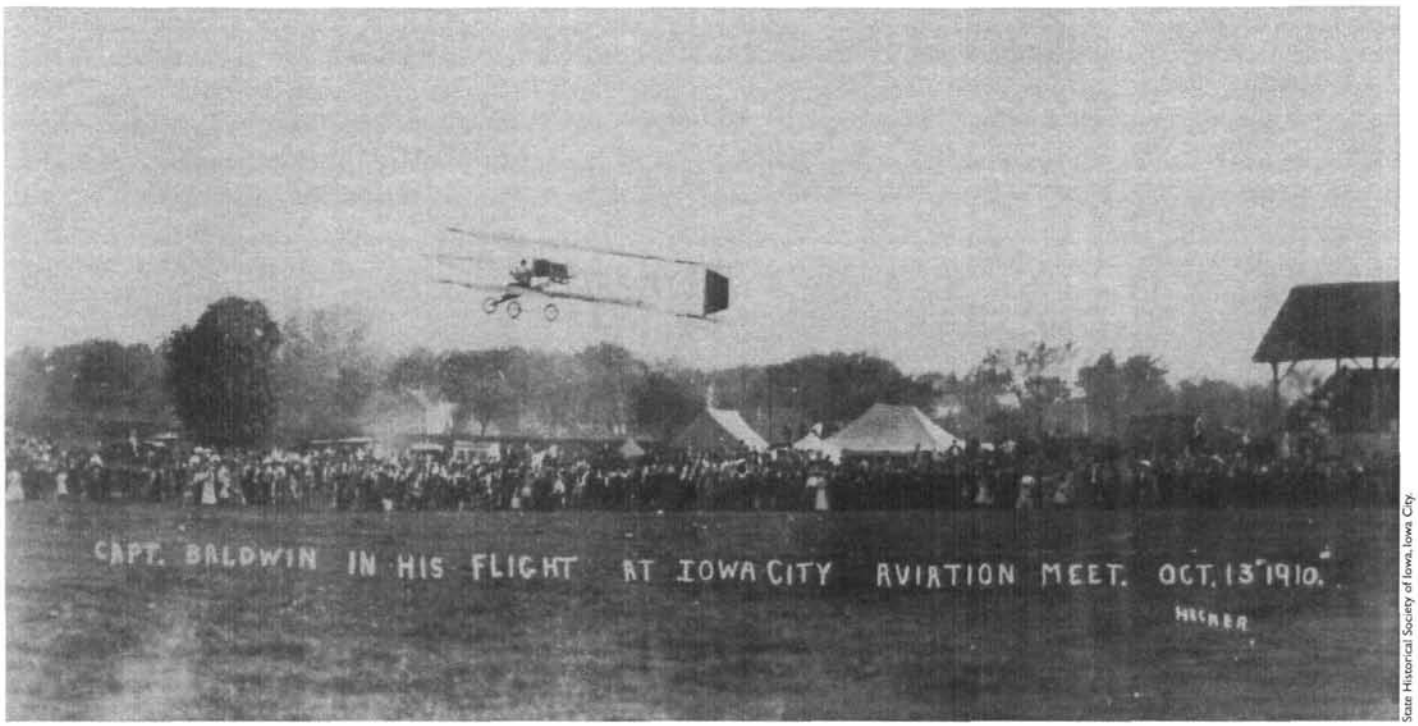
Iowa City Municipal Airport: Opening the West to Aviation, 1918–2007

by Jan Olive Nash
Tallgrass Historians L.C. – Iowa City, Iowa

The Iowa City Municipal Airport traces its origin early in the twentieth century to a cow pasture on the Benjamin farm, then south of the town limits. The dairy farm was separated from the Iowa River only by the Red Ball highway, an increasingly busy 600-mile highway linking St. Paul and St. Louis. Some of the same local boosters who promoted the Red Ball route through eastern Iowa also advocated the development of a landing strip in Iowa City, convinced that their town's prosperity depended on its full participation in the unfolding modern transportation era. Early actions by these boosters attracted the U.S. Post Office in 1918, which was searching for refueling stops as it extended air mail flights west of Chicago. As a result, Iowa City played a pivotal role in the development of the air mail service and participated in the great technological strides taken by brash young air mail aviators, most of whom were World War I veterans.

Little more than a grassy strip at first, Iowa City's "port" for airplanes became a municipal responsibility in 1922, when Mayor Emma J. Harvat signed the lease for Smith Field, as it became known. Major improvements followed Iowa City's successful 1929 airport bond vote, and the town claimed the first-in-the-state spot of owning its own air field and supporting it with a bond issue. Carrying government mail and a growing number of passengers, Boeing Air Transport (later consolidated into United Air Lines) further improved the airport by constructing a large, concrete-block hangar in 1930, one of several the company built at its air mail stations west of the Mississippi River. With doors that opened wide on the two long sides of the hangar, larger and larger planes could taxi in through one side; deplane passengers, freight, and mail under the shelter of the broad hipped roof; and then roll straight out the other side onto a taxiway leading to the runways.

During the 1940s wartime hiatus of United Air Lines' commercial service into Iowa City, the big Boeing hangar sheltered the trainers used by student pilots. United quickly resumed service to the town upon the return of peacetime operations, and the 1950s saw a relatively golden age of rising passenger numbers and municipal improvements to the airport, including the construction of the stylish beige-brick-and glass-block administration/terminal building. But the decade was also marred by the loss of the federal government's weather and communication station to a growing and increasingly competitive Cedar Rapids airport in 1951. Momentum continued to shift away from Iowa City's airport when United canceled its service to Iowa City in 1959. After Ozark Air Line's cessation of service in 1972, the airport became a general aviation airport, serving private aircraft owners, local industries and corporations, and various University of Iowa users, including frequent air ambulance flights and planes landing for sports events. After nearly 90 years of operation, Iowa City's Benjamin airstrip–turned Smith Field–turned Municipal Airport continues to evolve. New general aviation T-hangars and a large corporate hangar sprawl over the field once occupied by the Shaw Aircraft Company. A new runway extension underway in 2007 will result in the final curtain for the old Boeing hangar—demolition of a longtime witness to aviation history in Iowa City. This publication serves to mitigate the hangar's loss by preserving some of its history.



State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City

Captain Thomas Baldwin thrilled Iowa City residents when he sailed overhead at the city's fairgrounds.

Prelude – First Flight over Iowa City

The 1910 flight over Iowa City of Captain Thomas Baldwin's *Red Devil* was not only a first for the town, it was one of the first airplane flights in the entire state. Just months earlier, in May, an enterprising young balloonist named Art Hartman had grabbed the coveted "first flight" spot in Iowa aviation history by piloting a little home-built monoplane to a height of 10 feet over a golf course west of Burlington. In June, Eugene Ely, a former auto racer with grandparents living in Iowa City, succeeded in a longer flight in Sioux City while under contract to the Curtiss Exhibition Company. Ely had moved from auto racing to aviation a year earlier in Los Angeles, where he met Glenn Curtiss. Press coverage of Ely's activities left Iowa Citians abuzz throughout the summer of 1910 as they followed his successful and not-so-successful flights throughout the U.S. and Canada.

Enthusiasm for this newest form of lifting men and women above the treetops continued the excitement that surrounded balloon ascensions. Ballooning exhibitions had existed since the 1880s and were hugely popular. People thrilled at the sight of something so rare and dangerous. When internal combustion engines were developed at the turn of the century, small engines were attached to cigar-shaped balloons called dirigibles. Together with a propeller and rudder, the engine gave balloonists a slight bit of control over direction. One famous dirigible pilot who made the transition to airplanes was the seasoned balloonist Captain Thomas Baldwin. From Illinois, Baldwin as a youth had performed with a circus and had become a technological innovator as well as the consummate risk taker. He created an improved parachute and made his first jump from a balloon in 1887. "By 1888, the balloon ascension with subsequent parachute drop was almost a routine form of exhibition entertainment across the country," according to one aviation historian. In 1906, Baldwin and Curtiss, both with the U.S. Army at the time, visited Orville and Wilbur Wright in Dayton, Ohio, where Baldwin gave an airship exhibition. The four men examined "photographs of the Wright 1904 and 1905 flights, and the machine and the flights were discussed at considerable length." By late 1909, Curtiss was building an airplane of Baldwin's own design for the pilot. During the summer of 1910, while Iowans were reading about Eugene Ely's flights in cities from Winnipeg, Canada, to Rock Island, Illinois, the 57-year-old Baldwin was testing the first of his *Red Devil* airplanes.[1]

In Iowa City, the local Commercial Club, precursor

of the Chamber of Commerce, was planning its annual Farmers' Day festival. Three members, including Robert N. Carson, traveled to Rock Island in early September to watch Ely fly and invite him to perform at the festival. When the plan to bring this native son back home fell through, Carson's group contacted Thomas Baldwin, who had been making his own headlines. In early September, Baldwin had "electrified" spectators in St. Louis by flying over the Mississippi River and *under* the downtown Eads Bridge. "A large part of the city's population saw the flight, and thousands of persons standing on Eads Bridge cheered wildly. This scooting under bridges was a feat of pure dare-deviltry." Captain Baldwin visited Iowa City on October 1 on his way from New York to Kansas City, where he was scheduled to perform an exhibition. Commercial Club members showed him both the athletic field along the Iowa River (where the University of Iowa's English-Philosophy Building stands today) and the fairgrounds at the east edge of town (just west of City High School). Baldwin chose the fairgrounds, saying the riverside facility was just too small and too low.[2]

As the scheduled festival neared, residents and the Commercial Club began to call it an Aviation Meet, as such exhibitions were popularly called. Expectations about Baldwin's nearing flight dominated the local newspapers. Attendance predictions swelled to 20,000 visitors, and local business owners fretted over whether the town's hotels and cafés could accommodate them. "All agree that Iowa City is about to tackle the biggest proposition in her history, and one of the biggest events in Iowa this year," crowed the local newspaper, with just days to go. One young reporter even planned to ask Baldwin to take him up in the air, though Baldwin was certain to refuse. The pilot's own weight of more than 200 pounds had left him unable to lift off the ground in several of his earlier dirigibles, and the *Red Devil*'s lightweight frame and small engine struggled under his weight alone. But the reporter's bravado only fueled the growing excitement.[3]

Baldwin's brother, his mechanic, and the *Red Devil* biplane arrived in town on October 10 to start preparations for the flight. The next day, Thomas Baldwin was welcomed to town as an honored "Air King." Ushered to the fairgrounds, the pilot declared the site the "most dangerous, on account of its limited size, from which I have ever planned to fly, although I have flown from some bad sites." "My worst foe," Baldwin explained, "will be the inability to land safely, if control is lost, and my machine starts to fall. I want open ground, prairie, and soft earth, if possible, if I am to be the victim of an accident."[4]

The day of the flight, October 12, dawned with fair weather and "ideal" aviation conditions, according to pilot Baldwin. His flight was scheduled for the late afternoon, and the Commercial Club had a long agenda of local activities planned leading up to it. A hundred automobiles paraded through downtown, decorated with buntings, flags, and flowers. A trapeze artist, Miss Garcia, performed aerial feats "of rare power" over city streets, and a city/country tug-of-war contest ended with the "country bunch" winning handily. The Alert Hose Company's team of big white horses was encouraged to dash down the street, racing behind an auto driven by a visiting Chicago fireman. During the afternoon, boys and girls competed in foot races, while the "Marine band discoursed elegant music" throughout the day.[5]

By 3:30 in the afternoon, the throngs had assembled at the fairgrounds to observe the spectacle of flight, and Baldwin was ready. He took off from the half-mile race track, headed north and then west in a counterclockwise fashion, soaring 100 feet up in the air "like a lark, not a 'Red Devil,'" before completing the circle and coming in from the south for his landing "amid ten thousand plaudits." With three flights promised to the public and the Commercial Club, however, Baldwin quickly prepared for another flight. This time the pilot took off and turned east, instead of west, and immediately ran into trouble. The *Red Devil* bashed through treetops and headed toward two barns, slowly gaining altitude. The crowd cheered, thinking the danger passed. As Baldwin later explained, "after crashing through the trees I'd have escaped O.K., if the bad air pocket between the two barns had not caught the bi-plane." The *Red Devil* nearly cleared the buildings but snagged its rudder at the rear of the plane on one of the barns, catapulting Baldwin into a farmer's field from about 30 feet in the air. Bruised and bleeding, but essentially unhurt, Captain Baldwin was interviewed at length by local reporters. Claiming to "be beaten" by the "lust for peril," Baldwin explained that after every crash he knew he should give it up, but he was "irresistibly impelled to enter the lists of air-voyagers once more." Making lemonade from lemons, the Commercial Club and the local press quickly focused on Baldwin's successful first flight of the day, and proclaimed for Iowa City the honor of the "first successful [aviation meet] ever held in the state of Iowa." The crowd surely went home both thrilled and shaking their heads in wonder.[6]

The Nine-Year Experiment, 1918–1926

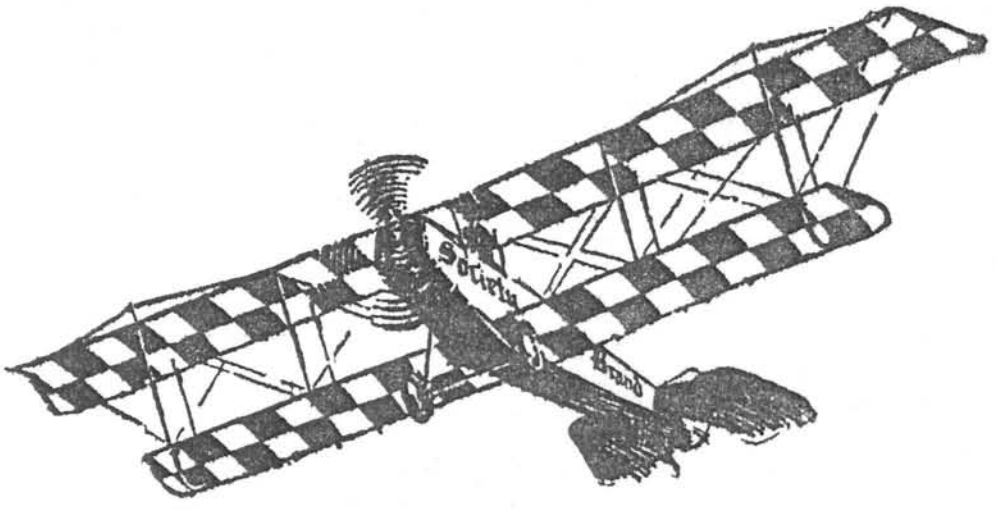
Before 1918, aviation in Iowa City, and across the country for that matter, was mainly a feat of daredevilry, performed for exhibition by barnstorming pilots for pricey fees paid by local booster clubs and county fair organizations. Many Iowa communities sponsored aviation exhibitions on an annual basis, and men and women around the state were building their own "aeroplanes" in barns and backyards. Small aviation companies rapidly formed and disbanded (often due to a crash of their sole plane) with only a handful of flights to their record. By 1916, the Davenport School of Aviation, for one, had organized to design and build biplanes and train the aviators. Pilots flying around the state included a number of women like Katherine Stinson, who performed spectacularly at the Clinton Fall Festival in October 1916, and Neta Snook, one of the first students at the Davenport School of Aviation. Most of this novel entertainment and commercial enterprise ended, though, when the United States declared war on Germany in 1917. The few aviation shows that did go forward had military overtones.[7]

When World War I ended in November 1918, legions of young pilots left the military service to return home from Europe and look for ways to exercise their skills and extend their flying experience. At the same time, scores of airships, both American-built and English, became available as surplus equipment. The U.S. Army Air Service knew the importance of aviation to the future defense of the nation, and sought ways to encourage, but not necessarily financially support, aviation in peace time. In September 1919, the Army Air Service announced it would conduct a "transcontinental reliability test" to illustrate the great strides in aviation technology that had taken place during the war. Forty-eight planes participated in a three-week cross-country race, but numerous crashes and several fatalities suggested that "unreliable engines, inadequate navigational instruments, and primitive landing facilities" constituted the actual state of the country's aviation system at that moment. Still, the availability of war-surplus aircraft with the ability to haul at least one passenger renewed the interest in barnstorming and exhibition stunt flying.[8]

Iowa City, which locals called the "Athens" of Iowa, did not escape the country's postwar aviation fever. In fact, the town embraced it as a means of staying modern and in step with the larger cities of the Midwest. Individual business owners arranged for flyers to come to town as advertising ploys, landing them on a variety of open fields around the town. One event occurred in July 1919, when Harry Bremer, owner of Bremer's Golden Eagle store, brought a shipment of "Society Brand Clothes" to town aboard an "express" aeroplane. The plane was scheduled to land at the "Peter Lenz Farm 3–4 miles south of city on Lower Muscatine Road," and the store encouraged the public to come to the landing field and witness the aircraft's arrival, even arranging parking accommodations for 500 cars. "We take great pleasure," the store's advertisement crowed, "in extending a cordial invitation to the public to witness the landing of the big plane and see the merchandise transferred to our store." Indeed, so many cars arrived to witness the plane's arrival that many of them had to park on the road leading to the landing field. Not to be outdone, a month later Yetter's, a dry goods store, teamed up with Robinson's Furniture Exchange to bring another biplane to town to perform stunts and give a few lucky passengers rides into "cloudland." That aviator even flew over the surrounding small towns of Oxford, Wellman, Lone Tree, West Branch, and West Liberty to drop advertising handbills from 2,000 feet. His initial Iowa City landing site had been at "Black's grove, not far from the Glencoe boat house up the river, on the way to Black's springs and the city park," but later in the day the pilot used the city's fairgrounds.[9]

Another 1919 aviator, F. A. Donaldson, a former university student and friend of Virginia Carson, daughter of businessman and booster Robert N. Carson, thought he would land "south and west of the Ryerson bridge," perhaps referring to a farm field south of the present Johnson County fairgrounds. Meanwhile, the state university in Iowa City had not been immune to postwar flying fever either, initiating an aviation program and organizing an aviation club of "men who have served in the service, as 'birds'—whether in the army, navy, or marine aviation corps." Alumni aviators were invited by the town's *Daily Press* newspaper to come to the university's 1919 homecoming via their own "birds," dubbing the event "doubtless a first in the history of the university of making their voyages to their old college town by air route."[10]

Without a doubt, however, aviation's chief proponent in Iowa City was a booster organization called the Iowa City Commercial Club—precursor to the present Chamber of Commerce. The Commercial Club had



Friday, July 11th, Is Aeroplane Day

A Saving of 20 to 50 Per Cent on All Purchases During The Big

JULY CLEARANCE SALE

Come and See the Aeroplane Friday Noon, July 11th. The First Aeroplane Express to Iowa City.

Bremer's
GOLDEN EAGLE
IOWA CITY, IOWA

(Store Will Be Closed Friday From 12 to 1 P. M. To Receive Aeroplane Express.)

Iowa City Daily Press, July 10 and July 11, 1919.

During the summer of 1919, U.S. Army Lieutenant David L. Behncke flew several hundred pounds of Society Brand clothes from Chicago to Iowa City in a Curtiss bi-plane. Circling the downtown area a few times to attract attention before landing, the pilot, plane, and cargo soon were greeted by thousands of spectators—including Mayor Ingalls Swisher—at the landing field. Dubbed "one of the most gigantic publicity 'stunts' in the history of...the Athens of Iowa" by the *Daily Press*, the Bremer's "Golden Eagle aeroplane express" brought the "latest styles in coming season apparel for men" for the store's display windows.

sponsored well-attended local aviation exhibits as early as 1910, when Captain Thomas Baldwin flew (and crashed) his *Red Devil* biplane during the annual fall festival. With membership largely drawn from business and professional circles, the Commercial Club supported a wide array of betterment activities, especially those meant to invigorate the town's economy. Good highways (the Red Ball and the River-to-River roads intersected at Iowa City) and development of the airways were both high on the Commercial Club's agenda. Enthusiastic and visionary club members such as Robert N. Carson were leaders in both movements. Christian Yetter, who chaired the Commercial Club's aviation committee, was another such leader. The landing field that would later become the Iowa City Municipal Airport was identified by Yetter and lay adjacent to the Red Ball road south of town. Described in October 1919, the site was "the landing place that Chris Yetter chose sometime ago for other airplanes—across the river, south of town, near the old time fairgrounds, about a mile south of the Burlington street bridge." This location was a field on the dairy farm owned by W. J. Benjamin, with whom the Commercial Club had an agreement by at least 1918, if not well before.[11]

The club's aviation promotional activities were well known in December 1919, when the local postmaster, Max Mayer, received a telegram from one of his bosses. Assistant Postmaster General Otto Praeger, the government official in charge of Air Mail Service, wired Mayer to ask about local landing fields. Eighteen months earlier, Praeger had initiated the country's first air mail service between Washington, D.C., and New York City and was determined to expand the service across the continent. U.S. Army Air Service planes and pilots flew the route when the Postal Service inaugurated it on May 15, 1918, but Praeger was dissatisfied with the military's performance. He had been unable to find any commercial enterprise with the technical capability, but did not want to use the Army Air Service either, and so planned to build his own airship fleet and train his own pilots. When the war ended, planes and pilots both became available. By December 1918, the War Department was out of the air mail business and Praeger was busy planning a transcontinental air mail route.[12]

Praeger's wire to Postmaster Mayer indicated that Iowa City might be selected as a stop on the air mail route extension from Chicago to Omaha. Published in the local press, the telegram sparked much speculation about whether the town would be just a temporary landing site or perhaps develop into a permanent mail stop, and about whether the planes would actually pick up mail or only use the field for emergency landings. "What is the length, breadth and location of aviation field used by army near your city?" Praeger asked. "Also how accessible by street car and how far from post office? Also what buildings contained thereon and who has charge of property? Am considering its use temporarily for mail flights to Omaha about January 8. Wire details fully." As if urged by someone, Praeger sent a quick follow-up wire: "Regarding telegram landing field kindly confer with secretary Chamber of Commerce." Mayer dutifully conferred with the Commercial Club, and a group went out to Benjamin's farm to take measurements. The local Iowa City postmaster sent back word: "Aviation field one and one-half miles south west of post office, west of river on Red Ball highway. Seven-tenths mile from street car. City phone in farm house. Transportation available at post office. Property of W. J. Benjamin. Field 440 yards square. Four-way landing, no trees or brush. No buildings for airplane. Temporary field only. Aviators report field first class." Thus, the Benjamin field emerged in 1919 as the best local landing field, already known beyond the immediate region. It appeared on "government maps in Washington as being available for use, and [was] on all army aerial maps of this region," according to the local press, who credited Yetter's efforts to secure Benjamin's continued permission to use the field.[13]

Despite competition from Davenport and a threat that political pressure could move the air mail stop to the state's capital, Des Moines, Iowa City soon won over Praeger. The college town was, after all, more nearly the midpoint between Chicago and Omaha if pilots were to follow the Rock Island tracks as their road map. Davenport was too close to Chicago, while Des Moines was too close to Omaha. Smaller towns to the west of Iowa City, such as Marengo or Williamsburg, might be the actual midpoint, but didn't have the aviation history or strong boosters found in Iowa City's Commercial Club. And Praeger needed local support, for he had no government money to build landing facilities. Talk of building a hangar on Benjamin's field for the new air mail planes began to circulate among Iowa Citians and Commercial Club members, though it would be more than two years before a permanent hangar could be erected.

Early in January 1920, government men arrived to secure rights to needed oil and gasoline for the Benjamin field and urged the Commercial Club to build a hangar, hinting that other cities still might be in the running. Praeger's special assistant, Colonel John A. "Straw

Hat" Jordan, was one of the men who arrived in town. According to one historian, Jordan was "a bit of a snake-oil salesman" who pitted local officials of many western cities against each other, pressuring them to build the needed facilities or lose the air mail stop to the other city. Certainly, Jordan's tactics, which were later the subject of a congressional inquiry, were played out on Iowa City Commercial Club officers whenever Des Moines or Davenport was brought into the conversation.[14]

With Iowa City still the purported midway stop between Chicago and Omaha, pilots began test flights in January 1920. During the history-making first test run on January 5, 1920, F.A. Nutter and Walter J. Smith (after whom Iowa City's airfield would later be named) arrived in rebuilt army De Havilland 4s within minutes of each other. These biplanes carried two people, but as rebuilt, the "position of the pilot is in the rear, and the mail pit is the one used by the pilot during the war." En route, Nutter had wrongly followed the Chicago North Western railroad line for a bit, but corrected himself and "hopped" over to follow the Rock Island's tracks into town. Leaving his plane in a "makeshift [canvas] hangar" on the ground at Iowa City, Nutter then rode along with Smith to "learn the landmarks between Iowa City and Omaha." On another test flight a few days later, a bag of mail and fresh meat for a banquet to be held for General John Pershing were flown on Smith's plane to Omaha, while Robert Carson of Iowa City slipped a 10-pound live pig on board Nutter's plane bound for Chicago.[15]

Despite the successful test flights, problems with weather, equipment, and ground facilities continued to delay the inauguration of daily mail service in the Chicago to Omaha division, of which William J. McCandless was postal superintendent. McCandless had organized the Cleveland to Chicago route and strongly supported Iowa City as the midway service and repair station for the Chicago to Omaha segment, despite Colonel Jordan's scare tactics and Iowa City's lack of a hangar. McCandless predicted, however, that commercial contractors would take over all air mail routes within three years, a thought later echoed by Christian Yetter, and recommended that the Commercial Club only build a "canvas tent hangar" for the reserve plane to be stationed on the field. The tent hangar was up and ready by the end of the month, but daily air mail flights would not start until mid-May, just days after McCandless died in a crash as he returned to Iowa City from an inspection trip to Omaha. Efforts to create the western segments to San Francisco would be spearheaded by others, and in the late summer of 1920 the Postal Service announced the opening of the country's first transcontinental air mail route. At the same time, the Commercial Club signed a formal lease for the Benjamin landing field for $1,600.[16]

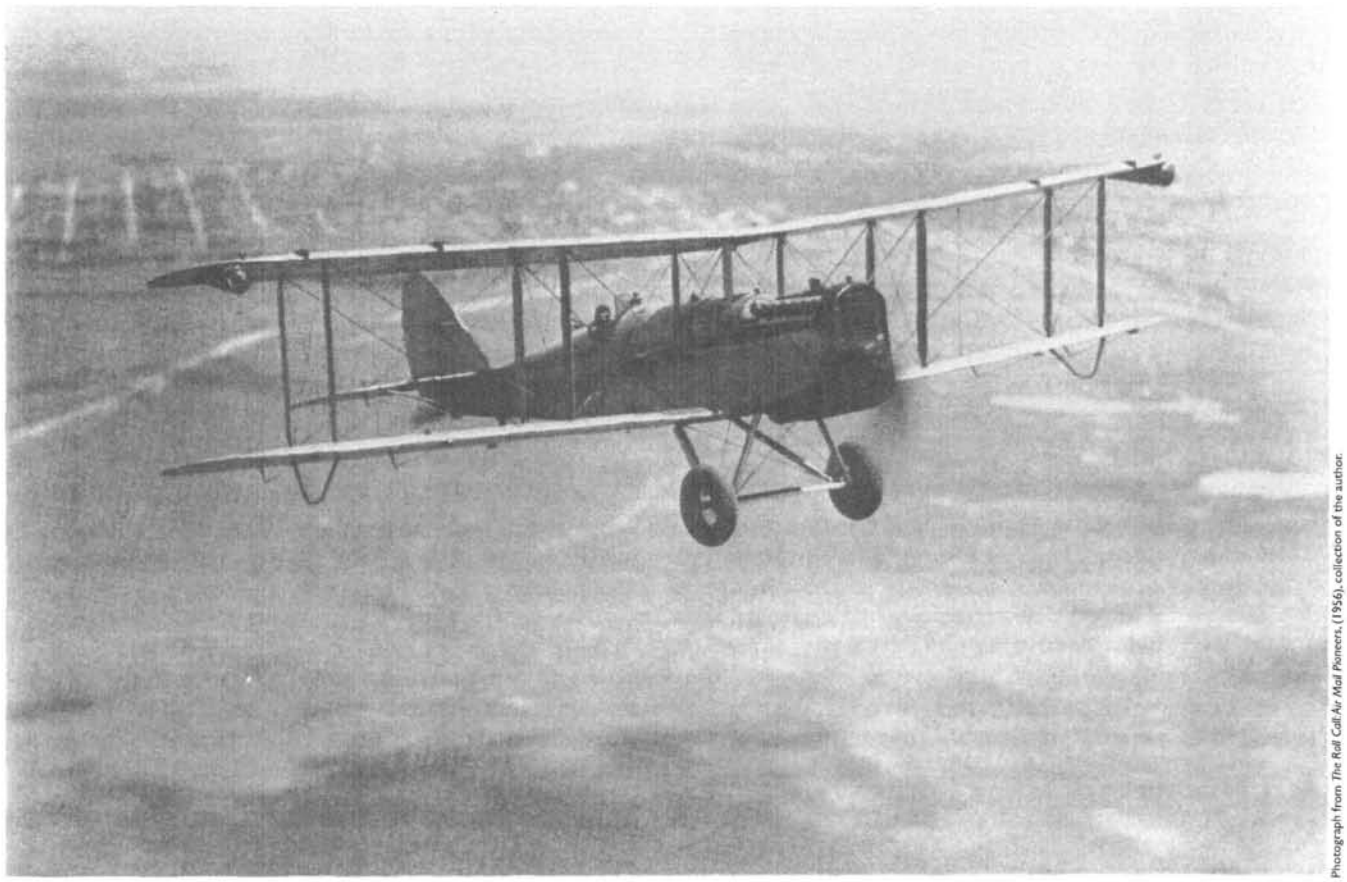
In just two short years, Iowa City's role in the country's developing aviation history had leaped from local entertainment and advertising flights to membership in an exclusive, nationwide government experiment. Farmer Benjamin's 35-acre cow pasture had been formally converted to an official, government-designated air mail landing field, and Hugh S. Long had moved to town from Washington, D.C., to manage it. And the Commercial Club's membership had ponied up to pay for the Benjamin lease by special contributions, perhaps relieved not to be asked for money for a hangar, too. Little did the "Clubbers" know their pride in the local airfield soon would swell even more as Praeger's next big plan for air mail service was unveiled—transcontinental flights that would land in Iowa City at night.[17]

Praeger's plan always had been for long-distance air mail routes, as planes could not compete with the railroad companies on short hauls like New York to Washington, D.C., at least when transport of mail to and from the post offices was considered. Airfields were at the cities' outskirts, while the railroad depots were in the hearts of cities, just like the post offices. The shorter routes had quickly been abandoned as the Postal Service focused on developing the transcontinental route, but as long as the planes landed at sundown, the trains would always catch up. The ability to fly the central Chicago to Omaha section of the route at night was critical to Praeger's success.

Night flying was a particularly risky aspect of aviation, considering the lack of navigational instruments or ground markers other than the landmarks identified for visual flying. And both the equipment and pilots were often pushed to and sometimes past their limits. Throughout the second half of 1920 and into 1921, the Iowa City papers were full of short, newsy articles of air speed records being set by postal aviators but also, unfortunately, the many crashes suffered by the pilots and planes. Iowa City did not escape these experiences either, with at least one accident occurring on the Benjamin field in July 1920, when a mail plane's motor failed on takeoff and the craft "dropped 10 feet." The plane—No. 94 piloted by C.C. Lange and en route to Chicago with 100 pounds of mail—"skimmed a ditch, crashed into and through a fence, carrying the wreckage with it." Fortunately, aviator Lange, who had flown in France during the war, escaped unharmed. Six months later, another air mail plane crashed in heavy fog near

Solon, north of Iowa City. The pilot of No. J306, a "metal monoplane" traveling east from Omaha, encountered fog in western Iowa near Atlantic and rose above it. He landed in Parnell, some 25 miles west of Iowa City, to "find out where they were," but by the time he reached Iowa City the fog was too dense to find the airfield. The monoplane "landed" in a pasture south of Solon. Rolling through a fence and across a road, No. J306 ended up wedged between two telephone poles. Amazingly, the two pilots aboard were uninjured. And again, in early February 1921, an army pilot ran out of gas and landed at the Iowa City airfield. During takeoff, at 300 feet over the flights of several pilots and planes, including the overnight course of Jack Knight and Harry G. Smith in two separate planes. Smith's experience apparently ended with his refusal to fly farther east than Omaha because of the snowstorm pelting the nation's midsection. Several newspaper interviews with Knight during and after the flight, however, recorded his saga for posterity. Interviews he gave many years later further embellished the story. Knight, a wartime aviator turned air mail pilot, had never before flown the route between Omaha and Chicago; in fact, he had never even traveled it by train.

The transcontinental test involved two planes

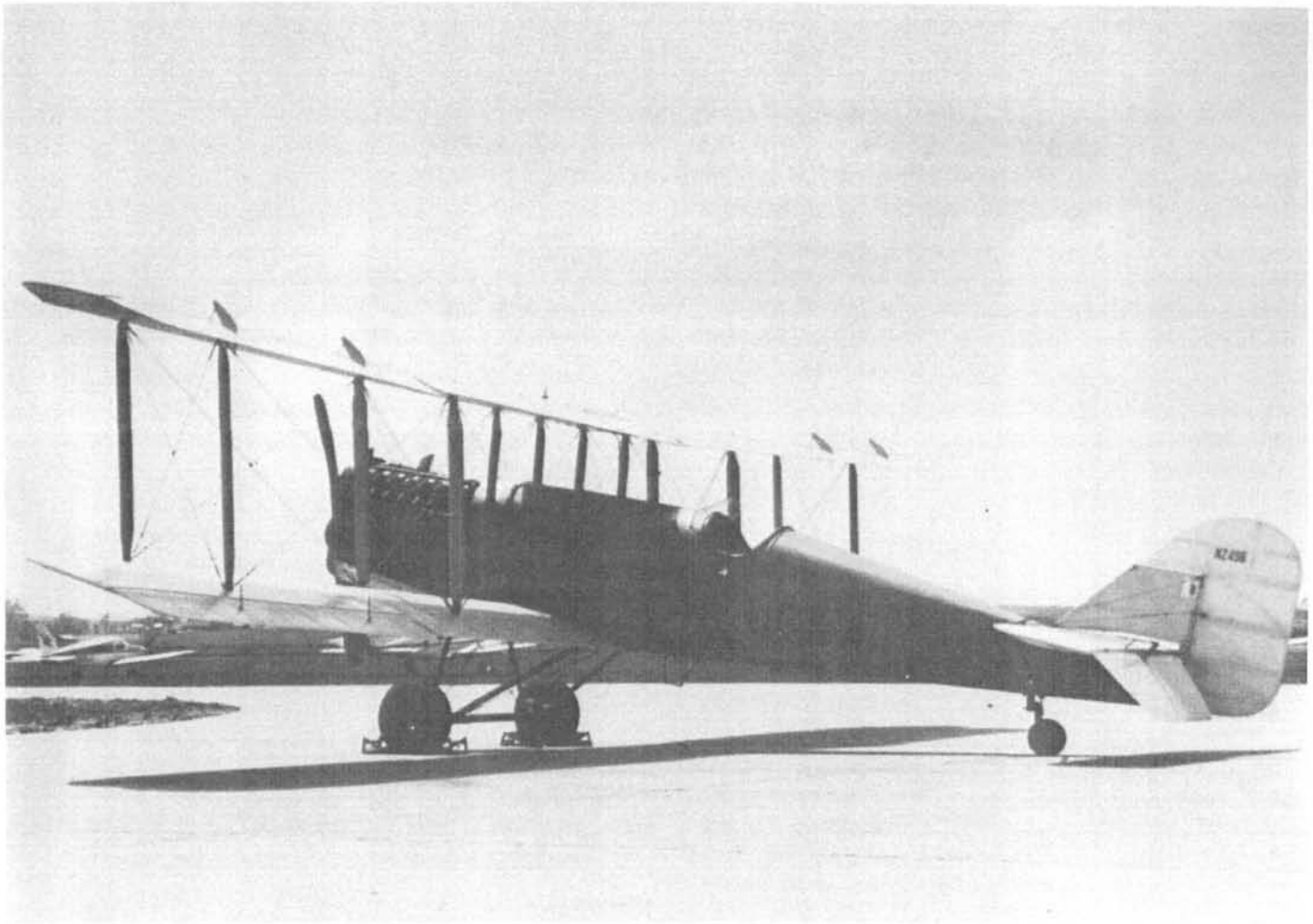


Photograph from *The Roll Call Air Mail Pioneers*, (1956), collection of the author.

The De Havilland 4B, or DH4B, was a modified World War I observation plane. After the Armistice, the army turned over a small fleet of DH biplanes to the Post Office. Tagged with the nickname "Flaming Coffin" because of the fuel tank's location next to the pilot, the military DH was modified for both cargo capacity and safety before being put into service as mail planes.

field, his engine died, again forcing him to glide down to a nearby field, where he crashed through a fence. The air mail staff made immediate repairs to the wing, and the lieutenant was able to leave without further incident.[18]

Testing for the critical night segment of the transcontinental route began on February 22, 1921, during the dead of winter, with the remarkable relay traveling west from the East Coast, both of which were grounded due to poor weather while still east of the Mississippi, and two planes traveling east from the West Coast. Changing planes and pilots at predetermined relay points, the plan was to complete the transcontinental run in 36 hours or less. Knight's eastbound plane had departed from Cheyenne, Wyoming, after dark at 6 p.m.,



De Havilland 4B mail plane #249, seen here around 1968, was restored and flown along the transcontinental route to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the first U.S. air mail route. The pilot stopped at each of the 15 original landing fields, including Iowa City. This photo is from an undated souvenir booklet of the flight contained in the Iowa City Municipal Airport files.

piloted by Frank R. Yeager, en route to North Platte, Nebraska. Ignition problems in the Yeager plane at North Platte delayed Knight for an hour on the ground. Soon, though, he was aloft and headed to Omaha, flying in clear air at 2,200 feet and crossing the Great Plains by moonlight. Flying through central Nebraska, Knight recalled that "the moon shone intermittently through the cloud banks, sending scudding shadow-silhouettes along the grey-black earth as I followed the silver thread of the Platte river eastward." The Union Pacific train tracks and Lincoln Highway also followed the Platte, and volunteers in small towns along the way—Lexington, Kearney, Grand Island, and Central City—kept bonfires glowing throughout the cold night to guide and encourage Knight (and Smith, no doubt). The manager of Omaha's airfield had prepared for the night flyers by illuminating every tree, tower, and other obstructions near the field. Knight spotted the airfield, including its white hangar, from miles out over Wahoo.[19]

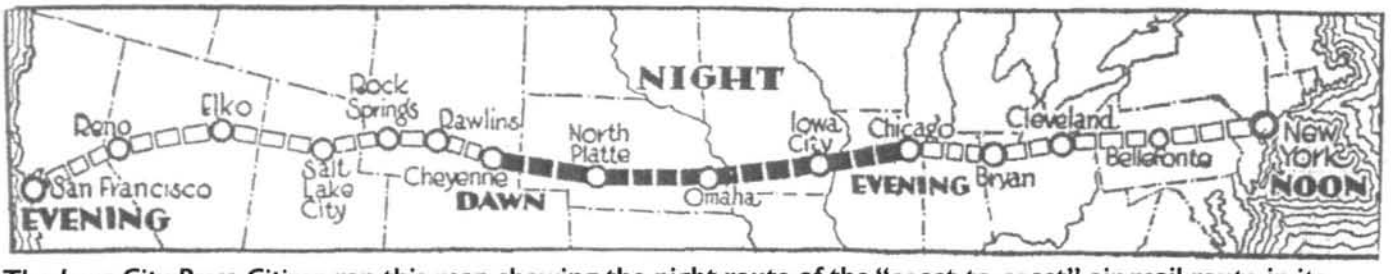
At 2 a.m., Knight departed Omaha for his next fuel stop, Iowa City. He found no railroad or big river to guide him over western Iowa and was being pushed off course by the strong northern wind. "Only the night-lights in the business sections of the towns" flickered up at him. Later, Knight recalled that he relied entirely on his "compass—and a strong hunch…'crabbing' into the north wind, checking up on my compass course every ten miles to see if I were estimating the drift correctly." His hunch was good, and the trusty compass led him straight to Des Moines, where he made out both the parade grounds of Fort Des Moines and the illuminated gold dome of the state's capitol. Ten miles east of Des Moines, however, Knight's weather conditions rapidly declined. Fog drifted in under him, and he descended

The American Airport, 21.

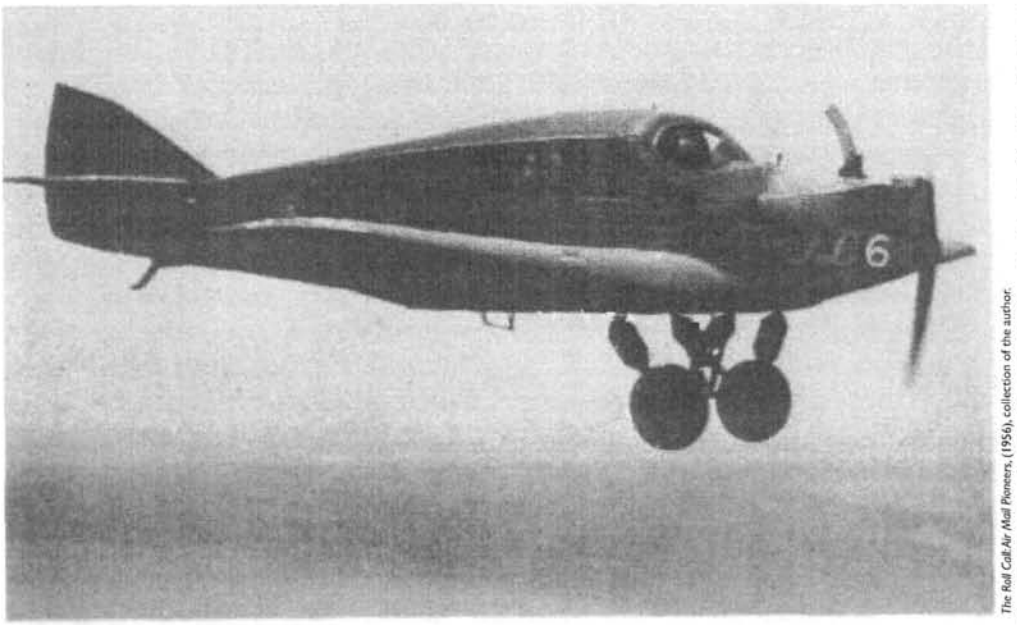
The first "hangar" at the Iowa City airport was a canvas tent, probably similar to the Army Air Service tent hangars being set up in this photograph from the 1920s.

at times to just 100 feet over the earth. Along the way, the only bonfire he saw blazed up from Grinnell, though undoubtedly other towns' fires were obscured by the fog. Then, he flew into snow and lost his horizon.[20]

Near Williamsburg, the aviator saw the "semaphore lights of a railroad" and trailed them to Iowa City. Knight circled his refueling stop for 15 minutes in the snow and fog, descending "lower and lower over the town, till at last I was dodging church steeples and water tanks." Finally, he sighted the tent hangar and lights on the field placed there for the pilots' benefit by Chief Hugh Long, who was there waiting for him. "Many a time a pilot new to the territory over which he is flying, and whereon he desires to descend, finds it difficult, even in the daytime, to locate a strange field," Long told a local reporter. "With Jack Knight coming to a perfectly strange city and field, and at night, and under adverse conditions, too, what he accomplished is about as fine a piece of work in the air as I ever saw." After an hour on the ground in Iowa City, and with reports of improving weather to the east, Knight again lifted off to head toward Chicago. The lonely feeling of flying over a slumbering world "passed



The *Iowa City Press-Citizen* ran this map showing the night route of the "coast-to-coast" air mail route in its February 15, 1923 edition.



The Roll Call: Air Mail Pioneers, (1956), collection of the author.

The Post Office flew eight futuristic-looking Junkers-Larson JL-6 models, a low-wing metal monoplane with a single BMW 180 h.p. engine. This one is shown in 1919.

rapidly," Knight reported, "for then I was flying over an awakening world. Lantern lights showed about farm houses, faint streaks of dawn appeared in the east. The sun, a red orange, peeped over the edge of the horizon.... It was broad day light when I sighted Chicago." Smith and Knight's remarkable journeys that night over the quiet, cold, and sleeping farmland of the Midwest would prove for Praeger, the critics and naysayers, and, ultimately, Congress that nonstop transcontinental air mail was possible.[21]

The congressional response was quick, with nearly immediate effects on the Iowa City airfield. Just two days after the nighttime transcontinental flight, an excited local congressman, Harry E. Hull, called the town's daily newspaper, the *Press-Citizen*, to confirm a $1.25 million appropriation for the Postal Service. Hull also predicted that Iowa City would gain importance by becoming a mail exchange stop, rather than solely a service and repair landing field. Chief Long renewed his "plea" to the Commercial Club at the end of March 1921 for construction of a real hangar, estimated to cost $5,000, in order to accommodate the expected increased air mail traffic. Unfortunately, the club also faced the expiration of its lease with Benjamin in about a month. In a move that foreshadowed a perennial dialogue about financial support and improvements to the airfield, the club hesitated. How much longer could it continue to ask its members for special contributions to promote aviation in Iowa City? At its annual meeting, in April 1921 club members discussed "the aviation situation." "The [$2,000] lease upon the Benjamin field will soon expire," reported the *Press-Citizen*. "Mr. Benjamin offers to make a new lease....Can Iowa City afford to spend this amount of money each year to hold the field? Also, can we afford to build a hangar at a probable cost of $5,000? These are problems that are to be met and solved with a view to overlooking nothing that promises for the future of the City....If Iowa City abandons the field it [the air mail service] will probably go to Cedar Rapids."[22]

Though the Commercial Club hesitated in its commitment to build a hangar, it soon renewed its Benjamin lease, again putting out the call to its members for special support. The *Press-Citizen* encouraged the lease renewal, saying "the government has expended more than $20,000 here in the past year and the city has received a tremendous amount of publicity and thousands of people have visited the city to see and ride in the planes." Further, the newspaper claimed, "It is hinted that private enterprise will soon take over the handling of mail and express business by air and that local deliveries will be provided for all along the lines. Iowa City got in 'on the ground floor' in the aviation business and sentiment seems to retain favor retaining the advantage." Indeed, as the local discourse heated up, the Postal Service began to install other facilities around the town that would aid aviation. In July, Chief Long announced a wireless telegram station would be installed at the airfield, "powerful enough to communicate with the vessels at sea. The wireless will be used to get into communication with points east and west, to ascertain weather conditions, also to conduct Post Office Department business speedily." Just a month later, the Postal Service and the state university announced that the government would erect two steel, 100-foot towers on the university's westside campus.[23]

The need for a better shelter for the Postal Service's aircraft came to a boil a year later when the Postal Service designated Iowa City as the eastern terminus of air mail service in the fall of 1922. This designation

meant more staff and more reserve aircraft would be stationed here; the hangar could no longer be ignored. Announced improvements included upgrading the government's radio station, construction of an oil station, and, at long last, erection of a hangar. Just days after the initial public announcement, an $8,000 government contract was awarded to the C. M. Sulser company, a local firm, to erect a "cement block" building, 66 by 100 feet, with a trussed roof and a concrete floor. Additionally, government representatives were negotiating with the Commercial Club and the City of Iowa City to formalize a new arrangement for the airfield's lease. Benjamin and the City of Iowa City would sign a new $1,600 lease (reduced from $2,000), but the Postal Service would reimburse $1,000 of that, and the Commercial Club would pick up the other $600, assuring continued access to the field for commercial planes. That lease, which was signed on July 1 by Mayor Emma J. Harvat and ran for five years, concerned 58 acres of Benjamin's farm and permitted him to continue to use "said premises as pasture for live stock entirely at his own risk and peril as to injury or damages to stock or other property." By the end of 1922, then, the hangar was up, the lease was signed, and the city was making its own aviation history.[24]

"The Pageant of America" collection, courtesy New York Public Library

All the features of a well-built air mail field are pictured in this mid-1920s photograph taken from across the dirt Red Ball highway. Constructed in late 1922, the large hangar was equipped with floodlights at each end. The office building under the American flag measured 20 by 30 feet. A rotating beacon sits atop the tallest tower. Plane spotters and weather observers could climb to the deck at the top of the lower tower, which also sported a floodlight. This wooden tower had been enclosed by the time of the next photograph.

Iowa City's status as terminus of the eastern division brought it increased importance, but its location in the middle of the nighttime segment of the transcontinental air mail route meant lighting the airfield was critical. In fact, the entire nighttime corridor across three states needed navigational aids if Jack Knight's hair-raising flight was not to be repeated. So, the Postal Service

Friml (October 1928), courtesy Special Collections, University of Iowa.

The reserve De Havilland air mail plane was pulled outside the hangar to stage the scene for this photograph taken in the mid- to late-1920s. The photographers are seen here preparing their camera equipment, suggesting that even the act of photographing an airplane was special enough to be recorded. Note the observation tower has been enclosed.

went back to Congress and threw down the gauntlet. It requested another $1 million, arguing that "unless the million is granted and the mail service allowed to go on with its development, it would be better to drop the whole thing." If "airplane service is abandoned," representatives continued, "that may end the development of commercial flying in this country." The "paradoxical thing," wrote one Washington, D.C., reporter about these claims, is that "as recently as 1918, …the post office started out to demonstrate by actual test whether it was feasible to attempt to carry mail by airplane." Statistics overwhelmingly confirmed that it was possible, "but the same experiment has also shown that airplanes as presently operated, namely, in daylight only, cannot compete with trains as mail carriers as a practical business proposition." The "future of air mails, Assistant Postmaster General Henderson told the house appropriation committee recently, lies in night flying." The $1 million would be used to illuminate the segment between Cheyenne and Chicago, identifying and improving 31 emergency landing fields that "will be outlined in lights every night. Connecting the emergency fields will be automatic guide lights about three miles apart." The Postal Service got its funding.[25]

Throughout the rest of the year, government representatives worked to identify the emergency landing fields. In Iowa, these included airfields in Donahue, Moscow, Williamsburg, Montezuma, Reasnor, Carlisle, Booneville (Boone), Casey, Atlantic, and Oakland. Specifications required that these fields be positioned about 25 miles apart and have clear approaches to about 40 acres of open land. The government planned to equip the emergency fields with signal lights, floodlights, and landing lights. Regular landing airfields such as Iowa City would have these fixtures, plus bright rotating beacons atop high towers. Connecting all these landing fields would be beacons on shorter towers, spaced every three miles. At the Iowa City airfield, which had recently been named the Walter J. Smith Field to honor one of the first air mail test flyers, floodlights were installed on the town's new hangar. And a new "6,000,000 candle" tower was erected on the field by

State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

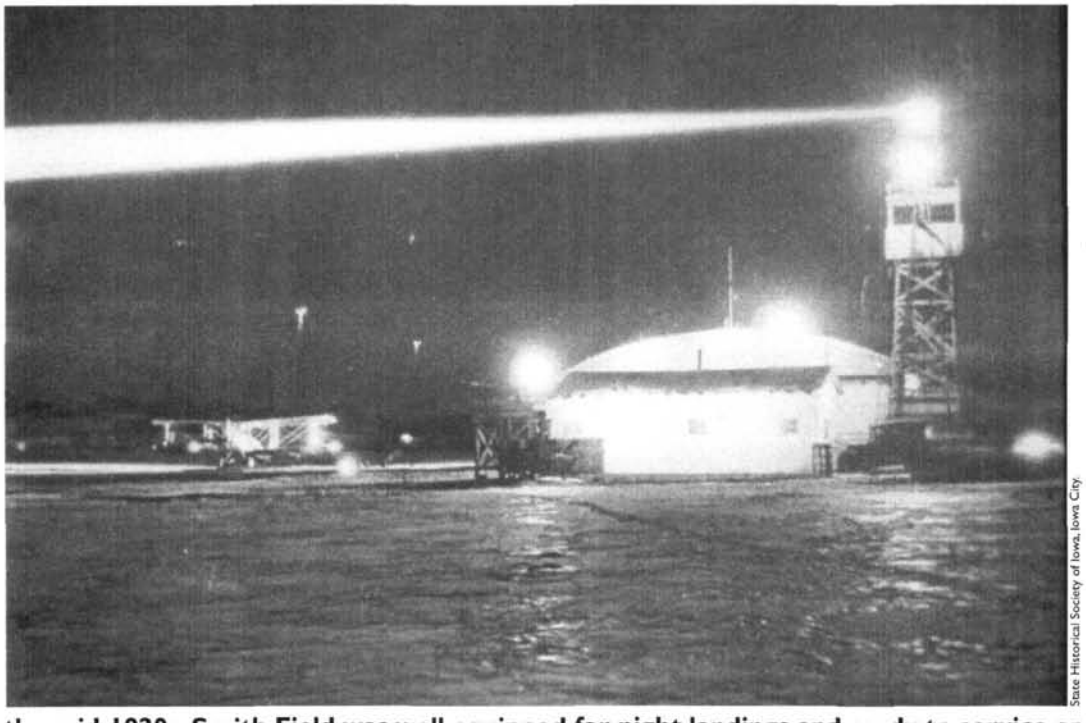
This De Havilland is marked "maintenance plane."

Chicago Daily News (1923), courtesy Chicago Historical Society.

By signing the first city lease of the Benjamin airfield in 1922, Mayor Emma J. Harvat initiated the city's long formal relationship with the Iowa City Municipal Airport.

the beginning of July. Soon reports filtered back from residents of area towns who could see Iowa City's great new beacon flash across their sky.[26]

In mid-August 1924, the first test of the entire "great white way" was under way. When pilot D.C. Smith landed in Iowa City at 9:40 p.m., August 14, he was greeted by a "vast throng of people" enthusiastically wishing him well. It was a community event. "No general publicity had been given this preliminary flight of Pilot Smith last night," the *Press-Citizen* reported, "but when, at 8:30 p.m. the great lights began to illuminate the heavens here, the people of the community who had been reading the *Press-Citizen* 'caught on' and understood.... Accordingly countless automobiles forthwith began to bear their interested parties to Benjamin's bailiwick. Therefore, in a short time, the cars were four deep, along the river road, leading to and from Manager Long's field." With the successful conclusion of the nighttime testing in 1923 and the implementation of regular nonstop transcontinental air mail service in 1924, Iowa City's position in the nation's air mail system remained secure for the next few years. In 1926, the passage of the landmark Air Commerce Act brought about the first comprehensive set of regulatory standards. The act's impact, together with rising commercial aviation interests, would quickly bring big changes to local airfields, especially Iowa City's.[27]



State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City

Seen here in the mid-1920s, Smith Field was well equipped for night landings and ready to service and fuel the transcontinental air mail planes.

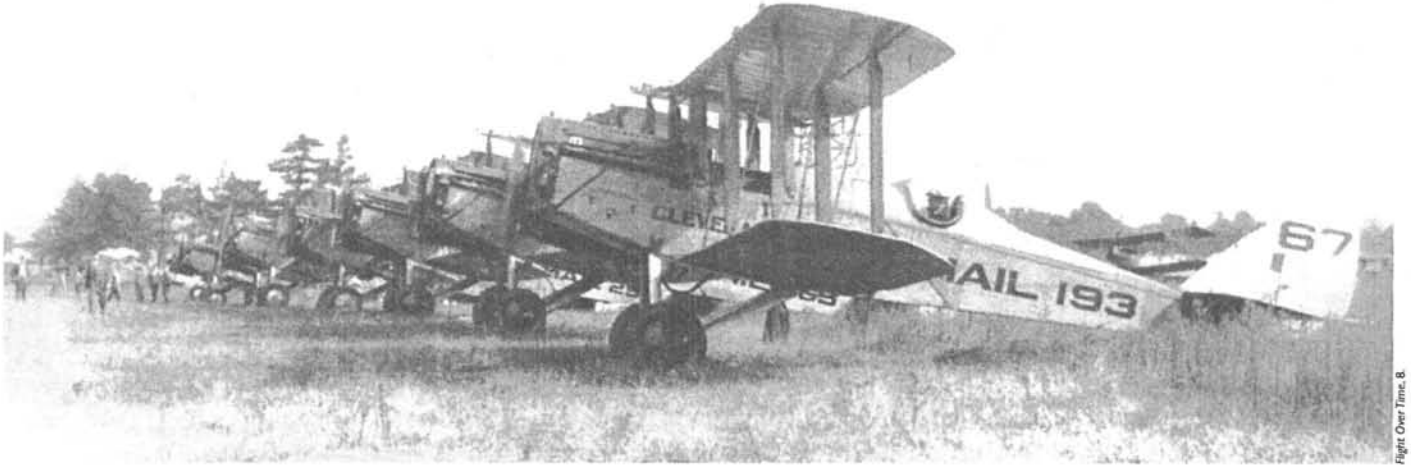
From Smith Field to Municipal Airport, 1926–1930

Pushed first by the demands of World War I and then by a U.S. Post Office determined to develop air mail service, the infant aviation industry of the 1920s had taken a huge leap forward from the balloonists-turned-flyers of 1910. No longer did aviators just fly one-of-a kind aeroplanes at county fairs and main street-sponsored exhibitions. Planes were manufactured by a number of larger companies that were working hard on the old war-vintage designs to improve reliability, safety, and cargo capacity. Landing fields across the country had moved from informal open pastures, where a pilot might dodge the odd cow, to grass turf strips promoted by local authorities and civic organizations. Occasionally, a paying commercial passenger might even occupy the second "pit" of a mail plane flying day or night across the country. As the 1920s drew to a close, the field of aviation was poised to take another great step.

Assistant Postmaster General Otto Praeger did not intend to be in the flying business as well as the postal service, but he had no alternatives in 1918. That would change, however. Federal legislation in 1925 and 1926, as well as Charles Lindbergh's huge popularity following his May 1927 transatlantic flight, catapulted commercial aviation out of its infancy and well into its adolescence. The Airmail Act of 1925 (commonly called the Kelly Act) was, in its own words, "an act to encourage commercial aviation and to authorize the Postmaster General to contract for mail service." By January 1926, contracts had been awarded to private aircraft companies for all the feeder routes, but not the transcontinental course. When the Columbia, as the transcontinental route was then called, was offered for private contract, National Air Transport, already flying the Chicago to Ft. Worth feeder route, won the Chicago to New York segment of the Columbia, too. Boeing Air Transport, a Seattle-based manufacturer of navy trainer planes, won the prized western segment from Chicago to San Francisco, substantially underbidding all other competitors. Boeing offered to fly the mail for just $1.50 per pound, while the next closest bidder was Western Air Transport at $2.24 per pound. To no avail, Western Air and others protested the award, alleging that William Boeing planned to finance his air mail route with proceeds from Boeing's manufacturing operation, presumably to get a foot in the door for the mail routes.[28]

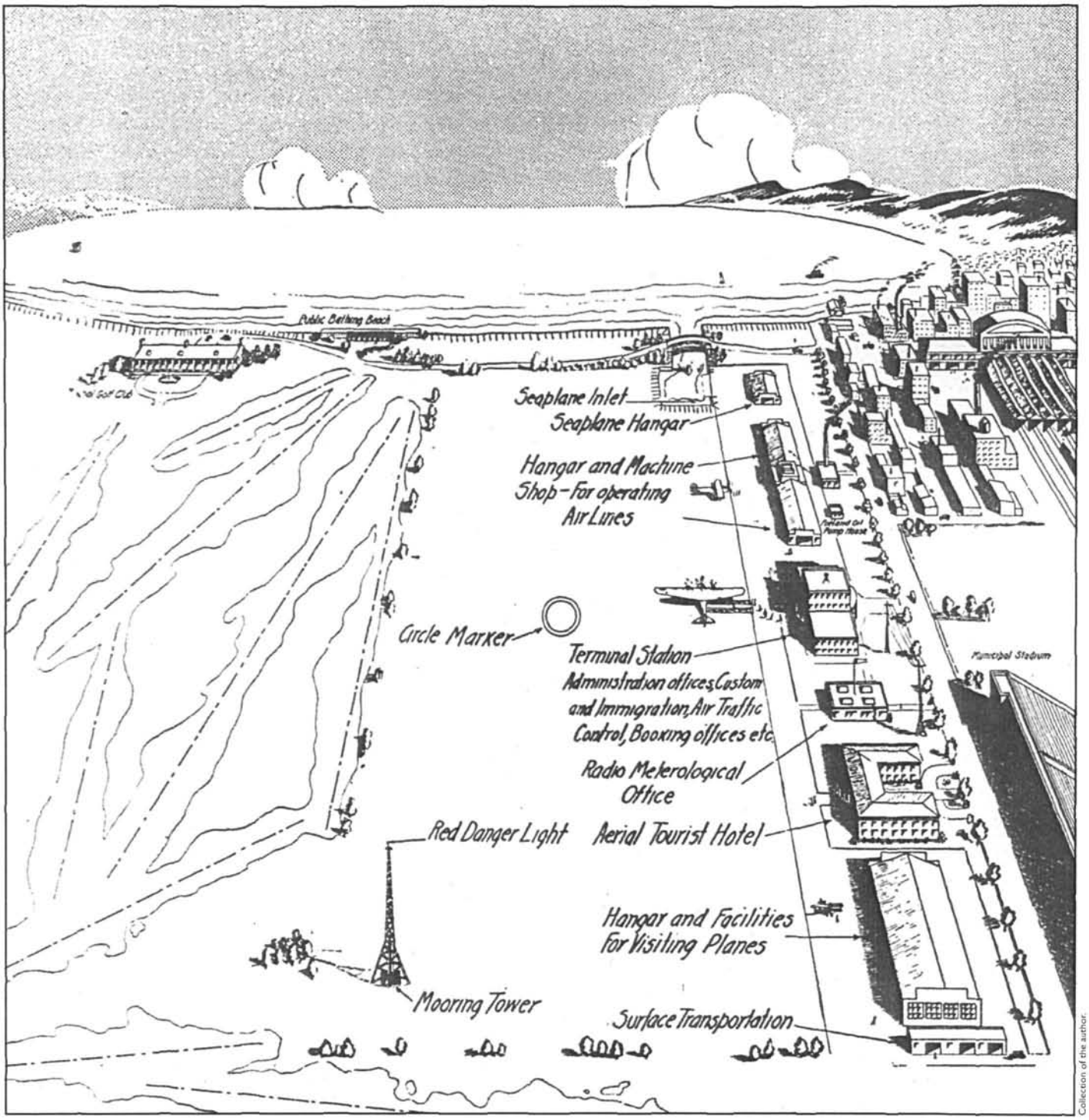
William E. Boeing (1881-1956) made his first fortune in the Pacific Northwest lumber business and by World War I was producing float planes and biplane trainers for the U.S. Navy. When Boeing won the contract for the long western segment of the transcontinental route, company engineers redesigned one of their models to use an air-cooled engine, dropping the weight of "radiators, plumbing, and cooling fluids" and increasing the mail cargo capacity. Called the Wasp-powered B-40, the efficient plane would generate profits for Boeing Air Transport from the air mail contract, even at $1.50 a pound. By July 1927, Boeing's fleet of planes, along with the company's newly hired, ex-Post Office pilots and staff along the entire corridor—including Iowa City's Smith Field—were ready to start handling the nation's longest air mail route.[29]

A second piece of federal legislation, passed in



Flight Over Time, 8.

De Havilland mail planes are lined up for exhibition in this vintage photograph from the 1920s. The location is not certain.



Collection of the author.

The sky was the limit in terms of combining air travel with local municipal functions, according to David Duke, author of *Airports and Airways: Cost, Operation and Maintenance* (1927). The author's birds-eye drawing of the "well-equipped airport of the future" featured a public golf course and club house (along left side and bottom), and a municipal stadium (bottom right side). Airport facilities included a dirigible mooring tower, hangars for airlines and visiting planes, a radio and weather station, and an administration and terminal building. The plan even included an "aerial tourist hotel." Covering all bases, the drawing contained a seaplane hangar and water inlet along the lake at the top, but, oddly, no runways.

1926, also profoundly affected commercial aviation and the way in which local facilities were provided. Passage of the Air Commerce Act brought about the first significant federal regulation in the design, licensing, and operation of aircraft. The act also established that, while aircraft regulation would be the job of the federal government, landing facilities remained a local obligation. This division of responsibilities was known as the "dock concept." With roots in maritime history, the dock concept called for local "ports" to build, operate, and maintain the airfield facilities, while the federal government maintained the designated air lanes and the airways in general. Smith Field in Iowa City would soon become known as Iowa City's "air port," serving both contract air mail planes and an increasing number of private commercial flyers.

Boeing vice president, Edward Hubbard, visited Smith Field as early as April 1927 to check field conditions and confirm lease arrangements with the local organization. When Hubbard met Chamber of Commerce officials, the possibility of purchasing Smith Field was raised, and Boeing seems to have played a hand that Chamber officials were used to seeing—that Iowa City might not remain on the air mail route unless its facilities continued to improve. A few days later, the *Press-Citizen* opined that "commercial aviation, as Iowa City well knows, has become strongly established in this country. It is no longer mere experiment....The volume of passenger traffic in the air has increased surprisingly [with] vastly more flying during 1926 than before." Still, perhaps to assuage the concerns of Good Roads advocates, of whom there were many local representatives, the editor continued, "This evolution of air service [will not] disturb, interfere with or take the place of approved means of transport on the solid earth. There will be enough patronage for all."[30]

The local press reported developing events concerning Smith Field throughout 1927 with increasing frequency. In mid-April, a 10-passenger plane stopped in Iowa City, and the plane's interior was described for readers in detail, suggesting what a new concept passenger flying was and the novelty of every aspect of aviation. "The plane has a long enclosed body with 10 upholstered seats arranged as in a bus. It is equipped with a radio and 'Humoresque' [inflight entertainment?] was on the air when the dial was turned to accommodate interested Iowa Citians who gathered around the plane today. All the comforts of a parlor car are found in the plane and the passengers were dressed in spring suits without overcoats." In June, the newspaper announced that Boeing had hired Lester F. Bishop, the local manager and a seasoned air mail pilot in his own right, to stay on at the airfield. Further, the Post Office intended to turn the radio facilities on the field over to the Department of Commerce (to be maintained day and night, with three operators working eight-hour shifts), while all the other facilities would be given to the local municipality. This was impressive, considering that the 68-acre landing field had been improved with a 66-by-100-foot hangar in 1922, an office building some time shortly thereafter, and lighting equipment, beacons, and towers by 1924, all valued at $35,000. Despite the dock concept, under which the city might have been asked to buy the facilities, it surely made more sense for the federal government to encourage aviation by handing over these facilities to the local authority rather than sell them to the commercial air mail companies. And it simply made good business sense to hire the experienced postal staff and flyers who had just lost their government jobs.[31]

When the first Boeing mail plane touched down at 10:40 p.m. on July 1, 1927, on the initial westbound trip from Chicago, it was a full hour late, but 600 to 800 Iowa City residents still were waiting at Smith Field for a chance to congratulate the aviator. According to the local press, this was "the largest crowd at the field since the air mail flights were inaugurated." Again, the marvel in the local reporter's words was clear. "This big ship, glistening in its silver coat, propelled by a nine-cylinder Pratt-Whitney Wasp motor capable of 125 miles an hour, and 1,800 pounds of passenger and mail weight, was the first of the new planes seen here by local aviation fans. It looked as secure as a battle ship, with a glass-enclosed cabin for passengers, just behind a mail compartment back of the motor, a large area wing spread, rounded non-air resistant wing tips, and the powerful metal propeller. The pilot sat amidships in an open cockpit."[32]

While Boeing Air Transport's profits mounted, Iowa City continued to show its local support for aviation. When the Department of Commerce asked local communities to aid flyers by marking their town names on "aerial signboards," local residents did so, painting the town name and arrows that pointed toward the landing field on the roofs of nearby buildings. One such aerial signboard survived in Iowa City until the end of the twentieth century on an arched-roof building near the present intersection of Riverside Drive (the old Red Ball highway past the airfield), IA 1, and U.S. 6. Thirty days after Boeing began landing in Iowa City, the road to Smith Field, which was outside city limits, was graveled to the air field's driveway in order to make sure the Post

Office could get mail to and from the field. By the end of summer 1927, Iowa City's mayor had signed the new air field lease with Boeing, and the city formally owned the government's improvements on the field. As the *Press-Citizen* put it in good booster fashion, "with the best equipped airport in the state and one of the finest in the middle west, there is no reason why Iowa City should not lead in the encouragement of commercial aviation."[33]

Events at the national level coalesced in 1927 to make coast-to-coast passenger service a reality, but also increasingly pushed the need for improvements to the local facility. On September 1, National Air Transport began flying passengers along with its mail from New York to Chicago, whereas Boeing Air Transport already was flying passengers between Chicago and San Francisco. Private companies were now flying the entire nation, coast to coast, with no more than two extra seats for paying passengers. With increasing demand for these seats on their air mail planes, ambitious Boeing executives were eager to put larger planes into service on the company's long route. Once again, representatives visited Iowa City. "Officials of the Boeing company," it was locally reported, "assert that within a span of months they hope to operate 10-ton passenger and express planes on the transcontinental line. They point out that the present drainage of Smith Field is inadequate and that they are not willing to risk $40,000 planes by attempting to land at the local field when weather conditions are unfavorable." The new planes, described as "leviathans of the air," were "giant 12-passenger planes equipped with reclining chairs, luncheon buffet, and lavatory, and driven at the rate of 125 miles per hour by a triple-engine power plant of 1,275 horsepower." By October 1927, the cost to produce the new planes had risen to $65,000 each, and the request for better drainage, which had been made to the Chamber of Commerce, was pressing. The cost to fix the drainage problem was but one example of the growing need to clarify the financial responsibilities between local authorities for Iowa City's busy airport.[34]

The tangled arrangement of ownership and operation of Smith Field came to a head in 1929, a big year in the history of the airfield. Following precedent set a few years earlier by the Post Office, Boeing Air Transport leased the field from the city, but the Chamber of Commerce still financially supported part of it in order to keep the field open for other types of aviation. And the underlying land was still a private farm, complete with a farmhouse, a barn, outbuildings, and a dairy herd. The four-year lease called for Boeing to pay $1,500 a year to the city, $100 less than the lease with the Post Office and $500 less than the Commercial Club's direct lease with the Benjamins. Boeing could terminate the lease with 90 days notice if it needed more space for air mail operations and the city failed to provide it. With this termination provision, the threat of losing the air mail stop continued to hang over the city and its boosters. In light of the increasing use of the airfield and value of improvements to it, the arrangements for Smith Field's operation and maintenance needed simplification and clarification.[35]

Early in 1929, Carl Cone, then chairman of the Chamber of Commerce's aviation committee, began promoting an effort to have the city purchase the Benjamin farm, including Smith Field, and some adjacent acreage. Boeing may have requested space and improvements—perhaps a bigger hangar or better runways—under its lease with the city. Or the state's new statute permitting municipalities to own airports may have prompted the local effort. Or the city may have received a less than satisfactory grade under the federal government's new rating system. Probably it was a combination of all these factors. In any event, the specter of losing the air mail service continued to hang over the town. In March, the university's *Daily Iowan* newspaper ran a cartoon that poked fun at the town's hesitation to upgrade the airfield, but the Chamber's position was clear. "The time has come for Iowa City to take definite and positive action in the matter of providing this community with a First Class Airport," wrote its president, Rollin M. Perkins. "As you know, for nine years loyal citizens contributing through the Chamber of Commerce have maintained the field in its present state, but within the last two years development in flying has gone forward so rapidly, the increase in air mail has been so great and future requirements are such that it appears to the President and Board of Directors of the Chamber of Commerce that an airport second to none in this section [is] a prime necessity."[36]

Members of the Chamber's aviation committee spoke at service club luncheons, held public meetings and roundtable forums, and circulated a petition to request a special city election on a bond issue to finance the upgrades. The Chamber maintained that $70,000 obtained through a sale of municipal bonds would be enough to buy the entire 190-acre farm and improve Smith Field to an "AAA" airport. A small levy and revenues from the airfield would be enough, the Chamber argued, to pay off the 20-year bonds in 13 years. This triple A rating was not simply salesmanship or a catchy phrase. The Air Commerce Act had given the Department

of Commerce the responsibility of rating the nation's growing number of airports. Three areas of airport operations—general equipment and facilities, size of effective landing area, and lighting equipment—were rated from A down to D. The latter grade was assigned to airports meeting only the minimum requirements. The Chamber's goal for Iowa City's Smith Field was an A rating in each category. "If the field is not soon enlarged and improved," argued Cone, "it will mean the loss of the air mail and the advantages of government aid in local aviation activities." Further, the hangar, office building, and all the equipment given to the city by the Post Office "could not be retained" if air mail service was lost because the airport could not meet the new standards.[37]

When petitions bearing nearly 2,000 signatures were presented to the city council, the special bond vote was set for May 27, 1929. As the vote approached, the local papers were filled with articles and editorials promoting a positive vote outcome. The *Press-Citizen* strongly encouraged Iowa Citians to vote for the bond issue, editorializing that it was time the city took over the airport as the Chamber of Commerce was not in a financial position to upgrade it. "For nine years," the *Press-Citizen* wrote, "Iowa City has had a prominent place on the transcontinental air line. This line has developed from a few battered war planes to a great fleet of the most modern flying craft. The larger, speedier and more modern equipment quickly replaced the old, and now still faster and heavier planes await the development of flying fields to suit their needs. If Iowa City is to accommodate these…we must have more room, longer runways and better equipment." More than just a "recreation" for municipal residents, the *Press-Citizen* took issue with a recent Department of Commerce statement that compared airports with city parks, and argued that "the municipal air field will be an absolute necessity for the city against the time when the air trip will be an everyday incident for thousands of people. That day is coming just as surely as our present motor age developed from watching the comings and goings of the occasional motor car."[38]

Daily Iowan cartoon, Cone clippings collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City

Cedar Rapids was just one nearby town that was positioning itself to wrestle away Iowa City's coveted spot on the air mail route. The Cedar Rapids Chamber of Commerce (and later the city itself) had leased "Hunter field," a farm south of town, and wanted to upgrade it in order to become Boeing's permanent air mail and passenger stop. Des Moines already had become a stop for Boeing's planes.

Chamber representatives continued to assure voters that the new, expanded airport could become self-supporting within two or three years, considering Boeing's continued rent, the fees assessed on transient aircraft, and the pasture fees the landowner would soon be required to pay. If the dairy herd was banned from the new airport, then the hay could be harvested and sold instead. Reports circulated of an aircraft manufacturer who wanted to locate a flying school in Iowa City, *if* the airport was upgraded. Local stores—Bremer's and Yetter's among them—contributed prizes to a youth essay contest on the value of the airport. Old timers reminded citizens of past lost opportunities. The city, Dr. Emil Boerner claimed, had rejected the Burlington railroad's request to "bring its main line north through Iowa City" in the 1870s, and "Sinclair Packing company also wanted to locate here….At that time Cedar Rapids was half the size of Iowa City. Compare the towns now." Finally, Carl Cone

proclaimed, "the eyes of the whole country are upon us," waiting to see if Iowa City would become home to one of the truly outstanding airfields in the country. The pressure to stay modern and not lose the investment already made was seemingly overwhelming. In the face of such a barrage of support for the bond issue, 72 percent of the 2,672 voters who participated cast affirmative votes.[39]

Cone clippings collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

This 1929 newspaper ad sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce encouraged Iowa Citians to vote for the bond issue using a photograph of a night scene of the airfield. A biplane sits flooded in light, surrounded by a throng of people. Behind the plane, the three spotlights on the hangar outline its arched roof. Though not identified, the scene was very likely taken in mid-August 1924, when the plane testing the "great white way" arrived and a crowd of well-wishers spontaneously appeared at the field to welcome it.

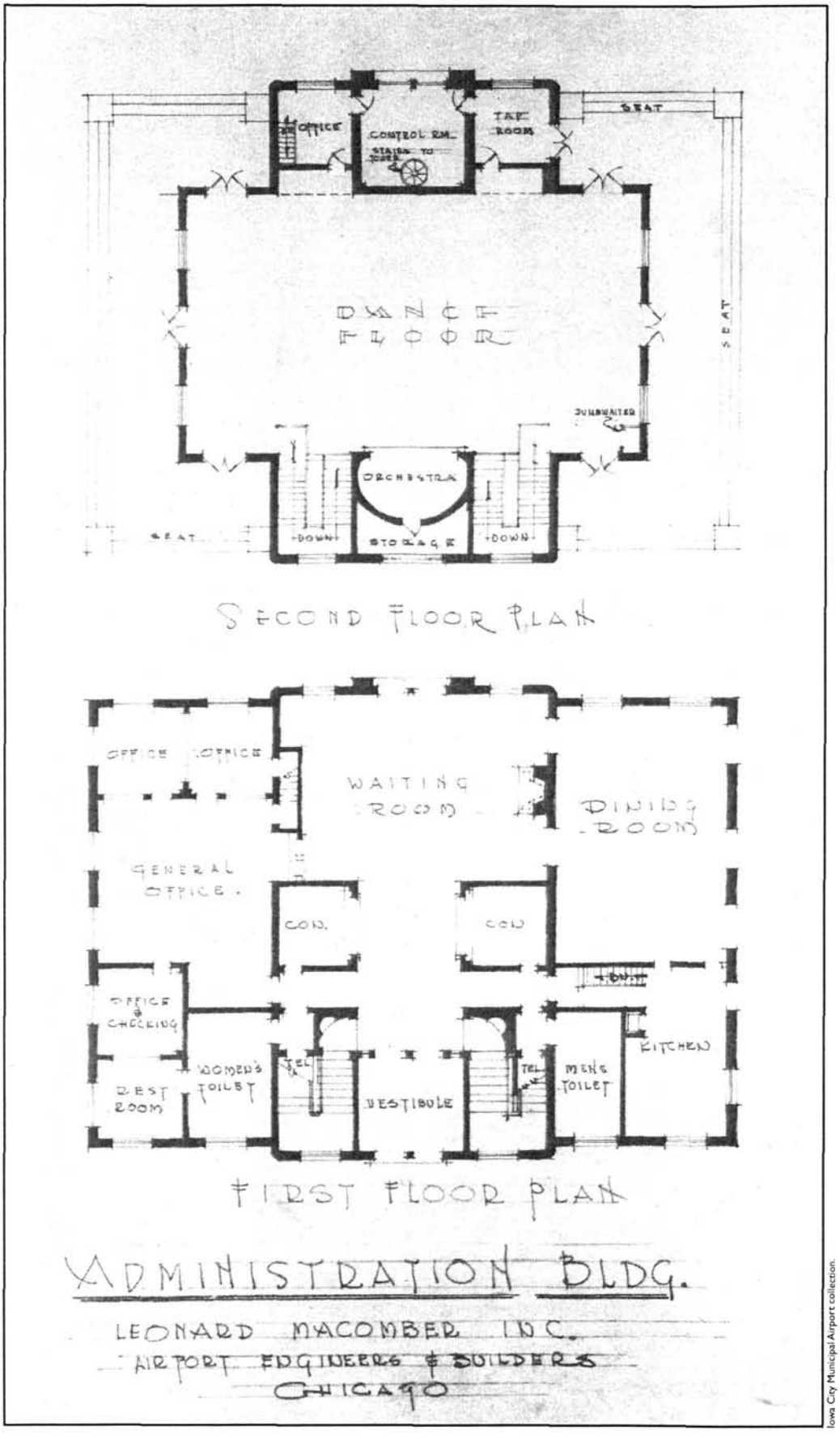
Within seven months, on November 1, 1929, just days after the national stock market crashed, the city council unanimously agreed to purchase the land. Obtaining the approval of the site from the state's railway commission—the body charged with aviation oversight but which had never before been asked to approve an airport site—largely caused the long delay. With approval in hand, however, Iowa City became the "first city in the state to accomplish actual ownership of the air field upon which its airport is maintained," as well as "the first city in Iowa to vote airport bonds for maintenance." The city not only purchased the farm on which the airfield was located, but also about 15 acres east of the farm between the Red Ball highway and the Iowa River. By December 1, 1929, the city made its final payment on the land, and the new municipal airport was created.[40]

With the expectations as well as the economy jolted by the stock market crash, the beginning of the Great Depression affected building projects all over the country. Extravagant projects like the Empire State Building on Manhattan island, commenced earlier in the year while the market was still booming, were completed despite the crash, but there is evidence that Iowa City's ability or desire to spend money on the airport land it had just purchased quickly waned. A Chicago firm had been hired earlier in the fall of 1929 to put together the various plans and estimates to assure a triple A rating for the city. These designs, drawn by the Leonard Macomber, Inc. firm, included a new drainage system estimated to cost $8,000, a complete system of border lights to surround the airport for $3,000, and "a commodious, modern office building, [with a] waiting room, providing every facility for employees at the field and for passengers" estimated at $5,000. An elaborate plan of proposed runways complemented the buildings, which included two large hangars and a remarkable terminal building. None of Macomber's building plans were ever executed, nor was this firm's proposed runway configuration built. The sky may have seemed the limit in the fall of 1929, but by the end of the year most of these plans had crashed and burned. New, more modest facilities would have to wait at least a year and be financed by other means.[41]

Iowa City Municipal Airport collection.

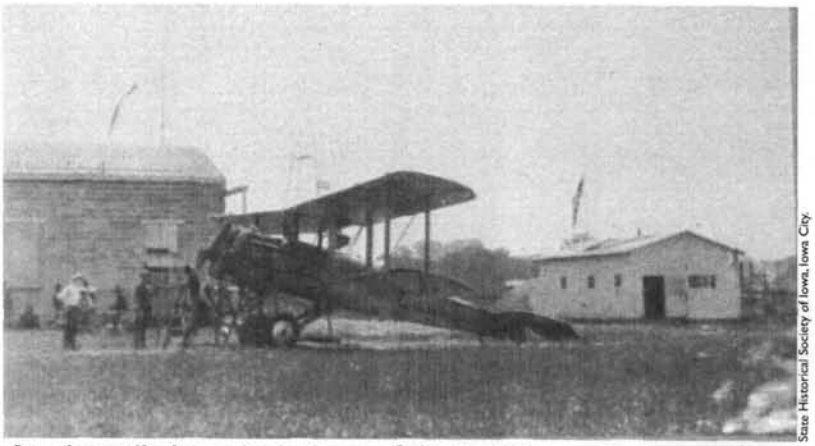
The administration building proposed by Leonard Macomber Inc. in September 1929 was a stylish Art Deco plan, with stepped wings leading to a tall central mass, suggestive of pre-Columbian pyramids. *Bas relief* panels of stylized floral and abstracted designs decorated the flat surfaces and drew the eye upward toward the tall central tower, accessed only by airport personnel from the control room (see floor plans). The tall windows that pierce the walls of both the roadside elevation seen here and the opposing airfield side ensured ample daylight for the interior and saved the building from looking too heavy. They also gave passengers and the public better views of the anticipated aircraft that would circle the field. These building plans were never executed.

NEXT PAGE:
The mix of aviation floor space with recreational functions proposed for the new Iowa City administration building reflected the contemporary attitudes of the day. Not only did the Department of Commerce suggest that public recreational use was a principal justification for municipality-owned airfields, but also, in many towns, responsibility for operation and maintenance of early airports was given to the local parks department. Some towns even paired a landing strip with their municipal golf course, as was the case of Tipton, Iowa. Leonard Macomber built his reputation in the 1920s designing golf courses and is still well remembered for that work.



Iowa City Municipal Airport collection.

Iowa City's New Boeing Hangar, 1930



State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

An air mail plane sits in front of the facilities—a hangar and small office building—that existed when Boeing signed its first lease with Iowa City in 1930.

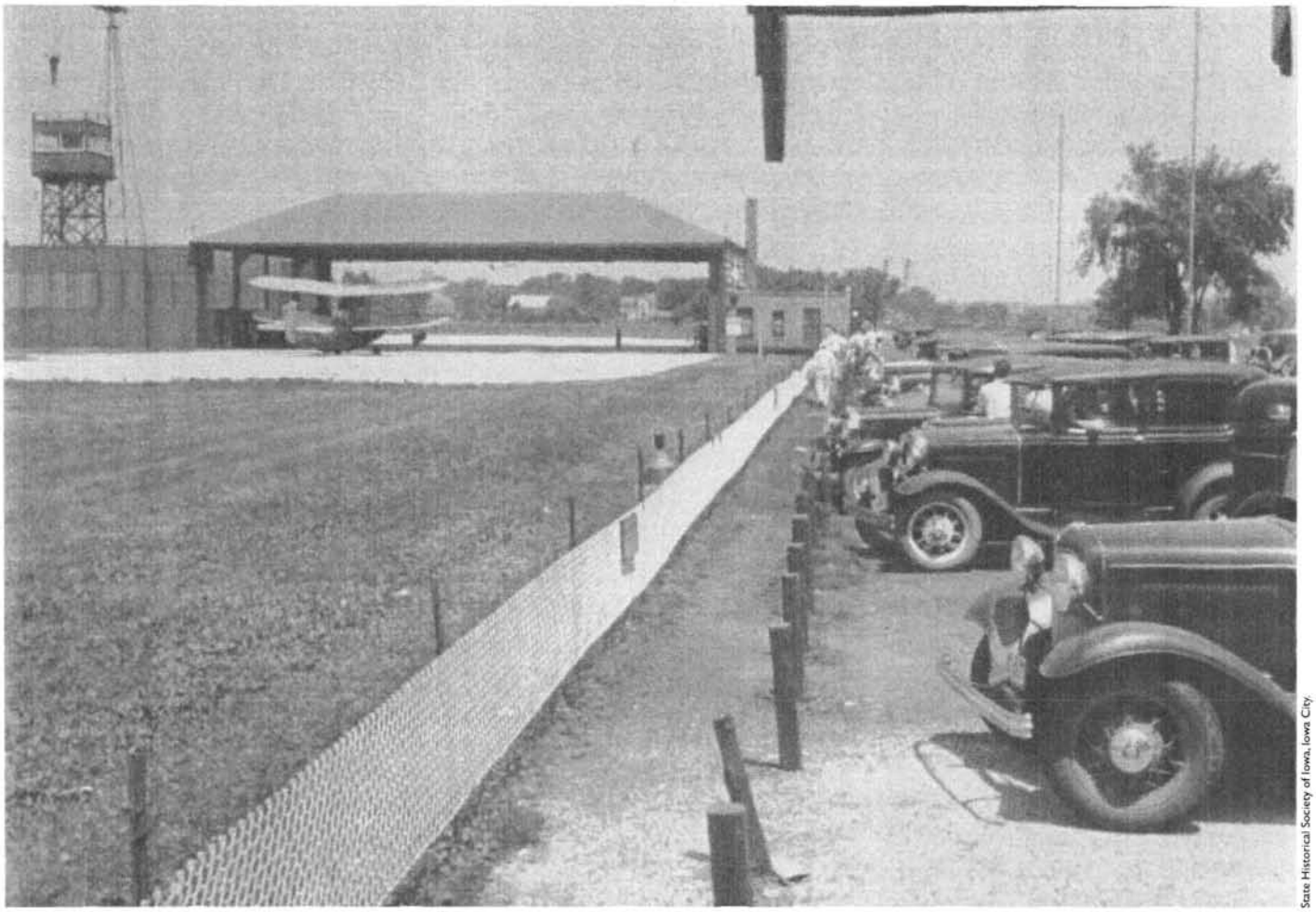
Boeing Air Transport officers once again visited Iowa City in the spring of 1930, this time to hammer out the details of a long-term lease. Over the prior two years, Cedar Rapids with its Hunter Field, just 25 miles to the north, had attracted Boeing to the extent the company was landing its eastbound mail plane there and was considering removing its entire operation from Iowa City. But the same natural conditions that made flat and level farmland good for landing aircraft also meant poor drainage and long periods of soft, unusable sod runways. These were conditions that afflicted both Hunter and Smith airfields. Unlike Iowa Citians, however, Cedar Rapids voters had twice in 1929 turned down bond issues that would have resolved the drainage problems. Without a base of local support in Cedar Rapids, Boeing refocused its attention to the south, to ensure the Iowa City landing facilities could meet the demands of its ever faster and heavier aircraft. Specifically, Boeing's new tri-motor, 18-passenger plane was set to start flying the transcontinental air mail route on May 1.[42]

With the Iowa City airfield now greatly expanded in acreage and municipally owned, the existing lease for Smith Field was outdated. Boeing wanted a longer-term lease and a division of responsibilities that would assure development of better and more permanent facilities. It had taken 80 percent of the funds from the bond issue, however, just to purchase the land from Benjamin and adjacent landowners. After sundry expenses, Iowa City had only $12,000 left in its airport fund. Boeing, on the other hand, was already investing in hangars to house its aircraft at other airfields, including Cheyenne, Wyoming; Reno, Nevada; and its headquarters in Seattle, Washington. With negotiations on a 50-year lease nearing completion, Boeing announced it would send a man to town to begin planning for its investment in Iowa City's new airport.

The lease was a plum for Iowa City, and local leaders applauded it. Iowa City finally seemed to have a guarantee that its long-championed airport would not diminish in importance. The lease, after all, required Boeing to "regularly land its planes on said Airport" for the next 50 years, "and to develop this Airport as one of its regular ports for delivery of or taking off of passengers, mail, express, and freight." While Iowa City's obligation was to spend the remaining $12,000 of its airport fund on "grading, drainage, installing lighting equipment, and other improvements," Boeing agreed to construct two long runways to the specifications its planes needed, expressed in the lease as "not less than 100 feet wide and 2000 feet long." Further, Boeing agreed to maintain the existing hangar and small office building, but had the right to construct additional hangars for its own use.

The ink was barely dry before D.B. Coyler, vice president in charge of Boeing's operations, arrived from his base in Cheyenne to let contracts for construction of the runways. By the end of the year, a new hangar would be erected on the location of the old Benjamin farmstead. The daily press and civic leaders heartily applauded the events of May 1930. Predictions were for greater public visibility for the town from the growing number of passengers who would stop at the airport. Others were sure that flying schools and aviation-related businesses would be attracted to the airport. Only the "city solicitor," Will J. Hayek, expressed caution when he said "this [lease] seems to be the only method that Iowa City can obtain a properly equipped airport, and of course it takes time to decide as to who will derive the greatest benefit" from it.[43]

The city wasted no time starting its work. A major grading cost would be the relocation of "a knoll at the south center of the field to a low spot nearby." A number of fences and trees also needed to be taken down, and, of course, the Benjamin farmstead just north of the existing hangar and office building had to be cleared from the site. City Clerk George Dohrer advertised for bids to remove the farm buildings. The outbuildings—corn crib, machine shed, garage, chicken house, milk house, and a



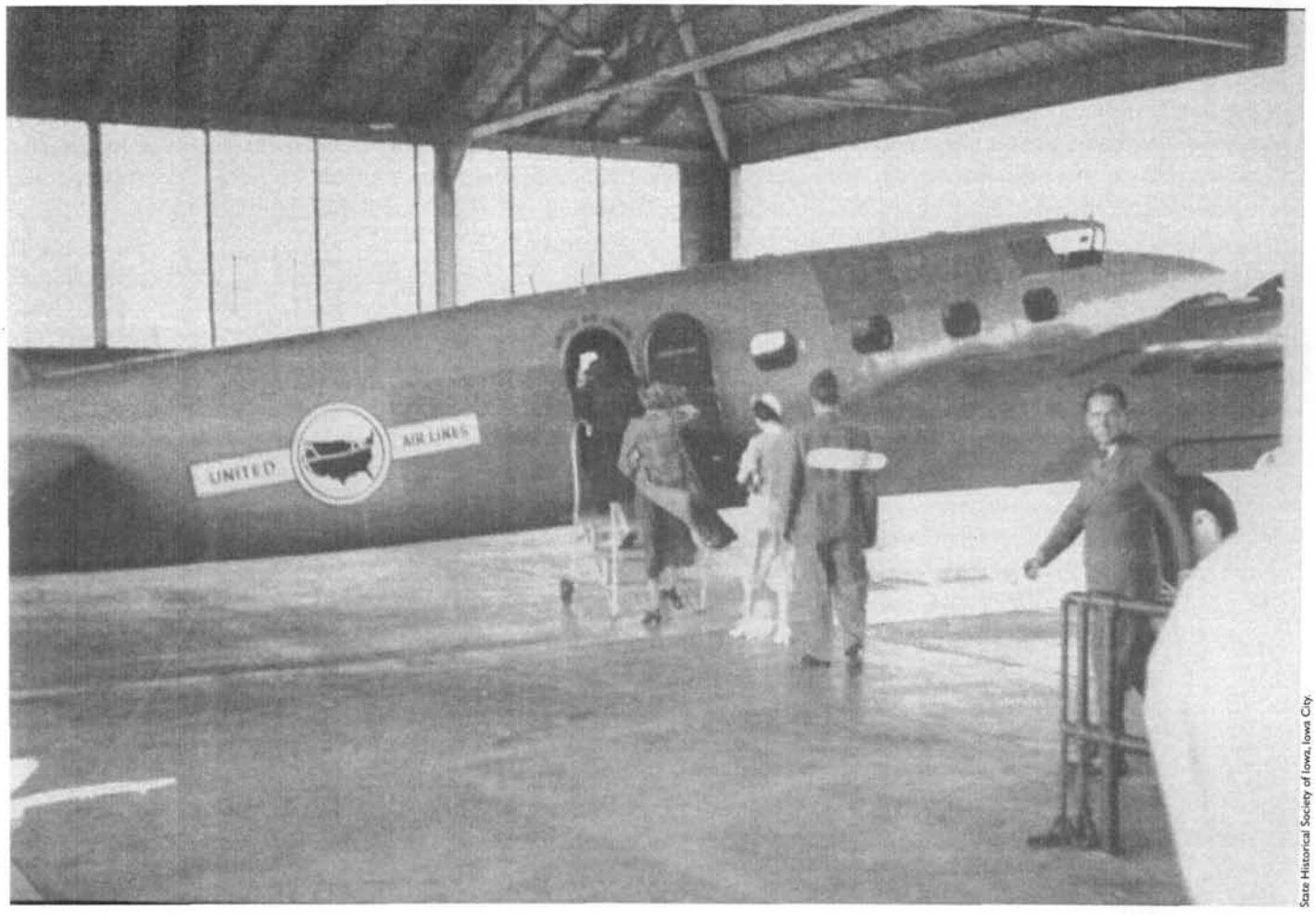
State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City

A biplane, perhaps Boeing's 40A air mail plane, taxis into the new Boeing hangar in this photograph from the early 1930s. The number of cars lined up along the new fence suggests a community event is under way.

tool shed—were purchased for $150 and moved off the site. The farm house was moved to an unknown location, but Benjamin's dairy barn was demolished. Boeing then contracted two local companies for the runway work. The H. J. Dane coal company would construct them, using crushed rock supplied from the River Products company. Six inches of rock were planned, but the cost was prohibitive, so four inches were actually installed. The runways were to "reach to all four corners of the landing field" and would take two months to complete.[44]

In midsummer 1930, the daily press carried the headline news that Boeing had hired the Austin Company, based in Cleveland, Ohio, to build a $40,000 combination hangar and administrative building at the city's new airport. Contracts already had been let with this company for the same hangars at fields in Reno, Nevada, and North Platte, Nebraska. Plans were also in the works for similar hangars at other transcontinental air mail and passenger stops, including Omaha, Nebraska; Rock Springs, Wyoming; Reno and Elko, Nevada; and Sacramento, California. The "new depots," reported the *Press-Citizen*, would each be "80 by 130 feet, will contain hangar space large enough for tri-motored planes, shops, ticket, radio and weather service offices, and toilet facilities. Passenger planes can taxi through the building for loading under cover."[45]

The Austin Company, builder of Boeing's air mail hangar, was founded in Cleveland in 1878 by Samuel Austin, a young English carpenter who traveled to the U.S. originally intending to help Chicago rebuild after its great fire. Never making it past Ohio, eventually Austin and his son, Wilbert, a trained engineer, grew the commercial construction company into one that offered both engineering and construction services, a novel idea for the early twentieth century. During World War I, the Austin Company designed and constructed an aircraft assembly plant for the Curtiss Aeroplane and Motor Company in Buffalo, New York, and became



State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City

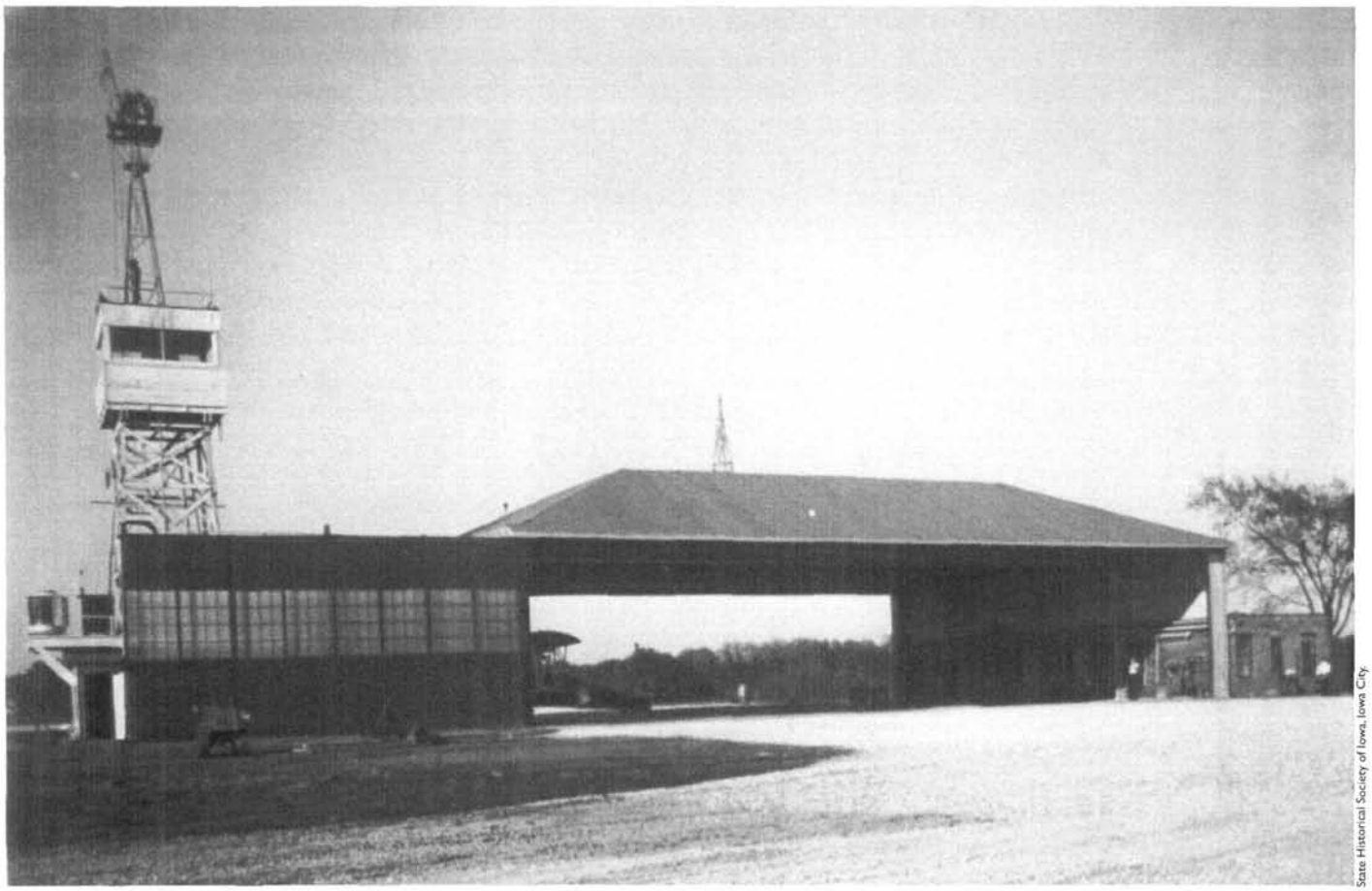
Boeing's new hangar opened wide on both the north and south sides to enable sheltered passenger loading. United Air Lines took over for its subsidiary, Boeing, after 1931. The clothing worn by these passengers suggests the photo is from the 1930s.

nationally recognized for its aviation facilities. In 1924, the Austin Company went to work for Boeing, designing and building many of the needed hangars for Boeing's growing passenger business. Samuel Austin died in 1936, and Wilbert was killed in a plane crash in 1940, but the company survives today, doing business in a wide variety of industries. During the 1920s and 1930s, the Austin Company was not the only firm producing hangars for the new aviation industry—the Truscan Company was a major competitor—but Boeing's business was a healthy share of the market.[46]

As built, the new Boeing hangar on the Iowa City airfield cost the company just over $31,000, including the concrete aprons and landscaping. Constructed nearly atop the site of the old Benjamin farmstead, the project employed local labor supervised by an Austin Company man who had superintended the construction work of hangar buildings in Seattle and Cheyenne. Work progressed on the Iowa City hangar throughout August and into the fall. In September, Boeing announced it would put in a third runway "to be constructed from the halfway mark between the old and new hangars, northwest to the intersection of the two runways now under construction." By early October, the airport offices and radio equipment were being moved from the old to the new hangar, and a new steel beacon tower was "lifted" at the west end of the new hangar. In mid-October, when three "Boeing army pursuit planes" landed on the field to refuel, they and a passing air mail plane became grounded by fog and were housed along with the reserve air mail plane in the hangar, proof, the following day's paper claimed, of the "practicability of the new hangar." Iowa City's aviation enthusiasts were so pleased with the completion of the airport improvements that year that the Chamber of Commerce sponsored a "gala" at the airport, which included dinner in the new Boeing hangar.[47]

The successfully completed projects at the airport

that year prompted a number of other key events, including the extension of the town's borders to include the airport property and, at the urging of the Chamber of Commerce, changing the name of the new facility. Officially still known as the Walter J. Smith Field, the Chamber argued that residents already commonly called it the municipal airport. "We do not wish to rob Smith of any honor," said D.W. Crum, Chamber secretary, "but feel that since the city has bought the field and put a considerable sum of money in its improvement, it should bear the city's name." Finally, in a move that would figure prominently in airport activities throughout the next decade, an aviator in town since 1928, Paul Shaw, applied for and was granted "exclusive rights to operate passenger service and conduct a flying school at the Iowa City airport."[48]



State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

Radio equipment and the tower seen here at the west end of the Boeing hangar no longer exist. The biplane tail-dragger inside the hangar suggests this photo is from the 1930s.

State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

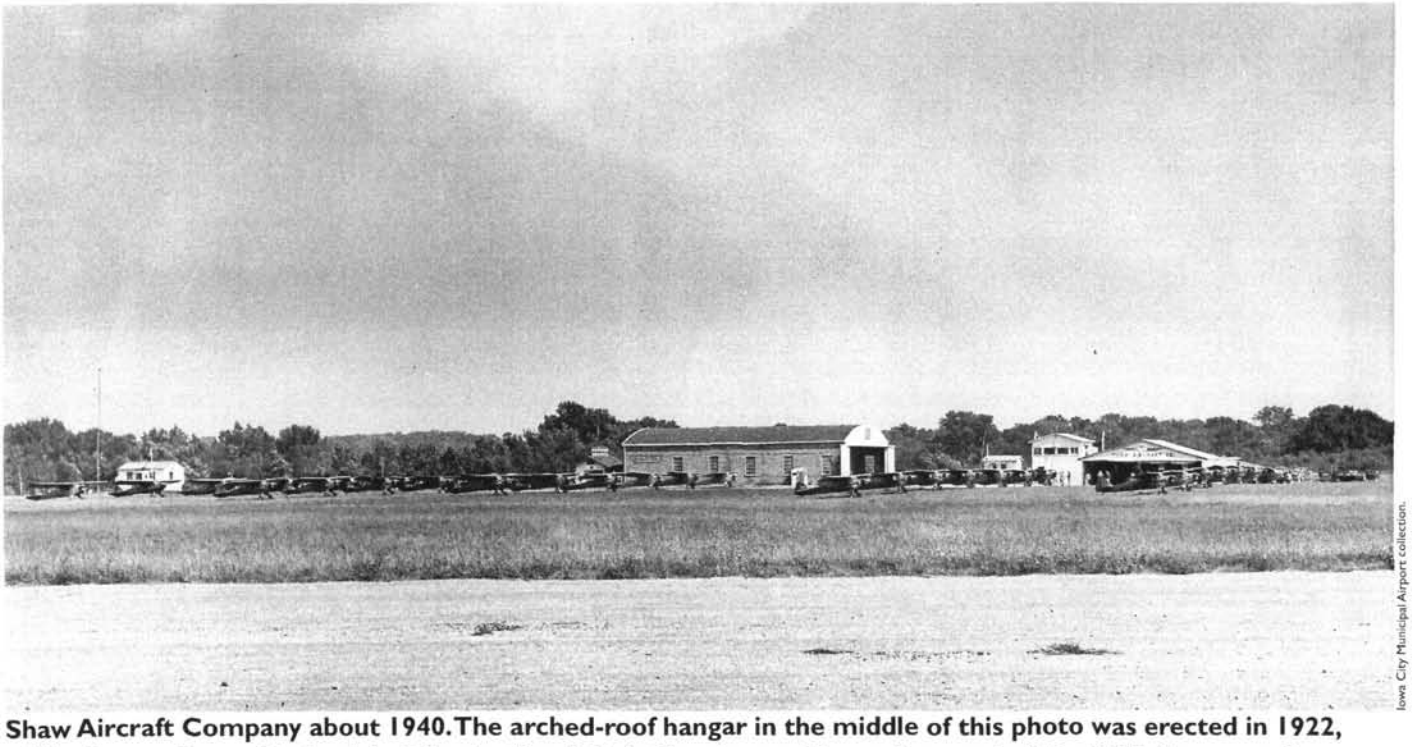
Boeing's utilitarian hangar, with its brick appendage that fronted Riverside Drive and served as ticket office and lobby, was a far cry from the proposed stylish design of Chicago architect Leonard Macomber. Still, it served the city's commercial aviation needs for nearly 25 years, through one world war and many advancements in aircraft technology.

Building toward Midcentury, 1930s–1950s

Paul Shaw moved his only plane, a brand new biplane Air King with an open cockpit, from Cedar Rapids to Iowa City in 1928, intent on starting a serious business of "normal" flying. He'd been an auto mechanic, motorcycle enthusiast, and weekend barnstormer in Cedar Rapids for ten years, but was ready to focus on building an aviation company. In 1930, while the Iowa City airport was undergoing its most substantial improvements to date, Shaw won the exclusive right to operate a flying school on the field. Ten percent of his receipts from the school went to the city, plus a cut of any local passenger rides or longer, cross-country passenger trips. In 1939, Shaw and his Shaw Aircraft Company became associated with the Civilian Pilot Training Program (CPTP), a New Deal federal program that aimed to increase the number of trained pilots nationwide. Shaw needed more shelter for his planes, however, especially in light of his growing flying school. He already fully used the old "municipal" hangar, and when a windstorm damaged one of his planes Shaw resorted to lashing his craft to a fence to tie them down. With a local company, Nagle Lumber, providing the materials on credit, Shaw told the city council he was ready to erect a 40-by-40-foot wooden hangar, to be sited about a 100 feet south of the 1922 concrete-block hangar. The open grassy field surrounding the new hangar would still be used for taxiways and parking.[49]

The location of the new hangar put Shaw well south on the airport grounds from the hangar built in 1930 by Boeing Air Transport. Boeing was one of several airline subsidiaries of United Aircraft & Transport Corporation, a conglomerate of aviation companies that merged in 1929. In 1935, Boeing's independent airline operations ceased, and the company refocused itself exclusively toward aircraft design. Locally, Boeing's 50-year lease was formally assigned to United Air Lines in 1935 as well. While Shaw's aircraft were available for hire—or charter—by individuals, United continued to provide commercial passenger service to Iowa City well into the 1950s, landing several flights weekly. Though regular air mail service had spread to a number of Iowa cities, including Des Moines, the Iowa City airport remained an emergency service field as well.[50]

Shaw Aircraft Company contributed significantly to the operations at the airport throughout the 1930s and 1940s, a time period that saw ever-improving runways, thanks to repeated federal grants and work programs. The Boeing-built gravel runways were addressed in



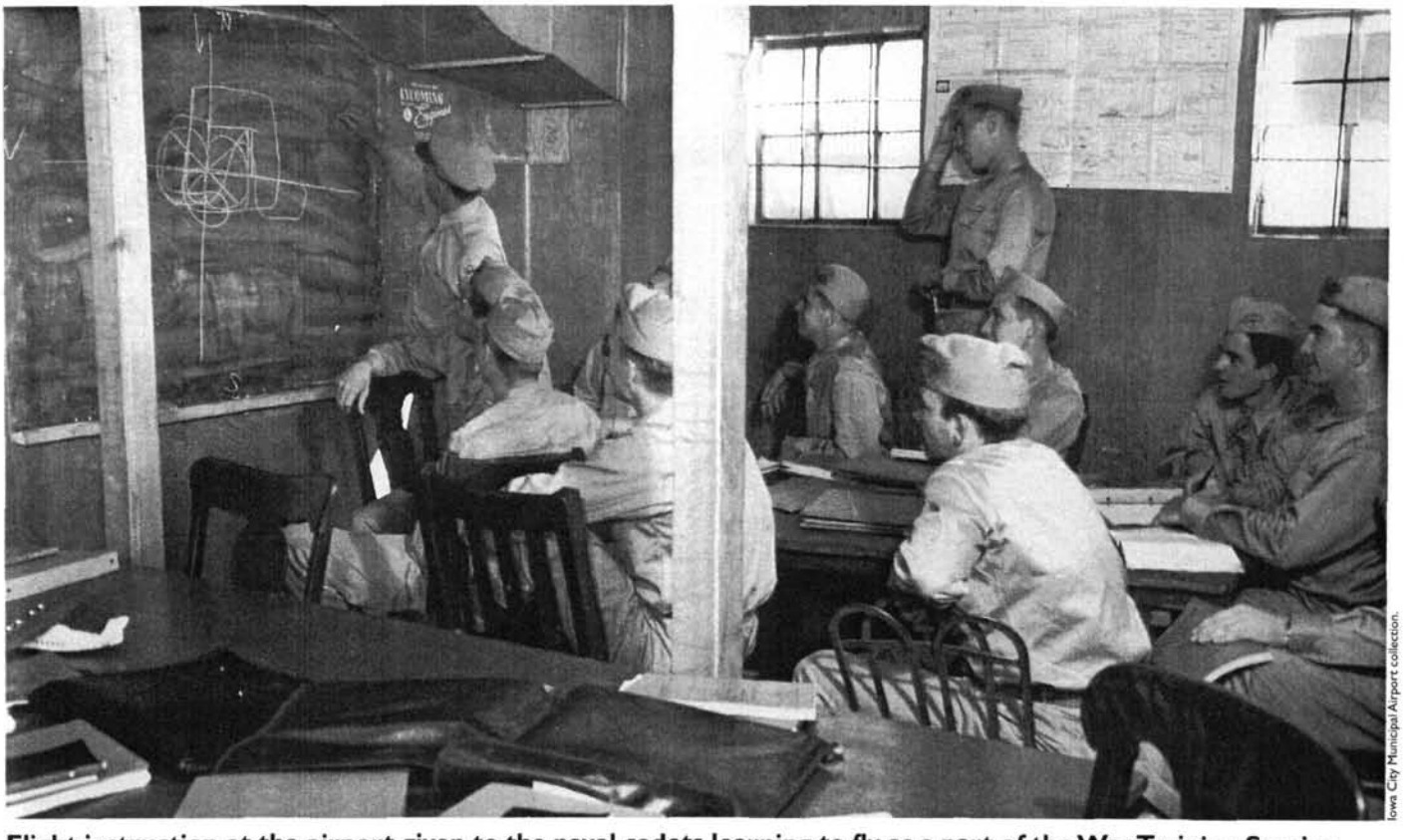
Iowa City Municipal Airport collection.

Shaw Aircraft Company about 1940. The arched-roof hangar in the middle of this photo was erected in 1922, while the smaller gable-front building to the right is Shaw's wood-frame hangar, built in 1939. An array of Taylorcraft trainers is parked in front of the hangars. None of the buildings exist today.

1938 under a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project that added a new northwest-southeast runway and extended both ends of the north-south runway. Each runway was macadamized with layers of rock chips rolled between asphalt. Shaw's aircraft, located to the south of both runways, taxied on turf to reach them. Additional runway work took place in 1940, again as a federal project, when the east-west runway was paved with concrete. Major runway projects were also completed in 1941 and 1943. As war-preparedness projects, the improved runways would allow Iowa City, if necessary, to "serve as a defense base for the Rock Island arsenal." With the world at war again, the Iowa City airport became "one of the few approved by the war department for transcontinental bombers."[51]

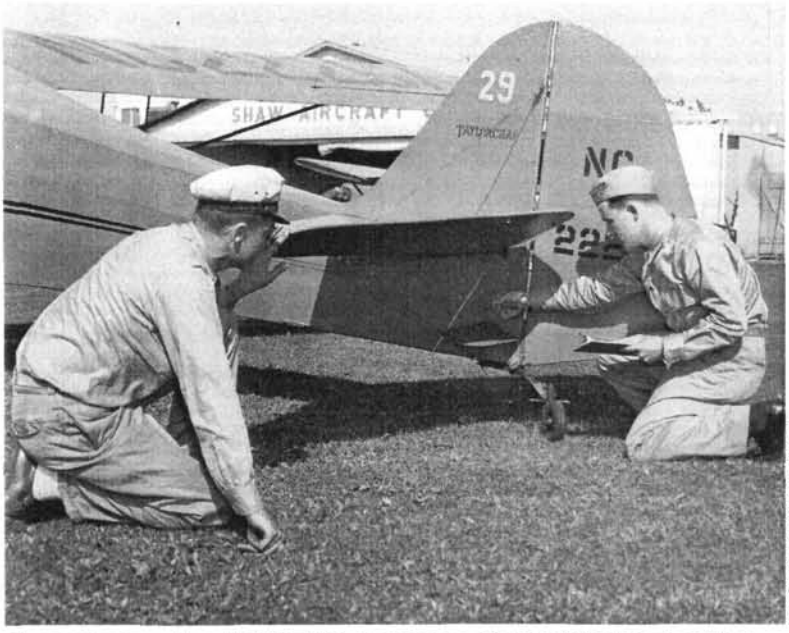
The increase in airport activity just before World War II was remarkable. Shaw Aircraft Company had just one private airplane on the field as late as 1936, but by 1939 eight planes were housed at the airport, and the local newspaper estimated that 100 residents had trained as pilots. When Shaw Aircraft Company entered the CPTP that same year, numbers of planes and student pilots dramatically rose. According to Paul Shaw, who was interviewed in 1988 for a journalism project, the University of Iowa's engineering department provided the ground school instruction for CPTP students, while he acted as flight instructor. Courses were taught by engineering professor Elmer T. Lundquist, sometimes using model planes and wind tunnels. By 1940, Shaw had enough students—including several women—that he hired additional flight instructors. After the CPTP ended in 1941, Shaw's flight school began to train cadets under the navy's War Training Service. Shaw's "navy elementary training unit" initially had 100 cadet students and prompted him to purchase 15 more trainers. Plans called for 50 new students to complete training, under both Shaw and Lundquist, every two months. By 1943, Paul Shaw's flight school had 22 instructors and a fleet of at least 32 trainers—Taylorcraft high-wing monoplanes. According to Shaw's autobiography, between 1939 and 1944, Shaw Aircraft Company staff trained 2,500 new pilots. The navy's preflight schools (see sidebar) did not include any flight instruction, so Shaw's naval elementary training program appears to have been independent of the preflight school based on the university's campus. Certainly, the two activities were reported as separate entities in the local paper.[52]

Prior to World War II, United Air Lines experienced



Iowa City Municipal Airport collection.

Flight instruction at the airport given to the naval cadets learning to fly as a part of the War Training Service program is pictured in this photo from the early 1940s.



Iowa City Municipal Airport collection.

A young naval cadet (right) performs his preflight inspection of a Taylorcraft in this photograph from the early 1940s. The other man resembles Paul Shaw.

growth in commercial passenger traffic at Iowa City, so much so that in 1939 it increased flights between Iowa City and Chicago from three to five times a week. Shaw's wartime training activity at the airport, however, meant an increasingly urgent demand for even more hangar space. In 1941, Shaw leased the Boeing "airline" hangar as well as the 1922 "municipal" hangar for his flight school, suggesting that the frequency of United's landings in Iowa City had declined. A year later, in May 1942, United completely suspended airline service into Iowa City for an indefinite period. The company had turned over so many of its planes and pilots to the government for the war effort that it was unable to sustain normal commercial passenger service to small cities like Iowa City, even if the demand existed. "United and other air lines recognize that their first obligation is to do everything they can to help win the war," local United manager H.L. Kinsey told the press. "The diversion of planes and crews to military service has necessitated curtailed schedules in all parts of the country, and temporary suspension of service to several dozen communities." Assurances by the United Air Lines president, William A. "Pat" Patterson, that the airline would "restore service to Iowa City as soon as war requirements no longer necessitate the suspension" were published in a large ad in the local press a few days later under the heading "Your Mainliners have joined the Army."[53]

Indeed, United was back flying its DC-4 Mainliners in and out of Iowa City by February 1946. It also quickly established a commercial passenger stop in Cedar Rapids by midsummer the same year. Claiming it did not "intend to abandon Iowa City as a stopping point," United alternated its scheduled landings between the two cities. Postwar aviation in Iowa was booming, with all but 15 of the state's 99 counties registering at least one airport, 39 of them owned by municipalities. As they rebuilt their routes following the war, other commercial airlines also considered adding Iowa City as a stop, especially the north-south carriers. Mid-Continent Airlines made local inquiries to gauge

Iowa City Municipal Airport collection.

Nearly three dozen Taylorcraft trainers sit outside the two hangars used by Shaw Aircraft Company in the 1940s. The aircraft could be tilted nose down for tighter storage, allowing more of them to be sheltered in the hangars. The Skyway Cabins motor court was located just beyond the dark grove of trees in the upper left. In 1985, the city acquired land and established a park known as Ryerson's Woods atop the bluff on the horizon toward the right.

Iowa City Municipal Airport collection.

Paul Shaw (far left), along with flight instructors, office staff, and mechanics of the Shaw Aircraft Company, lined up for this 1942 photograph used in a patriotic ad published in the *Iowa City Press-Citizen* on April 4. The Boeing/United Air Lines hangar is in the background behind the three women, who are identified as (l-r) secretaries Gretchen Doerres and Juanita Rice, and accountant Betty Jean Cochran. The flight instructors standing in the back row are (l-r) Clifford J. Leutholt, Lambert L. Fechter, Henry Vande Kerk, Jack Hamilton, Leonard A. Woeppel, Harold E. Rowe, Paul E. Hansmire, Wilton B. Hodges, and Homer Hagins. Mechanics kneeling in the front row are (l-r) Robert J. Jehle, Wilson J. Putnam, Robert Kircher, John DeHoogh, William O. Boshart, William H. Everett, Dale M. Brower, and Everett J. Taylor.

the passenger demand, and late in 1947 Eastern Airlines proposed to add Iowa City in its Florida to Minnesota plans submitted to the Civil Aeronautics Board.[54]

Not all postwar events were good news for the local airport, however. In 1951, when Iowa City was in the midst of planning a modern new administration building at the airport to operate as a terminal for United Air Lines, the Civil Aeronautics Administration (CAA) pulled its weather and communication station and moved it to the Cedar Rapids airport. The government had installed its station at Iowa City in 1941, during the prewar buildup of training activities at the airport. Despite the objections and an appeal made by business operators and the city's airport commission (established in 1944), some of whom traveled to Kansas City to plead the case in person, the CAA stuck to its original decision. Local representatives also asked United Air Lines to "remain neutral" in the controversy, but the company announced that if it could not have communications stations at both towns, it preferred that the one station be located in Cedar Rapids. The jolt of losing the weather and communication station did not, however, stop

planning for the airport's new administration building. The city took bids for its construction the same week the station's loss was announced, ultimately awarding the contract to M.D. McCreedy Construction. The loss of both the station and United's support surely cast a pall on the outlook of city officials.[55]

The CAA, which funded half the new administration building, had told the city from the start not to include space for the weather and communication station. Plans were drawn up by a local Iowa City architect, Henry L. Fisk. Born in New York, Fisk attended the University of Iowa in 1924 and received his certificate of architecture from the University of Pennsylvania in 1927. Following his graduation from the UI, he spent the next nine years working for architects in Washington, D.C., New York City, and Philadelphia. In 1924–25 and again in 1927, Fisk also worked for the prominent Des Moines firm of Proudfoot, Bird & Rawson (later Proudfoot, Rawson & Sovers). By 1933, Fisk was back in Iowa City in private practice, where he designed large residences for prominent Iowa Citians and, in 1937, served as the local consulting architect for the *Press-Citizen*'s new Streamline Moderne building in downtown Iowa City. During World War II, Fisk worked for the navy in Washington, D.C., but returned to pick up where he left off in Iowa City, receiving the commission for the airport's new building in 1950. Fisk was Iowa City's only architect at the time, a situation that lasted until about 1960.[56]

Henry Fisk's design for the airport's administration building was similar in many ways to the *Press-Citizen* building, despite the intervening gap of more than a decade. The Great Depression had slowed domestic building, and then World War II halted most construction that was not war related. Early postwar designs often appeared to evoke inspiration from the 1930s, as if leapfrogging over the construction gap of the 1940s. Both the *Press-Citizen* edifice and the airport's administration building had tall central masses flanked by side wings. Both were executed in a tan masonry and featured large glass-block windows. But while the *Press-Citizen* building had rounded edges and was decorated with stylized sculptural panels, Fisk updated his administration building to reference the crisp and angular lines of the International Style. The administration building was free of decoration, relying only on changing materials to enhance the aesthetics—from narrow rough limestone blocks, to raked brick, to smooth grayish granite. The airport building's central mass was much taller than its wings, which had been reduced to the scale of minor dependencies, and Fisk's enormous two-story glass-block window, far from enclosing the interior in an

U.S. Navy Preflight School at the University of Iowa

by Eric Lana

After the bombing of Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941, the U.S. military branches expanded their training programs to a degree never before seen. Within this expansion was the U.S. Navy Aeronautic V-5 preflight training program, organized under the auspices of the Naval Air Primary Training Command. Only five locations across the U.S. were selected for the preflight schools, each of which operated for varying periods between 1942 and 1945. Schools on the University of Iowa campus and at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill were the first two to open, in May 1942. Preflight schools at the University of Georgia and St. Mary's College (California) opened a month later, in June 1942. The fifth and final Navy preflight school geared up at the Del Monte California Naval Air Station in January 1943.

As the name suggests, preflight training was positioned a step before actual flight instruction. After preliminary training, students were sent to one of the five U.S. Navy preflight schools. Upon graduation, selected students continued on to primary flight training in places such as Ottumwa, Iowa; Pensacola, Florida; and Corpus Christi, Texas. The preflight school in Iowa City should not be confused with the flight instruction programs taking place at the same time at the city's municipal airport. The latter commenced in 1939 as part of the U.S. Army–affiliated Civilian Pilot Training Program (CPTP). Associated with more than 400 college campuses nationwide, the CPTP was a New Deal program that attempted to boost private civilian flying (now called general aviation) by training young men and women pilots, theoretically preparing them for an age of aviation as well as building a cadre of pilots ready for national defense, should the need arise. The CPTP suffered from lack of organization and political support, however, and ultimately expired in 1946.

Four pillars of instruction underpinned the Navy's preflight training program: physical conditioning; naval history and customs; military drill and seamanship; and communication, ordnance, and specialties. Perhaps the most notable aspect of this training philosophy was the focus on physical conditioning for the young naval men, which translated to the formation of sports teams of trainees from each of the individual preflight schools. According to the originator of the preflight curriculum, Lt. Commander Thomas J. Hamilton (a carrier pilot and former head football coach at the U.S. Military Academy), the sports

training helped establish instinctive behavior and reinforced group loyalties toward a greater goal. In other words, the reflexive actions acquired on the playing field would help the trainees establish quick reflexes and build a team loyalty that would later serve them well on the aerial battlefield.

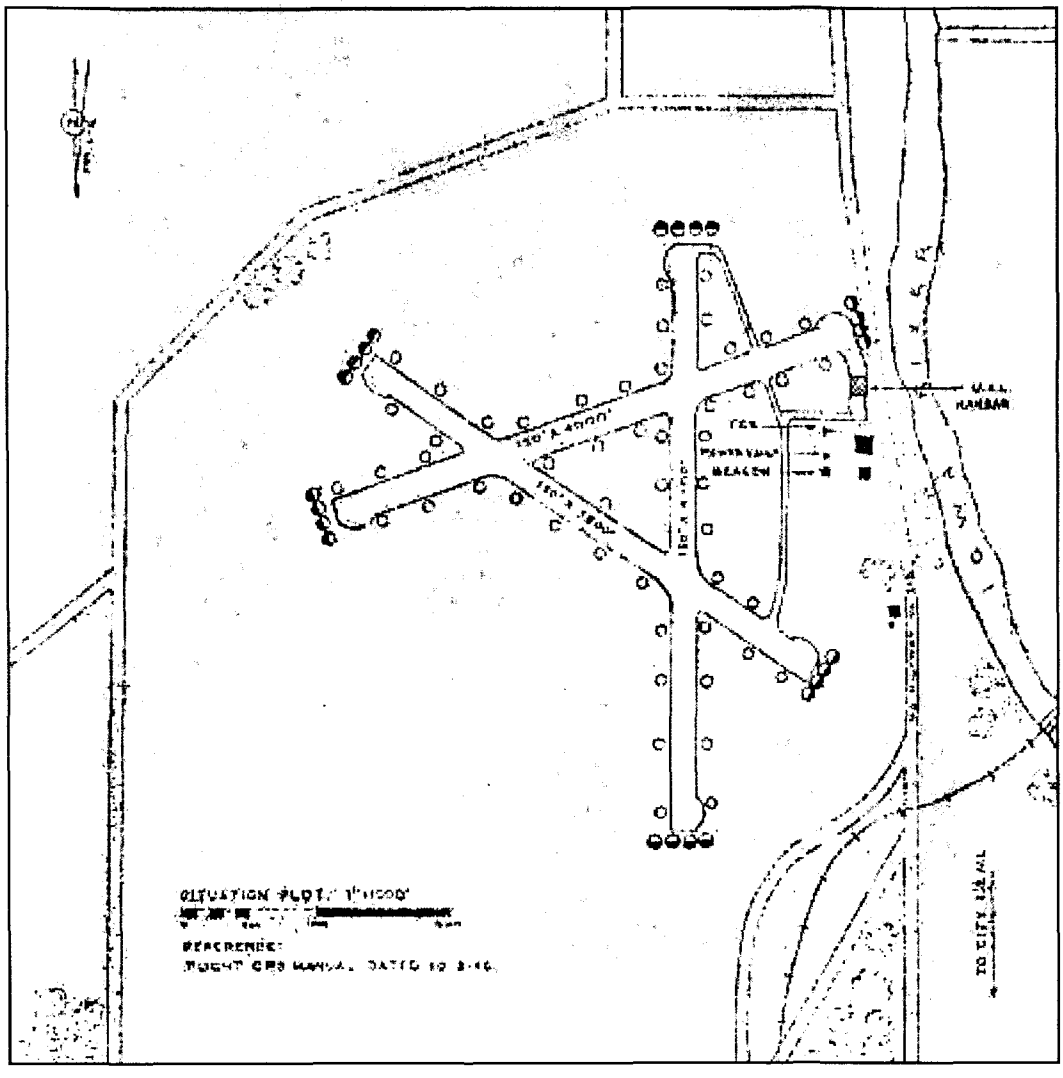
The preflight teams played against regular collegiate sports teams, battling for supremacy on the national scene. The Iowa preflight teams—nicknamed the Seahawks—were some of the most dominant amateur sports teams in the nation during this time. They played in the same venues as the University of Iowa sports teams, including football in the Iowa Stadium (later renamed Kinnick Stadium) and basketball on the university's Fieldhouse court. Additionally, track, soccer, gymnastics, boxing, and wrestling were all a part of the university's preflight campus activity. Preflight training at the University of Iowa was primarily based in buildings surrounding the Fieldhouse on the university's westside campus (now largely occupied by University Hospitals and Clinics buildings). A new administration building was constructed by July 1942 for the preflight officers, and existing university buildings used by the preflight trainees and officers included the Quadrangle and Hillcrest dormitories. Occasionally the trainees were also put to work on physically demanding local projects such as finishing the drainage system at the Iowa City Municipal Airport in October 1943.

State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

Naval students are pictured here learning the "principles of flight" in the preflight ground school. From *Presenting in Pictures, United States Navy Preflight School in Iowa City, Iowa*, c. 1943 or 1944.

After V-E Day on May 8, 1945 and V-J Day on August 15, 1945, there was little need for these extended military training operations at American places of higher learning. In September 1945, the preflight schools at the University of North Carolina and the University of Georgia were both closed, and over 400 of the remaining trainees from each school were transferred to the school in Iowa City. The preflight program in Iowa City was discontinued on December 4, 1945, when all remaining trainees were then sent to the Ottumwa Naval Air Station. Ultimately, over 20,000 cadets graduated from the preflight school at the University of Iowa during its three and a half years of operation. The last chapter of the U.S. Navy Aeronautic V-5 preflight training came in June 1946, when the V-5 school closed at St. Mary's College in California. In the end, preflight's emphasis on competitive sports outlasted the program and the war, and proved tremendously influential on civilian collegiate athletics. Among the roster of individuals exposed to the Navy preflight sports philosophy during the war years—either as teachers or trainees—were the likes of Woody Hayes, Paul (Bear) Bryant, and George Halas, men who would later become hugely successful coaches in their own right.

SOURCES: *The Spindrift of the Naval Aviation Preflight School*, Iowa City (weekly publication, 1942-45), located at the State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City; *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, multiple issues, 1942-43; Donald W. Rominger Jr., "From Playing Field to Battleground: The United States Navy V-5 Preflight Program in World War II," *Journal of Sport History* (Winter 1985).



Iowa City Municipal Airport collection.

At the end of World War II, the airport's runway configuration approximated the current layout. This "situation plan" was drawn by United Air Lines in October 1946 shortly after it returned commercial service to Iowa City. The Boeing-built hangar is marked with crosshatching and designated as "U.A.L. Hangar." Shaw's buildings are represented by the two black squares to the south. The only significant differences in the runway layout in 2007 are the lengthening of the northeast-southwest (#7-25) runway from 4,000 feet to 4,355 feet, and the closure of the north-south (#17-35) runway in 2006.

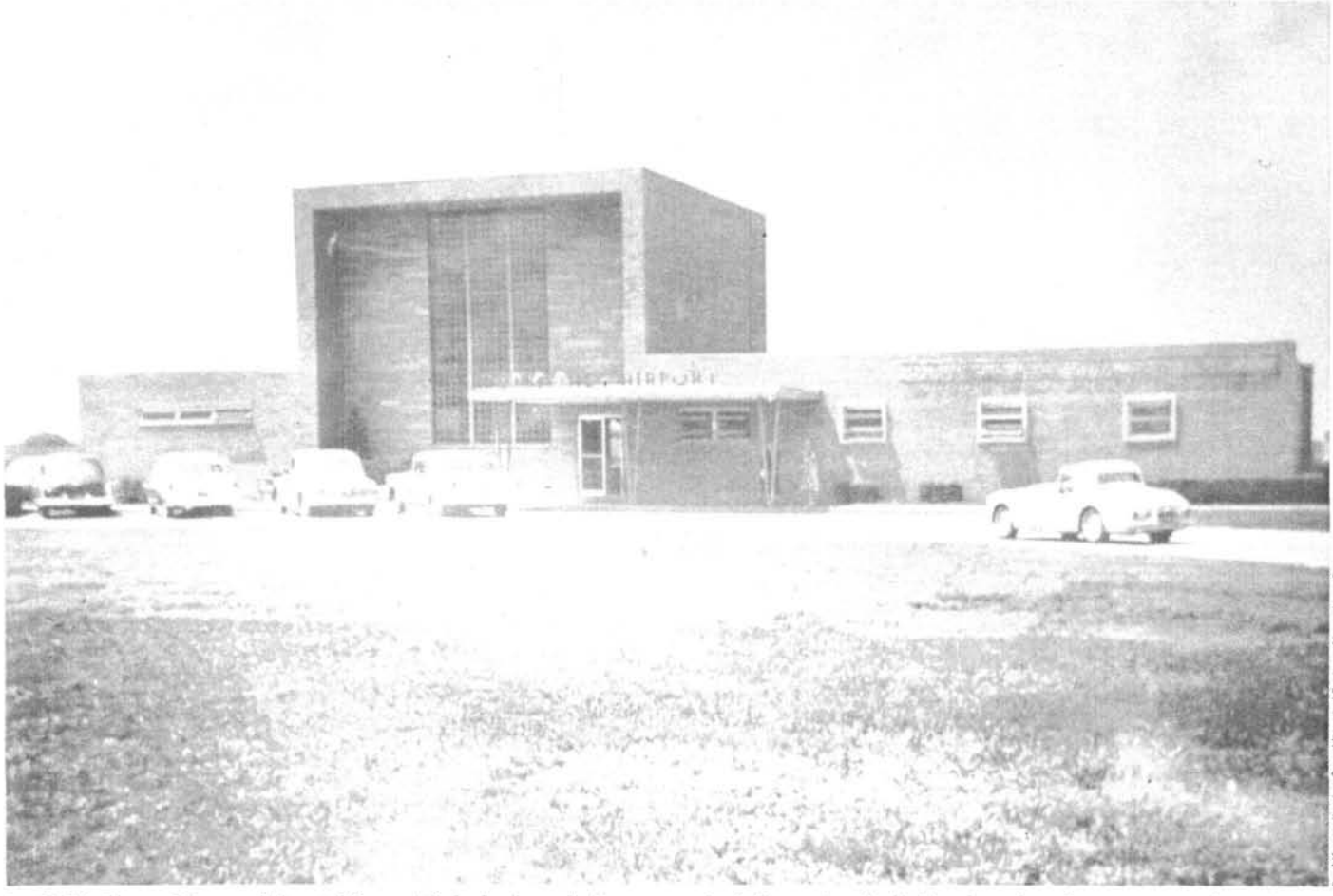
atmospheric chamber as in the *Press-Citizen* building, instead flooded the interior with daylight, creating a feeling of openness for the airline passengers waiting within. Opposite this grand window, which faced east toward Riverside Drive, another floor-to-ceiling window enabled waiting passengers and the public to watch planes land and take off on the field.[57]

Like other growing airports during this golden age of commercial aviation in the 1950s, the Iowa City airport's new administration building incorporated a restaurant for both the flying public and local residents. Food service had been offered before at the airport. In fact, until 1944 a building on the grounds near the Boeing/United hangar hosted a café known as Airport Lunch and the Airport Restaurant. This eatery may have operated as the Rivera at the time the city sold the building. The city, or the Chamber of Commerce before it, had leased this ground to a number of restaurant operators at various times, with varying degrees of success. The airfield was, after all, adjacent to the Red Ball (later U.S. 218 and now Riverside Drive), the principal north-south route in east-central Iowa. Growing automobile traffic had supported traveler accommodations in the airport's neighborhood for several decades (see sidebar).[58]

Fisk planned the restaurant for the southern wing of his new building. The central lobby and north wing were used by United Air Lines for its ticket, baggage, and office activities. When the new administration building was finished in 1953, United turned over the older, 1930 hangar to the city, transferring ownership in return for the use of space in the new building for the next decade. A dedication ceremony for the new administration building, held in June 1953, featured a fly-in breakfast for pilots from other towns and speeches by notables, including U.S. representative Thomas E. Martin, representatives of the CAA, and a United Air Lines official.[59]

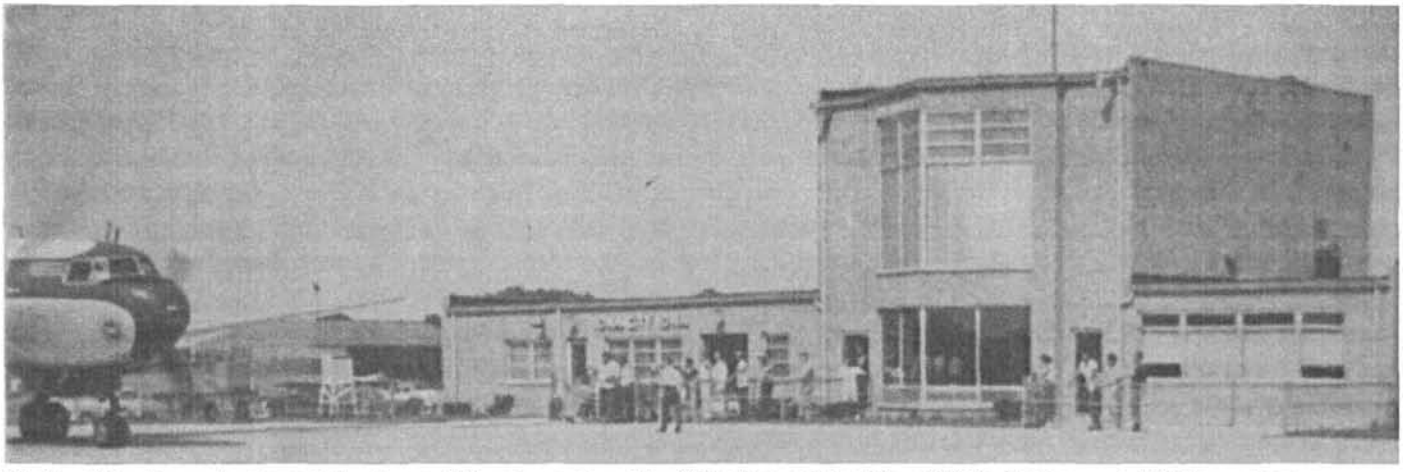
Despite increasing numbers of United passengers

flying in and out of Iowa City's airport through the mid-1950s, ever faster and heavier propeller-driven and jet planes inevitably spelled the end of local United flights. The company claimed to have enjoyed a 600 percent increase in Iowa City passenger traffic since 1946, but nonetheless canceled service in 1959. A regional carrier, Ozark Air Lines, then picked up the airport as a regular stop for its DC-3s and operated in Iowa City using the same United facilities until 1972. Since that time, the Iowa City airport has remained a "general aviation" port, without commercial airline service. While this has meant increasing rows of attached, metal T-hangars to shelter small private planes, and a few large corporate and maintenance hangars, most of the older buildings that best reflect the long history of the airport are gone. One early hangar used by Shaw Aircraft Company was blown down in a windstorm in 1945. The other was removed. The Boeing hangar, built in 1930 for air mail service and fueling, and later used by United Air Lines for commercial passenger service, is scheduled to be demolished in 2007. Still, the airport remains an active place and continues to look to the future. Occasionally, an antique aircraft flies into town, circling a few times before landing. Just as it did decades earlier, such a spectacle still draws crowds to the airport to look, learn, and imagine flying as it used to be.[60]



Fred Kent collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

In 1950, Iowa City architect Henry Fisk designed the new administration building for the airport, seen here in 1956. It was dedicated in 1953 and served commercial passengers of both United Air Lines and Ozark Air Lines.



United Air Lines News 24, no. 8 (August 1955), 11, Iowa City Municipal Airport collection.

United Air Lines featured the Iowa City airport as the "Station of the Month" in its August 1955 employee publication, writing "Students at the University of Iowa help swell Iowa City's population to more than 27,000. The university, noted especially for its sports teams and medical school, generates much of United's local business. A multi-million dollar drug products plant now under construction by Proctor & Gamble is expected to further strengthen the area's economy. United has a local staff of five employees to handle two Convair flights a day."

Jan Olive Nash.

The DC-3 that landed at the Iowa City Municipal Airport one steamy afternoon in August 2006 circled the town several times to announce its presence before landing. Appearing twice as large and half as fast as the customary general aviation aircraft based at the airport, the *Rose* did indeed attract dozens of Iowa Citians to the airport to admire the plane from the observation deck and picnic table outside the lobby door. Numerous aviation enthusiasts bought tickets and flew "around the patch" in the *Rose* before it left town 24 hours later.

Borrowing the Aviation Landscape

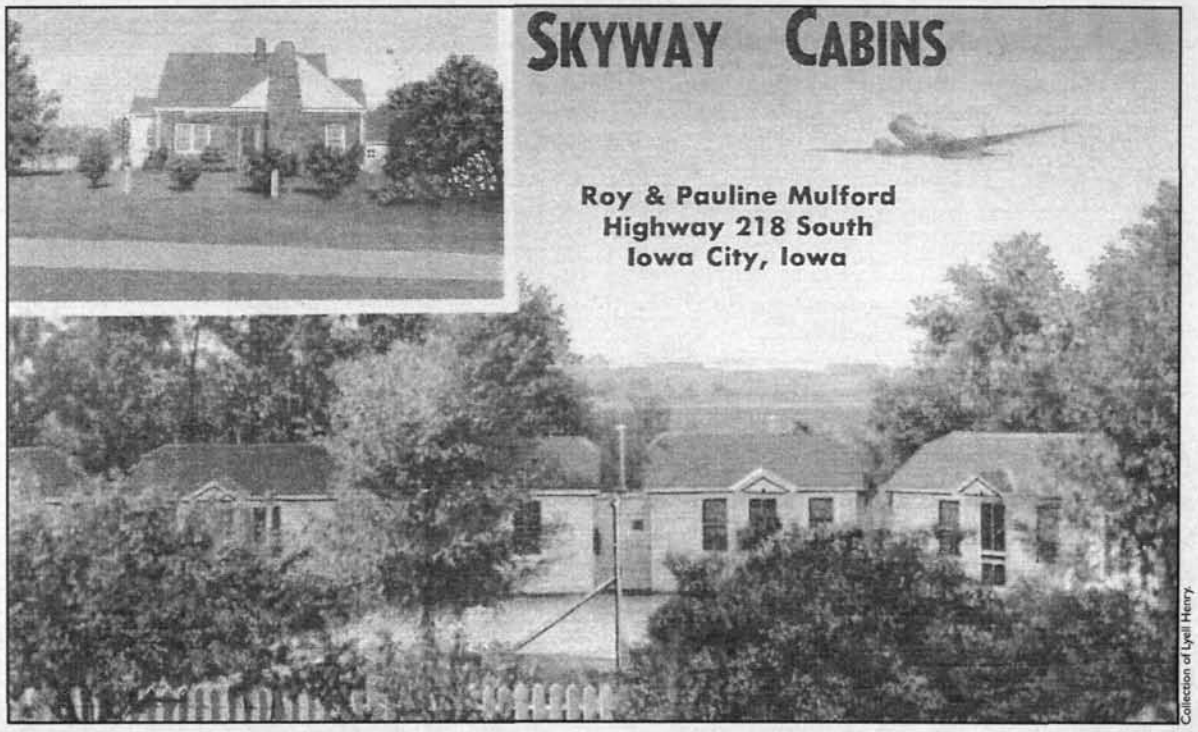
The proximity of two important twentieth-century transportation modes—the Red Ball highway and Smith Field or the Municipal Airport—inevitably meant some commercial development would locate nearby in order to attract the traveling public. In addition to at least one restaurant located on the airport grounds, over the years, three lodging establishments also have operated near the airport at the southern edge of town. Each in its own way reflected a different era of overnight accommodations. Two clearly sought to associate themselves with the airport nearby and the cachet of modern travel.

The earliest business, a cabin court called Skyway Cabins, operated from about 1937 until 1967. Surrounded by a grove of trees, a line of small cabins sat behind the owner's snug Tudor Revival home. The cabin court was located south of the airport on the west side of the highway, near the end of one of the runways. A tourist postcard survives from this establishment and bears the likeness of a large airplane rising over the cabins.

In the late 1950s, a strip motel called the Airlane Motel was constructed on the north side of the airport, also along the highway (or Riverside Drive). Mildred Baum and her husband, Gerald, built and operated the motel from 1956 or 1957 to the early 1960s. Mildred had been a riveter on a DC-3 assembly line in California and was fascinated by aviation. Though they wanted to put in a U-shaped motel, the city would permit only a rectangular footprint. With fewer than a dozen units attached in one long linear building that sat perpendicular to the street, the Airlane Motel was named after the air routes on aviation maps. A large neon sign in front of the motel advertised the name, and the motel counted among its customers many of the pilots who flew into the airport. By the mid-1960s, the Coralville "strip" had better commercial prospects for the Baums. The city landfill, for one thing, had been located across the street from the motel, and smoke drifted over them too often. This landfill occupied 15 acres purchased by the city in 1929 as a part of the airport bond issue. Initial ideas proposed for its use, none of which were executed, included a city park and a municipal baseball field. The Baums sold the Airlane and relocated to Coralville where they built the Capri, a motel that still exists. In the 1990s, the Airlane was removed to make way for airport improvements.

Finally, around 1980, a two-story motel, the Alexis Park Inn, was constructed north of the airport. Perhaps unintentionally, and despite its "olde English" decorative theme, the two-story profile of this last motel bears a striking resemblance to the shape and scale of the old Boeing hangar located nearby.

SOURCES: The author interviewed Mildred Baum on October 17, 1995.



According to the back of this tourist postcard, the Skyway Cabins, located on "Highway #218 South," were "strictly modern" with hot showers, kitchens, and automatic heat, as well as being "insulated, shaded, and quiet." The cabins' location off the end of runway number 30, here signified by an ascending commercial craft, hardly evokes the promise of a quiet night's sleep. The imagery does, however, associate the cabins with a "strictly modern" mode of transportation.

Endnotes

[1] Arthur George Renstrom, *Wilbur & Orville Wright: A Reissue of a Chronology Commemorating the Hundredth Anniversary of the Birth of Orville Wright* (2003), 12; Ann Holtgren Pellegreno, *Iowa Takes to the Air, 1845-1918*, vol. 1 (Sioux City: Aerodrome Press, 1980), 18.
[2] "Baldwin in Red Devil," *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*, September 30, 1923; *Iowa City Daily Press*, October 1, 1910.
[3] *Iowa City Daily Press*, October 3 and October 5, 1910.
[4] *Iowa City Daily Press*, October 11, 1910.
[5] *Iowa City Daily Press*, October 12, 1910.
[6] *Iowa City Daily Press*, October 12 and October 14, 1910.
[7] Ann Holtgren Pellegreno, *Iowa Takes to the Air, 1845-1918*, vol. 1 (Sioux City: Aerodrome Press, 1980), 229-34.
[8] William M. Leary, ed., *Pilots' Directions: The Transcontinental Airway and Its History* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1990), 7.
[9] *Iowa City Daily Press*, July 9 and August 2, 1919.
[10] *Iowa City Daily Press*, August 23, October 21, and December 13, 1919.
[11] *Iowa City Daily Press*, October 21, 1919.
[12] Leary, *Pilots' Directions*, 9.
[13] *Iowa City Daily Press*, December 12, 1919.
[14] *Iowa City Daily Press*, January 8, 1920; Leary, *Pilots' Directions*, 13.
[15] *Iowa City Daily Press*, January 5 and January 6, 1920.
[16] *Iowa City Daily Press*, February 9, May 13, May 15, and July 10, 1920.
[17] *Iowa City Daily Press*, April 20, 1920.
[18] *Iowa City Daily Press*, July 17, 1920, and February 19, 1921.
[19] Leary, *Pilots' Directions*, 19-21.
[20] Ibid.
[21] *Iowa City Daily Press*, February 23 and May 14, 1921; Leary, *Pilots' Directions*, 19-21.
[22] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, April 12, 1921.
[23] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, April 28, May 3, July 2, and August 30, 1921.
[24] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, September 2, September 6, September 9, and November 15, 1922.
[25] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, January 25, 1923.
[26] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, February 15, May 1, May 19, June 6, and July 2, 1923.
[27] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, August 15, 1923.
[28] Tim Brady, "U.S. Airlines before 1930," in *The American Aviation Experience: A History*, ed. Tim Brady (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 2000), 136, 142.
[29] Ibid., 143.
[30] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, April 1 and April 19, 1927.
[31] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, April 16 and June 25, 1927.
[32] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, July 2, 1927.
[33] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, July 16, July 30, and August 2, 1927.
[34] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, September 26, 1927.
[35] "Port Committee Reports Revenue from Air Field," [*Iowa City Press-Citizen*], c. April 1929, Carl Cone clippings scrapbook, Irving B. Weber collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.
[36] Chamber of Commerce letter by Rollin M. Perkins to unspecified recipients, April 12, 1929, Cone clippings scrapbook; "Pass Air Field Measure," *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, May 4, 1929.
[37] "Start Drive for Approval of Bond Plan," [*Iowa City Press-Citizen*], c. April 1929, Cone clippings scrapbook; Janet R. Daly Bednarek, *America's Airports: Airfield Development, 1918-1947* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2001), 46.
[38] "Pass Air Field Measure."
[39] "Air Field, if Owned by City, Would Soon Become Nearly Self-Supporting," *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, May 18, 1929; "Air Field an Opportunity Iowa City Cannot Afford to Pass Up Says Boerner," [*Iowa City Press-Citizen*], c. May 1929, Cone clippings scrapbook.
[40] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, December 29, 1929.
[41] "Facts on Air Field," [*Iowa City Press-Citizen*], c. May 1929, Cone clippings scrapbook.
[42] *Lake Mills [Iowa] Graphic*, May 2, 1928; *Cedar Rapids [Iowa] Gazette*, special edition, October, 26, 1986; *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, May 3, May 16, and September 11, 1930.
[43] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, May 9, May 16, and July 21, 1930; Lease dated May 2, 1930, Iowa City Municipal Airport collection.
[44] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, May 16, May 29, August 12, and September 11, 1930.
[45] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, July 11, 1930.
[46] Geza Szurvoy, *The American Airport* (St. Paul, Minnesota: MBI, 2003), 43; Austin Company Web site, accessed at www.theaustin.com/.on November 8, 2006.
[47] "Certificate [of cost of improvements at airport]," March 28, 1931, Iowa City Municipal Airport collection; *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, July 21, September 9, October 7, October 15, and October 31, 1930.
[48] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, August 30, September 6, and September 12, 1930.

[49] Paul B. Shaw, *Early Flying in Iowa* (privately printed, 1985), 9, 20; *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, July 11 and August 30, 1930, March 17 and October 23, 1941; Shaw photos, Iowa City Municipal Airport collection.
[50] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, August 4, 1939; William Garvey and David Fisher, *The Age of Flight: A History of America's Pioneering Airline* (Greensboro, North Carolina: Pace Communications, Inc., 2002), 50; Letter UAL Transport to City of Iowa City, January 30, 1935, Iowa City Municipal Airport collection.
[51] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, July 11, July 25, July 29, and August 12, 1938, October 28, 1940, January 23, 1941, June 13, 1953.
[52] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, January 11, 1941; ICAT, University of Iowa School of Journalism, *Flight Over Time: 70 Years of History at the Iowa City Airport* (Iowa City: University of Iowa School of Journalism, 1988), 9-10; Iowa City Municipal Airport collection; *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, April 8 and May 15, 1943; Shaw, *Early Flying in Iowa*, 42.
[53] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, October 20, 1939, October, 23, 1941, and May 27, 1942.
[54] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, February 2 and June 28, 1946, September 27, 1947, June 13, 1953; *Cedar Rapids Gazette*, July 7 and August, 1946.
[55] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, June 6, 1951.
[56] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, May 29 and June 21, 1951; Wesley I. Shank, *Iowa's Historic Architects: A Biographical Dictionary* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999), 63.
[57] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, June 13, 1953.
[58] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, September 12, 1944; Robert Helble, interview by author, October 11, 1995; Shaw, *Early Flying in Iowa*, 21.
[59] *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, June 2, 1953.
[60] *United Air Lines News* 24, no. 8 (August 1955), Iowa City Municipal Airport collection; *Iowa City Press-Citizen*, August 10, 1955, and July 1, 1976.

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Szurvoy, Geza. *The American Airport.* St. Paul, Minnesota: MBI Publishing Company, 2003.

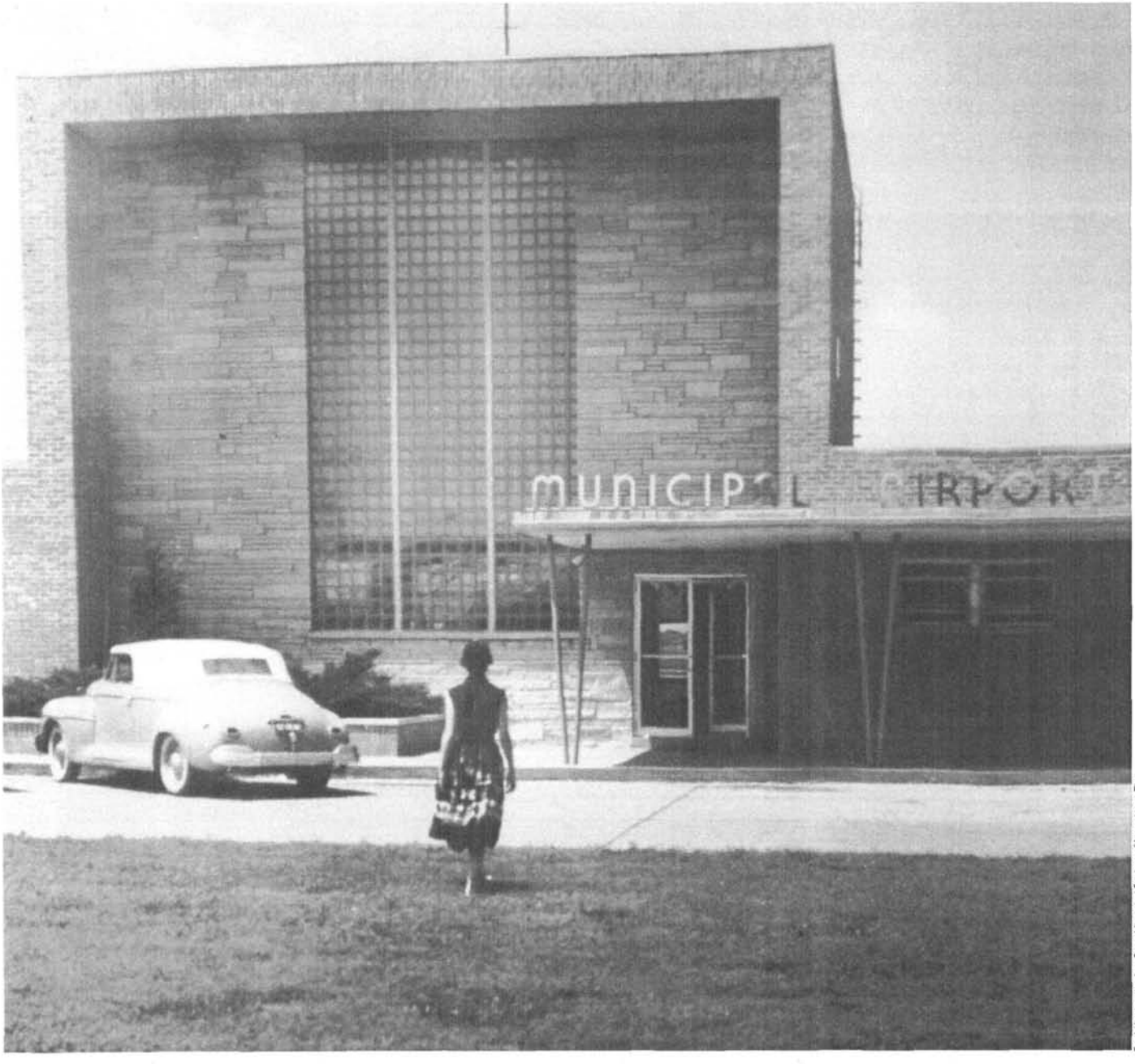
Additional Photographs

State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

Mechanics service a United Air Lines passenger plane, as the apparent pilot looks on, in this 1934 photograph taken inside the Iowa City airport's large new hangar. The aircraft is a Boeing Model 247, considered by many to be the first modern airliner. Capable of carrying 10 passengers and reaching a maximum speed of 200 mph, the plane had twin radial engines, retractable gear, and a wingspan of 74 feet.

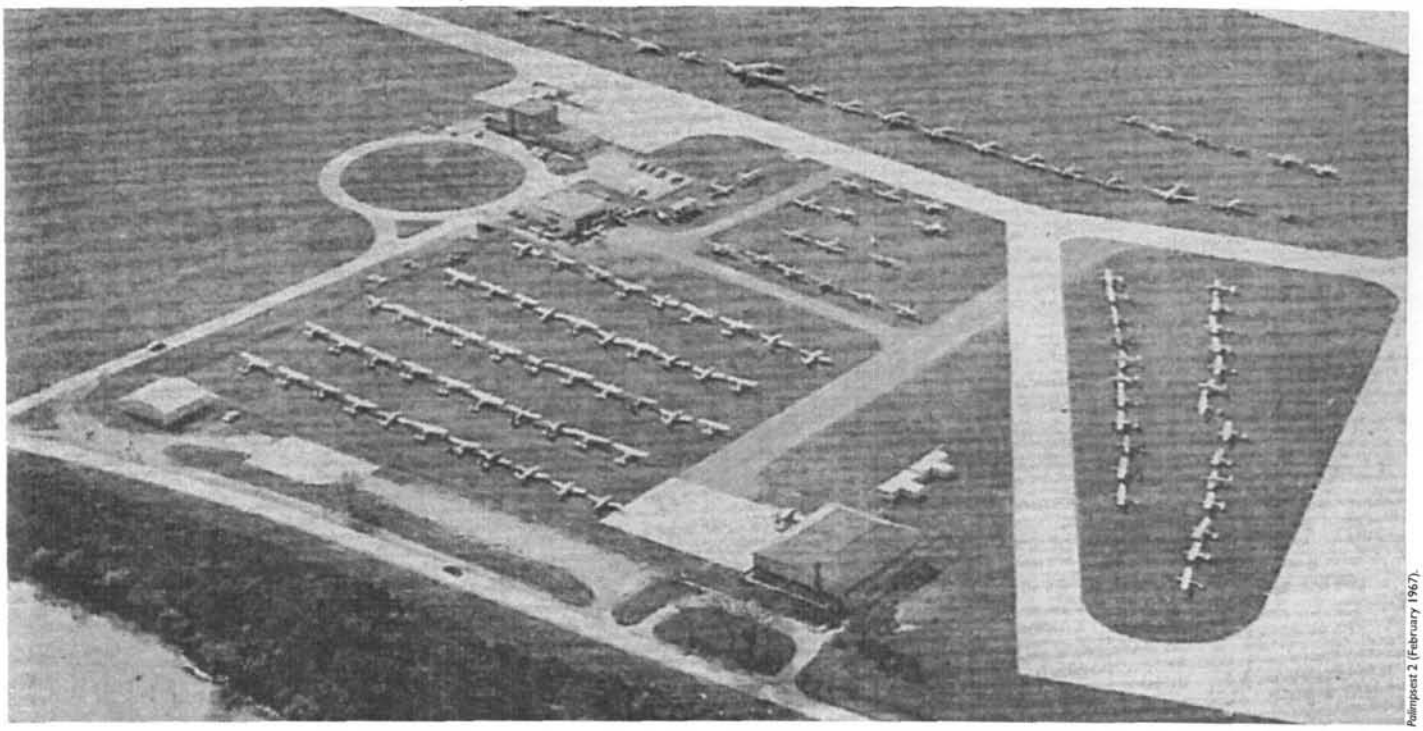
United Air Lines News 24, no. 8 (August 1955).

In 1955, when United Air Lines featured the Iowa City Municipal Airport in its employee magazine, the company claimed that University of Iowa sports teams were "frequent Mainliner charter customers." Here UI basketball coach "Bucky" O'Connor (left), along with Assistant Athletic Director R. F. Williams (center), "conclude a transaction with B. D. McWilliams, UAL Station Ground Services Manger."



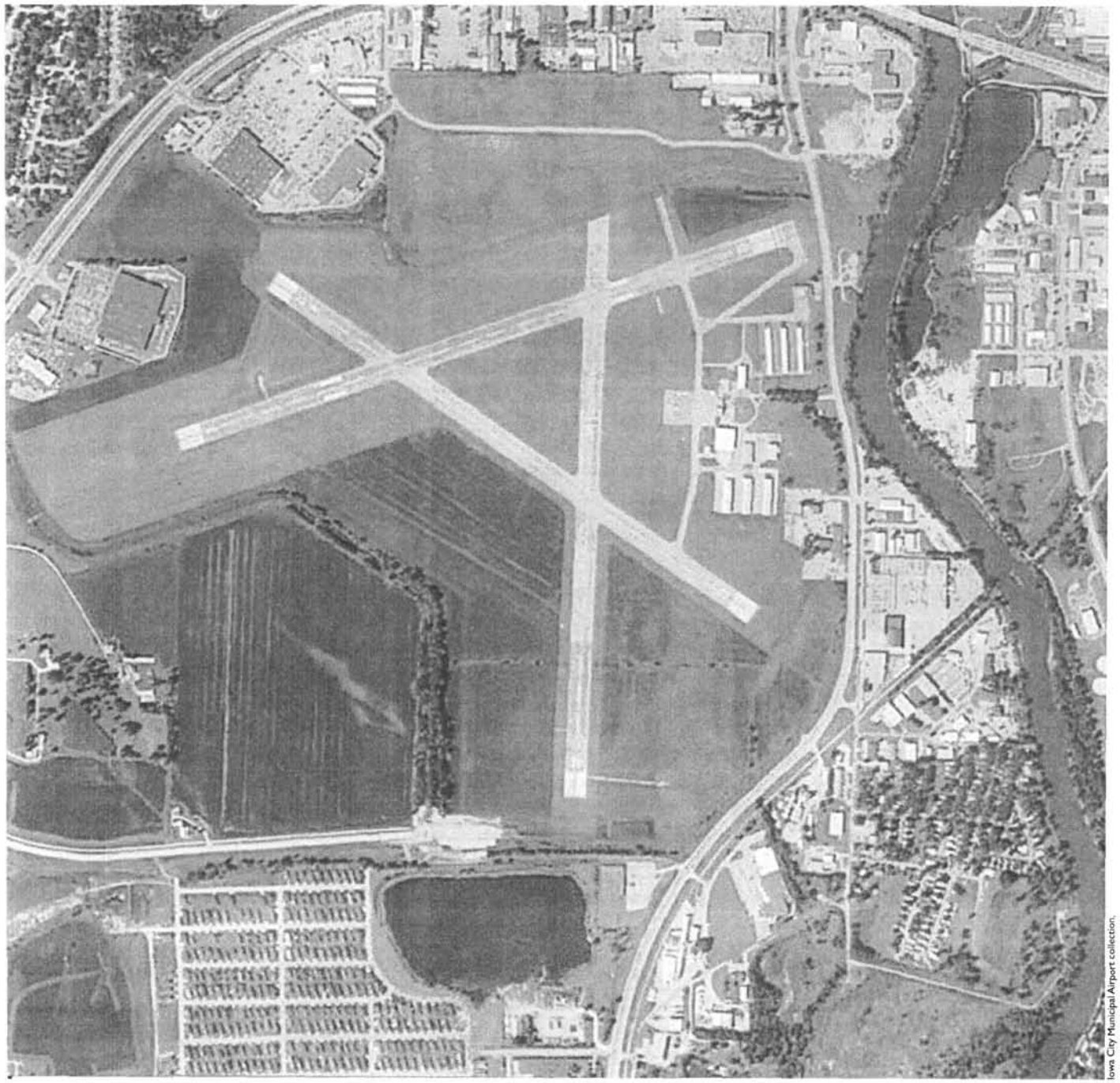
Fred Kent collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

The exterior of the administration building at the Iowa City Municipal Airport, seen here in 1956, remains remarkably intact in 2007. Though the interior recently received a major renovation, the Airport Commission and project architects largely preserved the historic spatial arrangement of rooms and hallways, as well as the sunlit staircase to the second floor located just behind the glass-block window seen here.



Palimpsest 2 (February 1967).

Only one of the trio of significant and historic aviation buildings seen in this c. 1960 photograph will remain standing after the Boeing/United Air Lines hangar (bottom right) is demolished. The last of the Shaw Aircraft Company hangars (bottom left) was removed soon after the picture was taken, but the 1950s administration building (top of the circle drive) has been remodeled to provide years of additional service. Nearby (to the right of the circle drive), the shop building where mechanics perform aircraft maintenance remains as well. Other changes to the airport and its neighborhood since this view was taken include the construction of general aviation hangars in the central grassy area where the five rows of airplanes are parked (c. 1960s), even more general aviation hangars to the left of the long drive (1980s-90s), and large corporate hangars to the left of the circle drive. Riverside Drive, along the bottom of the photograph, has been expanded from two lanes to four. While the particular event that drew the planes seen here to Iowa City is unknown, over the decades, many important football games have brought flocks of aviators to town in a tradition that dates back to the earliest years of the airport.

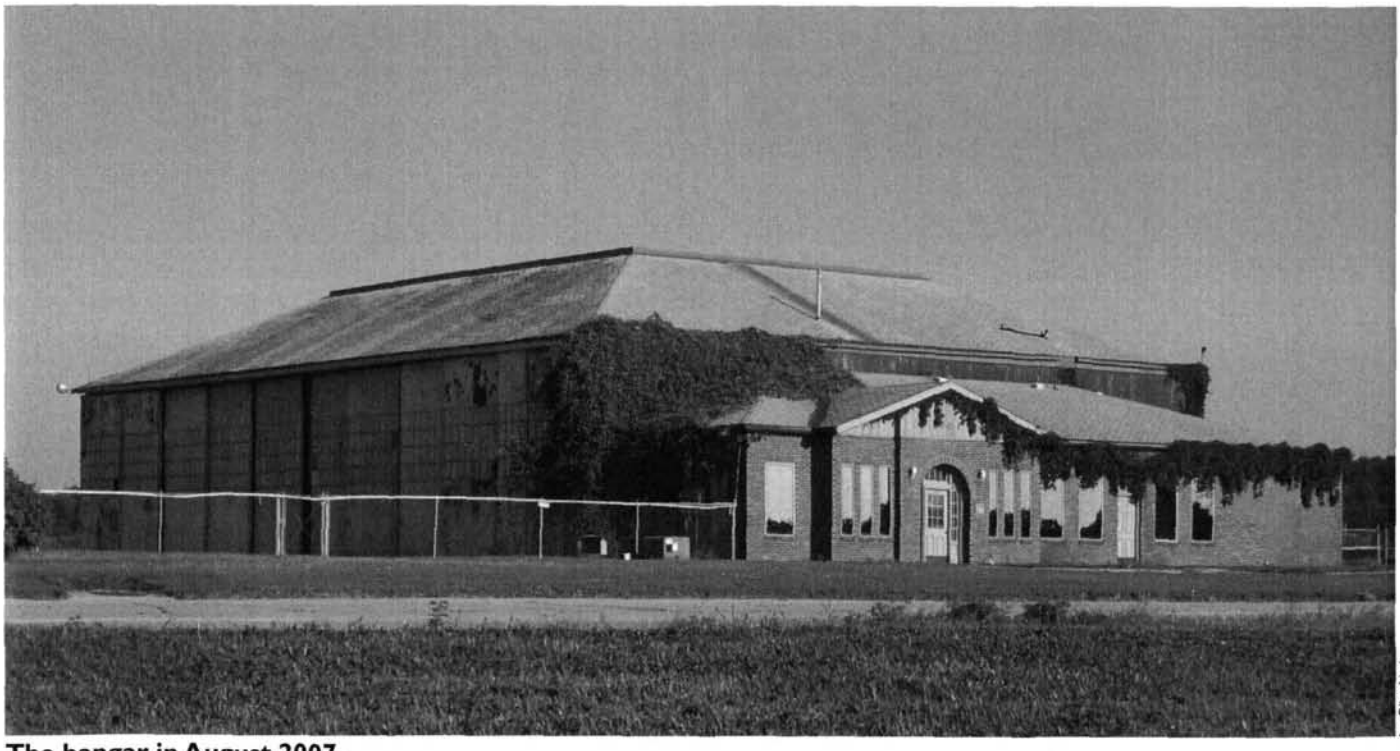


Iowa City Municipal Airport collection.

This recent aerial photograph of the airport and its surroundings dates to around 2006. Ruppert Road, the new city street seen at the top of this image, links a shopping area in the upper left corner with S. Riverside Drive near the Iowa River. To the south, or bottom of the photo, another new city street, Mormon Trek Boulevard, was under construction. This street has now been completed and opened to the highway. The runway (designated 35-17) that was bookended by these two new streets was closed in 2006.

Iowa City Press-Citizen photograph collection, State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa City.

Boeing/United Air Lines hangar, date unknown.



Jan Olive Nash.

The hangar in August 2007.

Jan Olive Nash, 2007

DATE	REVISION	BY	CH'K'D
6-3-30	CHECKING REVISIONS	M.W.	E.T.
7-7-30	Sect. B-B Nos of Cols added	M.S.	REllis
7-7-30	Conc. Base Changed to Brick	M.W.	REllis
7-30-30	Changed Radio Rm + Ticket Office Doors & wood partition	W.F.T.	BSW
7-30-30	Slope of Aprons Shown	WFT	BSW

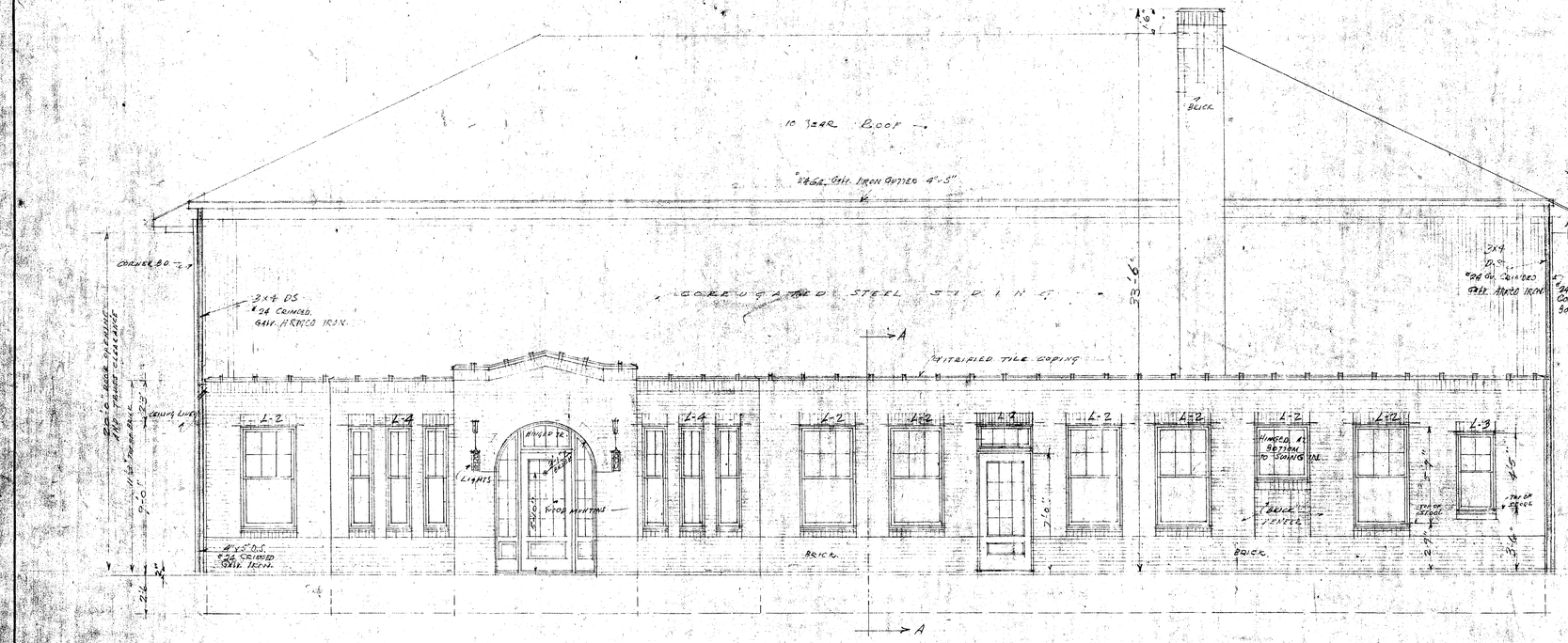
The Austin Company

ENGINEERS AND BUILDERS
SEATTLE-PORTLAND

EMERGENCY STATION BUILDING
FOR
BOEING AIR TRANSPORT INC.
ELKO - NORTH PLATTE - IOWA CITY - ROCK SPRINGS

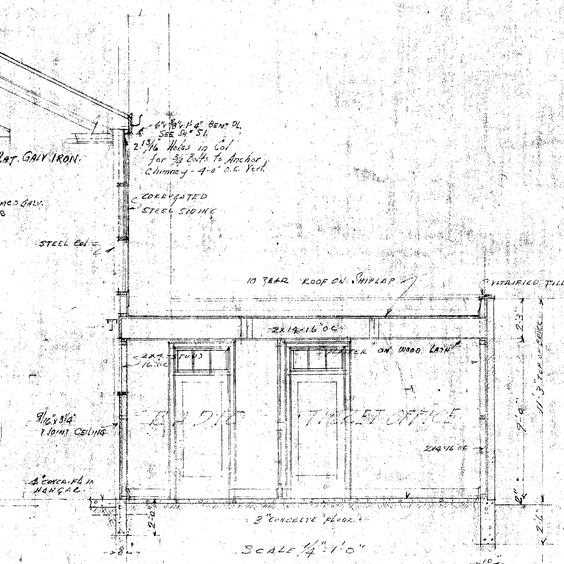
DRAWN BY W.F.T. DATE 6-26-30
TRACED BY DATE
CHECKED BY B.S.W. DATE 6-30-30
SCALE

CONTRACT NUMBER 5342
SHEET NUMBER 1



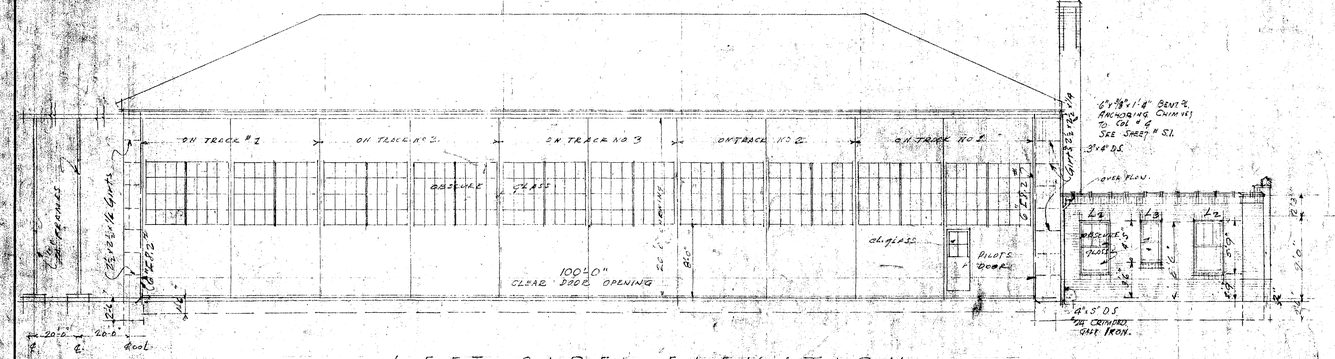
FRONT ELEVATION

SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"



SCALE 1/4"=1'-0"

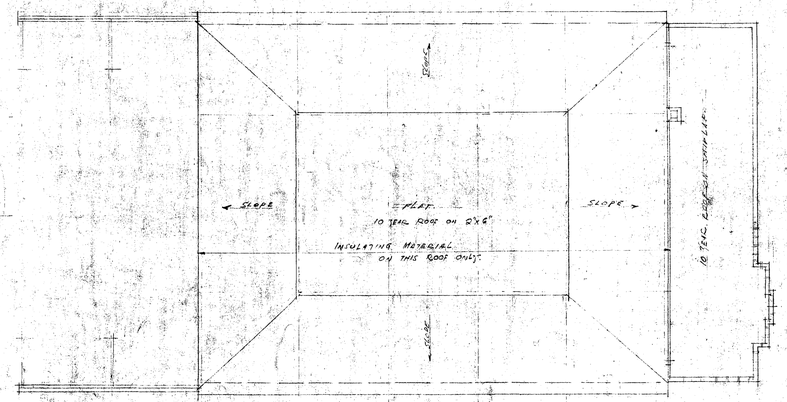
SECTION THRU OFFICE PORTION "A-A"



LEFT SIDE ELEVATION

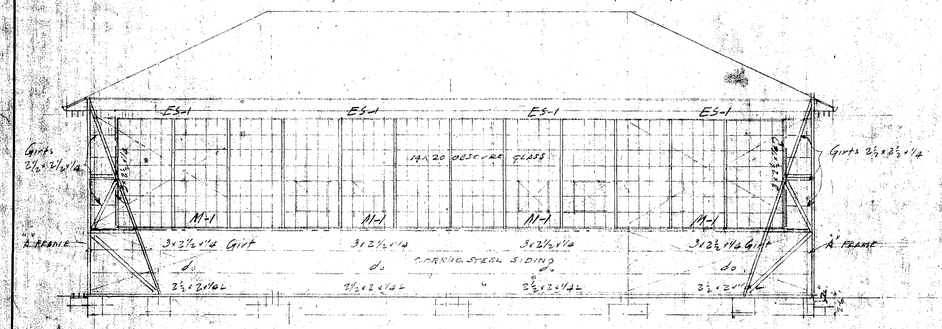
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

RIGHT SIDE ELEVATION SAME EXCEPT FOR OFFICE PORTION WINDOWS. SEE FLOOR PLAN.



ROOF PLAN

SCALE 1/16" = 1'-0"



REAR ELEVATION

SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

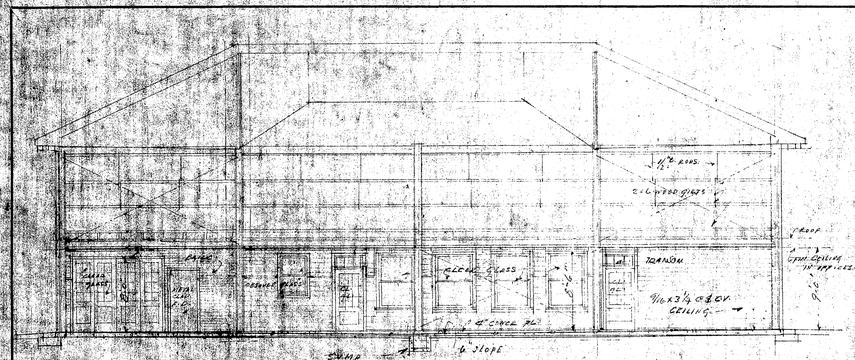
ELEVATIONS

6-30-30	CHANGING REVISIONS	W.C.H	E.T.
7-1-30	FLASHING, DOWNSPOUTS, GUTTER, GABLE IRON	R.F.H.	REV.
7-7-30	ENG. CASE, CHANGED TO SCALE	W.C.H.	REV.
DATE	REVISION	BY	CH'K'D

The Austin Company
ENGINEERS AND BUILDERS
SEATTLE-PORTLAND

EMERGENCY STATION BUILDING
FOR
BOEING AIR TRANSPORT INC.
AIRPORT - NORTH PLATTE, NEBR.

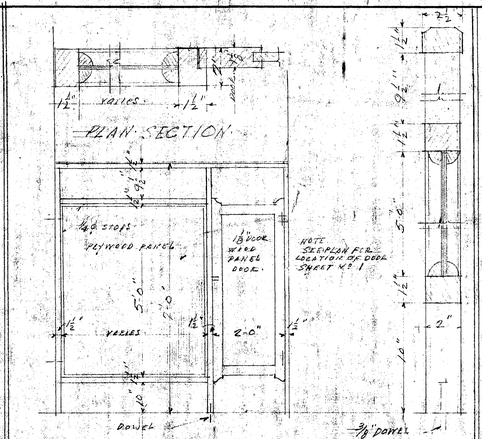
DRAWN BY	W.F.T.	DATE 6-26-30	CONTRACT NUMBER 5342D
TRACED BY		DATE	
CHECKED BY	B.S.H.	DATE 6-30-30	SHEET NUMBER 21
SCALE	AS NOTED		



SLOPE 4" SLOPE

MAIN GATE - SOUTH OFFICE BLDG. CHANGE PARTITION DETAILS

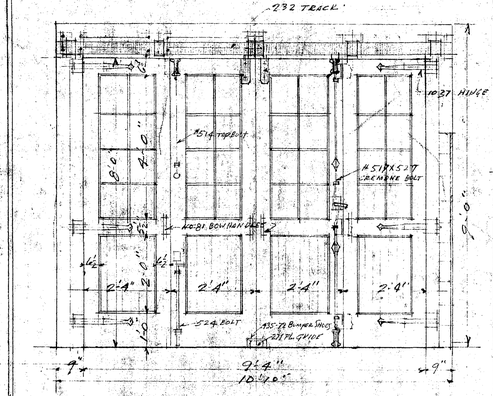
Scale 1/8" = 1'-0"



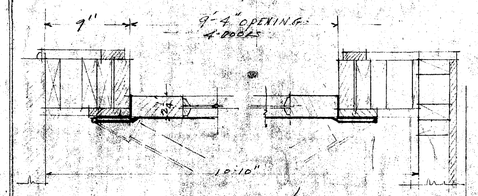
TYPICAL ELEVATION Scale 1/2" = 1'-0"

VERTICAL SECTION Scale 3" = 1'-0"

TOILET PARTITION DETAILS



SHOP SIDE ELEVATION

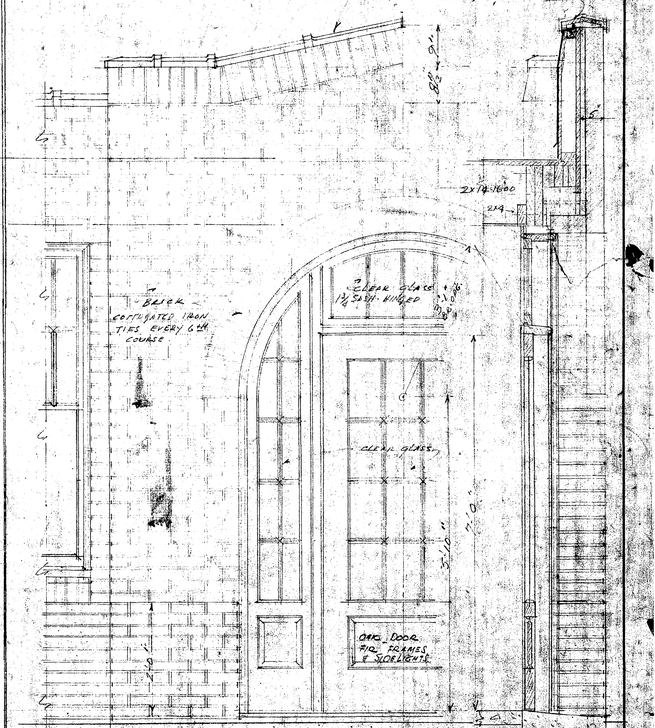


PLAN OF JAMBS

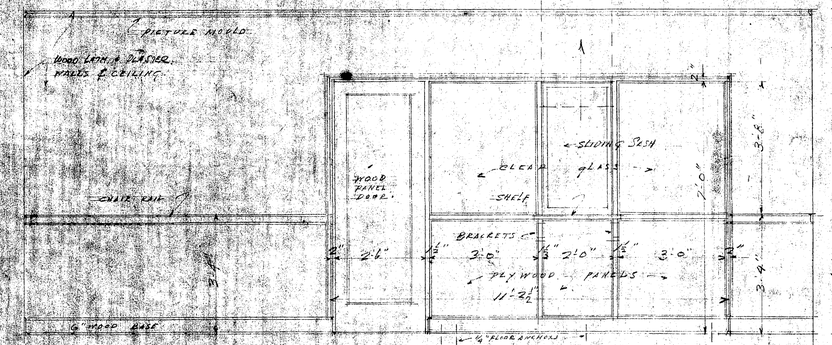
Scale 1 1/2" = 1'-0"

DETAIL OF DOORS TO SHOP

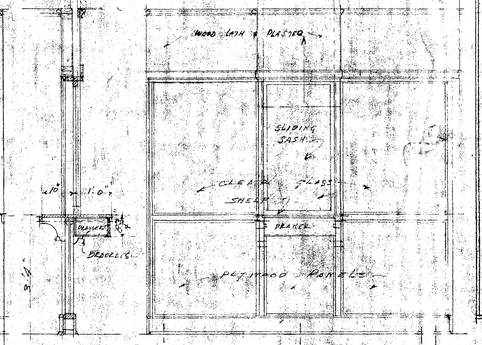
USE ARCHITECTURAL HARDWARE TOWER REYNOLDS - WILCOX-WHITE FOREST #435-4 1/2-232 EXCEPT AS NOTED



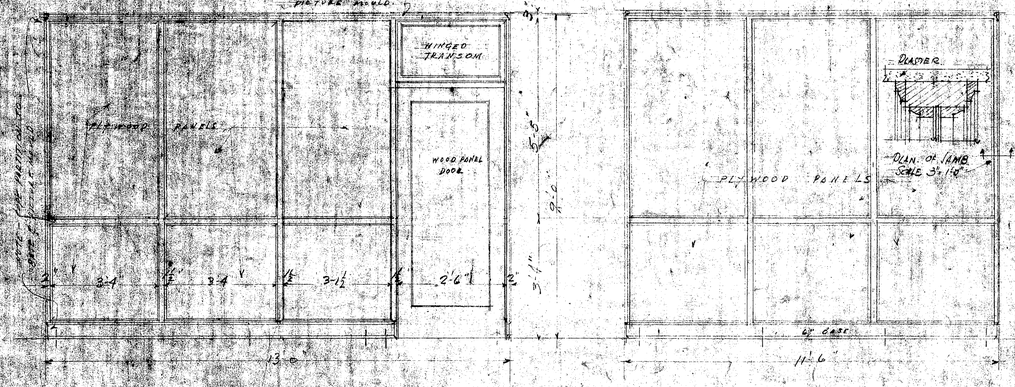
HALF ELEVATION



PARTITION BETWEEN TICKET OFFICE & WAITING ROOM SCALE 1/2"-1'-0" #1



SECTION THRU PARTITION #1 AT SLIDING WINDOW

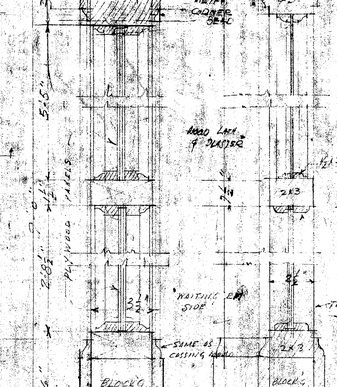


PARTITION BETWEEN RADIO & TICKET OFFICE #2

PARTITION BETWEEN PILOTS RM & STORE RM #3

1/2" SCALE PARTITION DETAILS

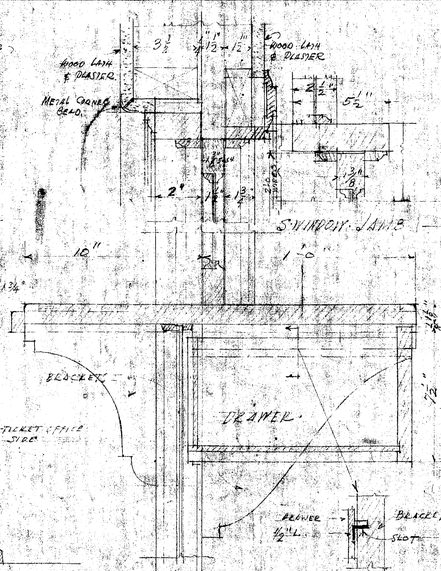
ALL PARTITIONS TO BE BUILT UP AT MILL



F.S. DETAIL TYPICAL WOOD BASE

SECTION THRU PARTITIONS #2 & 3

Scale 1" = 1'-0"

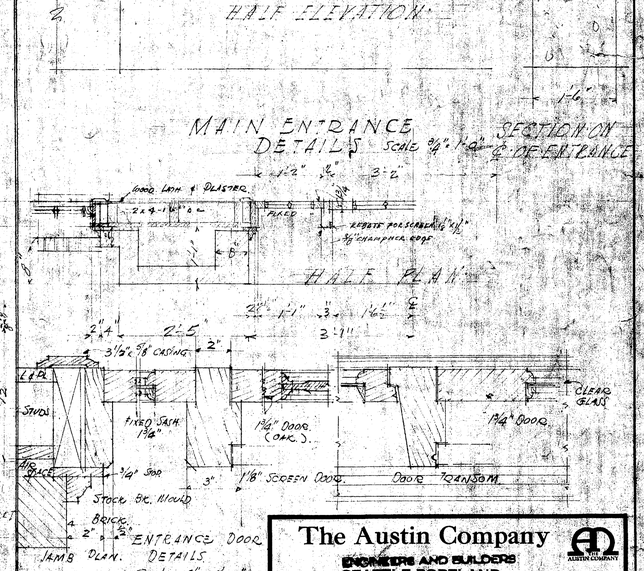


SECTION THRU PARTITION #1

SCALE 3" = 1'-0"

SLIDING WINDOW

3" = 1'-0"



MAIN ENTRANCE DETAILS SCALE 3/4" = 1'-0" SECTION OF ENTRANCE

HALF PLAN

ENTRANCE DOOR JAMB DETAILS

Scale 3" = 1'-0"

NOTE:

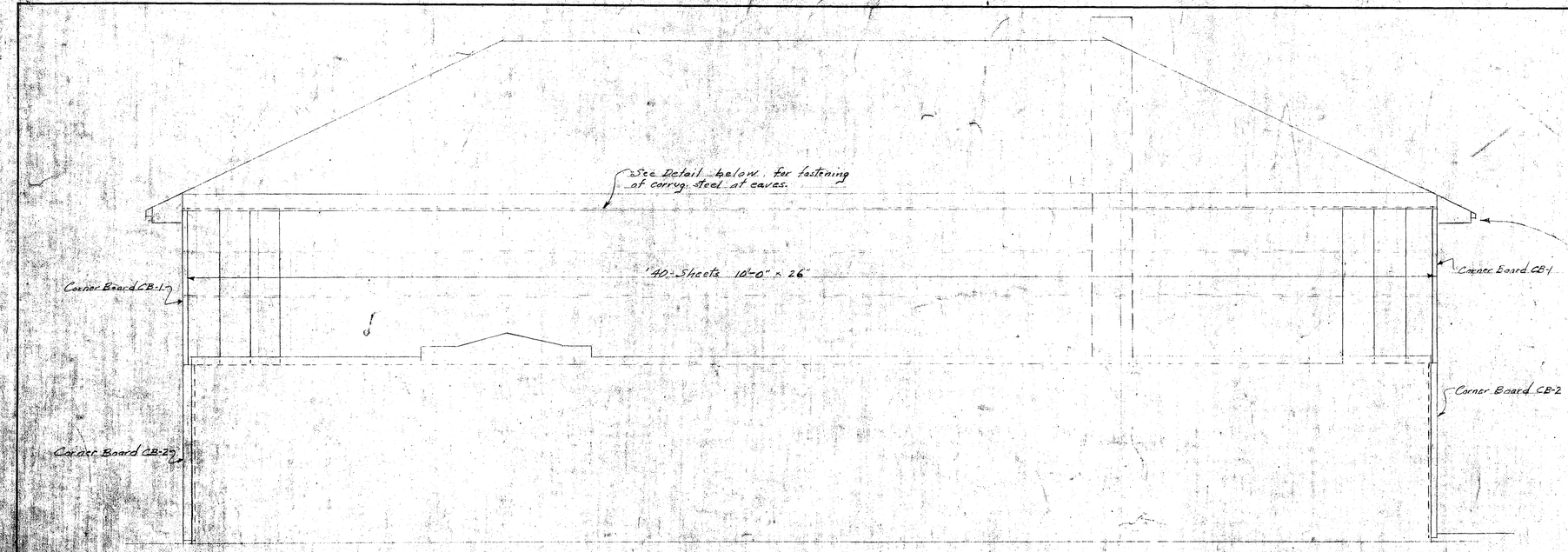
ALL DIMENSIONS FOR PARTITIONS TO BE RECHECKED AT THE JOB BEFORE STARTING ANY MILLWORK.

DATE	REVISION	BY	CH'K'D
6-30-30	CHECKING REVISIONS	M-H	ET
7-7-30	CONC. BLKS. CHANGED TO BRICK	MCM	KWS
7-30-30	Changed Partition #2 & Dimension Sliding Wicket	W.F.T.	ASH

The Austin Company
ENGINEERS AND BUILDERS
SEATTLE-PORTLAND

EMERGENCY STATION BUILDING
FOR
BOEING AIR TRANSPORT INC
ELCO - NORTH PLATTE - IOWA CITY - ROCK SPRINGS

DRAWN BY	W.F.T.	DATE 6-26-30	CONTRACT 5342D
TRACED BY		DATE	NUMBER
CHECKED BY	ZSW	DATE 6-30-30	SHEET 3
SCALE	AS NOTED		NUMBER

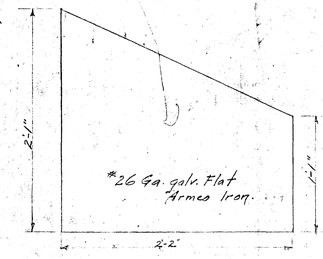


FRONT ELEVATION
1/4" = 1'-0"

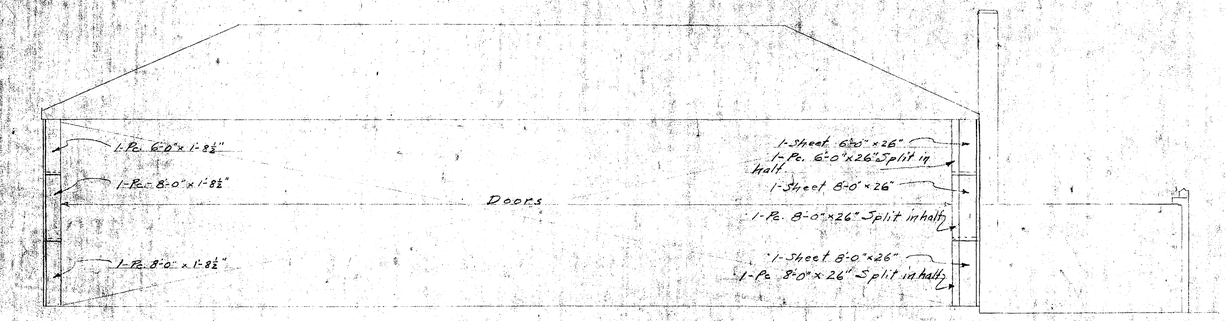
"SCHEDULE"

No Reqd.	Length	Over Width	Net Cover.	REMARKS
40	10'-0"	26"	24"	
46	8'-0"	26"	24"	
6	8'-0"	13"		Cut from 3-8'-0"x26"
4	8'-0"	20½"		Cut from 4-8'-0"x26"
4	6'-0"	26"	24"	
4	6'-0"	13"		Cut from 2-6'-0"x26"
2	6'-0"	20½"		Cut from 2-6'-0"x26

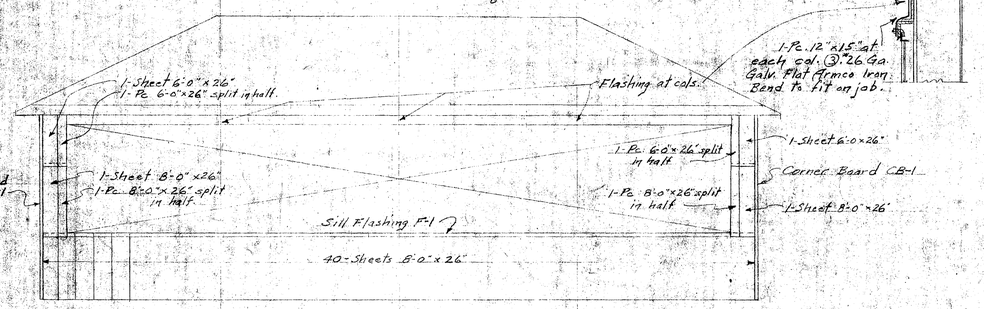
All sheets #26 Ga. Corrug galv. steel.



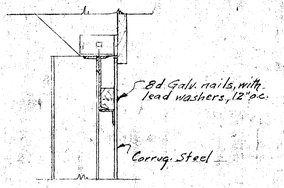
FLASHING TO CLOSE ENDS OF GUIDE ANGLE SUPPORTS.
1½"=1-0"
2 REQUIRED AS SHOWN
Fasten at top to roof boards with 8d galv. nails and at bottom to steel slap Angles with 5/16" galv. stove bolts.



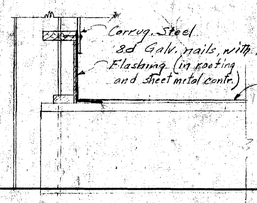
LEFT SIDE ELEVATION
RIGHT SIDE ELEVATION SIMILAR
3/8" = 1'-0"

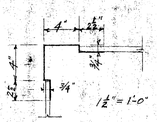


REAR ELEVATION
3/8" = 1'-0"

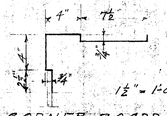


SECTION THRU FRONT
1" = 1'-0"

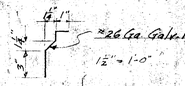




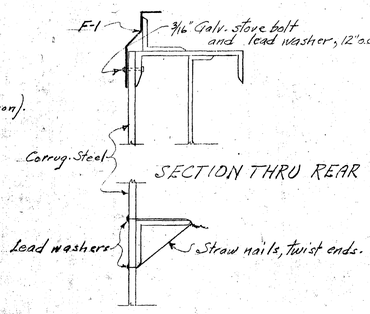
CORNER BOARD CB-1 (#24 Ga. Flat Galv. Armco Iron)
63 FT. REQ'D (ALLOW 6" FOR LAPS).



CORNER BOARD CB-2 (#24 Ga. Flat Galv. Armco Iron).
24 FT. REQD (ALLOW 6" FOR LAPS)



SILL FLASHING F-1
75 FT. REQUIRED (ALLOW 6" FOR LAPS)



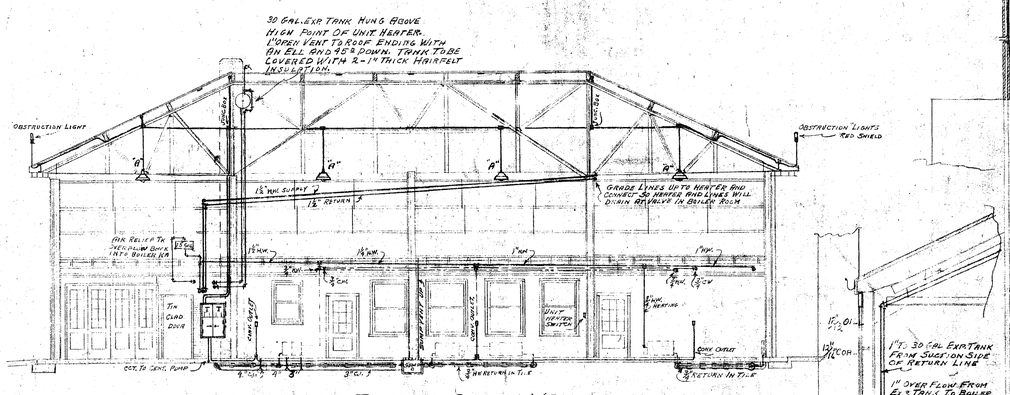
NOTES:-
Lap sheets one corrugation at sides and at least 4" at ends. Fasten at sides with 3/4" clinch rivets 12" o.c. Nails and rivets to be in top of corrugations. Fasten to wood girts with 8d. Galv. nails, to steel girts with #9 straw nails.

DATE	REVISION	BY	CH'K'D

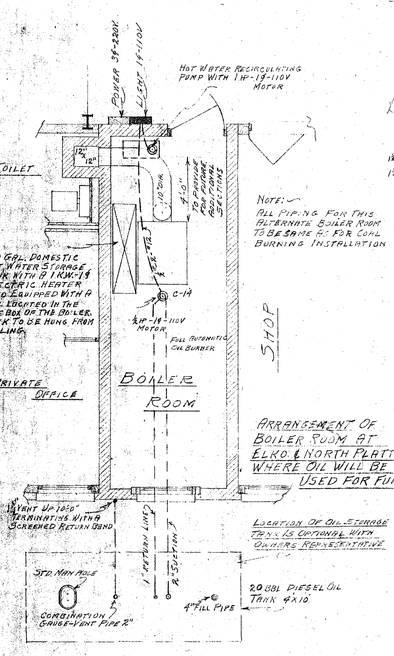
"CORRUGATED SIDING DETAILS"

The Austin Company
ENGINEERS AND BUILDERS
SEATTLE-PORTLAND
EMERGENCY STATION BUILDING
FOR
BOEING AIR TRANSPORT INC
ELKO - NORTH PLATTE - IOWA CITY - SILVER SPRINGS

DRAWN BY R.H.	DATE 6-30-30	CONTRACT NUMBER	5342-D
TRACED BY	DATE	SHEET NUMBER	4
CHECKED BY E.T.	DATE 7-2-30		
SCALE As noted			



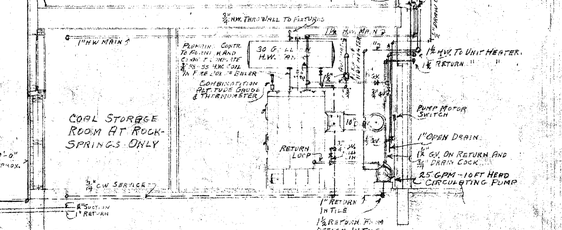
SECTION TOWARD OFFICE WALL
SCALE ¼"=1'-0"



NOTE:-
ALL PIPING FOR THIS ALTERNATE BOILER ROOM TO BE SAME AS FOR COAL BURNING INSTALLATION

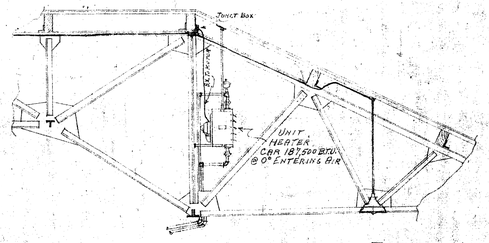
ARRANGEMENT OF BOILER ROOM AT ELKO & NORTH PLATTE & IOWA CITY WHERE OIL WILL BE USED FOR FUEL

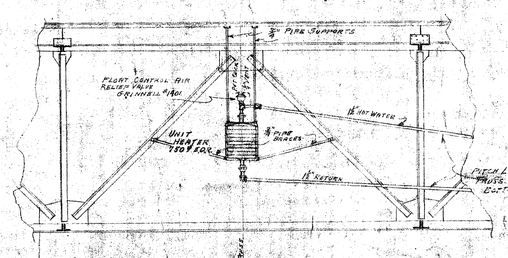
LOCATION OF OIL STORAGE TANK IS OPTIONAL WITH OWNERS REPRESENTATIVE



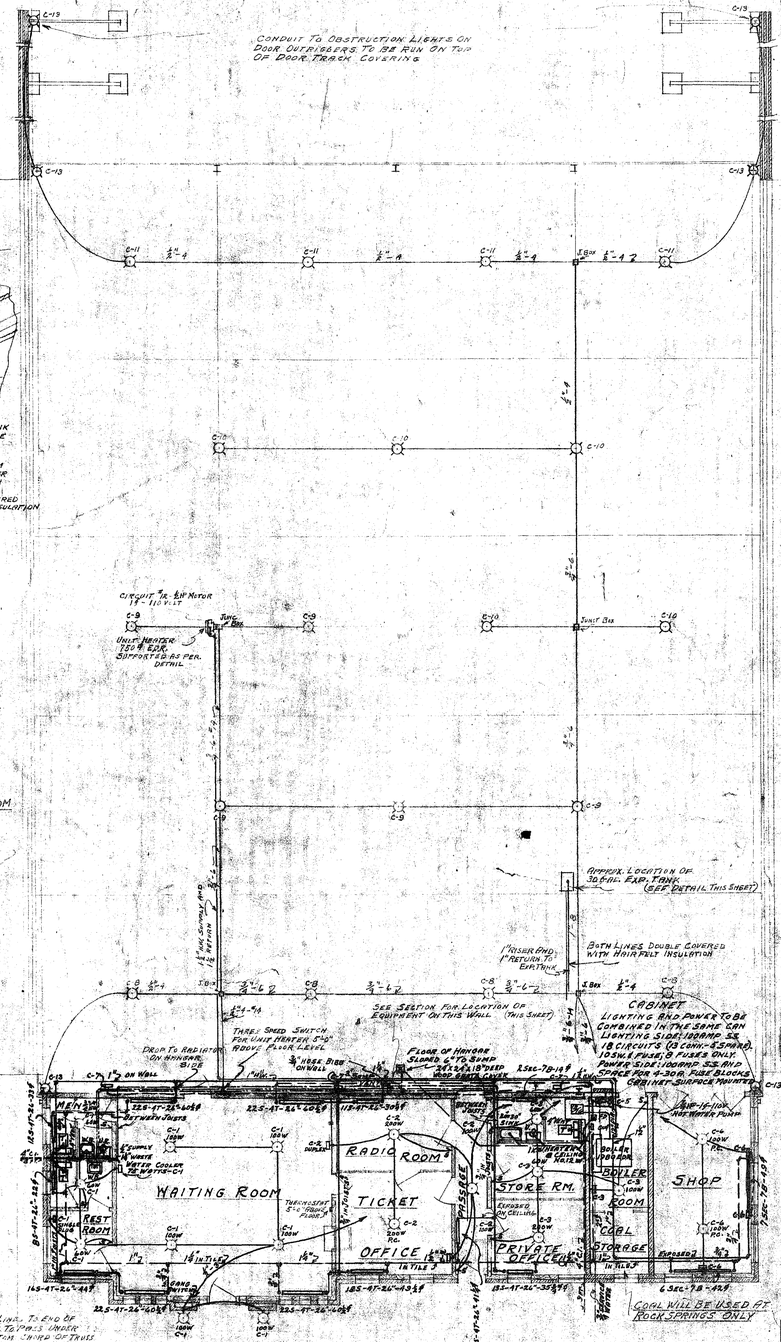
TYPICAL SECTION
SCALE ¾"=1'-0"

SECTION THRU BOILER ROOM
SCALE ¼"=1'-0"

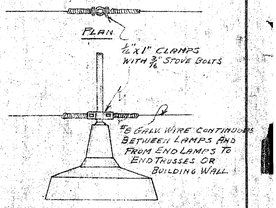




TYPICAL INSTALLATION OF UNIT HEATER
SCALE ¾"=1'-0"



COAL WILL BE USED AT ROCK SPRINGS ONLY



DETAIL OF FIXTURE STAY
SEE "A"

NOTES:-
ALL WIRING IN HANGAR TO BE IN RIGID CONDUIT.
ALL WIRING IN OFFICE PORTION TO BE STANDARD KNOB & TUBE INSTALLATION.
ALL BASE PLUGS TO BE DUPLEX UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.
CONVENIENCE OUTLETS IN SHOP AND HANGAR TO BE LOCATED 4'-0" ABOVE FLOOR LEVEL, OTHERS 8'-0".
¾" CONDUIT ONLY RUN TO 3'-0" OUTSIDE BLDG. FOR UNDERGROUND SERVICE OR TO ROOF OR ABOVE CABINET FOR OVER HEAD LIGHTING SERVICE (AT OPTION OF OWNER).
1" CONDUIT ONLY FOR 3Ø-220V. POWER SERVICE RUN TO SHOWN. SPECIFICATIONS AS TO SERVICE.
ELECTRICIAN TO MAKE CONNECTIONS TO SWITCH, CIRCULATING PUMP, IN HW. HEATER, AND CONNECT UP COMPLETE TYPE SWITCH AND MOTOR OF UNIT HEATER.
PLUMBING CONTRACTOR TO FURNISH AND MAKE UP FROM CEILING WHERE SHOWN A 30 GAL. ELEC. HW. STORAGE TANK EQUIPPED WITH 2 1KW-1Ø-110V CIRCULATIVE TYPE AUTOMATIC WATER HEATER.
PLUMBING CONTRACTOR TO FURNISH AND CONNECT UP COMPLETE A ¾" BRASS HOT WATER HEATING COIL IN THE FIRE BOX OF THE BOILER.
CIRCUIT #3 IS FOR SIX OBSTRUCTION LIGHTS ONE AT EACH CORNER OF LANDING STATION ON THE DOOR AND ONE AT THE EAST END OF THE RADIO OFFICE ROOF. SEE DETAIL THIS SHEET.
UNIT HEATER SWITCH TO BE LOCATED WHERE SHOWN AND OF THE TYPE NECESSARY TO CONTROL THE THREE SPEEDS OF THE MOTOR. SWITCH FURNISHED BY HEATING CONTRACTOR.
THE UNIT HEATER AND LINES SUPPLYING IT ARE TO BE ARRANGED IN THE BOILER ROOM SO THAT THEY MAY BE DRAINED AT ANY TIME WITHOUT INTERFERING WITH OPERATION OF THE REST OF THE HEATING SYSTEM IN ELKO AND IOWA CITY.
IN THE CASE OF ELKO & NORTH PLATTE, WHERE OIL WILL BE USED AS FUEL THE BOILER ROOM WILL BE ARRANGED AS PER DETAIL ON THIS SHEET. (F CIRCUIT #8 WILL BE RUN AS SHOWN ON THE DETAIL FOR THE OIL BURNER. (EPH 19-110V)
HOT WATER TO PLUMBING FIXTURES TO BE A RECIRCULATING SYSTEM WITH ¾" SUPPLY MAIN AND ½" RETURN MAIN BOTH COPPER.
RADIATOR VALVES TO BE GRADUATED PACKLESS ANGLE TYPE WITH DRILLING PLUGGED NO. 139 "NARTH" OR EQUAL.

PLUMBING HEATING & ELECTRICAL PLAN

The Austin Company
ENGINEERS AND BUILDERS
SEATTLE-PORTLAND
EMERGENCY STATION-BLDG
FOR
BOEING AIR TRANSPORT INC.
ELKO - NORTH PLATTE - IOWA CITY & ROCK SPRINGS

7-2-30	CHECKING REVISIONS		RBK.
DATE	REVISION	BY	CH'K'D

DRAWN BY	R.B.K.	DATE	7-10-30
TRACED BY	—	DATE	—
CHECKED BY	R.S.W.	DATE	7-11-30
SCALE	As Shown		

CONTRACT
NUMBER 5342-D
SHEET
NUMBER M-1

DATE	REVISION	BY	CH'K'D
6-30-30	Checking revisions	M.P.S.	E.T.
7-1-30	Length Anch. Bolts added	M.S.	[illegible]
7-5-30	Size of Col. 2,4,7&9 Changed	R. Ellis	R.E.
7-7-30	Track Ls & Brackets changed	M.S.	R.Ellis
7-8-30	Length of Tracks & Door Guides changed	R. Ellis	R. Ellis
7-22-30	Length " " #1 Rail changed	M.S.	

The Austin Company
ENGINEERS AND BUILDERS
SEATTLE-PORTLAND
EMERGENCY · STATION · BUILDING · FOR · BOEING · AIR · TRANSPORT · INC.
ELKO - N. PLATTE - IOWA CITY - ROCK SPRINGS

DRAWN BY M.S. DATE 6-26-30
TRACED BY DATE
CHECKED BY R. Ellis BSW DATE 6-30-30
SCALE
CONTRACT NUMBER 5342-B
SHEET NUMBER S-1


Roofing 4#
Insulation 1
2x6 T+G. 4
Purlins 1½
Truss + Brac. 4½
D.L. 15#
L.L. 30
Total 45# per sq. ft.
Compo. Roofing 2"x6" D.+C.M.
Insulating Material
6x12 Purlins @ 8'-0" o.c.
5x3x5/16 Purlin Clips 12" Long
3/8" Gusset
5x3x5/16 Purl. Cl. 8" Long
2x12 Fascia
6x12 Purlin
2-8x6x9/16
2-8x6x5/8
2-3½x2½x5/16
2-5x3½x5/16
2-3x3x5/16
2-2½x2x¼
2-2½"x2"x¼" Ls
2-3"x2½"x¼" Ls
2-3x2½x3/8 Ls
21'-8"
20'-0"
20'-0"
ES-1
20'-11" To Top of ES-1 and Col.
11'-11½" Sash Dim.
16" CB 35# *
M-1
3x2½"x¼" Girts
#26 Ga. Corr. Steel Siding
5 2½x2x¼ L, 7/16 Holes @ 12" o.c. V.L.
11/16 Holes @ 4'-0" o.c. in H.L. for 5/8" Bolts
½# Sag Rods 2-each Bay
2x6 Girts
#26 Ga. Corr. Steel Siding
See Detail Sh. #1
S-3
2'-0" 2'-0"
103'-4" ℄ cols. 2 & 4 to ℄ cols. 9 & 7.
104'-0" ℄ cols. 1, 3 & 5 to ℄ cols. 10, 8 & 6.
TRUSS T-1 (2-Thus)
Camber 2"
All Gussets 3/8" thick
" Rivets 3/4
" Holes 13/16
All Field Connections to be bolted.
All Structural Steel to have one shop coat of Brown Graphite Paint with erection Marks on painted surface only
1" = 50000#
- Note - All Columns to be Securely guyed until All the Trusses are - bolted in place. -
LONGITUDINAL SECTION
SCALE ¼" = 1'-0
Strut + Lintel Schedule
ES-1 { 1-9" [13.4# ; 1-2½x2½x¼ L ; 1-3½x2½x¼ Sash L } See Detail Sh. #S-1
S-1 - 2-3x2½x¼ Ls
S-2 - 1-3x2½x¼ L
M-1 { 1-7" [9.8# ; 1-6" [8.2 ; 1-3½x2½x¼ L } See Detail Sh. #S-1
S-3 - 2-5" [s 6.7#
L-1 - 2-3x2½x3/8 x 4'-6
L-2 - 1-3x3x¼ x 4'-8
L-3 - 1-3x3x¼ x 3'-8"
L-4 - 1-3x3x¼ x 7'-3
6x4x3/8 Clip L
3/8 G. Pl.
#26 Galv. Iron flashing
3½x2½x¼ Ls
21'-4" to Floor Corner Cols. only
DETAIL OF INTERMEDIATE SUPPORTS FOR TRACK ANGLES Showing also Connection at Corner Cols. (14 Brackets thus)
1½" = 1'-0"
Ends to bear
6x12 Purlins
4-5/8" Thru Bolts
5x3x5/16 Purlin Clips 12" Long
DETAIL OF PURLIN CLIPS
½" = 1'-0
2"x6" Bevelled Stiffeners, 3/4" Bevel both edges
2-2½x2x¼
2-3½x2½x5/16 Ls
2-3x2½x¼
1-3x2½x¼
1-3x3x¼
S-1
Truss T-1
10'-5⅜" 10'-0" 8'-0 8'-0 8'-0 8'-0 10'-0 10'-5⅜"
80'-0"
20'-0" to Floor
TRUSS T-2
4-thus
SCALE ¼" = 1'-0"
3x3 Nailer
3½x3½x5/16
11/16 Holes for 5/8 Anch. B. 4'-0 o.c.
#24 Ga. Armco Gravel Stop & Flashing
2x6 Fascia
6x3½x5/16 Angle Clip - 8" Long, 13/16 Slott. Holes 2" Long (3/4" Bolts, Spring Lock Washers) for Vertical Adjustm. of Door Ls
9" [13.4# - 11/16 Holes for 5/8 Anch. Bolts 4'-0" o.c.
3/8" Guss. Pl.
2-5x3x5/16 Clip
2½x2½x¼ L
#26 Ga. Galv. Iron flashing betw. angles
3x3x5/16 Cont. Angle
5x3x5/16" Contin. Track Angles
1/8"x3" Contin. Plate, Spot welded to 9" [.
2 - 2½x2½x¼" Ls - with 2-13/16" Slott. Holes - 2" Long (3/4 Bolts, Spring Lock Washers) for Vert. Adjustm. of Door Ls
℄ Door
DETAIL OF DOOR TRACK ANGLES (8 Brackets thus at ends of T-2)
- SCALE 1½" = 1'-0" -
FULL LOAD
DEAD LOAD ON CANTILEVERS
1" = 10000#
BOTTOM CHORD BRACING
Scale 1/16" = 1'-0
TOP CHORD BRACING
Scale 1/16" = 1'-0"
Door Tracks, See Detail
Flush with Top of Trusses at intersection
Bolted to 10" CB 21# with 3/4 Bolts @ 4' o.c. staggered
6x12 Solid Bridging, 1½x3/8x1'-6" Straps each side of Purlins, 2-5/8 thru Bolts each end of Purlin.
Top of Ridge Bm. Flush with Top of ES-1 at intersection
GENERAL NOTES
Structural Steel Stress = 18000# per sq. in.
All Structural Steel to conform with the Standard Specifications of A.I.S.C. for Structural Steel for Buildings
6-30-30 | Checking revisions | M.S. | E.T.
7-3-30 | Size of Col. 2, 4, 7 & 9 Changed | R.Ellis | R.E.
7-7-30 | Knee brace changed to Gusset Plate | R.P.H. | R.Ellis
7-7-30 | Door Track Angles changed | R.P.H. | R.E.
7-17-30 | Truss T-2 + Bracing revised | M.S.
DATE | REVISION | BY | CH'K'D
The Austin Company
ENGINEERS AND BUILDERS
SEATTLE-PORTLAND
EMERGENCY STATION BUILDING FOR BOEING AIR TRANSPORT INC.
ELKO - N. PLATTE - IOWA CITY - ROCK SPRINGS
DRAWN BY M.S. DATE 6-26-30
TRACED BY DATE
CHECKED BY R. Ellis RSH DATE 6-30-30
SCALE
CONTRACT NUMBER 5342-D
SHEET NUMBER S-2

Historical Architectural Data Base

Data Entry Form for Studies and Reports

Doc. No.: 52-076

Source of Study: ☐ Certified Local Government Project ☒ Section 106 Review & Compliance Project
☐ Historical Resource Development Program Project ☐ Other

Project Reference #: 770352821

Authors/Editor/Compiler/Originator:
Jan Olive Nash, Tallgrass Historians L.C.

Author Role: ☒ Consultant ☐ Private Researcher/Writer ☐ Teacher ☐ Student
☐ Project employee/volunteer ☐ Site Administrator ☒ Other: Historian

Title of Work:
Iowa City Municipal Airport: Opening the West to Aviation, 1918-2007

[Boeing Air Transport Hangar Recordation]

Year Issued: 2007

Type of Work Performed:
(*check one only*)

Survey:

- ☐ Windshield survey minimum level documentation
- ☐ Reconnaissance survey to make recommendations for intensive survey(s).
- ☐ Intensive survey
- ☐ Mixed intensive and reconnaissance survey

Plan:

- ☐ Planning for Preservation/Survey
- ☐ Community Preservation Plan

Property Study:

- ☐ Iowa Historic Property Documentation Study
- ☐ Historic American Building Survey (HABS)
- ☐ Historic American Engineering Record (HAER)
- ☐ Management or Master Plan
- ☐ Historic Structure Report
- ☐ Feasibility/Re-use Study
- ☐ Architectural/Engineering Plans and Specs.

National Register:

- ☐ Multiple Property Documentation Form

Other (e.g., private research, school project, video): public history publication

Iowa City Municipal Airport: Opening the West to Aviation, 1918-2007

[Boeing Air Transport Hangar Recordation]

Kind of Work Produced:
(fill in one section only: Report or Monograph or Chapter, etc.)

Report: Published/produced by: Tallgrass Historians L.C.

Place issued: 2460 S. Riverside Drive, Iowa City, IA 52246

Client: Earth Tech, Des Moines, Iowa

If applicable, include:

Series Title: _____

Volume #: _____ Report #: _____

Monograph: Publisher Name: _____

Place: _____

Chapter: In: _____ First pg. #: _____ Last pg. #: _____

Journal: Name: _____ Vol. _____ No. _____ Pages: _____ to _____

Thesis: Degree (check one): ☐ Ph.D. ☐ LL.D. ☐ M.A. ☐ M.S. ☐ B.A. ☐ B.S.

Name of College/University: _____

Paper: Meeting: _____

Place: _____

Other: public history publication

Geographic Scope of Study:

☒ City/town ☐ Township(s) ☐ County ☐ Region of Iowa ☒ Statewide ☐ Other: _____

State:	IA	__	__	__
County:	Johnson	_____	_____	_____
Town:	Iowa City	_____	_____	_____
Township:	____	____	____	____
Range:	___	___	___	___

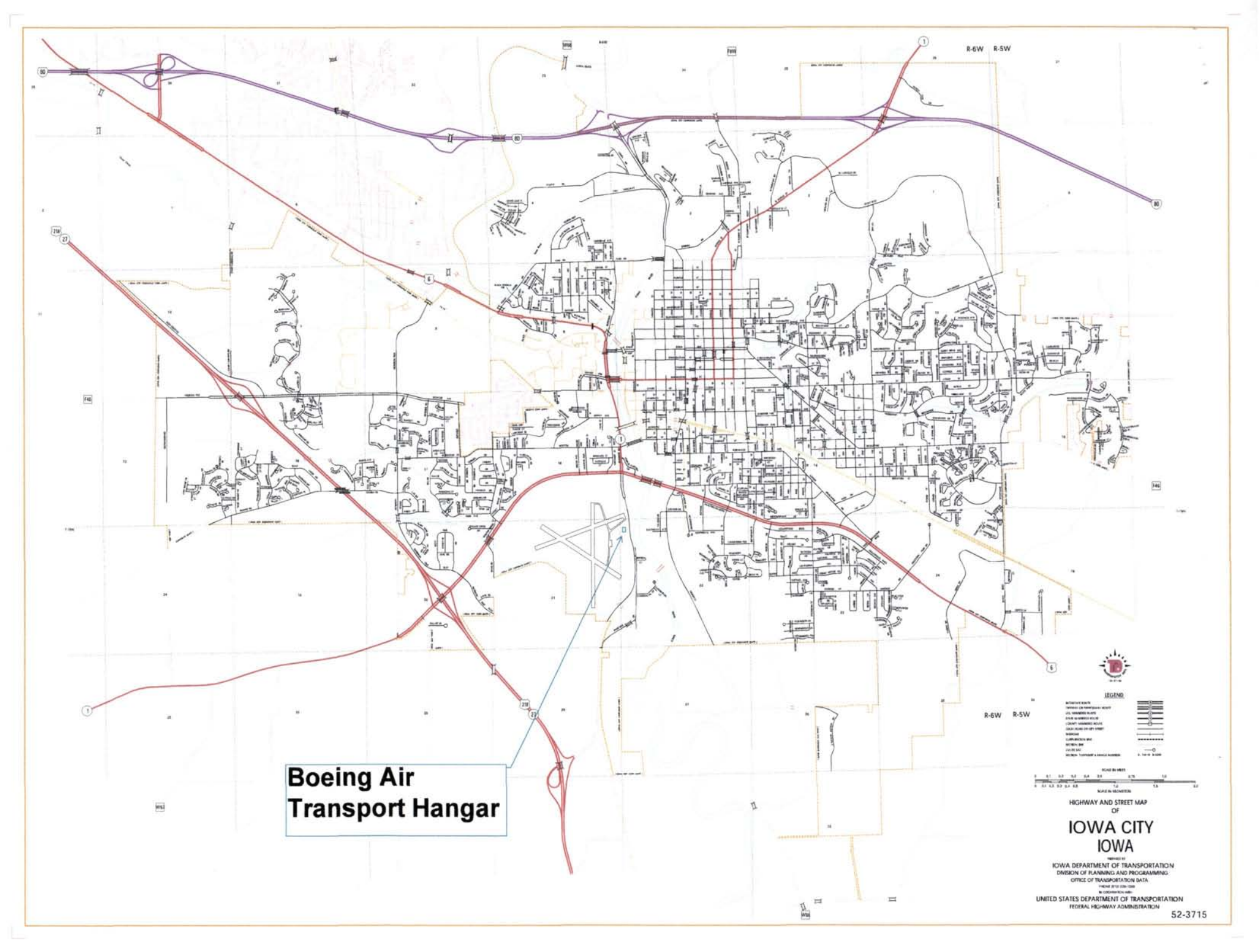
Time Focus: (check any decades that receive particular attention)

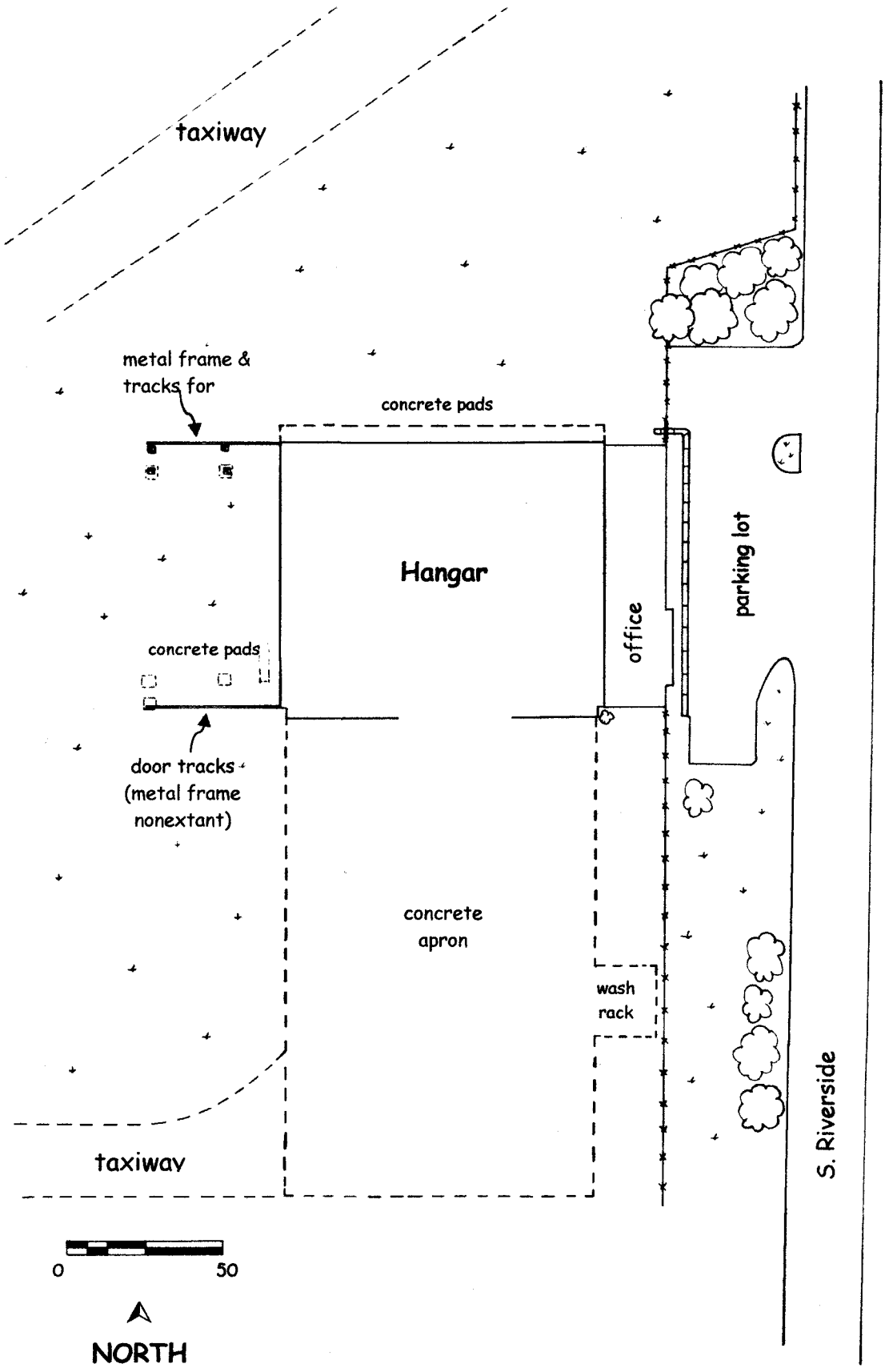
☐ before 1830 ☐ 1830s ☐ 1840s ☐ 1850s ☐ 1860s ☐ 1870s ☐ 1880s ☐ 1890s

☐ 1900s ☒ 1910s ☒ 1920s ☒ 1930s ☒ 1940s ☒ 1950s ☐ 1960s ☐ 1970s ☐ 1980/later

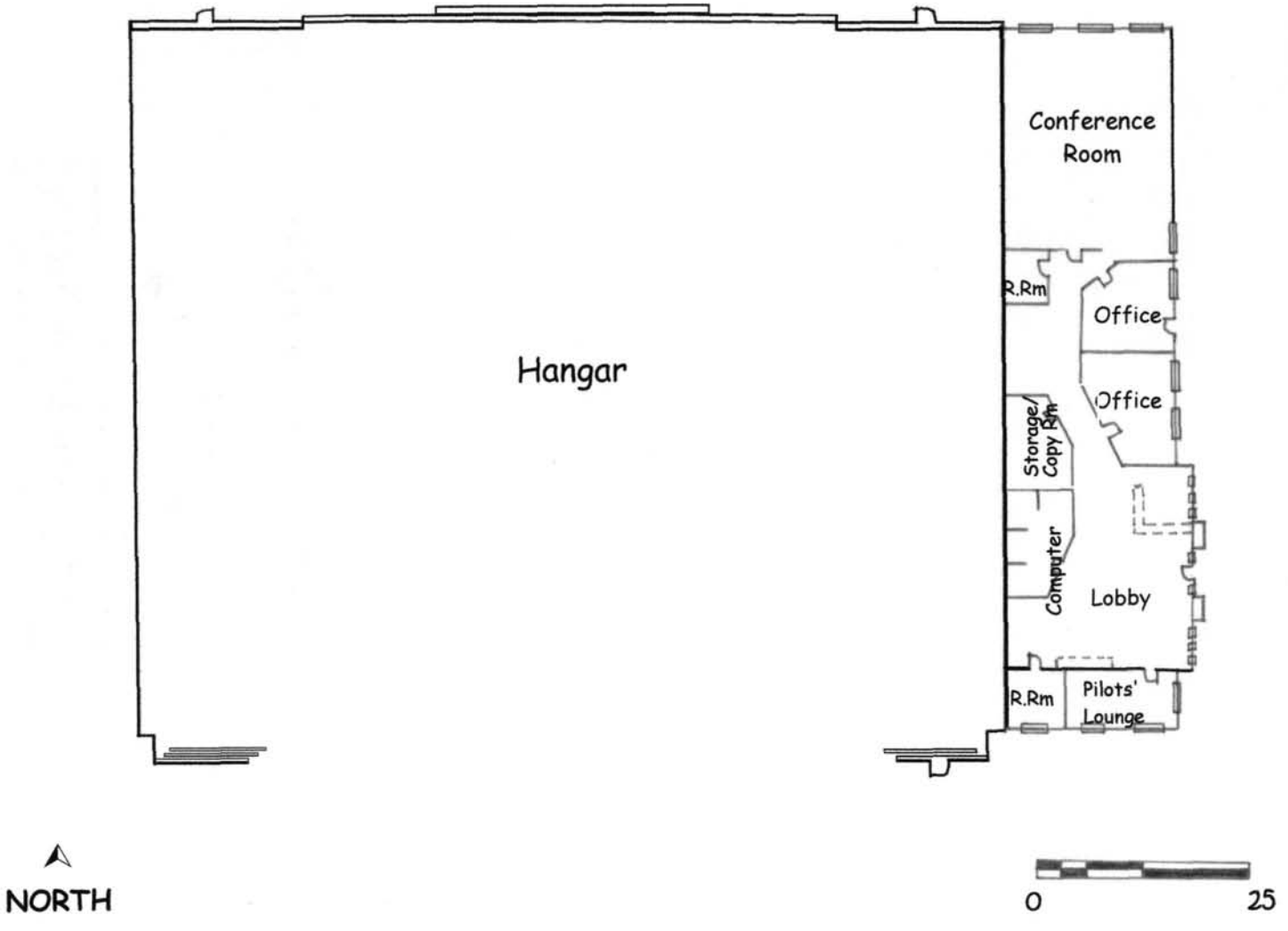
Keyword: (Index of any subjects, topics, or people given prominent attention in the report)

air mail	airmail
aviation	airport
Boeing Air Transport	United Air Lines
booster groups	Thomas Baldwin, Captain
transcontinental flight	night flight
Red Ball highway	Emma J. Harvat, Mayor
_____	_____

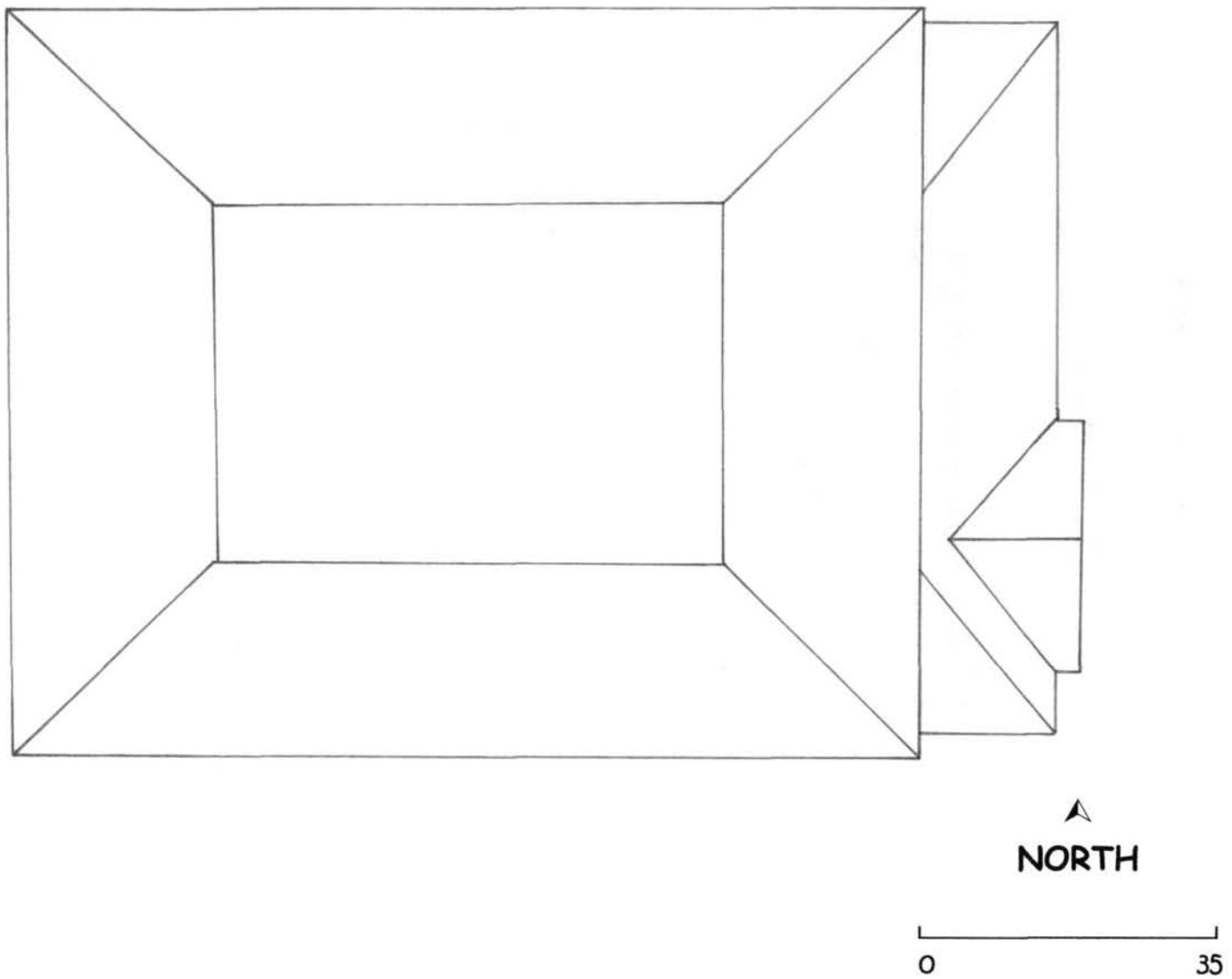

R-6W R-5W
Boeing Air
Transport Hangar
LEGEND
R-6W R-5W
HIGHWAY AND STREET MAP
OF
IOWA CITY
IOWA
IOWA DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
DIVISION OF PLANNING AND PROGRAMMING
OFFICE OF TRANSPORTATION DATA
UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION
FEDERAL HIGHWAY ADMINISTRATION
52-3715



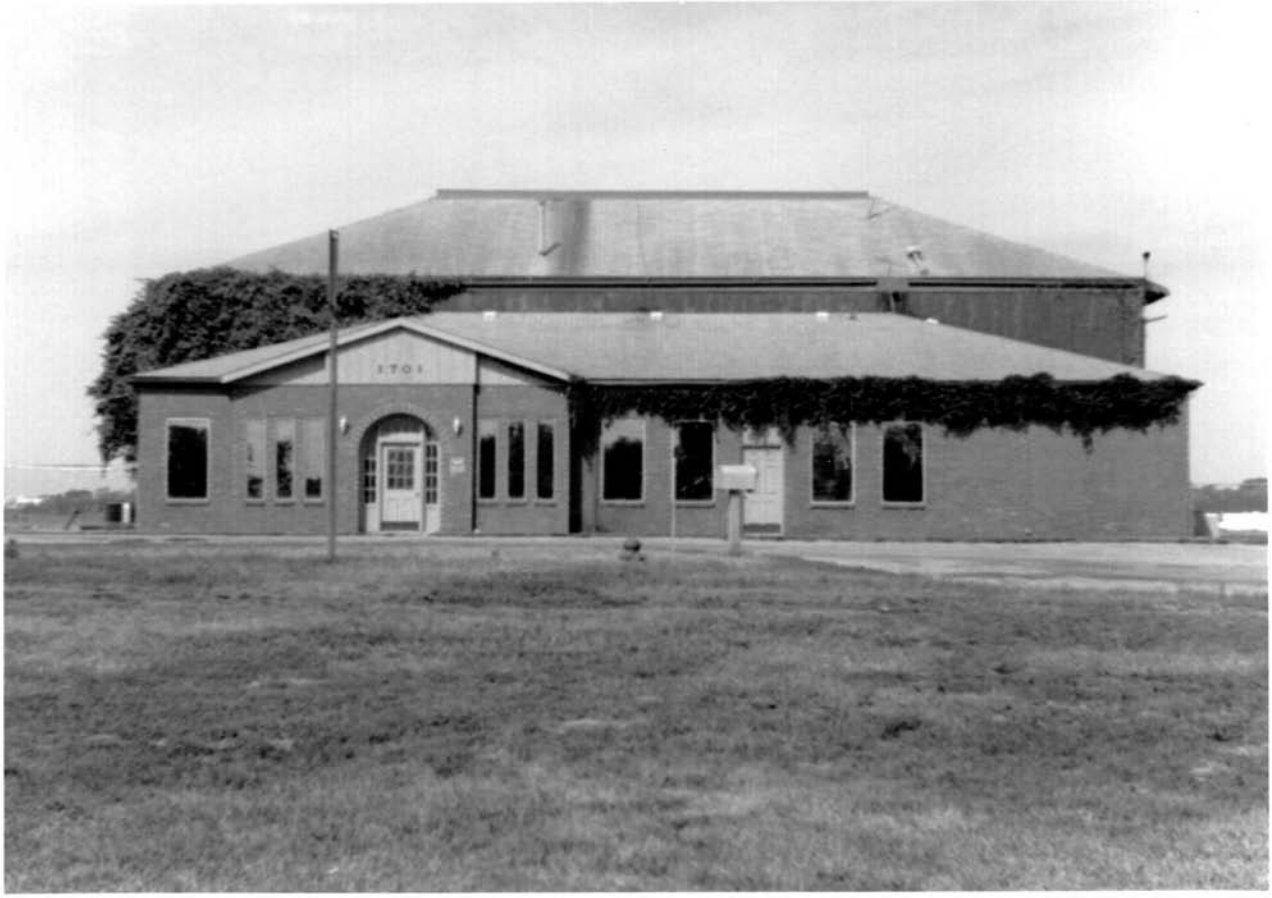
Site Plan of Boeing Air Transport Hangar
(Source: Tallgrass Historians L.C., 2007)



Floor Plan of Boeing Air Transport Hangar
(Source: Tallgrass Historians L.C., 2005)



Roof Plan of Boeing Air Transport Hangar
(Source: Tallgrass Historians L.C., 2007)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