

# America Airports Airfield Development 1918-1947 Centennial Of Flight: A Historic Transformation



## The Birth of Aviation

In the early 20th century, the invention of airplanes revolutionized the way we traveled and transported goods. It was an era of endless possibilities and dreams that soared high up in the sky. As aviation gained momentum, the need for proper airports and airfields became evident. This article takes you on a journey through the development of American airports and airfields from 1918 to 1947, marking the centennial of flight.

## The Dawn of Airports

In 1918, the United States was still recovering from the aftermath of World War I. The military had made significant advancements in aviation during the war, and now attention shifted towards civilian air travel. The first airports were established primarily for mail delivery and emergency landings, with Pasadena's Clover Field and College Park Airport in Maryland leading the way.



## America's Airports: Airfield Development, 1918-1947 (Centennial of Flight Series Book 1)

by Janet R. Daly Bednarek(1st Edition, Kindle Edition)

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These early airports were nothing more than makeshift landing strips, devoid of proper infrastructure and facilities. However, they laid the groundwork for what would become robust aviation hubs in the years to come.

### The Golden Age of Airfields

By the 1920s, the allure of flying had captured the imagination of the American public. Aviators like Charles Lindbergh became household names, inspiring a wave of interest in aviation. This surge in popularity catapulted the development of airfields across the country.

During this golden age of airfields, iconic locations like Roosevelt Field in New York and Ford Airport in Michigan became synonymous with aviation history. These vast expanses of land were transformed into bustling airfields, complete with hangars, control towers, and passenger terminals.

The advancement of technology also played a crucial role in this phase. Improved navigational aids, such as radio beacons and landing lights, made nighttime flying and long-distance travel more viable. This led to the establishment of transcontinental airfields, like the Los Angeles Municipal Airport (now known as the Los Angeles International Airport), facilitating coast-to-coast travel.

## **The Rise of Airports**

As airfields evolved, so did the concept of airports. The 1930s witnessed a transition from airfields to purpose-built airports, designed to handle increasing air traffic and accommodate the growing number of passengers. These airports were equipped with runways, terminal buildings, and ancillary services, providing a more comprehensive flying experience.

Notable examples of this transformation include Cleveland Hopkins International Airport, known for its innovative terminal design, and Seattle-Tacoma International Airport, which became a model for modern airport planning.

Around the same time, the government also realized the economic potential of aviation and started investing in airport development. The creation of the Works Progress Administration (WPA) during the Great Depression led to the construction of numerous airports, providing employment opportunities and stimulating economic growth.

## **War and Progress**

World War II brought with it unprecedented challenges and opportunities for aviation in America. The need for military airfields skyrocketed, resulting in the construction of thousands of airbases across the country. These airbases played a pivotal role in training pilots and supporting military operations.

After the war, many of these military airbases were converted into civilian airports, forever changing the landscape of American aviation. This transformation not only expanded the existing airport network but also served as a catalyst for technological advancements in air traffic control and airport management.

## **The Legacy of Transformation**

The period from 1918 to 1947 marked a significant milestone in the history of American aviation. The development of airports and airfields during this time laid the foundation for the modern air transportation system we have today. These airports not only connected cities but also brought people closer, fostering economic growth and cultural exchange.

As we celebrate the centennial of flight, it is essential to reflect on the remarkable journey that American airports and airfields have undertaken. From humble beginnings to global aviation hubs, their transformation echoes the spirit of innovation and progress that defines the United States.

The legacy of this development continues to shape the aviation industry, as airports evolve to meet the demands of the future. With emerging technologies like electric aircraft and autonomous vehicles, one can only imagine what the next century of flight holds for these historic landmarks.

The era of 1918-1947 witnessed a remarkable transformation in American airports and airfields. From rudimentary landing strips to purpose-built airports, the development paved the way for the growth of civil aviation. This period

marked a turning point in history, ushering in a new era of travel and innovation. As we celebrate the centennial of flight, let us remember the pioneers who built the foundations of modern aviation and continue to inspire future generations to reach for the skies.

*Remember to always check the latest travel advisories and guidelines before planning your trip to any airport.*



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Chicago-O'Hare, DFW, LAX, New York–La Guardia. Across the country, Americans take for granted the convenience of air flight from one city to another. The federal role in managing air traffic and the cooperative corporate planning of major airlines mask to some degree the fact that those airports are not jointly owned or managed, but rather are local public responsibilities.

In this unique history of the places travelers in cities across America call "the" airport, Janet R. Daly Bednarek traces the evolving relationship between cities and their airports during the crucial formative years of 1918–47. She highlights

the early history of experimentation and innovation in the development of municipal airports and identifies the factors—including pressure from the U.S. Post Office and the military, neither of which had the independent resources to develop a network of terminals—that made American cities responsible for their own air access. She shows how boosterism accelerated the trend toward local construction and ownership of the fields.

In the later years of the period, Bednarek shows, cities found they could not shoulder the whole burden of airport construction, maintenance, and improvement. As part of a general trend during the 1930s toward a strong, direct relationship between cities and the federal government, cities began to lobby

for federal aid for their airports, a demand that was eventually met when World War II increased the federal stakes in their functioning.

Along with this complex local-federal relationship, Bednarek considers the role of the courts and of city planning in the development of municipal airfields. Drawing on several brief case studies, she looks at the social aspects of airports and analyzes how urban development resulted in a variety of airport arrangements.

Little published work has been available on this topic. Now, with Bednarek's insightful and thorough treatment and broad view of the subject, those interested in the patterns of American air travel will have new understanding and those concerned with urban development will recognize an additional dimension.



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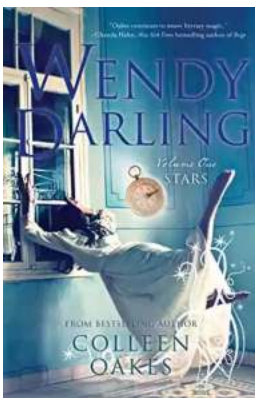
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