

7 AVIATION  
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INDUSTRIAL: Development of Aviation  
by: Royse Aldrich

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Wichita "The Air Capital."

No city in the world is as hospitable to aviation as Wichita is to the commercial phase of that industry.

The otherwise obscure little town of Kitty Hawk, tucked away in the marshes down in Carolina, may boast of being the spot where Man took wing and flew, thus realizing ages upon ages of human endeavour and mortal aspiration to emulate the birds of the air.

Granting that it is the cradle of flight, conceding that it plays Bethlehem to Dayton's aeronautical Jerusalem, it remains that Wichita is The Air Capital: the Rome to which all airways lead in tracing the development and popularization of flying. In brief, Wichita has contributed more than any other one city in the world, or any number of them combined, to bring aviation to the people, to make it an accepted fact, an every-day reality.

The work of two organizations stand out in a review of the achievements which have enabled this city to stand supreme in the commercial flying field -- the Aviation Committee of the Chamber of Commerce and the Park Department of the City of Wichita.

Relatively quiescent though it may be to-day, though by no means dormant or moribund in furtherance of progress in aviation, the city is waiting for Man to take wing and fly again; to fly out of the morass of the depression and away from the slough of despond, to sail again in a salubrious atmosphere of prosperity, though not soaring as recklessly as he soared in 1929, when streamers from Wall Street tickers figuratively flew like gay and gaudy plumage in the tail of his ship, whirling from the wash of propellers as he fed it the gun.



During the lull in activity the city is building upon substantial ground. Experimenting is continuing -- wise and necessary mechanical and technical experimentation in an effort to realize a standard of perfection from the visions of designers of aircraft, but there is no more flying-by-night in high finance along dark and sinister paths of high-pressure salesmanship. The airways now are as plainly marked to the investor as they are to the pilot whose ship was built with sound capital as well as expert labor, allowing it was built in The Air Capital. The Wichita of the post-war boom period is no more; it has flown with the sinister night-birds along an uncharted course which is the way of all carrion.

The city now is awaiting the upturn in aviation, guided by the experience of its past and profiting by the exigencies of the present and the necessities of the future, now that flying is firmly and definitely established as a modern mode of transportation. Wichita bids to be the Detroit of the Air when the fogs lift from the depression. They are beginning to lift, and Wichita is emerging out of the shadows, lifting its collective head to glimpse the vista that leads along the diagonal George Washington Boulevard to the Municipal Airport and environs, where progress already is thriving, standing as a tribute to civic planning in which agencies of municipal government and commercial enterprise have worked hand in hand to preserve the city's distinction as The Air Capital, to justify it both from a standpoint of production and transportation.

Mute evidences of past glories still stand, like the classic temples of ancient Rome. A few buildings and the charred ruins of a few other buildings remain from the onslaughts of time and stand out, bare and gaunt, scattered here and there over the city, to remind sane and sober Wichitans of the glamorous twenties when the townspeople dipped and dove into an orgy of speculation in aeronautics so wildly and contagiously that even kids were infected and were playing heroes to their dreams, flying down to Rio and beyond to the ruins of the perfected civilization of the Aztecs; and beyond the string of pearls encircling the Antilles and garlanding



the Caribbean to the Gran Chaco, exploring hitherto unknown rivers from the air as those streams snaked through impenetrable masses of verdant and lush jungle.

That was the glamorous, thrilling Air Capital of 1927 and 1928 and 1929 as sedate business men visualized it and youngsters dreamed it -- a city destined to be the source of conquest in Man's greatest aspiration, his desire to fly to lands of flowery romance and exotic charm, to escape if, alas, only from himself. The city stirred under a terrific impetus of air-mindedness, only to encounter an impasse, and a series of poignantly tragic frustrations, when Wall Street's guiding star crashed, and men became not winged angels but men and demons, fighting and clawing, stealing and robbing to retrieve whatever mazuma was possible from the rapidly vanishing bonanza that literally flew in the air. The Icarus of old had crashed when his wax-wings melted from too close proximity to the powerful shafts of a jealous and avenging sun-god; Man now was the new Icarus, bereft and forlorn, sprawled on the earth from contact with the crashing star whose symbol was the eternal dollar, with his wings singed and melted and crushed, though he still nourished his ambition to fly. And Time, inexorable though it is in its movement, is not relentless in refusing solace to nurse the illusions of destiny and the <sup>and it</sup> deals of aspiration, <sup>^</sup> has favored Wichita with its beneficence just as Nature has favored it with its magnificence in making it an ideal center for The Air Capital.

From that day in 1919 when the brothers Laird, -- Matthew <sup>(SM)</sup> and Charles, <sup>(CS)</sup> -- with scotch in their blood and heather in their sandy hair and laurels on their lapels from ~~intrepid~~ daring deeds of war, -- from that day when they landed in Wichita, Wichita was on the make as an aircraft manufacturing and transportation center. The early days were days of pioneering struggle. The Lairds, young, fresh from the exploits of war, were long in ambition and short in capital. They built their original "boneshaker" in the back end of what had been an old casket factory at the northeast corner of Wichita and English Streets, at the rear of Wichita's massive Forum.



This "boneshaker" played Adam in fathering a distinguished progeny of airplanes in Wichita. From a rib sprang Eve, metamorphosed into Travel-Air, which still is the most prolific producer of aircraft in this city. Any number of companies that were born during the 1920's owe their origin, either in idea or in personnel or in reorganization, to the old phantom that the Lairds created in their little workshop, which had been donated to their use by Mr E. A. Watkins, who subsequently was to figure prominently in the development of the industry locally.

The Lairds christened their bird The Swallow after assembling it in The Forum, their wood-working shop proving too small. The city donated the use of the space required for that purpose in the public auditorium, and that generous act signalized a venture in municipal co-operation in aid of a burgeoning industry which is unequalled by any other city in the country.

The Lairds got on their wings, financially speaking, when they flew to the assistance of J. M. (Jake) Mollendick, who was splurging in oil in the early twenties. A gusher shot a stream of black flowing gold in a field near el Dorado, and Jake was in a hurry to fly the twenty miles to the scene from Wichita. The Lairds accommodated him with their flying crate, and he was sold then and there on aviation, seeing its possibilities for quick transport. He sank part of his fortune into a project in which the Lairds had sunk their faith, and faith and fortune yielded forth The Laird Swallow factory at Twenty-seventh Street and Hillside Avenue, with a flying field in connection -- Wichita's first factory and field.

Yet it was as early as 1918 that Wichita began to consider the possibility of being on an air-mail line. The minutes of the Chamber of Commerce show that on November 30 in that year a Mr Smith, of Enid, Okla., had called on Harry I. Fox, president of the chamber, with reference to establishing an aerial mail route through this city. Mr Smith wanted \$150 to make a flight from Wichita to Lawton, Okla., to demonstrate to the Government the practicability of such a route. The



record does not disclose whether he received the \$150.

Two aerial officers of the United States subsequently came to Wichita to confer with a committee of three appointed by Mr Fox relative to the route. The committee reported on December 6 that the city would be required to provide a convenient landing field one-half mile square with a concrete bullseye five or six feet wide which would be visible for as many miles. It was estimated the bullseye would cost \$50.

The committee on February 21, 1919, reported that it had selected Jones Field, north of town, the present location of the Bridgeport Machine Company, and that it would ~~has~~ arrange to have a target erected.

The opportunity to get the aerial mail service extended from Kansas City arose on November 9, 1920, when the Chamber undertook to interest local people in a ~~consist~~ contract for such service. A week later a special air-mail service committee was appointed to confer with Jake Mollendick, who by this time was president of the Laird Swallow Company, relative to bringing the air mail to Wichita. This committee was composed of M. M. Murdock, G. H. Turner, and William Lassen, and it was the nucleus of the Aviation Committee of the Chamber of Commerce, which has functioned throughout the years in making Wichita an outstanding center in aviation. Mr Murdock was chairman of this original special committee, which long has ceased to be special and has <sup>be</sup> come a fixture as permanent and as responsible as any other group in the civic association.

A move to link Wichita on an air mail route extending from Omaha to Houston was under way in July of 1924, to connect in the former city with a trans-continental route which then was in operation. The chamber decided to lay Wichita's interest in the proposal before postal authorities in Washington.

The National Air Transport Company (NAT) was the only concern to bid for flying the mail to and from the Gulf up to September 15, 1925, according to a report to the chamber from the Postoffice Department. The desire for such service was strong in Wichita, evidenced by the fact that out of a number of questionnaires



sent to the membership of the chamber, 300 replies were received favoring the establishment of a route, with local landing field, to none opposed. Walter P. Innes, who was chairman of the special committee in 1925, reported to the chamber that the idea of a municipal landing field had been proposed to the City Commission, but the City Attorney had expressed the opinion that neither the City Commission nor the Park Department had any specific authority for acquiring land for such purposes. This led eventually to the passage of enabling legislation by the State Legislature to permit cities to acquire land and establish fields, thus paving the way for Wichita operating its first municipal field at the Travel-Air factory on East Central Avenue.

The air mail first was flown to Wichita on May 12, 1926, on a route operated by NAT extending from Dallas to Chicago and passing through Oklahoma City and Kansas City. There were two flights daily, the north-bound ship being scheduled to arrive at 11:57 a. m. and the south-bound ship at 1:18 p. m., covering a distance of 987 air miles between Dallas and Chicago.

Even before the line was established the local chamber, particularly its aviation committee, was active in working up support for the air-mail service, getting pledges from the membership in particular and the public at large to use this new mode of quick delivery. To-day, after ten years, the air-mail is such a regular thing that it has ceased to be a novelty, yet during the lean years of its origin its future was none too secure. The chamber here co-operated with thirty-three other towns in Wichita's trade area to bring to the attention of the public the benefits to be derived from the use of the system, with a result that has justified the whole undertaking.

The ~~officers~~ members of the Aviation Committee in the year that the air mail was brought to Wichita were: W. P. Innes, chairman; E. C. Moriarty, vice-chairman; M. M. Murdock, Wilbur M. Ne<sup>e</sup>lley, L. S. Seymour, J. H. Turner and Stewart M. Young. Mr Young was postmaster at that time. Mr Turner succeeded Mr Innes as chairman in 1927, and the committee was increased to include Walter Beech, E. E. Boyle, Walter



P. Innes, Jr., C. M. Smyser and H. A. Dillon. The committee now (1936) consists of close to a hundred members, with M. M. Murdock as chairman.

Aside from its leading part in landing the air-mail for Wichita, the Aviation Committee has spread Wichita's fame wide and far by the encouragement and support it has given to the manufacture of aircraft, and often this assistance was not only moral but monetary. Indeed, more than one company got its start on local capital, only to have outside interests be attracted and undertake expansion, sometimes successfully, sometimes not. Grandiose schemes flew higher than kites in 1929 and crashed harder, aviation stocks being among the first to feel the brunt of the depression, because the industry was new, having no tradition to draw upon, and hence no accumulated reserves to sustain it.

A list of manufacturers and jobbers of aircraft and accessories ~~zzzz~~ shows that sixteen factories were in operation in 1929, these being: Swallow Airplane Manufacturing Co., Travel Air Manufacturing Co., Inc., Stearman Aircraft Company, Cessna Aircraft Company, Swift Aircraft Company, Knoll Aircraft Company, Braley Aircraft Company, Yunkers Aircraft Corporation, Wichita Airplane Manufacturing Company, Watkins Aircraft Company, Mooney Aircraft Company, Sullivan Aircraft Company, Associated Aircraft Company, Continental Aircraft Company, Metal Aircraft Corporation, and Buckley Aircraft Company.

There were six airplane motor factories, classified as experimental: Wichita Blue Streak Airplane Motor Company, Poyer Motor Company, Wichita Imblum Aero Corporation, Self Aircraft Corporation, C. M. Mulkins (Excelsior-Henderson airplane motors), and Vanos Aircraft Corporation.

Air Transportation at that time was handled by Airvia, Inc., (ticket office and brokers), Central Airlines Company (Universal), National Air Transport, Inc., Pacific Southwest Airways Corporation, Transcontinental Air Transport, Inc., Wichita Air Service Provision Company (WASP), Western Air Express, Mid-Continent Air Line, and Yellow Air-Cab Company.



There were over a dozen schools offering aeronautical instruction, including courses ranging from welding to actual flying, with the University of Wichita offering a four-year course in aeronautical engineering. The accessory and supply houses were twice the number of airplane factories, and Johnston-Larimer made flying suits and Teitzel-Jones-Dehner made flying boots. The old established iron foundries turned to compressing corrugated hangars and forging hangar steel -- cantilever trusses, beams, and disappearing doors. Such nationally established concerns as Curtiss and Wright opened branches in Wichita to deal in motors, parts, and service. You would have thought Detroit and Toledo and Dayton had undertaken an exodus to combine and rear an Air Capital upon the plains of Kansas at the junction of the two ~~Arkansas~~ Arkansas Rivers. Wichita was teeming with ~~air~~ activity, seething, frothing with excitement. The discovery of oil in the ~~East~~ Wright and Eastborough pools had enhanced the play. The gambling instinct was at feverish heat. And then -- the crash.

One writer, studying the phenomena that have resulted in Wichita's commanding position of leadership in commercial aircraft production, attributes the uniqueness to Man's gambling instinct, and yet it is evident he overlooks one simple fundamental factor, and that is Nature. The Lord God of Creation, resting on the seventh day from his labors, must have paused and gazed admiringly upon his handiwork that lay cupped in the saucer of the Arkansas River -- the broad valley buttressed on the east by gently rolling hills. It was not precisely his choice for the Garden of Eden, since it was largely a treeless plain, but he had endowed the creature whom he had moulded out of clay with an instinct to fly, and it passed that some geological aeons hence Man hit upon this spot to sprout his wings, -- this spot that is Wichita in the present Twentieth Century.

For here is an extensive clearing in the wilderness, with such factors as ~~and~~ wind and sunshine to make it pre-eminently desirable as a flying center; the stiff winds of March to test the tensile strength of ~~airframes~~ <sup>ailerons</sup> and struts and fabric in the battle of force against resistance, and sunshine, almost the year around,



to enhance visibility, and a climate that is remarkably free of fog in comparison with other areas. The altitude, roughly 1,300 feet above sea-level, the steady winds, sometimes gentle murmurs from the South or zephyrs from the West or cool breezes from the East laden with moisture, or chill blasts from the North, -- either gentle or strong, but always steady, as wind goes, varying in intensity but always blowing; the days with only a faint trace of autumnal haze and the clear nights when the stars twinkle as compasses and beacons for the nocturnal eagles, -- all these factors of climate and weather and nature conspire to the greatness of the glory that is Wichita's in the aeronautical firmament, -- plus Man's ingenuity.

Man is naturally a creature of adaptation, and where advantages exist, he is not long hesitant in developing them. Nature favored Wichita as an air center, just as she favored California with gold, and its resources are natural, requiring no artificial stimulation, no advance ballyhoo, nothing save man utilizing them in his inevitable trend toward progress. The oil play in the mid-Continent field had provided men with the wherewithal, the inclination, and the leisure to invest in an oil-rich producer new enterprise, and if ~~he~~ turned to airships as a growing child turns from toy balloons to kites, then it was with the realization that aircraft offered a new field for fuel consumption, resulting in an increase in demand for oil and gasoline, and thus more oil wells to provide the supply.

It may have been the gambling instinct that fired Wichita capitalists in the past decade, but closer scrutiny reveals it <sup>was</sup> ~~an~~ plain common-sense. Here was something close at hand, with Nature offering a vast plethora of her bounty both in the ground and in the air; an open bid, as it were, for man to do his damndest to do his best. The gods surely were amused by some of the antics in not only financial clowning but in stunt-flying; yet the gods are patient, knowing that man learns, if ever so slowly, by cold hard experience. From the frenzied twenties man emerges into the thoughtful thirties, soberer and mellower in wisdom. The show meanwhile goes on, not as glamorous as the opening act which offered its panoply of speculation, but as intriguing and more interesting from a rational point of view, presenting an unfoldment of an industry along a steady course of development.



1 From the sixteen companies making aircraft, whose factories dotted Wichita's industrial map at the close of the last decade, the list has dwindled to four. Unsound financing, impractical management, consolidation and competition have backed an even dozen of them ~~off the board~~ off the gangplank into the seas of memory, or otherwise drowning them outright in oblivion.

The four companies now in operation are Beechcraft, Stearman, Cessna, and Swallow, representing an outlay of approximately \$2,500,000 in plants, equipment, and material. ~~and production~~ The employment figures shift according to seasons and volume of production, but between 500 and 600 persons are employed the year around at the factories, with 225 at Beechcraft, 200 at Stearman, from 35 to 50 at Cessna, and from 12 to 15 at Swallow. Close to another hundred persons are employed in the various contingent services, including twenty-five in flying-service and repair agencies, another twenty-five in transport service, five in the branch of the Weather Bureau that provides weather information for fliers, three representatives of the aeronautics division of the Department of Commerce, three employees at the Municipal Airport, and four employees of the Aircraft Steel Company, a jobbing concern.

The production volume of all Wichita plants is estimated at \$1,500,000 per year. The Municipal Airport represents a cost of \$600,000, counting Administration Building, hangar, and improvements. The air industry in Wichita, counting all aspects, comes close to being a \$5,000,000 investment. This is all solid and substantial, covering nothing that is not in actual use, functioning in an efficient manner to yield profit in dollars and satisfactory results to the air-minded public. <sup>This</sup> <sup>been</sup> <sup>by</sup> ~~The~~ figure may have greatly exceeded that in 1929, when the air boom was at its apex, but the financial structure at that time, in many instances, was built so insecurely on paper that it tottered with the first blow of the depression and collapsed leaving only those companies standing which had been built upon the rock of financial stability.



Those concerns are still going -- Beech, Stearman, Cessna and Swallow, -- names which have figured in Wichita's aviation history from inception, remembering that Swallow is the outgrowth of the old Laird Swallow, and that Walter Beech, Lloyd Stearman, and Clyde Cessna were associated early with Charlie and Matty Laird and Jake Mollendick in the original company.

The first offshoot from the Swallow stem was when Matty himself left the organization in 1923 to form the E. M. Laird Commercial Airplane Company of Chicago, his older brother, C. S. Laird, replacing him at the head. Walter Beech was employed as test pilot and Lloyd Stearman, fresh from two years of study in architecture at the Kansas State Agricultural College and with a hitch in the Naval Air Service as his background, was promoted to the position of designing engineer, the New Swallow being his creation.

But the New Swallow was a frail bird from strictly a business standpoint. The company fell into receivership, and when it was reorganized, good-natured Jake, whose charity, if not his credulity, had been imposed upon, was out of focus. In a final effort to forestall receivership and to recoup part of his losses, he sold to the Lincoln-Paige Company, of Lincoln, Neb., the rights to manufacture and sell the New Swallow in Nebraska under the name of Lincoln-Paige. This concern previously had been rebuilding surplus war craft into commercial ships. A descendant of the old boneshaking Adam thus flew to the flats of the Platte to feather a new nest.

Shortly before this reorganization, Charlie Laird resigned to form the Laird Aircraft Corporation of Wichita, producing the "Whippoorwill," a cabin bi-plane. Reverses drove this company into insolvency, and in 1928 its assets were purchased by the Knoll Aircraft Corporation, headed by Felix A. W. Knoll, a young german aeronautical engineer who had designed ships for many foreign countries. ~~brother-in-law~~ Waverly Stearman, a brother of Lloyd C. Stearman, replaced Charley ~~the~~ Laird as designer of the Whippoorwill organization.



Early associates of the brothers Laird in their first company were Buck Weaver and Billy Burke. Weaver and Matty Laird were war-time buddies. The former went to Lorain, Ohio, to organize the Weaver Aircraft Company, which became Waco Aircraft of Troy, Ohio, becoming a large producer of commercial planes. Weaver since has died a natural death, whereas Billy Burke flew, crashed, and dived to his. His plane tangled in high tension wires spanning Lake Spavinaw near Tulsa. Billy<sup>4</sup> used to do the same ~~thing~~ kind of stunting at the Swallow Field, flying under telegraph wires that stretched along the east side of Hillside Avenue past the airport, only he never crashed. He was the first pilot ever to take the present writer of this great epic aloft, stunting him over Main and Douglas by flying upside down, doing barrel-rolls and everything else that was up Billy's alley, <sup>beforehand</sup> without a hint that such was to be the thrilling experience of the young punk in the rear cockpit, who was strapped in. In those days it wasn't against the law to cut up over the ~~busiest~~ busiest and windiest corner in the State of Kansas at a 'safe' altitude of 3,000 feet.

The origin of Travel Air (the present Beechcraft) hinges around Walter Beech. Joining Swallow in 1923 as a test pilot, he quickly built up an enviable reputation for himself, flying Swallows to victory in many events, including the Admiral Fullam Derby at St Louis in July, 1924. Fired by the example of Laird and Weaver, he early determined to own a factory and build his own planes, and to this end he teamed up in business with Clyde Cessna, a pioneer Kansas aviator and barn-stormer.

Cessna had become interested in aviation as <sup>early as</sup> 1910 while living on a farm at Rago, Kingman County, and he became owner of the first monoplane west of New York. The fuselage of this ship was built to his order in New York and shipped to Enid, Okla., where it was covered, the Cessna wing was added, and the engine was mounted. In this ship Cessna taught himself to fly; he was a 'natural,' like Bert Acosta, who at that time also was springing to fame.



The intrepid Cessna as late as 1925 had not attached himself to any factory, and Beech succeeded in interesting him in the proposed organization. Each put in \$5,000 of operating capital toward producing the first Travel-Air. The company, succeeding with its first job, soon outgrew its little factory, and, expanding, it took in Lloyd Stearman as assistant designer, and presently it was building a plant five miles east of town on Central Avenue.

This site, with a 160-acre landing field adjoining it, figured in the prime of Wichita air growth, with Travel Air enlarging its plant as business picked up and with the city taking over the field and municipalizing it. It was here that Col Charles Augustus Lindbergh landed on his tour of the Nation after his heroic and historic solo conquest of the Atlantic in 1927, and where he received the plaudits of a multitude of kansans and oklahomans who converged on Wichita to honour one whose ship could have been -- indeed, might well have been, -- designed, built and flown on its maiden flight from that very field. But that is another story; a story of a miscue in a bid for renown, in which Travel Air missed its chance because the directing genius thereof had tucked away in a file and either ignored or forgot a telegraphic query from an obscure, unheralded air-mail pilot who sought to interest the company in making a ship that would be first to succeed in flying across an ocean in solo passage. Irony plays many quirks, but its hand seldom is so ironic that it deals a blow like that to a factory, and, for that matter, a town, that was supposed to be up on its toes reaching for every laurel in building itself up as The Air Capital. But Fame was to smile upon Wichita in many other ways; it had before, and it would again.



Differences of opinion regarding design led to Cessna withdrawing from Travel Air after he had designed and built at his own expense outside the factory a monoplane that was the first commercial ship to hop the Pacific Ocean. Piloted by E. L. Smith and E. B. Bronte, this ship took off from Oakland, Cal., on July 14, 1927, and crashed the following day in making a forced landing on Molokai Island, Hawaii, after its supply of gas had become exhausted, without injury, however, to either pilot. Cessna always has been a stickler to the cantilever wing monoplane type of aircraft -- a sort of monomania with him, or monotype, aeronautically, but not typographically, speaking.

In his insistence upon one type,  
If Cessna had reason to believe he was vindicated, then Beech had reason to feel he was justified by a policy of adherence to a variety of types of design, both previous and as subsequent events were to prove.

With no less a personage than Beech himself at the stick of a stock biplane, a Travel-Air topped a sweeping victory in the 1926 Ford Reliability Tour. Three similar biplanes finished the tour the year previous with perfect scores, Beech and Chief Bowhan being two of the pilots. But perhaps the greatest triumph of all for Travel Air was when Col Art Goebel, flying the "Woolaroc," with his navigator, Lieut. W. V. Davis, won fame, victory and \$25,000 in the Dole Trans-Pacific Race. The celebrity that the Woolaroc received over this feat was exceeded later only by Colonel Lindbergh's "Spirit of St Louis," which now is a museum-piece.

The formation of the Cessna Aircraft Corporation was announced in April, 1927. Victor Roos, formerly of Bellanca-Roos of Omaha, became junior member of the Cessna-Roos Aircraft Corporation in August of that year, but the company reverted to its original name when Roos sold his interest to become general manager, secretary and treasurer of Swallow.



Lloyd Stearman, designer of the New Swallow and the Travel-Air biplane, left Travel Air in 1926 to go to Hollywood to do stunt flying in the movies, where he met Fred Hoyt, also a movie flier, and Mac Short, an engineer and flier, and the trio organized the Stearman Aircraft Company of Venice, Cal. After a year of gondoliering on the shallow canals of Venice, the trio accepted an offer for some deeper financing in Wichita. Walter Innes, Jr., took it upon himself to raise \$60,000 in stock subscriptions in one day via telephone among Wichitans, with the result that Stearman was floated to Wichita in September, 1927, where it has been ever since, leaving the mud flats of Venice high and dry. Lloyd C. Stearman no longer is associated with the company, now being a representative of the aeronautics division of the United States Department of Commerce.

There were other companies that figured prominently in the aviation life of the community up to the bust in 1929, among them Lark and Swift and a few other birds of ~~the~~ <sup>a similar</sup> category, all off-shoots of either Swallow, Travel Air or Stearman or Cessna, but these four last-named concerns may be regarded as definitely established. George Christopher now is running Swallow; J. Earl Schaefer has risen from sales manager to president of Stearman; Travel Air has been supplanted by Beechcraft, with Walter Beech again heading it, and Clyde Cessna still is head of the concern bearing his name.

The Stearman factory has gone into production of military planes, both for this country and some nations in South America, receiving contracts from the various governments in recognition of the success it achieved in the development of training planes for both the army and the navy.

Yet it isn't war that the aviation industry in Wichita is counting on to snap the business out of the doldrums; it is the realization that aircraft increasingly is proving itself a necessity in peace-time activity for commercial and ~~for~~ transport ~~and~~ service and for purposes of pleasure. Distance has been annihilated and time shattered to such an extent that delays no longer will be



brookd in the shipment of cargo to places that are remote and all but inaccessible save by air. These new air channels, whether they be paths to the plantations of Pan-America or mission stations in the Congo or dude ranches in the wild and woolly West, are being used with a greater frequency as man increasingly takes to wing, whether to expedite his wares or to expedite himself as super-cargo. The air-mail has pioneered in opening air-lanes. Inland Wichita was among the first of the 'islands' in the vast sea of Middle-Western prairie where these ships paused to drop their pouches of packets and missives that bore a kind of stamp of which the founding fathers, with all their vision, never had envisioned: stamps that bore the imprint of giant mechanical condors flying through clouds, through rain and sleet, in the Twentieth Century's version of the revival of the Pony Express.

Flying the mails was fraught with the danger of any pioneering enterprise, and the casualties constitute a roll of honour from which experience was gained to enable air-transport to be the safe and reliable mode that it is today. It is owing to the activity of the Aviation Committee of the Chamber of Commerce that Wichita had a hand in the development of that early progress whereby not only hours but days and nights were clipped off the time it required to communicate with either coast. The race was against a minimum of time to insure a maximum of safety when all America should awaken to the advantage of the aerial mode. All America did awaken in response to the exploit of "Slim" Lindbergh, and became air-minded, and since then the endeavour has been directed toward making it air-accustomed.

From its success in landing the air-mail for Wichita and in interesting and inducing aircraft companies to establish here, the Aviation Committee turned to the problem of providing this city with the facilities of a distinguished airport, one that was commensurate with the dignity of a title which then was being bestowed gratuitously upon the city -- The Air Capital. Nothing less than a Le Bourget, a Roosevelt Field, would suffice to answer the expansive visions of those up-and-coming Wichitans who were heralding a new Rome at the aerial crossways in



the heart of an industrial and an agricultural Empire.

Yet the law itself was a barrier, and a Justinian was required to circumvent it, legally, of course. The undesirability of a flying field within the limits of a compact city is understandable, considering its effect upon surrounding residential property both from a standpoint of safety and potential value, and any site in the business area was out of the question, for the reason that no field was large enough, neither Payne's Pasture nor Mathewson's Pasture nor the old race-track site on the west bank of the Big River north of the Missouri Pacific Railway. Besides, this would have smacked of copying Kansas City's development of the bottoms at the mouth of The Kaw as a municipal airport, with the contingent danger of fog lifting up from the confluence of the Little River with the Big River hard by, greatly to the detriment of ships that pass in the night.

It wasn't so much that law forbade the creation of a municipal airport as it was that it made no provision for it, even within the confines of a municipality. The Aviation Committee, in co-operation with a legal committee of the chamber and the City Solicitor, who at that time was Mr A. V. Roberts, drafted the necessary permissive legislation which should enable the city to acquire a site beyond its limits for such a specific purpose. This was pushed through a legislative chamber of bucolic farmers, doubtless with a joker that cows shouldn't be disturbed within a mile or two of the airport when airplanes either ascended or descended. Anyhow, Wichita was authorized to build its long-wanted airport as a municipal venture, but it happened that where the mills of justice had ground slowly, some enterprising Wichitans had gone ahead and kneaded the dough.

This consisted of the formation of the Wichita Booster Company by Jack Turner and others, who developed Travel Air flying field, which the city took over when it was allowed to do so by its lord-protectors at Topeka. This was a 160-acre patch five miles east on Central Avenue, one-fourth as large and equally as inadequate in comparison with the field that supplanted it.



The field that supplanted it was the old California Section, five miles southeast of Wichita, about four miles south and a mile or two west of the Central Avenue airport. It was a section of pasture-land, 640 acres in area, which had been optioned as a prospective suburban development in times before Wichita was compelled to meet the challenge in aeronautical progress if it wanted to stay on the transport map.

This field was appropriately named: California. It was as sun-drenched as an esplanade leading to the Golden Gate; its gracefully undulant sweep was as broad and as fragrant as the flower-laden fields of the Imperial Valley; its haze as ethereal as the sun-flecked atmosphere of the high Sierras, and in all else it was reminiscent of the last frontier that dips into the Pacific. It was ideal for a flying center, as ideal as any field at Oakland or flower-crested Burbank. It was, moreover, at the half-way point between East and West: a suitable place to stop in the flight of eagles across a continent. It had the additional advantage of being now bowl surrounded by lofty crags, and in this respect it obviated those sudden changes in temperature and air currents due to precipitous drops in altitude, such as characterize airports in mountainous areas, making landing hazardous.

The winds, streaking down from the western plateau, blew steadily, with occasional capricious gusts to test the mettle of a neophyte pilot; or they blew not at all, or as a murmuring andante, leaving the field remain fallow and serene, with a herd of kine grazing contentedly on bluestem and buffalo grass in a pastoral setting. The moon-flowers furtively opened their silvery little cups to quaff argent-spangled dew amid the hushness of the slumbrous nocturne as Celene cast her beams from a clear, star-lit sky, and it all, somehow, was enchantingly californian, and it still remains to this day, only more garish under the play of flood-lights that eclipse the splendour of the lunar goddess.



It is transformed now into the bizarre glamorousness of Hollywood. The California style permeates the type of architecture that is the Administration Building, offering its masses of set-backs that rise up to a square tower as one views it approaching the field from that Via Appia that leads from The Air Capital -- the tree-bordered diagonal George Washington Boulevard. The main building is situated in the northwest corner of the section, the nearest corner from town, and to the east is the hangar, its style of design corresponding with the Administration Building, with ornate decorative effects gracing its copices.

This new Wichita Municipal Airport -- a mile square -- is operated under the direction and control of the Board of Park Commissioners of the City of Wichita. Its rating is A1-A, the highest rating bestowed by the Federal Government. The terrain is native prairie sod, unturned by plough, and hence compactly knitted by the roots of grasses, and hence ideal for taking off or landing.

It is laid out as an all-direction field, the north-south landing strips being 4,800 feet long, and the others in excess of 3,600 feet. Open country surrounds the field with no adjacent structures to jeopardize flyers. The entire area is fenced with border lights, obstruction lights (on telephone poles), and is equipped with floodlights which illuminate even the farthest corners of the field. The hangar is a modern approved type of brick and steel, 270x102 feet, of cantilever construction, and so designed that planes may enter from the sides. It has a capacity for thirty planes, and will accommodate the largest land ships built.

The airport consists of more than a hangar, office and depot, runways and lamp-houses. It is, in a rather restricted sense, a park. It has been beautified, and it is being utilized as such by thousands of Wichitans who motor out to it on summer evenings to enjoy the coolness of its breezes and to see the ships come in. Plenty of parking space is available in the northwest corner of the field, just off State Highway 15, along a drive that winds past the Administration Building, offering an excellent view as the giant transports glide down and taxi up toward the buildings.



A shoulder-high wire net fence prevents cars from crowding on the field into the path of ships as they roll up to discharge and receive passengers. The fence is draped with climbing vines and garlanded with rose blossoms. Other flowers are blooming in beds nearby. The cars line up row on row along the fence, facing the clearing, with windshields open and windows down to catch the fresh and cool breezes blowing across the mile expanse of airport. People talk in muffled tones, expectant, with sometimes shrill laughter breaking the stillness. The scene is a revival of that Nineteenth Century classic of going to the depot to see the trains come in and of that ageless classic of going to the wharf and peering out to a misty horizon to catch a first glimpse of a white sail.

In the nocturnal hours the airport becomes an abode of romance, superseding public parks. The local contingent of the Legion of Youth motors to the spot in droves. A swain and his lady-bird are nonchalantly parked in a Chevvie coupe beside a swain and his lady-bird who are parked in a V-8. They loiter, they linger amid the fragrance of a rose-bower, their serenade to be broken presently by the roar of a pair of twin motors as a giant air-liner swoops down and pulls up within the glare of ~~food~~ floodlights to empty its human cargo. The intent crowd in the gallery lining the enclosure murmur with a ripple of excitement as a fluttering figure steps out to promenade -- a Hollywood star bound either east or west, with a satellite in her train, sometimes her director, sometimes her husband, sometimes he is both. She trods upon native prairie terrain where gophers were burrowing only a few years before and an occasional harmless bullsnake crawled to keep rodents from being too utterly prolific. Suave and glamorous under the flare of lights, she flickers like that butterfly that she is on the silver-sheet, reenters the cabin, and flies away, to light again either at Kansas City or Albuquerque, depending upon which way the whims of fortune blow her.



The Municipal Airport did not come into existence without foresight, and its maintenance is not carried on without sound business judgment, an acumen for disinterested public service, and making it profitable. The foresight was largely that of the late L. W. Clapp, banker, capitalist, <sup>Mayor and</sup> former City Manager, and until his death two years ago (September, 1934), Chairman of the Board of Park Commissioners of the City of Wichita.

The most tiresome mortal that ever penned a manuscript and read it as a public address, nevertheless he was untiring in his zeal and in his devotion to the improvement of the city, from his own home to the public links in Sim Memorial Park, where it is doubtful he ever golfed. His love for flowers, his ardor for beautification, was more than a hobby, a penchant, an avocation; it was the manner by which Mr Clapp expressed his soul, and he certainly left a far more beautiful Wichita than he found -- the man who cultivated Nature, who befriended wild and growing plants, who tenderly nurtured them and persuaded them to grow in spots which otherwise they disdainfully would have shunned as being too inelegant, too ugly.

It was fortunate for Wichita that the Municipal Airport, once it was created, was allotted to the control and direction of the Park Department during the Clapp regime. Whatever may be said in praise of the artistic side in Mr Clapp's nature, praise equally is due to his administrative ability in practical business. The airport, to this day, remains entirely municipalized, without a single concession to private enterprise in the maintenance of service that qualifies it for its A-1 government rating.

The very gasoline and oil that is poured into the tanks of ships, whether they are huge transports or mere transients or native birds, is dispensed by attendants who are in the employ of the Park Department. The city owns the fuel and everything else at the field, renting space in hangars to owners of planes where they may, of their own accord, tinker with them or repair them, tune them up or trim them down. The field is under the direct personal management of Joe Patterson,



who rose from the ranks when the city took over the Travel Air field on East Central Avenue ten years ago. He lives and sleeps at the field, having an apartment on the top floor of the Administration Building, monarch of all that he surveys.

The Municipal Airport sets in a frame designed by Alfred MacDonald, Director of Parks and Forestry, in consultation with Mr Clapp and other authorities on city planning. Aside from the purely natural aspects of the field, which has been levelled and smoothed and drained until now it is possible to land in a blinding storm, the design of the runways is so arranged and they are so constructed that the whole offers a problem in geometrics reduced to the simplicity of squares and triangles.

These runways were laid out with a view to conform with the tendency of prevailing winds, the longest strip -- 3,600 feet in length -- being in a north-south direction, the extra length being attributed not only to the fact that that is the course of the prevailing wind but also to the fact that it generally blows harder from either of those points than a cross-wind.

The field has two such north-south runways, one being ~~stright~~ straight and the other verging slightly from east to west. Another long cross-strip runs due east and west, while two other shorter ones are diagonal, one extending northwest to southeast, and the other, northeast to southwest. It thus is possible to take off against the wind in whatever direction it happens to be blowing, whether it be the boreal Aquila shooting his frigid arrows down from the North, or gentle Zephyr riding out of the West or Notus wafting up flower-laden scents from the South or Hesperion blowing dew from the summits of the Ozarks to quench a parched prairie.

Midway between the north-south runway paralleling the east side of the field stands a small brick structure, appearing to be two stories in height, housing a powerful lamp that glows with the intensity of thirty million candles when it is turned on at night to guide ships in landing <sup>or in</sup> ~~an~~ taking off. Its light is so bright that you can read even the market reports or the baseball box-scores set in 6-point in your favorite newspaper as you peruse it anywhere on the field.



A smaller floodlight, with only eight million candlepower, is housed near the main junction of the runways in the north central portion of the field, serving as an auxiliary light, being approximately one-fourth as powerful as the big one. The boundary is festooned with red lights to warn of poles and fences; green lights to indicate clearances. The view of the airport at night, either from a plane or on terra firma, is that of a massive railway terminal with its infinite array of vari-colored lights suspended on gantries, blinking signals, each with an ominous or a welcome purport, depending upon whether its color is a lurid red or a friendly green or a neutral, cautious amber. The happy landings have the odds by about a million to one so far as night-flying is concerned. A few minor spills perhaps have occurred, and the thousands of Wichitans who are drawn to the airport by something more attractive than a sense of morbidity have yet to witness their first tragedy under the lights, which certainly speaks well for the efficiency with which the service is maintained.

The United States Department of Agriculture operates a branch of the Weather Bureau at the Municipal Airport, the office being in the Administration Building. The airways communications division of the Department of Commerce handles reports on weather conditions, providing its service to pilots of transport lines in a two-way radio system. The radio towers are to be seen one mile north of the field. A twenty-four-hour service is offered, and, in addition, the two transport companies using the field also have their own system of communication to and from their air liners.

A radio beacon, or radio range -- the magic eye of modern aviation -- uncannily sends out signals guiding a pilot unerringly to the airport, a code of dots and dashes telling him whether he is on or off the course and also when he is directly over the field, enabling him to set his ship down in a blind landing, allowing, of course, that he is adept at the controls and knows the purpose of each and every gadget on the panel of his plane, -- which, naturally, he must know if he is a licensed pilot.



The airport is situated at the junction of two weather transmission circuits, one extending from Los Angeles to Kansas City and the other originating at Nashville, Tenn., and terminating in Wichita, linking Shreveport, La., Fort Worth and Oklahoma City in a belt that provides up-to-minute service to Transcontinental & Western Air and Braniff Airways, both of which stop at Wichita.

These two lines fly nine ships in and out of Wichita daily, linking this city with the East and West and with the Gulf. Wichita is the only stop in the State of Kansas for these giant twin-motored luxurious air-liners, and the importance of the Municipal Airport is realized by these companies not only because of the city's central location, but because of the accommodations at the field itself, the adequacy of its area, the condition in which its surface is preserved, and the facilities it offers in the nature of maintenance and supplies. The city being air-minded, Wichitans are quick to appreciate the ease with which it is possible to effect an economy of time in travel, whether one is pleasure-bent or business-sent, which makes this town an outstanding source of revenue in passenger traffic, to say nothing of the volume of air-mail that is shipped in and out of here each day.

Summarizing, the factors that contribute to Wichita's supremacy as an air transportation center, as well as its top position as an aircraft manufacturing city, are its favorable location in the center of the United States, its support it always has given to the industry, its location as the junction of two important airways, which are lighted throughout their length from coast to coast and from the Great Lakes to the Gulf by rotating beacons.

The municipal airport is less than fifteen minutes from the heart of the city along a paved state-maintained road boulevard, cutting diagonally northwest from the airport for a distance of five miles and entering the city by a route that offers quick access to all parts of the metropolis. The boulevard is named in honour of the Father of Our Country, and it was the Aviation Committee of the Chamber of Commerce that landed it, co-operating with the Board of County Commissioners.



7

From the acorn planted by the brothers Laird that grew into the family tree whence sprang Swallows, Swifts, Larks and other mechanical birds to bespeak the city's leadership in aircraft production, Wichita began to emerge into international prominence in 1924, when the National Air Congress was held here.

The Laird Swallow factory had been producing planes for five years up to that time, rating it as not only the oldest but the largest manufacturer of ships. Travel Air was scarcely within contemplation, surely not within actual projection, and Stearman Aircraft was three years remote. The degree of fame that had been achieved by the Swallow put Wichita on the aerial map, and the eyes of the aeronautical world turned upon this city on October 10 and 11, when the National Air Congress was held here.

Sanctioned by the National Aeronautic Association, affiliate of the Federation Aeronautique Internationale, this event was held under auspices of the Wichita Chapter of the National Association, ranking as the largest aerial exhibition next to the International Air Races which were held in that year at Dayton, Ohio.

The interest of the public in aviation had been quickened by the exploits of a sextet of intrepid army flyers, Captain Smith and Lieutenants Nelson, Wade, Arnold, Ogden and Harding, who flew around the world, receiving the plaudits of the populace in every spot they touched as well as a good press at home, which followed their every maneuver with the whetted appetite of a flock of newshawks swooping down on big game. That was during the summer preceding the autumnal classic in the Peerless Princess which was definitely to entrench Wichita in the popular mind as The Air Capital. Ten events were carded on the programme, for which the total awards amounted to \$10,000, with some of the races being open to civilian flyers only, others to both civilian and military pilots.



The officers of of the Wichita Chapter of the aeronautical association in 1924 were: Leland S. (Cy) Seymour, president, and general chairman of the Air Congress; J. H. Turner, vice-president; Jake Mollendick, vice-president; Walter H. Beech, vice-president; C. M. Casey, secretary; A. E. Merriam, governor for Kansas of the National Aeronautic Association; A. W. Hinkel, chairman of the board of directors of the local chapter; Maj Howard F. Wehrle, Air Service Reserve, technical director, and Walter Innes, Jr., chairman of operations committee.

The race officials were grouped as follows, all being from Wichita unless otherwise indicated:

John H. Engstrom, chairman; Walter Innes, vice-chairman; Carl Wolfley, St Joseph, Mo., referee.

Contest and Technical Committee: A. E. Merriam, chairman; Walter Innes, Jr., Ralph Hawkes, James N. Marx, E. E. Bidwell, Alva, Okla., Howard T. Fleeson and William R. Anderson, vice-chairmen.

Howard F. Wehrle, starter, and K. V. Hillard, alternate starter, both of Kansas City, Mo.; Odis Porter, Indianapolis, Ind., chief timer; C. S. Ricker, Indianapolis, alternate chief timer; Carl I. Winsor, chairman, assistant timers; J. H. Turner, chairman of judges, and H. M. Quinius, chairman of scorers. The races were run in accordance with the rules of the Federation Aeronautique Internationale Contest Committee of the Seventh Corps Area, representing the NAA and FAI, with Major Wehrle serving as chairman, Mr Merriam as secretary, and Junior Innes as vice-chairman.

Aside from the prominence that the National Air Congress gave Wichita at the time, the event was significant because it brought to public realization the necessity of this city having a municipal airport. The air-mail movement was gaining impetus throughout the land then -- that was a scant dozen years ago -- and



an additional inducement was offered in the prospect of an Army Reserve Unit being established here, with wings replacing spurs as the insignia of what suddenly had become a popular branch of the military service. The Swallow Field, a quarter section of land sloping at a perceptible angle on a hillside, was Wichita's flying field in those times. The local chapter of the NAA, many of whose members belonged to the Chamber of Commerce, and some of whom were active on the original aviation committee of that body, took a hand toward directing the people's attention to the desirability of a municipal field, availing itself of the opportunity created by the Air Congress to point out that if the Peerless Princess was to turn from jobbing to manufacturing, she had better don a municipal dress for a grand splurge in aeronautics.

It was pointed out that forty-two ships passed through Kansas City's Air Terminal as a monthly average in 1924, and that Dayton's supremacy as an air center at that time was owing to governmental experimentation, leaving Wichita with a fair chance to bid for the title of Air Capital. The decision was left to the people in a sort of unofficial plebiscite, the result being that Wichitans who became more air-conscious than ever over the thrilling air races, became enthusiastic over the idea of putting the town definitely and permanently on the air map, with results which already have been enumerated.

In view of Wichita's geographic advantage, it was pointed out that a commercial airplane -- a Laird Swallow, say, -- flying for ten hours at the rate of 100 miles per hour could reach before nightfall thirty-five States in this Federal Union, as well as six of the Canadian Provinces and five of the States in Old Mexico. With planes flying twice that fast now, the time has been cut in half and the distance doubled, the result being it is a small world, after all, when you can leave here at midnight on a Braniff Airliner and lunch in Mexico City tomorrow noon, leave here before 10 a. m. and dine in Los Angeles in the evening, leave here after breakfast and arrive in New York in the afternoon, or, for that matter, leave Newark



at 5 p. m. and arrive in Wichita in time for a night's sleep, via a twin-motored Douglas Airliner flying along The Lindbergh Line. A letter mailed in Wichita at the end of a business day will be delivered in either Los Angeles or Manhattan next forenoon. This record of speedy flight is an improvement upon the first TAT plane that flew the first mail to and from the original municipal airport at the Travel Air plant ten years ago. Progress does not lag in aviation, and Wichita is up to the minute, offering a type of service that makes this city a target in all record hops, to say nothing of the luxury liners that flit in and glide out nine times a day seven days a week.

The latest aspirant attempting to shatter the record for a non-stop trans-continental flight roars over the city and barges down at the airport to mend a broken oil line that is shooting spray. He will try again, succeeding finally in lowering the time in racing against the sun. Some pilot of the future will aim to make it in six hours from the Atlantic to the Pacific or vice versa. And always there will be Wichita The Air Capital at which to land if something goes haywire. The city has become an eyrie for human eagles such as Frank Hawks and Roscoe Turner and other speed demons of the ozone. It is the one nest between Burbank and Bennett Fields, nestled on a vast plain between two mountain ranges. Over the peaks of either, it is only a matter of short hours before the speeding craft is here, roaring at a thunderous clip overhead or sliding down to the firm terrain of the municipal airport.

The ship that perhaps has added to Wichita's fame as No ship has since Art Goebel's "Woolaroc" is The Mystery S, likewise by Travel Air. Completed in August, 1929, it still remains Wichita's most sensational achievement in aircraft. A winged bullet, it was built to annihilate time and space. A low-wing model sport and racing plane, it was equipped with a J-6 Whirlwind 9 300-horsepower engine, capable of a top speed of 235 miles per hour, a cruising speed of 150 at 1,550 revolutions per minute. The length overall was 20 feet 2 inches, height overall,



7 feet 9 inches, span overall, 29 feet 2 inches, with a total area of 125 square feet of wingspread, 12.3 square feet of ailerons. The ship weighed 1,475 pounds empty, with a disposable load of 465 pounds, its gross weight loaded being 1,940 pounds. Its landing speed was 70 miles an hour, and it was capable of climbing at the rate of 3,200 feet per minute at sea level, attaining a service ceiling at 30,000 feet and an absolute ceiling one thousand feet greater. Its normal gasoline capacity was forty-seven gallons, consuming thirteen gallons per hour. Its range at cruising speed was 525 miles, its endurance at cruising speed, three and one-half hours.

A creation of Walter Beech, The Mystery S was The Mysterious red-devil that copped honour and glory in the 1929 National Air Races and Aeronautical Exposition at Cleveland. Its outstanding achievement was in the fifty-mile free-for-all, circling the course at the hands of Doug Davis at an official average speed of 194 miles an hour. One lap its official average speed was 209 miles an hour, the fastest time ever made by any commercial craft in a like event. In this race The Mystery S out-distanced the fastest army pursuit planes whose average speed for the distance was 186 miles an hour. For the first time the Army was beaten by a commercial ship. It was another feather in the crown of The Air Capital.

The Mystery S became a stock sport and racing model, and, besides Davis, another distinguished flyer of this type of ship was Frank Hawks. The model was a bold venture in streamlining. Red, with a dark painted snout, it was as vivid as a cardinal on dress parade, as speedy as a bullet. Its prop was steel and its board was complete. It definitely brought to the attention of the whole world the importance of Wichita as an aircraft manufacturing and transport center.



A survey shows that during the year The Mystery S was being designed with infinite care by Walter Beech and his engineering associates, ~~Wichita~~ the fifteen factories in Wichita were producing a total of 1,500 planes having a valuation of \$8,000,000. This figure represented between one-third and one-fourth of the Nation's commercial aircraft production for 1928. It was estimated that close to 2,500 planes were produced in 1929 with a valuation of \$13,000,000, the increase being due to the various companies undertaking the manufacture of multi-motored <sup>transport</sup> planes as well as the smaller commercial jobs.

At the peak of production 1,000 employees in aircraft factories were drawing a weekly payroll of \$30,000, this number supporting 2,000 other persons, thus making 3,000 who were dependent upon the industry directly. The production capacity of the plants at that time was forty ships per week.

It was during the twelvemonth preceding the crash in Wall Street that outside capital began its infiltration without, however, removing control from local men until the depression had set in definitely, making removal necessary for some shops which already had not been thrust against the bankruptcy wall. Travel Air had produced as high as twenty-three planes a week before it felt the brunt of the financial blow, all but sinking it so far as Wichita was concerned. Yet during the last quarter of 1928 the capitalization of the city's four leading aircraft factories had increased from \$700,000 to \$3,975,000, when Stearman, Swallow and Cessna went into designing multi-motored transports.

Experience has proven, however, that the twin-motored ship offers the standard of excellence and economy in air-transportation, the third engine being regarded by many engineers as excess. The giant TWA luxury-liners that fly the TWA route set the pace for the country, being as comfortable as pullmans and relatively as commodious as the spacious liners that plough the sea. With two pilots, a hostess and an infallible gyroscope constituting the crew of each ship, these airliners roar in and out of Wichita daily and nightly, the humm and purr of their



throbbing motors breaking the nocturnal stillness as these silver-winged all-metal ships glide to earth like huge and graceful argent-spangled argynoids pausing in a transcontinental argosy at the Municipal Airport.

When Wichita was not the center of some outstanding national aerial exhibition, it was sponsoring shows of its own, such as two all-State Air Tours in 1928 when Wichitans took to the air to arouse the rest of Kansas to the advantages of aviation, and the national airways marking conference held here in Roscoe the same year. It was through the activity of ~~Bob~~ Vaughan and Arch Merriam, Jack Turner and Marcellus M. Murdock and other business men-sportsmen that forty chapters of the National Aeronautic Association were organized in this State, and through the activity of everybody concerned that Wichita remained on the itinerary of the Ford Reliability Tour year after year.

In that same year of 1928 a Stearman flown by Deed Levy made the only perfect score in the National Air Tour, and a ~~Cessna~~ Cessna, piloted by Earl Rowland, won the Class A Derby in the National Air Races.

The aircraft ~~industry~~ industry entered production in 1929 in expectation of an accelerating demand for ships -- a prospect that was sustained for nine months until the break in the stock market in October of that year, followed by condition close to panic among the weaker concerns here, which soon folded up.

But meanwhile a special committee composed of R. R. Hasty, Ben Hegler and Lloyd C. Stearman were drawing up ~~legislative~~ proposals to introduce in the Kansas Legislature regarding various phases of manufacture and transportation, which enabled Kansas to pass to the forefront in the protection of an infant industry and to insure those factors of safety for an air-minded public. The city has the Chamber of Commerce to be thankful for in this respect, it paving the way for the ~~city's~~ city's pride, the Municipal Airport, taking the initiative to arouse not only the community but the whole State to the advantage to be realized from being hospitable as the course of empire took to wings and built a new Rome in the West: The Air Capital that is Wichita.



From the picked three who constituted the original special aviation committee of the Chamber of Commerce to investigate the possibility of this city landing the air mail, the membership of the present aviation committee has lengthened to seventy-five names, all of whom are boosters and workers for a bigger and better Air Capital. Their names follow:

*Typist!*  
(pick up names on appended list, disregarding telephone numbers and address. SAVE COPY, it must be returned)

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SINCE 1895



M. M. Murdock, chairman; Walter Beech, O. A. Boyle, Vernon H. Branch,  
Sam Brolund, D. W. Brown, L. B. Brown, Dr M. E. Brownell, Mac Cahal, F. C. Carr,  
Clyde Cessna, George W. Cox, Lewis Denman, George Dickey, J. B. Dickey, Robert  
L. Dillenbeck, Frank Duggins, Frank Dunn, W. J. Easton, Roy W. Elliott, R. S.  
Littell, Robert Garst, Harry F. Gee, J. A. Glover, J. H. Douglas, Ralph E. Graves,  
Fred Grieme, B. F. Hegler, Bruce Helfrich, Dr H. W. Dodge, Frank S. Horn, W. P.  
Huston, Walter Innes, Jr., C. E. Jones, O. W. Jones, F. R. Jump, Dr G. W. Kirby,  
Harold Kohr, J. H. LaGrant, E. M. Leach, H. D. Lester, Winfield S. Leu, Capt H.  
L. Lewis, C. M. Lowry, E. H. Lyon, Alfred MacDonald, John McEwen, Melvin A. Martin,  
E. C. Moriarty, Harrie S. Mueller, C. A. Nath, H. C. Odell, R. S. Orr, Roy Preston,  
J. B. Riddle, D. E. Sauder, J. H. Schaefer, Lloyd R. Simpson, H. D. Smith, Lynn  
Smith, W. E. Stanley, L. A. Stinyard, A. S. Swenson, George Theis, Walter Vincent,  
Bert C. Wells, H. S. Wise, A. L. Wright, Carl Pettijohn.



SOURCES: Wichita, The Air Capital, complimentary booklet issued by the Board of Park Commissioners, Wichita, Kansas; The Story of Travel Air, booklet issued by Travel Air Manufacturing Co., Wichita; Stearman, booklet issued by Stearman Aircraft Co., Wichita; The Triumph of Cessna, booklet issued by Cessna Aircraft Co., Wichita; official souvenir program of National Air Congress, Wichita, 1924; time-tables of Braniff and TWA Airways, Summer, 1936; letter-files of Wichita Chamber of Commerce for 1928 and 1929; minutes of Board of Directors, Chamber of Commerce, from November 30, 1918, to April 26, 1927; The Wichita Beacon, May 12, 1926, for news-report on opening of air-mail through Wichita; list of personnel of Aviation Committee of Chamber of Commerce, 1936; interviews with Alfred MacDonald, director of Parks & Forestry, City of Wichita, and Warren E. Blazier, industrial commissioner of Chamber of Commerce. Written permission required for any other use.