CLEVELAND HOPKINS INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Cleveland Hopkins International Airport is a historic landmark that has served as a model for other airports around the world. Here are some of the important contributions Hopkins has made over the years to the progress of aviation.

1. Became the first municipally-owned airport

Cleveland Airport, the country's first municipally-owned airport, was formally opened for operations on July 1, 1925. The construction of the city airport was masterminded by William R. Hopkins, the City Manager of Cleveland, and Major John Berry. Major Berry became the airport's first manager, a position he held until 1953.

Cleveland Airport was renamed Cleveland Hopkins Airport in May, 1951 to honor Mr. Hopkins' significant contribution to the airport's development. Three years later, the Department of Port Control was established as the airport's administrative unit and was under the directorship of William R. Rogers until 1965. Mr. Rogers brought the airport into its international phase in 1964, as it became a true gateway to the world. That year Cleveland Hopkins became known as Cleveland Hopkins International Airport.

Cleveland Hopkins is a self-sufficient, non-profit facility with an annual budget of $35 million funded by airport users through landing fees, rentals and other charges. Although the airport is owned by the City of Cleveland, no taxpayer dollars are used for its operation. Over 4,000 people work at Cleveland Hopkins, employed by the airlines, concessionaires, general aviation tenants and public agencies. The Department of Port Control employs approximately 280 people who are responsible for the administration of the airport, as well as operations, maintenance of the terminal, airfield, runways and landside facilities.

Due to the foresight of Hopkins and Berry, Cleveland Hopkins could easily expand its land area over the years because of the airport's distance from the city. The airport grew from 400 acres and a landing field in 1925 to its current 1,800 acres and four main runways. In the late 1980's, the lengthening of Runway 5 Left/23 Right added another 1,800 feet of runway to improve air carrier operations and enhance safety.

2. Established the first air freight system

Upon its opening in 1925, Cleveland Airport began to play an important role in the development of the nation's first air cargo transportation system. The airport became a major air freight facility for the Ford Motor Company's Cleveland-Chicago-Detroit supply line. Today, Cleveland Hopkins' freight facility accommodates operations of over 49,000 tons annually by 30 cargo carriers.

3. Provided the first scheduled passenger service

Cleveland Airport was also the first airport in the country to be served by a commercial carrier. The Ford Motor Company in 1925 established scheduled passenger service from Detroit to Cleveland, which eventually became Stout Air Services.

In 1928, the first "Master Log" was implemented to record passenger traffic through the airport. Within the first nine months, over 10,000 passengers traveled through Cleveland Airport. In 1989, the 16 airlines which served more than 150 destinations carried a total of nearly 8.2 million passengers for the year. Approximately 22,500 pass through the airport each day, almost twice the total number of passengers in the airport's first nine months of operation in 1925.

4. Built the first passenger terminal building

By 1927 construction of the airport's first airline passenger terminal had begun. This original terminal, designed to serve 250 passengers a day, officially opened for operation in 1929. The building contained the control tower, weather bureau, post office branch, restaurant, airline ticket office, airport management offices and pilots' quarters.

The original terminal building proved to be inadequate as air transportation grew. To accommodate the ever-increasing number of airline passengers, construction of a new terminal began in 1953. The terminal's design was developed by applying the techniques used by the Columbus School for the Blind, which permitted smooth one-way movement throughout the terminal. The original 1929 terminal was leveled and the new terminal and west ("B") concourse were completed in 1956. In 1957, the north ("A") concourse was constructed to accommodate a future second story. The south ("C") concourse was opened in 1969.

In 1974, a $60 million renovation of the terminal building and concourses began to further improve efficiency and convenience. The west and north concourses were reconstructed with second floors to accommodate passenger loading bridges (jetways). A second level was added to the terminal where the ticketing level and elevated departing roadway are located today, and a mechanized baggage system was installed. The entire project was completed in 1982.

In late 1989, Continental Airlines announced its plans for further expansion of its Cleveland hub. Included in its development plans is the construction of a 67,250-square-foot addition to Concourse C with five new gates, new passenger departure lounges, operations offices, a Presidents Club lounge and additional concession areas. An on-airport flight kitchen and approximately 24,000 square feet of additional baggage claim area will be constructed as well. The carrier also plans to install a moving walkway down the length of Concourse C and to remodel its existing ticket counters.

5. Hosted the first National Air Races

The rapid growth in aviation in Cleveland was due in part to the ace pilots who drew thousands of thrill-seeking spectators to the Cleveland Airport. The first National Air Race was held at the airport in 1929, beginning a Cleveland tradition. In 1932, Jimmy Doolittle set an airspeed record of 252 MPH in his airplane the "Gee Bee", and thus won the race that year. Roscoe Turner broke that record in 1938 with a speed of 283 MPH, and won the air race a second time the following year.

The highlight of the National Air Race each year was the Thompson Trophy Race, which featured high speed, low level pylon racing. This event, scheduled on Labor Day, drew more than 100,000 spectators to the airport. The race week also included stunt flying, parachute jumping and precision flying exhibitions by Army and Navy teams. The air races were suspended from 1940 to 1945, and finally came to an end in 1949.

Today, the immensely popular Cleveland Air Show, featuring such precision flying teams as the Blue Angels, is held each Labor Day weekend at Burke Lakefront Airport.

6. Developed the first lighting system to aid night flying

In the early years of aviation, night flying was severely hampered by the lack of airfield lighting. An innovative aeronautical technician working for the City of Cleveland, Claude F. King, solved this problem in 1930 by inventing the nation's first airfield system. He designed and installed a 3 million candle power beacon to identify the airfield for aviators, in addition to a 1.5 billion candle power floodlight which illuminated the field.

Early operations of this powerful beacon required that a man walk in front of the flood light in order to reduce its blinding effects on the eyes of the pilots making night landings. Later, a light bar was installed and provided a remote-controlled shadow. parts of the original beacon are now on display at the Smithsonian Institute in Washington, D.C.

Today, all of the airport's runways are equipped with high intensity edge lighting, either MALSR (medium intensity approach lighting system), ALSF (approach lighting system), or VASI (Visual Approach Slope Indicators) systems. The airport also has a 36-inch high-intensity rotating airport beacon located on the field.

7. Installed the first airport control tower in the world

In addition to having the first lighting system, Cleveland Hopkins also was the first airport to have an air traffic control tower. Claude King invented, constructed and installed the tower in 1930.

In 1956, a new tower was built to coincide with the construction of the new terminal building. A third tower was constructed in 1987 to 1988. The new $4.9 million, state-of-the-art facility was fully operational in May 1988.

8. The first radio communications system to advise pilots of wind, air traffic and field conditions

Mr. King's invention of the control tower in 1930 marked the first airplane-to-tower communication. Air traffic was directed by well-trained City personnel who used radio equipment borrowed from the U.S. Coast Guard.

The first four tower radio operator's licenses in the country were issued by the federal Communications Commission to Cleveland city employees. The city ran the tower until February 1, 1943, when the Civil Aeronautics Authority, later renamed the Federal Aviation Administration, took over the control tower's function and operations.

9. The first passenger information board providing schedules of more than one airline

As an aid to air travelers, an electric flight information board was installed in the airport's new lobby. This board, the first of its kind, could display flight information for all the airlines simultaneously. Again, Claude King was instrumental in developing the information board. Arrival and departure times were relayed via teleautograph transcribers from the airlines and Civil Aeronautics Administration's air route traffic control center to the board.

10. Provided the first transit link direct to the airport terminal from the heart of the City

Another milestone in Cleveland Hopkins' history was the inauguration of direct rapid transit service from Downtown Cleveland to the airport on November 15, 1968. Passengers could board the rapid transit train in downtown's Terminal Tower and arrive at Cleveland Hopkins 25 minutes later, at a cost of only 35 cents. This was such a popular, convenient way of getting to the airport that within the first two months of operation, the Regional Transit Authority averaged 7,000 passengers per day. Today, the service is still provided, at a cost of $1.00.