100 YEARS: 1926-2026

ERNEST A. LOVE FIELD

Prescott, Arizona

By David M. DuPree

PART 2

1926-1939

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INTRODUCTION

Arizona's Oldest Airport

On July 4, 2026, America celebrated its 250th birthday. On that same day, Prescott's Ernest A. Love Field marked its first century – one hundred years of flying at "the airport beyond the Dells."

Love Field is the oldest airport in Arizona (Appendix D). It is also the only extant Arizona airport built *before* the airport-building frenzy that followed Charles Lindbergh's transatlantic flight. This centennial project is dedicated to the hundreds of "air-minded" people who played a role in establishing the field and, over time, building it into one of the finest airports in the West.

The men and women who established and built Prescott's airport were persistent. They promoted, persuaded, cajoled and whenever necessary, rolled up their sleeves. The airport should have faded away during the Depression, reverting back to the cattle and prairie dogs. But it didn't. It was kept alive by an enthusiastic and stalwart band of local aviators with support from some farsighted community leaders. And because of that, when the lease expired in 1938, the city was able to justify the expense of purchasing the airport land. At that point, the Prescott *owned* an operating airport on an excellent site with plenty of room for growth. And that, in turn, allowed it to qualify just a short time later for federal funding under a large-scale, nationwide airport improvement program. The national defense appropriations (DLAND [1]) of 1940-42 resulted in comprehensive improvements at Prescott that, in every regard, formed the foundation for today's regional airport.

Ernest A. Love Field seamlessly accommodates the western flight operations of Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University, a modern airline terminal, a federal air tanker & firefighting base, corporate jets, air ambulance flights, transient military aircraft, hundreds of based aircraft and a multitude of other aviation activities. The development of this airport did not occur haphazardly. At several key points in the airport's history, city leaders reached one of those "fork-in-the-road" moments when the wrong decision could have dramatically altered the course. Fortunately, in each of those cases they chose wisely.

The primary focus of this project is the first half-century of the airport's history. The series will begin with "Prelude," which will set the stage by describing Prescott's earliest aeronauts, aviators and landing fields. Next, Part 2 will chronicle the development of Ernest A. Love Field and its operation through the 1920s and 1930s, including the establishment, dedication and rededication of the airport, as well as the people who kept the airport going during the Great Depression. Part 3 will cover the 1940s and 1950s, encompassing World War II and the postwar years. Part 4 will present the 1960s and 1970s, up to the beginnings of the Embry-Riddle era. A great deal of additional material will be added in monograph format throughout the centennial year. Indexes, finding aids and other primary-source reference materials will also be added in hopes that the airport's history will be expanded and carried forward.

NOTE: The airport was dedicated as "Ernest A. Love Airport" in 1928. However, "Ernest A. Love *Field*" soon became the most commonly-used name. Arguably, it has remained the name most preferred by residents and pilots through most of the airport's history.[2] That will be reflected throughout this centennial tribute.

1926 or 1928?

For the past several decades, there has been some confusion regarding when, exactly, Prescott's airport was established. In recent years, airport anniversary celebrations and retrospective newspaper stories have pegged 1928 as the year the airport was built, and more specifically, August 26, 1928, when it was rededicated as "Ernest A. Love Airport." In reality, however, the land was acquired and the runways constructed in May-June 1926, with a formal dedication on July 4, 1926.

The root of the misunderstanding appears to go back at least to 1950 and a lightly researched story published in Phoenix. Then, in the mid-1980s some local researchers began to revisit the airport's early history. Unfortunately, they didn't go back far enough. A common trap when researching local history is to work your way backwards through the newspapers until you find the event that you think you're looking for – in this case, the airport dedication.[3] For reasons that will be explained later, Grace Sparkes and the Chamber of Commerce Aviation Committee did not refer to the 1928 ceremonies as a rededication. It was promoted as the dedication of Prescott's "new Ernest A. Love Airport." Thus, the trap for researchers was sprung and 1928 became embedded in local history as the anniversary year for the airport. Even as abundant primary-source material was being uncovered that described the earlier dedication, some minimized the event as "just a flying circus" held in conjunction with Frontier Days or they asserted that the 1926 airport was at a different location. Still others, lacking context in aviation history, dismissed the 1926 ceremonies simply because they were smaller in scale than the 1928 rededication.

Two Years. So What?

Why does it matter? To people who are disinterested in aviation history, a two-year difference in an airport's age is of no consequence. However, to those with an appreciation for history, particularly the people who study the development of airports and airways, the difference between 1926 and 1928 is significant. It's all about context. In aviation history, this was an extraordinary period. The development of aeronautics in America was transitioning from low gear to overdrive. Transcontinental Air Mail, the Air Commerce Act and rapidly-emerging technologies all combined with willing capital to advance aeronautics at an unprecedented rate. In the midst of this, one single event changed the nation's perceptions of aviation as nothing else had.

Charles Lindbergh made his solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean in May 1927. The details of that landmark event are readily available elsewhere, and need not be repeated here. However, the impact that this flight had on the subsequent development of airports, airways and airlines can't be overstated.

Aviators worldwide had been making and breaking flight records of all kinds for years. From a technical standpoint, some of those flights were actually more challenging than Lindbergh's. Though they made headlines and were of great interest to those already enamored with aviation, they largely failed to inspire the broader public. Lindbergh's feat (a long, solo flight across an ocean, one man against the elements) combined with his persona (a tall, handsome young American with tousled hair and a serious demeanor) *captured the nation's imagination* in a way unmatched by any other aviation accomplishment. Seemingly overnight, the public began to envision the commercial potential of aviation.

For those people laboring to develop civil aviation in the United States, Lindbergh's greatest contribution was that he capitalized on his new-found fame to encourage the development of aeronautics, and in particular, the construction of airports. A nationwide tour, planned as meticulously as his transatlantic crossing, was organized for just that purpose. He even managed to dedicate a few airports along the way (including Tucson's Davis-Monthan Municipal Airport, now Davis-Monthan Air Force Base, on September 23, 1927). The result was a nationwide burst of enthusiasm for building airports. Every town wanted to take its rightful place on the airways. Although there were public misconceptions about what "airways" were and what form they would ultimately take, few public officials wanted to take a chance on being left behind. There were still many people alive who remembered what it had meant for a town to be bypassed by the railroad.

What does any of this have to do with Prescott? Prior to Lindbergh's flight, let's call it "pre-Lindbergh," getting a town to build a real airport could be a very hard sell. A "real airport" in the early 1920s was little more than a level tract of land, well-drained and reasonably obstruction-free, with a properly conditioned landing area (grubbed, dragged and compacted) of adequate length for the altitude and surface winds. It had to be close to a decent road, and of course, fuel and oil had to be available somewhere nearby. Hangars and outhouses were a nice touch, but not, strictly speaking, essential. A telephone was a true luxury. As simple as that sounds, especially by today's standards, this real airport still required a level of funding and labor that many towns were unwilling to expend.

Those few real airports that did exist in Arizona up to the mid-1920s were either situated along the Army's "Model Airway" through the southern part of the state (Yuma, Tucson, Nogales and Douglas; laid-out and largely funded by the War Department), or they were multi-use fields, typically utilizing a town's race track, athletic field or park. The advantage of the multi-use arrangement was that the facility already existed, it required little or no additional expenditure and it was usually close to town. The downside was that they were suitable only for the WWI-era biplanes of the day. For the larger and faster planes soon to follow, these makeshift landing fields were wholly inadequate, if not downright dangerous. That was especially true in northern Arizona, where altitude becomes a serious factor. Often surrounded by fences, trees and other hazards, and with no capacity to expand, most of the multi-use or adjacent-to-town airports disappeared within a few years. The 1920s airports that have survived to the present have done so because they had plenty of room to expand. It was very, very hard for people in the 1920s and 30s to imagine the advances in aircraft size and performance that would occur in the near future.

Everything changed in 1927. During the years immediately following Lindbergh's flight, airports – real, purpose-built airports – began to spring up all across the country, including

Arizona. Airport design and construction became a specialty for architects, engineers, and builders. It was no longer a hard sell, it was more like "Let's make it happen."

Today, an airport established during the years between May 1927 (Lindbergh's flight) and around 1939 (the buildup to WWII) can rightfully be considered a historic airfield. There aren't that many of them. But a continuously-operated airport that was established *before* Lindbergh's flight is in a very exclusive category of pioneer flying fields. Ernest A. Love Field is the only one in Arizona. It hasn't just endured, it has flourished. It was, in 1926, fortuitously sited to accommodate a century of growth and improvement. The site may have been chosen more out of necessity than foresight, but the result is the same – a modern regional airport with room to spare. That hasn't happened very often, especially in the Mountain West.

Ignoring the actual date that Prescott's airport was established and the subsequent flights at the field prior to August 1928, effectively robs the airport (and the community) of a significant point of pride. Prescott established a real airport at a time when other Arizona cities and towns were not so inclined. And it wasn't allowed to die from indifference or neglect during the Great Depression.

More than enough primary-source references are available to put to rest, once and for all, any confusion about the airport's establishment. On the other hand, future airport feature stories might still continue to rely on the same old secondary sources, perpetuating the error and omitting important facets of the airport's history.

In the section, "Prescott Builds an Airport," more will be presented about the pre-Lindbergh and post-Lindbergh aspects of early airport development and how that led to the rededication ceremony for Ernest A. Love Field.



Bob Hausler's 3.5" x 5.5" (postcard size) business card from 1925-26, when he was promoting the establishment of landing fields along what he called the "Tri-State Airway" through California, Arizona and New Mexico. (*author's collection*)

PRESCOTT BUILDS AN AIRPORT

"the airport beyond the Dells"

Prior to 1925, only a very few Arizona cities and towns had anything more than a flat, open field where emergency landings could be made by a skilled aviator. Those few towns with a "real airport" (as described in the introduction) were located on the Army's "Model Airway," the western section of which extended from El Paso to San Diego, routed through Arizona by way of Douglas, Nogales, Tucson and Yuma, with an alternate routing through Phoenix. This very early daytime airway connected the Army's airfields in Texas and points east to Rockwell Field at San Diego and March Field near Riverside. It also provided infrastructure for patrolling the southern border by air when necessary. In a few more years, this route would become, with some modifications, the western portion of the Southern Transcontinental Airway.

In 1925, a new, though unofficial, airway across northern Arizona and New Mexico began attracting adventurous cross-country flyers. It followed, more or less, the time-tested route of the Beale Wagon Road, Santa Fe Railroad and National Old Trails Road (Highway 66). Robert "Bob" Hausler spent the better part of 1924 and 1925 promoting and/or establishing airports at Kingman, Williams, Winslow, Gallup and Albuquerque (and probably other locations lost to history, perhaps as far east as Kansas). Ostensibly, Hausler was the field representative of West Coast businessmen (Western Aero League, etc.) who collectively had a vested interest in the development of this route to Los Angeles. They knew that the greatest obstacle in those plans was a lack of adequate landing fields on the route. The extent to which Hausler was compensated for this work is unknown, but it's clear that he was also looking for personal business opportunities along what he was calling the "Tri-State Airway." Hausler built and operated the first airport in Las Vegas, Nev., in 1920 and subsequently established landing fields elsewhere in Nevada and California before focusing on the route through northern Arizona and New Mexico. A separate biography of Bob Hausler will be included in this project.

As mentioned, convincing small western towns to construct, at their expense, airports along this route required salesmanship. The pitch included inspirational visions of the future, charismatic persuasion and, to close the deal, generous amounts of hoopla. If that wasn't enough, then smoke, mirrors and perhaps just a bit of flimflam could be added to the mix. Bob Hausler may have been an aviation version of *The Music Man's* Harold Hill, but he worked tirelessly to make things happen and his accomplishments are worthy of recognition.

By the time Hausler came to Prescott (the last of his airports), he had it down. His airport-building playbook was dog-eared. Prescott wasn't a hard sell. Grace Sparkes and the Chamber of Commerce had been working on the airport question since 1919.

The Whipple Barracks Target Range had been Prescott's de facto landing field since 1919. When Bob Hausler and Frank Clarke made their exploratory flights to the Grand Canyon in 1926 they used the Target Range as a base for Clarke's Curtiss Canuck.

However, at some point in the spring of 1926, Hausler and some city officials began to consider another tract, not much farther from town. This section of grazing land had all of the attributes of an excellent landing field – relatively flat, well-drained and obstruction-free. It had direct access off of the Prescott-Ash Fork highway, which by 1924 was one of the best roads in the state. And it was large enough for two runways, with room to expand in the future. They could not have imagined at the time just how important that last factor would be to the long-term success of the airport. The actual circumstances of this sudden change in focus are unknown. Hausler and Clarke were the only aviators flying over the area during that period, so it might be safe to conclude that they were the first to recognize the site's potential and its advantages compared to the Target Range. It was the first and most important of a succession of fortunate choices that led to Prescott's current regional airport.

NEW AVIATION FIELD PLANNED FOR PRESCOTT

"An aviation landing field a mile square, completely open to planes abliged [*sic*] by varying winds to land from any possible direction, and equipment that would put this town on the air maps of the world, is the goal of a deal completed yesterday between City Manager Robinson, who is chairman of the chamber of commerce aviation committee and Fain and Wilkins. By the transaction, the city secures control of a large tract of almost perfectly level land eight miles out on the Ash Fork highway and only a few hundred yards from that important thoroughfare.

"Lack of funds required to condition the target range field was given as the reason for abandoning hope of fitting up this field, although it has been approved by army and air mail flyers who came here especially for that purpose.

"Robert Hausler, local aviator and active in the business of fitting Prescott for a place on the various east and west airways, announced yesterday that trucks and scrapers would be put to work on the new tract today so that a number of reserve flyers training at Rockwell Field might land here safely in a few days as they made their qualifying cross country flight with Prescott as an objective.

"The new field is a couple of miles beyond the Bianconi ranch and to the right of the highway as one drives toward Ash Fork. It has a plot a mile square but the center of it is to be immediately dragged and prairie dog holes filled, a wind indicator erected and all made ready for the landing of the Rockwell Field planes.

"Maps of the field will be sent immediately to the war department and to Rockwell Field, and these will be reduced and distributed to all army and commercial flyers to show them what they can expect in case they wish to land here."

Weekly Journal-Miner, May 2, 1926: 1

CONTEST FOR AERO QUEEN TO START ON WED.

"The contest for the honor of being the first aero queen of Prescott, the girl who will reign when the new flying field is dedicated and who will be given a trip from Prescott to Phoenix and return by air will open tomorrow, it was announced today by Capt. Bob Hausler [...].

"Five hundred votes will be presented each candidate nominated and after that, they will be credited with votes cast for them at the chamber of commerce and to cost one cent each. The contest will close on June 25 and the ballots will be counted each night and the results posted."

Prescott Evening Courier, May 11, 1926: 8

The level of enthusiasm was high for the Aero Queen contest, and some consideration was given to having an Aero Queen for the Verde Valley as well.

START GRADING FLYING FIELD

"The work of grading the new flying field, eight miles north of Prescott on the Ash fork highway, was begun today under the direction of Capt. Bob Hausler, who is in charge of the plans for Prescott's first air circus on July 4.

"The field will afford ample landing space for the largest planes and is admirable in every way, Capt. Hausler says. Little grading will be necessary to put it in condition and there is practically no brush which must be removed. No wires or tall trees interfere with the field and it is near enough to the city to be reached easily and quickly."

Prescott Evening Courier, May 12, 1926: 3

PRESCOTT AIR MEET

"PRESCOTT, Arizona will dedicate its new landing field on July 4th, during the Frontier Days celebration and rodeo which is held annually at Prescott. The entire day will be devoted to an aero show, flying circus and model airplane contest.

"A cash purse of $500 and silver cup are to be given for an On-to-Prescott race for civilian pilots and commercial planes.

"Pilots flying to Prescott will have good country to fly over. The Tristate airway from Los Angeles and Kansas City is located north of Prescott, and the U. S. Army airway from San Antonio to San Diego is located south of Prescott. Landing fields are located all along those airways and emergency landings can be made anywhere on the route.

"R. W. Hausler is putting on a stunt-flying contest for civilian flyers, the winner of which will receive a cash prize.

"Further information can be obtained by communicating with the aviation committee Chamber of Commerce, Prescott, Arizona, which is composed of John A. Robinson, manager, R. W. Hausler, Pickens Woodson and Robert Connell, Jr."

Aero Digest, Vol. 8, No. 6 (June 1926): 356

LANDING FIELD IS AMPLE FOR PLANES AND FOR SPECTATORS

"The landing field on which the On to Prescott race will stop and where the Fourth of July flying circus will be held, is in condition already for the landing of planes and their maneuvering.

"It is located an eighth of a mile off the Ash Fork highway, eight miles out of town. Circled by hills, this large flat affords a sheltered, highly visible and technically perfect landing place, now that it has been smoothed off and the wind indicators established. The prevailing wind is favorable for landing.

"The field has two runways, or landing areas. These are 300 feet by 2000 yards east and west and 300 feet by 500 yards north and south.

"The gentle slopes surrounding the field create a natural amphitheatre where tens of thousands of automobiles can be parked while the spectators, at a safe distance from the taxiing airships, can watch the proceedings in comfort.

"The landing field has been secured by contract by the city and a movement is on foot to present the government with its control."

Weekly Journal-Miner, June 5, 1926: 4

DEDICATION OF PRESCOTT AIRPORT

July 4, 1926

In terms of garnering community support for an airport, the formal dedication was the carrot at the end of the stick. Thoughts of aerial acrobatics, air races, military warplanes and dashing aviators could sustain local volunteers as they removed thousands of rocks, cleared brush and filled prairie dog holes. Add a beauty contest and wrap it all in the city's Frontier Days celebration – which by then had become a destination event for Arizonans – and the laborious job of grubbing and dragging what must have seemed like an enormous tract might go a little easier.

Bob Hausler submitted the following press release to several national aviation publications several weeks before the planned dedication date:

Prescott, Ariz., Will Open New Field

"During the annual Frontier Days celebration and Rodeo, to be held at Prescott, Ariz., July 1 to 5, the new flying field will be dedicated. Sunday, July 4, has been selected by the Committee as the day for this event and all other activities of the celebration will be suspended, the entire day to be devoted to aeronautical events and contests. A purse of five hundred dollars has been set aside for the On-to-Prescott Race, which will be participated in by both civilian and commercial planes. Another feature of the celebration will be the airplane model building contest, which was launched last week among Yavapai County boys up to 18 years of age. Models of any type plane are eligible, but no model is to be over 36 inches wing spread.

"The Tri-State Airway, from Los Angeles to Kansas City, is located north of Prescott and the U.S. Army Airway, from San Antonio to San Diego, is south of the City. Landing fields are available all along these airways.

"The full program of events follows:

No. 1. 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. – Model flying contest. Judging of models and public inspection of all planes on the landing field.

No. 2 1 p.m. – Dedication of Prescott airport. (The field will be named by U.S. Army officials.)

No. 3 2 p.m. – Bomb dropping contest for army and navy pilots.

No. 4 3 p.m. – Formation flying and exhibition flying by army and navy pilots.

No. 5 4 p.m. – D.H. race for army and navy pilots. Prescott airport to Chino Valley and return.

No. 6 5 p.m. – Spot landing, free for all.

"The Committee in charge of the aviation section of the celebration consists of: John A. Robinson, R. W. Hausler, Pickens Woodson, Robert Connell, Jr."

Aviation, Vol. 20, No. 22 (May 31, 1926): 843-844

As July 4th approached, Hausler's well-worn dedication checklist was nearing completion: Landing field selected, prepared and conditioned–CHECK. Weeks of publicity and ballyhoo–CHECK. Air races organized and entries confirmed–CHECK. "Air Queen" contest underway–CHECK. Hausler's California cronies, mostly Hollywood stunt pilots, due to perform–CHECK. Military aviators to attend–CHECK? Wait, not so fast. In the final days preceding the dedication, the commander of Rockwell Field, San Diego, notified the

Chamber of Commerce that he had no aircraft to spare for Prescott. For weeks, Hausler had promised that Army and Navy planes would be at the dedication, and it does appear that he had received tentative commitments. However, a critical shortage of instructors and planes precluded participation by aviators from Kelly Field, San Antonio, Texas. Likewise, Fourth of July events in California apparently exhausted the resources of the Army and Navy airfields on the West Coast. Hausler reportedly traveled to California to make an eleventh-hour plea to the unit commanders, but to no avail.

To say the least, the total absence of military participation was an unexpected disappointment. However, this letdown was offset to some extent by the flyers who did attend, including a cadre of seasoned aviators from the Los Angeles area. Local attendees at the dedication could not have fully appreciated it at the time, but the group included some of the era's most famous Hollywood stunt pilots.

ON-TO-PRESCOTT RACE

> "Western Union timing will be used and the planes will be given handicap ratings on horsepower, distance, and necessary stops under the stringent rules of the national association of pilots so that full and fair opportunity will be given to each contestant.
>
> "The first prize will be $350 in cash and a handsome trophy cup. Second prize will be $100 and the third $50."
>
> *Weekly Journal-Miner,* June 5, 1926: 1

The governing rules of the race were actually from the Professional Pilots Association. $350 in July 1926 was equivalent to $6,700 in July 2026 (*U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics*).

After computing the time, distance and handicaps, Frank Clarke was declared the winner of the On-to-Prescott Race. His Canuck blazed across the desert, averaging 68 miles per hour. Fred Hoyt took 2nd place in his Travel Air, while Patterson and Nomis came in 3rd and 4th, respectively.

Several entrants canceled in the days prior to the race. Of the six planes that departed the Los Angeles area, only the four from Santa Monica finished the race. As described below, Lee Miles and Clarence Prest did not make it to Prescott. Miles left Brea in his Thomas-Morse Scout, but was forced down near Amboy. He made repairs and then returned the Brea. Clarence Prest left Santa Ana, but crashed in Arizona. Leaving the crumpled remains of his biplane behind, his adventure was far from over as he searched for help.

Leo Nomis' Montee MR-1 monoplane limped in to Prescott with a broken water line and was grounded for repairs during the Sunday celebration. By Tuesday, it was back in the air, flying over town and giving rides.

THE PILOTS

of the 1926 Airport Dedication and On-to-Prescott Air Race

Hollywood Flyers

FRANK CLARKE — Curtiss Canuck (Canadian-built JN-4) — Clover Field, Santa Monica

In the 1920s, Clarke was the most famous of the Hollywood movie pilots. He preferred the Canadian version of the JN-4, with ailerons on both wings, a lighter airframe and significant control modifications. An original member of the "13 Black Cats," his subsequent exploits as a stunt pilot, actor, camera plane pilot and aerial cinematographer are legendary. And much of it was captured on film. Spanning three decades, his remarkable, death-defying career ended in 1948 with a most unlikely plane crash.

FRED HOYT — Travel Air (C6 or OX-5) — Clover Field, Santa Monica

Hoyt was operating Lyle-Hoyt Aircraft at Santa Monica in 1926. The company was the West Coast distributor for Travel Air. He was also a movie pilot and air racer, winning the 1926 "On To Sesqui" air race to Philadelphia in a Travel Air just a few months after his appearance in Prescott. When Lyle-Hoyt joined forces with Lloyd Stearman to form Stearman Aircraft in 1927, Hoyt served as chief pilot and salesman. While delivering a new Stearman biplane in January 1928, Hoyt encountered extreme weather over southern Idaho. He bailed out successfully, but froze to death before he could find shelter. He had passed within 50 feet of a house without seeing it in the snowstorm.

LEO NOMIS — Montee MR-1 "Silver Mosquito" — Clover Field, Santa Monica

Nomis was another original member of "13 Black Cats." Newspaper reports described the plane he flew to Prescott as a "Nome monoplane." It was actually the Montee MR-1 "Silver Mosquito," one of the ingenious planes built by the Montee Family (K. W. Montee Aircraft Co.) at Santa Monica. It used the fuselage and tail of a Fokker D.VII (WWI German fighter) and a 150-hp Challenger K-6 engine. Nomis was killed in 1932 while flying for the movie "Sky Bride."

AL JOHNSON — (with Leo Nomis in the Montee MR-1) — Clover Field, Santa Monica

Al Johnson was a barnstormer, wing-walker and movie pilot. The Sharlot Hall Museum holds a wonderful photo of Frank Clarke's white Canuck performing at the 1926 dedication. Johnson is pictured dangling from the axle (p. 16). In 1928, Johnson was killed in a crash during the production of the Howard Hughes movie, "Hell's Angels."

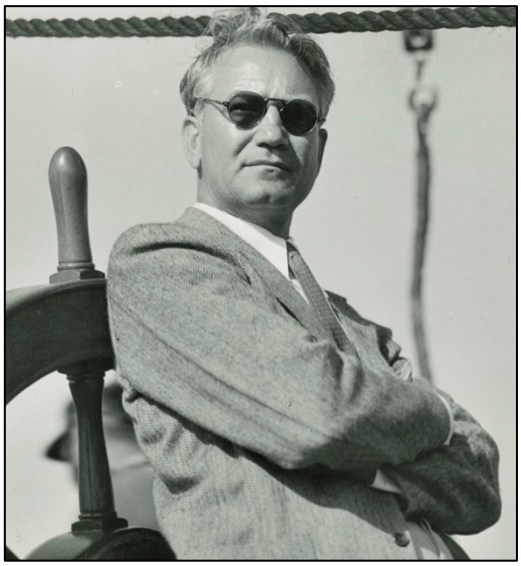
HOWARD PATTERSON — Catron & Fisk CF-15 "Fleming Special" — Clover Field, Santa Monica

Patterson was an early air circus performer and Hollywood movie pilot. He learned to fly in 1915, and along with Frank Clarke and other well-known stunt pilots, performed in Barr's Flying Circus at the Arizona State Fair in 1919. The "Fleming Special" was a Catron & Fisk CF-15 that was custom-built for Victor Fleming and delivered just days before the Prescott dedication ceremonies. The CF-15 was an uncommonly fast 2-place biplane powered by a Wright E-3 (180-215 hp). Both Patterson and Frank Clarke put the plane through its paces at Santa Monica before bringing it to Prescott.

VICTOR FLEMING — (with Howard Patterson in the CF-15) — Clover Field, Santa Monica

Fleming had a lifelong fascination with fast cars and airplanes. By 1926 he was already making a name for himself as a motion picture director, having worked his way up from camera assistant, then cinematographer. Ultimately, he became one of the most acclaimed directors in Hollywood history. Fleming visited Yavapai County many times during his life. He died in 1949 at the hospital in Cottonwood after suffering a heart attack at a guest ranch near Rimrock.







Top left: Frank Clarke; top right: Victor Fleming; bottom: on the set of the 1930 Howard Hughes motion picture, *Hell's Angels* – (L-R) Leo Nomis, Frank Clarke, and actors, James Hall and Ben Lyon.



Fred Hoyt (right) with George Lyle (left) and Lloyd Stearman (center) on the Lyle-Hoyt flight line at Santa Monica in 1926. Both Hoyt and Lyle entered the On-to-Prescott race, but Lyle canceled. The three men are standing in front of the first Stearman airplane, the C1. (*author's collection*)

THE PILOTS (Cont'd.)

Other On-to-Prescott Race Participants (who didn't make it):

CLARENCE PREST "Curtiss" (possibly an OX-5-powered Curtiss Standard) Santa Ana, Calif

Prest was a well-known Southern California aviator and airplane builder. He raced motorcycles and automobiles, but by the age of 15 he had become especially devoted to aviation. Inventive and fearless, he designed, built and flew a number of unique, and often tiny, airplanes. One he named "Poison" and another he called "Baby Pursuit." In his "Polar Bear" and "Polar Bear II" biplanes, he made two remarkable flights to Alaska, the first from the Mexico-California border at San Diego in 1921, and the second from New York the following year.

Prest entered a conventional biplane in the On-to-Prescott Air Race, probably either a JN-4 or Curtiss Standard (modified Standard J-1). Representing the Santa Ana Air Club, he departed Eddie Martin's Airport (near today's John Wayne Airport) "shortly after noon" and headed east as the desert heat was reaching its peak. For unspecified reasons – possibly a leak in the water-cooled engine – he went down somewhere between Salome and Congress Junction. Reports were conflicting. In one account, Prest was quoted as saying he crashed 30 miles west of Skull Valley. In others, he was forced down in the "Palo Verde Valley" or "on the side of a mountain, in the middle of a desert." He abandoned the wreckage and began walking, without water, through the night, some 25 miles. Finding a ranch house around dawn the next morning, "he borrowed a horse and started out again." From that point, the accounts of his ordeal are widely-varied. In the end, his adventure involved planes, trains, automobiles, bad roads and, of course, the horse. His injuries were minor, but the plane was described as unsalvageable.

Despite all of his early adventures and mishaps, Prest had a long career in Southern California aviation, particularly in the San Bernardino / Riverside area.

LELAND "LEE" MILES Thomas-Morse S-4C Scout (80-hp Le Rhône rotary) Brea, Calif.

Based at Brea, Calif., Lee Miles modified his WWI-surplus Thomas-Morse Scout for the On-to-Prescott air race. The most obvious alteration was an extra gas tank, shaped like a rocket and mounted on the top wing. The single-seat "Tommy," powered by an 80-hp Le Rhône rotary engine, may have been an unlikely candidate for a mid-summer flight across the scorching Mohave Desert. Nevertheless, Miles was no novice and he had high hopes. He was confident that the Tommy's extra speed, better high-altitude performance, and added fuel capacity would give him an edge. Sponsored by the Brea Air Club, the plane's fuselage was emblazoned with "BREA To PRESCOTT Non Stop." Unfortunately, the non-stop part turned out to be overly optimistic. Departing at dawn, the plane hummed and blipped along for two hours and 16 minutes – as far as Amboy, Calif. – before the engine overheated and a forced landing was made on a dry lakebed. Miles caught a ride to Bagdad, where he wired the Brea Air Club. He reportedly received permission from race officials to resume his flight the next morning. Instead, he made the necessary repairs and flew back to Brea later that afternoon.

Over the next decade, Miles became an aviation businessman and champion air racer. He was killed while qualifying in his Miles & Atwood Special during the 1937 Cleveland National Air Races.



Leland "Lee" Miles' "Brea To Prescott" Thomas-Morse S-4C Scout. (*author's collection*)



THE PILOTS (Cont'd.)

Arizona Aviators:

ERSEL GARRISON — Curtiss Standard (modified Standard J-1) — Bridgeport, Ariz.

Besides his lifetime of community service, Ersel Garrison may be remembered as one of Yavapai County's most prominent and active early aviators. In 1923, he purchased his first plane, a WWI-surplus Standard J-1, reportedly new and modified by Curtiss. He immediately began building his own landing field near Cottonwood, "across the new bridge at Bridgeport." There he erected one of the first civilian airplane hangars in the state. In the *Verde Copper News* of March 30, 1923, it was claimed that Garrison was "the first man in Arizona to own an airplane for his personal use." In addition, he expected to be "the first Arizona civilian to qualify as a pilot." Both of these claims are quite possible.

Mishaps were an accepted part of a pioneer aviator's life and Garrison had his share. Some were humorous in retrospect, while at least one was tragic. Through it all, he never lost his love of flight. He made significant contributions to the development of aviation in Yavapai County and the State.

Garrison flew to Prescott's airport dedication to enjoy the company of the visiting West Coast aviators and to lend his wholehearted support to the new landing field. He was flying another Standard J-1 (his first one had been demolished while departing the Phoenix Fairgrounds on his honeymoon in 1924). During the festivities he made exhibition flights and carried passengers until the plane was damaged during a hard landing. It returned to Bridgeport on the back of a truck.

Over the years, Garrison's association with Ernest A. Love Field remained strong. A separate biographical profile will be presented as part of this project.

JAMES WHITE — (unknown type airplane) — Phoenix

Little is known about Jimmie White except that he was 18 and kept a plane of unknown description at the old Central & Roanoke landing field in Phoenix (aka Quinn-Rankin Field). While en route from Phoenix to Prescott (following the AT&SF rails), he crashed near Congress Junction. Undaunted, he abandoned the wreck and hitched a ride with some local cowboys, making it to Prescott in time for the airport dedication. He stayed until the 6th, when the *Prescott Evening Courier* reported that he had left "to take apart his plane [...] pack it out to the railroad on burros and ship it to Phoenix for repairs."

Sadly, White was killed just three months later as a passenger in an airplane flown by a California pilot, again near Congress Junction. Reports were brief, vague and conflicting, but the aviators may have been trying to salvage yet another wrecked airplane in that area.

CITY'S AIRPORT IS DEDICATED

Miss Hixson, Air Queen, in Flight to Phoenix, Opens Show; Five Planes Here

"Prescott's new airport was dedicated yesterday and Prescott celebrated its first air circus, four of five planes entered in the "on-to-Prescott" race taking part. The air show formally was opened early yesterday morning when Miss Mabel Hixson, elected Prescott's air queen, took off with Pilot Frank Clarke for Phoenix, returning a few hours after what would have proven a delightful trip had not Miss Hixon been afflicted with an attack of 'airsickness.'

"There was scarcely a moment all during the day yesterday when at least two of the planes were not in the air, either stunting for the amusement of the crowds who lined the field, or carrying passengers. So numerous were the requests for short flights yesterday that the pilots have decided to remain until tomorrow night or Wednesday morning and afternoon."

Prescott Evening Courier, July 5, 1926: 1, 3



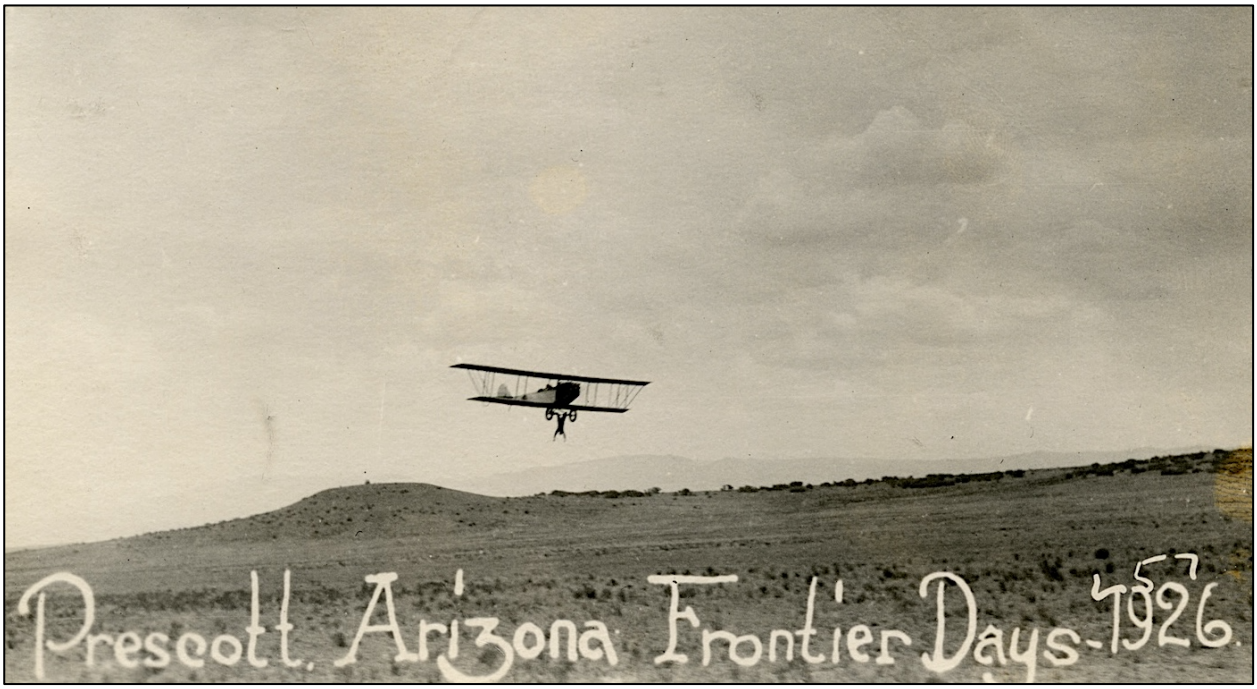
JULY 1926 – All five of the airplanes that were present at the dedication of Prescott's airport. Four of the five came from Clover Field, Santa Monica, competing in the On-to-Prescott Air Race. From left to right: 1) Montee MR-1 "Silver Mosquito" monoplane flown by Leo Nomis; 2) Catron & Fiske CF-15 "Fleming Special" flown by Howard Patterson and Hollywood director, Victor Fleming; 3) although obscured by the crowd, this would have been the Travel Air biplane flown by Fred Hoyt; 4) Standard J-1 owned and flown by Ersel Garrison of Cottonwood, Ariz.; 5) Curtiss Canuck flown by the legendary Frank Clarke. This photograph was most likely taken on July 4, the day of the dedication, however the flyers stayed over until the morning of the 7th, continuing to attract crowds. (*Sharlot Hall Museum Library & Archives*)

A detailed description of the dedication ceremony has not yet been found, although some newspaper editions remain inaccessible. It was reported that Prescott Mayor Morris Goldwater spoke on behalf of the city. It isn't known who may have represented the chamber of commerce. Doc Pardee, rodeo arena director and announcer, arrived at the airport on the 4th to announce the program, which would suggest that a formal ceremony did take place.

While at the airport, Pardee, master horseman and rodeo legend, was persuaded to take his first airplane ride with Frank Clarke. Pardee had been a world champion bronc rider and Clarke naturally assumed he would want an exciting ride:

> "Doc had not planned any such stunt when he drove to the aviation field yesterday to announce the program for the day but the press of invitations from the bird men was too strong for him to resist and up he went.
>
> "After carefully adjusting his chaps and spurs, in case the ship got unruly, Doc climbed in, said all he wanted was to go beyond the 12-mile limit, pulled his ten-gallon hat down over his ears, set his teeth and gave the signal to take off. From then on nothing could be seen of Doc except the tip of his hat and that was only because there was too much of him in the fusilage to get the hat down in, too.
>
> "Loops, tail-spins, falling leaves and spirals, Frank Clarke, stunt flier, gave Doc the whole works, providing a bunch of thrills for the spectators and a lot of others for his passenger.
>
> "Doc left the grounds almost immediately after landing and could not be found again until late afternoon."
>
> *Prescott Evening Courier,* July 5, 1926: 1

The reporter may have exercised some license in his story, but it's clear that Pardee's first airplane ride was befitting a champion bronc buster.



Frank Clarke performs in his Curtiss Canuck during the dedication of Prescott's new airport. The man dangling from the undercarriage is almost certainly stunt pilot and veteran wing walker, Al Johnson. (*Sharlot Hall Museum Library & Archives*)

The model airplane contest was judged on the morning of the 4th with awards in several categories. The celebration continued into the evening, when Clarke performed his promised night flight over the city. On June 28, the *Courier* described the aviator's planned show as follows:

> "Clarke will put on this flight about 9 o'clock Sunday night, July 4, flying directly over the city where his acrobatics may be seen by all. There will be three different color effects in the fireworks and the plane is expected to resemble a stream of fire weaving through the sky."

The newspaper followed-up on July 5:

> "Clarke thrilled the rodeo visitors last night with an exhibition of night flying with fireworks, stunting over the city while his plane left a trail of vari-colored fire behind him."

After the exhibition, Clarke returned to the unlighted airport, probably aided only by some automobile headlights.

The weather was good and the flying continued for more than three days. It was the most flying that had occurred in Yavapai County at one time up to that point.

Five civilian airplanes and a nauseous air queen may seem like an inauspicious start for Prescott's airport, but for a frontier town in 1926, it was actually pretty impressive. It was a good beginning for what would soon become Ernest A. Love Airport. Most of the credit goes to the Hollywood pilots. They were showmen who, on learning that the military would not be participating, picked up the slack with gusto. Hopefully, it was financially rewarding for them. It was said that Fred Hoyt, regional Travel Air dealer at Santa Monica, left Prescott with some solid prospects.

The absence of military aviators was certainly a disappointment. However, the commanders of the various Southwestern air bases, particularly March Field and Rockwell Field, would more than redeem themselves over the next three years.

On Wednesday morning, July 7, Clarke, Hoyt, Nomis, Johnson, Patterson and Fleming all departed Prescott for the return to Santa Monica, stopping at Kingman on the way. Bob Hausler rode along with Clarke.

POSTSCRIPT

Bob Hausler arrived in Prescott around January 1926. The previous May he had directed the establishment of Winslow's "Barrigen Field" municipal airport. The dedication of Barrigen Field was probably the largest and most successful of his Southwestern airport programs. Governor Hunt and other state officials attended and seven Army de Havilland DH-4's were sent. Several of Arizona's best known civilian aviators also participated, including Charles Mayse and Tex Rankin, as well as Frank Clarke and Howard Patterson from the coast. The celebration was considered an unqualified success. There's no doubt that Hausler expected the dedication program for Prescott, which closely mirrored Winslow's, to attract an even greater level of participation.

The importance of participation by state officials and military aviators was a lesson that wasn't lost on Grace Sparkes when she and her colleagues began organizing the rededication two years later.

There had been seven formal airport dedications in Arizona prior to Prescott's. One in 1919 and the rest during 1925. The 1919 event in Phoenix ("Hall Aviation Field") included Governor Campbell, but it was only a groundbreaking and it's doubtful whether that field ever felt the kiss of an airplane's wheels. The other six occurred in 1925. None of those survived, with only one making it past the Depression.

With one exception, all of Bob Hausler's airports, including Barrigen Field, vanished before the end of the 1930s, some much sooner. That was not unusual. Nationwide, most of the 1920s airports were built for the airplanes of the day, not the larger and faster planes that soon followed. Prescott was the exception. It became the crown jewel of Bob Hausler's landing fields.

July 1926 – August 1928

Prescott's airport was open for business and the traffic was about what one would expect for an off-airway landing field in the 1920s. There were runways, markings, wind indicators and a good road to town, but little else.

Pickens E. Woodson, former member of Roosevelt's "Rough Riders," was appointed caretaker of the airport, and whenever it was known in advance that a plane was coming, he dutifully drove out and made sure the field markings were in good shape. Grace Sparkes and her chamber of commerce colleagues continued to advocate for airport improvements. She and Woodson made periodic pleas for a hangar at the field.

In mid-May 1927, Army Lt. Gothlin flew from Rockwell Field, San Diego, to attend National Hospital Day ceremonies at Whipple Barracks. He landed his Douglas O-2 at the "Prescott Aviation field," where he was greeted by the Yavapai County Chamber of Commerce Aviation Committee.

Just a few days later, a young Air Mail pilot, Charles Lindbergh, became the first person to complete a solo flight across the Atlantic Ocean. This feat resonated with Americans in a way unmatched by any previous record flight. The impact of this accomplishment would be felt in every corner of the nation, including Prescott. On May 21st, the banner headline of the *Prescott Evening Courier* was "YOUNG LINDBERGH IN PARIS; Whistles Here Acclaim Flier; Fire Siren and Others in Outburst of Enthusiasm as Lindbergh Hits Paris; Local Concern Keen; Courier Associated Press Printers Watched Throughout Day for Bulletins."

In June, Russell Boardman brought mining engineer, Henry Crowther, from Wickenburg to Prescott in his Travel Air biplane. Boardman was unaware of the new airport and he landed in Miller Valley.

Also in June, Tilman Alexander and Helen Perham flew from Los Angeles to Prescott, where she had family. The purpose of the trip was twofold: get married and sell airplane rides. A display ad was placed in the *Prescott Evening Courier* for June 22nd, "FLY With T. C. Alexander in Safety Aircraft - Introductory Flights, $3.50 - Over Prescott $5.00 - Wednesday to Saturday 4:30 to 7:30 - Sunday All Day - Municipal Flying Field." With both objectives accomplished, it was reported in the *Courier* that the newlywed couple had departed for home after spending two weeks in Prescott and taking passengers for airplane rides at "the field beyond the Dells." [4]

Russell Boardman returned on July 1, to attend the Frontier Days celebration. This time he came from Goldfield, Nev., and the location of his landing was not reported. Boardman would go on to become a famous air racer and international long-distance aviator. From 1927 to 1929, he was also a frequent visitor to Prescott and the Verde Valley, having become partners with Romaine Loudermilk in the ownership of Rimrock Ranch in late 1927. Boardman even built an airstrip at Rimrock to accommodate his Travel Air biplanes. Though periodically dormant during the intervening years, that early airstrip exists today as Rimrock Airport.

In August, the *Courier* reported that Pickens Woodson had made another of his inspection trips to the airport "to make certain markings so that it can be identified by fliers in the air." The report added, "The use of the land for this purpose has been donated by Dan Fain, well known livestock man, although he will retain title to it." [5]

Army aviators from March Field, Riverside, Calif., landed at Prescott Airport in a DH-4 in early September. Reportedly pleased with the field, Lt. William G. Plummer and Sgt. Walter Christina stayed overnight and returned to March Field the next day.

The Arizona Industrial Congress held its directors meeting at Prescott's brand new Hassayampa Hotel in November 1927. Jack Frye, president of Aero Corporation of California, and J. Parker Van Zandt, president of Scenic Airways, were issued special invitations. Frye's company provided the first scheduled airline service in Arizona, initially operating between Los Angeles, Phoenix and Tucson. As Standard Airlines, the company would extend the route to Douglas and El Paso. Frye received Arizona pilot license No. 1 (back when the state issued such licenses) and, a few years later, became president of Transcontinental & Western Air (TWA).

Van Zandt's Scenic Airways built the Grand Canyon South Rim Airport ("Red Butte") as well as Phoenix Sky Harbor. The well-capitalized company expanded very rapidly and had a large impact on the early development of aviation in Arizona. That is until the Great Depression completely swept it away.

When the meeting of dignitaries was held at the Hassayampa Hotel, both Aero Corporation of California and Scenic Airways were just getting their plans underway in Arizona. Frye arrived at Prescott Airport in Aero Corporation's 6-passenger Fokker Universal (passengers were seated in the cabin, but the pilot was still in an open cockpit just behind the engine and forward of the wing leading edge).

Van Zandt and Frye both made presentations at the hotel banquet.

> "Frye's prediction was that within two years between eight and ten ships will land here [Prescott] each day, while in ten years 50 to 100 will stop here."
>
> *Prescott Evening Courier,* November 22, 1927: 1

Jack Frye's forecast was optimistic under the best of circumstances, but what he couldn't see in his crystal ball was the Great Depression. Before leaving for Phoenix and the West Coast, Frye made six local sightseeing flights from Prescott Airport in his Fokker, including one to Jerome and back. Passengers included conference attendees as well as locals like Gail Gardner and Mrs. Pickens Woodson.

1928 opened with a proposal from H. A. Dameron, Miller Valley landowner, that the city establish its airport on land that he would provide on his tract.

> AIRPORT OFFER IS LOOKED INTO
>
> "This morning an investigation of the possibilities of an airport on the H. A. Dameron tract in Miller Valley was made, but the lay of the land, its size, prevailing wind currents, and surrounding residences were considered drawbacks and the idea has been discarded, temporarily at least.
>
> "Dameron, well known local realtor, stated verbally that he was willing to convert a stretch of ground more than a half-mile long and 1,200 feet wide into a landing field, equip it with hangars, and maintain it, if the city would put in the Summit street-Lincoln avenue crossing.
>
> [...]
>
> "Dameron's land extends from Lincoln avenue to the ice plant, a distance of more than a half-mile. The land slopes gently toward the plant.
>
> [...]
>
> "Aside from these drawbacks, the Dameron proposal would be ideal, insofar as its proximity to Prescott is concerned. But under existing conditions, it seems that the present airport near the Dells must satisfy the desire for a municipal landing field. That field, it is understood, can be used indefinitely by Prescott, and it has every desirable feature except its removed position from the city.
>
> "Based on the statements of airmen to the effect that the Dells field is the best undeveloped field in the entire country, the members of the chamber of commerce aviation committee are understood to be working out a number of important details that will lift it out of the undeveloped class into one of distinct recognition."
>
> *Prescott Evening Courier,* January 25, 1928: 1, 3

City leaders considered in detail all of the important factors in this proposal. They also consulted aviator, Russell Boardman, who happened to be in town. Boardman's advice was sound. Among other things, he emphasized that an airport in Miller Valley would never "receive the proper classification from the government" and would soon become inadequate. The process demonstrated that the chamber of commerce aviation committee had gained a good grasp of airport issues. Nevertheless, the winter of 1928 found Prescott's airport in essentially the same condition as it was when dedicated a year and a half prior. It was an above-average western landing field with two level, well-drained runways, no obstructions, a good road nearby and fuel & oil available in town. Pretty basic, but not to be minimized – such fields were still rare in the off-airway parts of the Southwest. To a 1928 pilot searching for a place to set down in Yavapai County, Prescott's runways might have resembled Valhalla.

The impact of the Lindbergh aviation boom of 1928-1929 was felt in Prescott. There were regular visits by would-be airline operators and aviation promoters from Phoenix and elsewhere. Additionally, two small flying schools were reported to be operating at the field. The larger concerns, like Scenic Airways and Jack Frye's Aero Corporation of California, teased service at Prescott if certain improvements were made. To that end, local stories began appearing in the *Prescott Evening Courier* with headlines like "Prescott Airport To Be Built Soon" (2/19/28); "Complete Grading Runways For New Prescott Airport" (3/14/28); and "Work Progressing on Prescott Love Post's New Model Airport" (3/25/28). It's easy to understand how a researcher, working back through the newspapers, might conclude that this was the beginning of Prescott's airport.

Volunteers, aided by city and county employees, did perform a substantial amount of work at the airport in the spring. However, the efforts were almost entirely focused on lengthening, widening and generally improving the existing 1926 runways: more grading, dragging, grubbing and brush removal. Most significantly, the main runway was extended from 2,000 feet to an impressive 4,500 feet in length. Likewise, the shorter cross runway was lengthened from 1,500 feet to 2,500 feet. Also at this time, the Yavapai Chamber of Commerce announced that it had placed 640 acres – a full section – under a formal 10-year lease. The tract was described as a mile square (Section 25, Township 15 North, Range 2 West). In actuality, the total acreage leased may have been less than 640 acres. At that time, the airport required far less acreage and was situated in the west half of Section 25. In 1926, the airport had also been described as a mile square (one section), but it hasn't yet been determined if it was held during that period by lease (sublease) or by informal agreement.[5]

In terms of infrastructure, there was one other noteworthy improvement – a telephone! In March 1928, the city made arrangements to extend a telephone line to the field. The lines were run from the nearest ranch house a few miles south, but the phone itself wasn't installed until the end of June. The service was one way. Someone at the airport could call the operator in town, but calls could not be made to the airport. Nevertheless, it was a welcome amenity that eliminated the need for a transient aviator to circle the town or flag down a passing motorist on the Ash Fork highway.

Aside from the longer runways (no small thing) and a telephone, the airport was otherwise the same. There were no airplanes based at the field, probably because there were still no hangars – or buildings of any kind. Periodically, local civic organizations would pledge to raise money for a hangar at the airport, and that continued into the 1930s. However, those plans always fell short. The City of Prescott didn't build or own a hangar until the War Training Service contractors moved to the field in the early 1940s.

THE SUMMER OF 1928

Arizona Republican Aerial Survey, Frontier Days and airport rededication

1928 saw the first of two consecutive summers that were *very* eventful at Ernest A. Love Field. On June 6, 1928, a small crowd was waiting at Ernest A. Love Field for the arrival of a Standard J-1 "R-W Special" biplane. The "R-W" was for Howard Rinehart and Bernard Whelan, two pioneer Ohio aviators who modified the Standard and brought it to

Phoenix in late 1927. The two men opened an airport on East Van Buren St. where they could operate during the winter months. The Standard and the airport were sold in 1928 to Sam Witten, who chartered it to the *Arizona Republican* for what the newspaper touted as the first aerial photographic survey of the state. The plane was white with "ARIZONA REPUBLICAN" and "Aerial Pictorial Survey of Arizona" painted boldly across both sides of the fuselage. With Bill Kingsley as pilot, the mission was to fly to every region of the state with the newspaper's master photographer, E. D. Newcomer, taking aerial photographs.



E. D. Newcomer (L) and William "Bill" Kingsley with their "R-W Special" (Standard J-1) at Willcox on June 1, 1928. The *Arizona Republican* Aerial Pictorial Survey flew to cities and towns all over Arizona. Newcomer was a photographer for the newspaper and Kinglsey was the pilot. They landed at Ernest A. Love Field twice during their tour. (*author's collection*)

Two other planes were already on the field when the R-W Special landed at Prescott. Charles Goldtrap of the Aero Corporation of Arizona had come from Phoenix in an Alexander Eaglerock biplane. His passenger was Sheldon Miller, mechanic and parachute jumper. Also, a Whirlwind-powered Waco 10 biplane, owned by Ernest Wickersham and flown by Robert "Bob" Martin, came from Safford with Martin's wife and another passenger aboard.

City officials and members of the Yavapai County Chamber of Commerce and Kiwanis Aviation Committees were waiting to greet the aerial survey flyers. The plane had made a photographic detour and was running late, so Goldtrap gave short flights to several members of the waiting group.

All three planes were making their way north for the dedication of Flagstaff's new Koch Field municipal airport on June 8. A luncheon at the Hassayampa Hotel had been arranged for Kingsley and Newcomer. Invitations were extended to the other visiting aviators and they accepted. After the welcoming speeches by city officials and members of the aviation

committees, the guests took turns speaking. E. D. Newcomer described the aerial survey's progress and itinerary, while Charles Goldtrap told the group that he planned to operate a flying school at Ernest A. Love Field over the summer.

According to reports, at around dusk on the 6th, Gilbert Sykes arrived from Phoenix. In the fading light, he couldn't find the airport and landed his Waco GXE biplane in a nearby wash. Now there were four airplanes at Prescott.

Kingsley and Newcomer remained overnight, planning to stop at Cottonwood the next day, They would then photograph Jerome and Camp Verde on their way to Flagstaff. However, winds and temperatures were both running high, so Kingsley departed Prescott alone in the old Standard and flew directly to Flagstaff, while Newcomer borrowed Mayor Seale's car and headed to Flagstaff with his camera and gear.

It isn't clear when each of the pilots departed Prescott. Some or all of them may have waited until the morning of the Flagstaff dedication. Kingsley, Goldtrap and Martin all arrived at Flagstaff in time for the ceremonies.

The heat and wind continued to make flying in the north country especially difficult. Sykes had only been a pilot for a couple of months. A fueling error delayed his departure until around 8 a.m., at which time he took off for Flagstaff. For reasons unknown, he headed toward Granite Mountain to the west. Hanging on the edge of an aerodynamic stall during his shallow climb, the nose dropped one final time and he crashed about a mile from the airport. He was able to crawl away from the wreckage and reportedly passed out under a tree. He was located and taken to a hospital in Prescott. His injuries were relatively minor, but the plane was damaged beyond repair. To make matters worse the trim little Waco was owned by his bride-to-be. Some newspaper accounts were wildly exaggerated: "The crash occurred when Sykes, banking to miss the side of Granite mountain, went into a tailspin, dropping 200 feet to the gorge below."

Some of the pilots who had attended the Flagstaff dedication, stopped at Prescott on the way home. Kingsley and Newcomer spent about a week photographing Northern Arizona, before stopping once again at Prescott on the return to Phoenix.

On June 19, J. Parker Van Zandt, of Scenic Airways, flew a Ryan Brougham to Prescott from the company's new airport at the Grand Canyon. He discussed his ambitious plans to operate regular airline service between Salt Lake City and Phoenix, including a stop at Prescott. This was one of many such airline proposals that would be floated over the next couple of years. Van Zandt also promised to bring one of Scenic's two brand new Ford Tri-Motor transports to Prescott for the upcoming Frontier Days celebration July 1-4.

The big Scenic Airways Ford arrived on July 1 with a prepositioned ground crew waiting at the airport. Rides were sold throughout the festivities, with the standard trip taking passengers over the Dells, downtown, the rodeo grounds and back to the airport. The flights proved so popular, that the company's other Ford was dispatched to Prescott on the 3rd.



Scenic Airways' brand new Ford 4-AT-D Tri-motor, registration 5578, at Ernest A. Love Field. These two undated photos were most likely taken during the July 1928 Frontier Days celebration, when both of Scenic's Fords gave rides. The images have not been cropped in order to show as much of the airport tract as possible. In the photo below, the big Ford is taxiing out to the runway. The view is looking southeast, with Glassford Hill on the right. (*author's collection*)



Frontier Days also attracted four Army Consolidated PT-3 biplanes from March Field. Among the Army flyers was Capt. Joe Davidson and Lt. Leonard Weddington (see Appendix A for additional names).

Charles Goldtrap and Robert "Kern" Warren, of Aero Corporation of Arizona, arrived in an Alexander Eaglerock biplane from South Central Airport in Phoenix. Goldtrap, an Arizona aviation pioneer who became a senior American Airlines captain, reiterated his plans to operate a flying school at Prescott through the summer.

The grand finale of the airport's summer of 1928 was a second dedication as Ernest A. Love Airport.

Another Dedication?

In August 1928, ceremonies were held to dedicate the airport in the name of one of Prescott's hometown heroes, Lt. Ernest A. Love, Jr., a U.S. Army Air Service aviator who was shot down on September 16, 1918 near Verdun, France. In the custody of the Germans, Love succumbed to his injuries a few days later.

The original program for the 1926 dedication called for the visiting Army officers to officially name Prescott's airport. It was fairly common at that time for new civil airports to be named in honor of fallen military aviators. In 1925, the first municipal airports at both Williams and Winslow were named for Army pilots who had perished in crashes. Webber Field at Williams was named for Lt. Charles L. Webber and Barrigen Field at Winslow was named for Lt. John A. Barrigen. However, since the Army was unable to participate in the Prescott dedication, the official naming didn't take place. There's no way to be certain, but it's likely that Ernest A. Love had been selected and was the intended name from the beginning. In any case, "Ernest A. Love Airport" began to be used as the official name at least as early as February 1928. The name appeared on official documents submitted to the Aeronautics Branch of the Department of Commerce and it was used by the *Prescott Evening Courier* and other newspapers for at least six months prior to the second dedication ceremony.

Understanding the real motivation for the second dedication goes back to the difference between a 1926 airport dedication and a 1928 dedication – pre-Lindbergh versus post-Lindbergh. Prior to Charles Lindbergh's flight, state politicians and dignitaries who were invited to airport dedications in the hinterlands might have been more inclined to send a congratulatory telegram and stay home. That was especially true if it wasn't an election year. Everything changed after Lindbergh landed in Paris. Canny politicians were quick to sense the change in the public's attitude toward aviation, and eager to ride that wave. To be seen as "air-minded" was to be seen as progressive, forward-thinking, even visionary. Indifference or lack of appropriate enthusiasm made a politician look stodgy and out of touch.[6]

Prescott had built an airport back when "Slim" Lindbergh was still flying the night mail between St. Louis and Chicago. Now the Johnny-come-lately airports were getting all the publicity; airport dedications had become headline news throughout the state. Prescott's

pioneering airport was among the best of the state's pre-Lindbergh flying fields, and as good or better than most of the post-Lindbergh airports that were popping up. But it was being overlooked.

As Yavapai County's foremost advocate, Grace Sparkes had become a master of publicity, utilizing all of the tools - such as they were - at her disposal. She and the other Chamber of Commerce members watched as Tucson's new Davis-Monthan Municipal Airport and Flagstaff's Koch Field were dedicated (September 23, 1927 and June 8, 1928, respectively) with a level of fanfare and participation that was elusive in 1926.

Then, shortly after attending Flagstaff's dedication, Gov. George W. P. Hunt, "the Old Roman," wrote a long editorial letter that was published in several Arizona newspapers. He encouraged statewide development of aviation and, to that end, formed a state aviation committee. He also named several Arizona cities that had airports, *but not Prescott*:

> "The development and extension of aviation and the facilities thereof are problems of more than local importance. Phoenix, Tucson, Douglas, Flagstaff, Yuma and other Arizona cities have established air ports [...]"
>
> "Aviation Developing Emphasized by Hunt." *Prescott Evening Courier,* July 21, 1928: 10
>
> "Gov. Hunt Names Aviation Committee." *Arizona Silver Belt* (Miami), July 21, 1928: 5

It must have been frustrating for Grace Sparkes and the Chamber to have the governor ignore Prescott, placing it in the "other Arizona cities" category. Especially since the airport at Douglas was months away from being completed and the Phoenix Municipal Airport on Christy Rd. was marginal at best.

In any case, just seven days after that article appeared, the Yavapai County Chamber of Commerce announced, for the first time, its plans for a "formal dedication" of Ernest A. Love Airport to be held in August. In the press releases that followed, the field was referred to as Prescott's "new" airport. The planned ceremonies were not characterized as a rededication.

> "In keeping with these developments Prescott will fall right in line on August 25 and 26 in dedicating the Ernest A. Love airport, seven and a half miles north-west of the city. Though the field has been used for many months, it has not been dedicated officially. It is probable that a dozen government planes will come over from the coast for the occasion, it was said by Miss Sparkes, secretary of the chamber of commerce. Other planes also may take part in the ceremonies, she said.
> "In the meantime, Prescott's airport has received official recognition by the department of commerce, which, on June 21, issued a leaflet to be inserted in an aviation booklet describing the Ernest A. Love port..."
>
> "Are Projecting State Airlines." *Prescott Evening Courier,* August 3, 1928: 3

There's little doubt that this was a skillfully executed plan to get a dedication do-over. This time the Chamber of Commerce hoped to attract the governor, the dignitaries and the military planes that had been so conspicuously absent in 1926. It would garner more publicity and would remind Arizonans that Prescott had a real airport. That was the plan. And it worked!

REDEDICATION

Ernest A. Love Airport

August 26, 1928

In terms of participation, the rededication of Prescott's airport was everything that Grace Sparkes, Gail Gardner and the other local aviation advocates could have hoped for. Even by the standards of "post-Lindbergh" airport dedications, it was impressive.

Twenty-eight airplanes were on the field at one time. This included no fewer than 25 military planes. Gov. George W. P. Hunt and Sen. Henry F. Ashurst both addressed the crowd. These were the elements that were missing in the 1926 dedication.

There wasn't the long period of advance publicity and hoopla that had been required in 1926. At least publicly, the Chamber of Commerce Aviation Committee had only a month to organize the program, though there was undoubtedly some unofficial preparation prior to that. A serious logistical effort was required and city leaders went to work. Invitations flew. Grace Sparkes did what she did best – gentle persuasion backed-up with amiable arm-twisting. The dedication ceremony, a banquet and a dance were planned and organized. Accommodations were arranged for more than 40 visiting officers and NCOs.

The effectiveness of all this activity was aided by three factors:

First, the aforementioned Lindbergh effect. Politicians were now eager to accept invitations to airport dedications. Such functions provided opportunities to show voters that they were in the vanguard of progress.[6] The military, too, was more likely to participate. The Army had been encouraging airport development in the Southwest since 1919. Far more landing fields were needed than the Army had appropriations to build. One relatively inexpensive way to motivate cities and towns to build airports was offering the prospect that "government planes" might take part in the dedication. In 1927, as Lindbergh toured the country promoting aviation, the military air services were directed to maintain a high profile and cooperate with civil airport development in every practical way.

Second, the monthly meeting of the Arizona Colorado River Commission had been called by its chairman, Gov. Hunt, for August 27 in Prescott. The Governor may have scheduled the meeting after receiving the invitation to the airport dedication, but in any case, his presence in Prescott was assured.

Third, going back as far as 1919, the people of Prescott had established an uncommonly strong bond with visiting Army airmen. This was reinforced in the years immediately preceding 1928 with aviators like Lt. Leonard Weddington and Capt. Joe Davidson. Those relationships mattered when requests were sent to the Army. (The roster of early Army aviators that visited Prescott between 1919 and 1939 includes a surprising number of future generals.)

Pilots and Planes
of the 1928 Dedication

MILITARY

MARCH FIELD, Riverside, Calif.

14 Army aircraft total (Consolidated PT-3's and some de Havilland DH-4's); 16 officers and a complement of mechanics; Capt. Davidson arrived Thu. PM, 8/23; the rest of the group arrived in sections on Fri., 8/24; all 14 departed Mon. AM, 8/27.

Maj. Millard F. Harmon
Capt. Joseph H. "Joe" Davidson
Capt. J. H. Edwards
Lt. Leonard D. "Pop" Weddington
Lt. William G. Plummer
Lt. Hoyt S. Vandenberg
Lt. B. J. Peters
Lt. W. H. Hardy
Lt. D. M. Schlatter
Lt. S. P. Wilson
Lt. Kenneth Garrett
Lt. Walter L. "Peewee" Taylor
Lt. Fred C. Nelson
Lt. R. A. Fisher
Lt. Ned Schramm
Lt. W. C. Goldsborough

NAVAL AIR STATION SAN DIEGO (North Island), Calif.

2 Navy "Vought ships" (most likely Vought O2U Corsairs); arrived Sat., 8/25; departed Sun. PM, 8/26.

Lt. T. O. "Bubbles" Fisher
Lt. H. A. Brandenberger

FORT SAM HOUSTON (Dodd Field), San Antonio, Texas

3 Army Douglas O-2's; arrived Sat., 8/25; departed Mon. AM, 8/27 by way of Phoenix; this group flew to the Grand Canyon on Sun., 8/26, dined at the El Tovar and returned to Prescott.

Maj. William N. Hensley
Lt. Lawrence H. Douthit
Lt. Jordan F. Haney
Lt. Thad V. Foster

ROCKWELL FIELD, Coronado (San Diego), Calif.

6 Army pursuits (most likely Boeing PW-9's); arrived Sat., 8/25; departed Sun. PM, 8/26.

Lt. Aubey C. Strickland (flight leader)
5 other pilots - not identified

(SEE ALSO APPENDIX A)

Pilots and Planes
of the 1928 Dedication

CIVILIAN

Carson School of Flying - American Eagle biplane (probably A-1 reg. 5966)

Based at Phoenix Municipal Airport (Christy Road) and flown by instructor, Bill Langdon, with student, John Hamilton, aboard; en route to Prescott, the plane had to make a forced landing at Congress Junction; reported as overdue, five of the March Field planes departed Prescott to search; the Army pilots did not spot the missing biplane, but they took the opportunity to buzz downtown Phoenix before returning to Prescott; Langdon and his passenger made it to Prescott, where they immediately started cleaning the oil-streaked biplane.

Scenic Airways - Ford 4-AT-B Tri-Motor reg. 5493

Based at Grand Canyon South Rim Airport ("Red Butte"), this brand new transport plane reportedly took "a couple of hundred" passengers on flights over Prescott; it arrived and departed on Sun., 8/26, and made the tour flights despite very strong winds; the pilot was not identified.

Union Oil Company - unknown type airplane (possibly a Travel Air biplane)

Based in the Los Angeles area, this plane arrived and departed Sun. PM, 8/26.

Note: Charles Goldtrap had planned to fly an Eaglerock biplane from South Central Airport in Phoenix, but had to cancel for unknown reasons. Also, Russell Boardman was going to perform at the dedication in his Travel Air 4000, but he crashed at Ersel Garrison's Bridgeport landing field on 8/22. Following the dedication, Boardman sent congratulations to Prescott officials from his hospital bed.

The dedication began with the arrival of 25 military airplanes from four different air bases over a period of three days. The first to land was Capt. Joe Davidson, serving as advance officer for 14 Army aircraft from March Field, near Riverside, Calif. He arrived at Ernest A. Love Field on Thursday afternoon, August 23. Throughout the following day, the remainder of Davidson's detachment arrived "in twos and threes and sixes." These were mostly Consolidated PT-3 trainers, with some de Havilland DH-4's.

By nightfall on Friday, 14 planes were parked and tied down at the airport. Saturday, the first official day of the celebration, saw the arrival of 12 more ships. In the morning, the first of three Douglas O-2's came from Dodd Field at Fort Sam Houston, San Antonio. It had had stopped in Phoenix to pick up H. B. Watkins, an official of the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce. The two other Dodd Field O-2's landed soon afterward.

In the middle of all this, an oil-streaked American Eagle biplane approached from the south. Flown by instructor, Bill Langdon, and student, John Hamilton, it belonged to the Kit Carson School of Flying at Phoenix Municipal Airport on Christy Road. Reported as overdue, this plane had been the cause of some concern. According to one report, five of the March

Field planes left Prescott to search for the biplane. The search was unsuccessful, but the Army pilots took the opportunity to buzz downtown Phoenix before returning to Prescott. As it turned out, Langdon and Hamilton had made a forced landing at Congress Junction due to a leaking oil line. After repairs, they climbed out of the desert and over the mountains with no further difficulties. Once at Prescott, they immediately began wiping down their ship and had it looking like new for the dedication.

After noon, six Army pursuit planes arrived from Rockwell Field, San Diego. These are believed to have been Boeing PW-9's. They were followed by two Navy planes described only as "fast Vought ships" – almost certainly Vought O2U Corsairs. These last two planes came from Naval Air Station San Diego (now NAS North Island). At that time, the Army's Rockwell Field and Naval Air Station San Diego shared North Island.

Flights were made during the day on Saturday. Military pilots were now prohibited from "stunt flying" at airport dedications, but formation flying and demonstrations of performance were approved. The visiting aviators were provided accommodations at the Yavapai Club on Gurley St., which according to the *Arizona Republic,* "began to resemble a military club."

The municipal band played at Courthouse Plaza through the weekend. The band also opened the dedication ceremonies at the airport on Sunday. A banquet, sponsored by the Yavapai County Chamber of Commerce and hosted by Lester Ruffner, was held Saturday evening at the Hassayampa Hotel. The *Prescott Evening Courier* reported that the banquet room was "filled to capacity and spilled over into the Coffee Shop, the lobby and the hotel corridor. At a table where covers had been marked for about 200, easily 350 persons tried to find seats, but while all could not be served in the banquet room, they were enabled to hear the program, a most delightful one." Speakers included U.S. Sen. Henry F. Ashhurst, Gov. George W. P. Hunt, H. B. Watkins of the Phoenix Chamber of Commerce, P. G. Spilsbury, president of the Arizona Industrial Congress and the ranking officers of the four air bases. Although it isn't clear if Grace Sparkes addressed the gathering, she was introduced. The *Courier* described her as "the most efficient secretary of the organization which had planned the dedication and arranged the visit of the aviators and who had guided the local aviation committee in all its efforts to make the dedication a success." Besides Sparkes, the Chamber of Commerce Aviation Committee consisted of Mayor E. C. Seale, Stephen A. Spear, Park Miller, Gail Gardner, W. S. Cox, George S. Hill, Arthur P. Hennig, Joe Eichbaum and Norris Dunphy.

Following the banquet, the visiting aviators were provided transportation to an "aviator's ball" in their honor at the Gardens Pavillion at Granite Dells.

On Sunday, August 26, the actual dedication ceremonies took place. The day started with flying. Scenic Airways brought its new Ford 4-AT-B Tri-Motor from the company's recently-built Grand Canyon South Rim Airport. Rides were provided throughout the day, and the *Courier* estimated that "a couple hundred" people were taken on short scenic flights over the city and airport. The military aviators made exhibition flights, including formation maneuvers and high-speed passes. Also, a plane from the Union Oil Company, which provided a fuel truck for the dedication, landed and stayed through the ceremony before continuing on a flight to Santa Barbara.

There was only one thing to detract from the celebration. The wind on the 26th was *very* strong. The *Courier* described it as "winds of almost gale-like velocity." Fortunately, it was more-or-less steady and more-or-less aligned with one of the runways, so the military planes kept flying. Likewise, the big Ford transport, which made more takeoffs and landings than any of the other planes, appeared to take the wind and blowing dust in stride.

The formal dedication ceremony began at 1:30 p.m. with the crowd surrounding a speakers' platform mounted on the bed of a truck. Bordering the platform were American flags that remained completely unfurled by the wind, which was now at its peak. An American Pathé newsreel crew filmed the dedication, and a surviving excerpt clearly shows the strength of the wind. The film clip is available to view online at the Arizona Memory Project: https://azmemory.azlibrary.gov/nodes/view/255555.

For the most part, the lineup of speakers for the dedication mirrored that of the banquet the night before: Sen. Ashurst, Gov. Hunt, H. B. Watkins, P. G. Spilsbury and the ranking Army and Navy officers. They all struggled to be heard above the wind. Steve Spear, of the Chamber of Commerce, acted as master of ceremonies:

> "Governor Hunt, said Spear, had been called to Prescott for other reasons than to hold down the truck platform in the strong wind that swept unhindered across the treeless hills from the south. He then called upon the governor for a few remarks."
>
> *Prescott Evening Courier,* August 27, 1928: 1, 5

Dedication in the name of Ernest A. Love began with Norman Fain speaking briefly on behalf of his father, Granville "Dan" Fain, about the importance of aviation, after which, he formally presented the 10-year lease to Otto F. Orthel, president of the chamber of commerce.

Gail Gardner, a member of the Chamber Aviation Committee, closed the program. Gardner had been a classmate and friend of Ernest A. Love. He also served with the aviation section of the Signal Corps during WWI. During the dedication weekend, he was the flightline boss, marshalling the inbound and outbound planes and generally making sure the flyers had everything they needed. Now on the speakers' platform, Gardner told the audience about the life of Ernest Love. A bugler played while a copper plaque was unveiled. Embedded in a mortared mound of granite rocks, the plaque was, according to the *Courier,* "made by the hands of four intimate friends of Love that it might be a monument to the past and an inspiration of the future" It read:

ERNEST A. LOVE
AIRPORT
PRESCOTT, ARIZ.
DEDICATED
AUG. 26, 1928

Gardner closed by presenting each visiting airman with a commemorative matchbox holder made from Arizona copper by John Hennessy, an artist and disabled WWI veteran.



Matchbox holders, made of native copper by WWI veteran, John J. Hennessy, were presented to the aviators and dignitaries who participated in the 1928 airport dedication. The inscription reads: "Dedication Ernest A. Love Air Port Prescott, Ariz. Aug. 26, 1928." On the reverse is a small stylized airplane. In the second photo, the matchbox is accompanied by a small copper or copper-finished airplane more or less based on Lindbergh's plane. This "Souvenir of Prescott" is from that period, but it may or may not have been sold at the 1928 dedication. (*author's collection*)





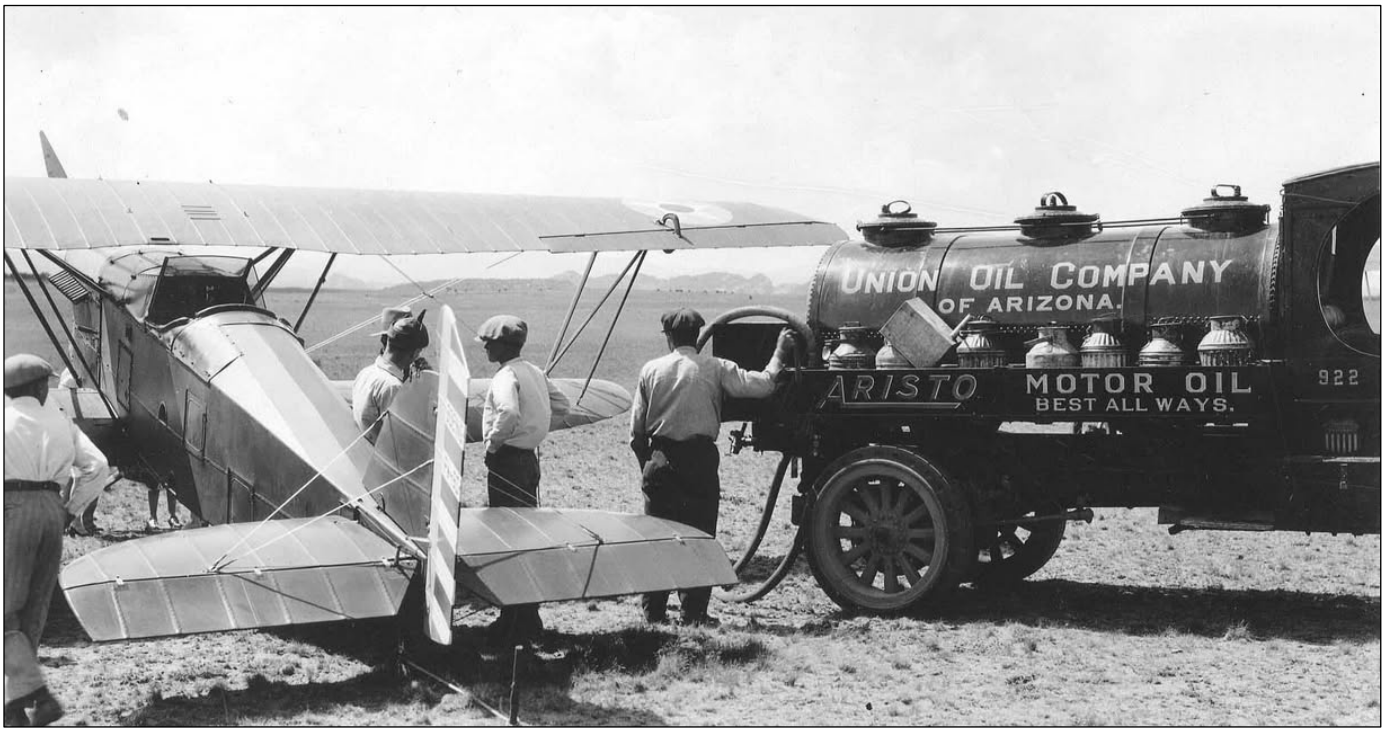
Dignitaries speak from a platform on the back of a truck at the August 26, 1928 rededication as Ernest A. Love Airport. The flags attest to the strength of the wind on that day. Note the Pathé newsreel camera in the foreground. The view is looking southeast; wind from the southwest; Glassford Hill at far right. (*Sharlot Hall Museum Library & Archives*)

More flying ensued on Sunday afternoon. Then the six pursuit ships from Rockwell departed, but not before roaring overhead. They were followed by the two Navy scouts. At some point that afternoon, the Scenic Airways Tri-Motor returned to its Grand Canyon base. Perhaps persuaded by Scenic Airways, the O-2's from Texas left Sunday afternoon on a trip to the Grand Canyon, where the aviators reportedly landed, enjoyed a meal at the El Tovar and then returned to Prescott.

On Monday, all of the remaining Army planes set courses for their respective fields. Except for the wind, over which the organizers had no control, the rededication of Prescott's airport was nearly perfect by any standard. It was a genuine tribute to Ernest A. Love. It also gave Grace Sparkes and the Aviation Committee a well-earned dedication do-over. A newly "air-minded" world was reminded that Prescott, Arizona had an airport.

> "Twenty-eight planes, all but three of them either army or navy planes, were on the field at one time yesterday morning, the largest number of government planes ever gathered on an Arizona airport."
>
> *Prescott Evening Courier,* Aug. 27, 1928: 1, 5

It is difficult to verify this claim, especially considering that squadrons were moving between the eastern and western United States along the Army's Model Airway, landing at Douglas, Nogales, Tucson or Yuma to refuel (Phoenix was bypassed when possible). However, 25 military airplanes on an Arizona airport *at one time* was still an enormous number in August 1928, and a cursory look at the files for the other airports fails to disprove the *Courier's* claim.



U.S. Army Boeing PW-9 being refueled by a Union Oil fuel truck at Ernest A. Love Field. This was most likely taken at the airport's August 1928 rededication, however a PW-9 was also at the field during the Smoki Dances in June 1929. (*Sharlot Hall Museum Library & Archives*)



At the conclusion of the dedication ceremonies on August 26, 1928, the three Douglas O-2's from Fort Sam Houston (Dodd Field, San Antonio) followed Scenic Airways' Ford Tri-Motor to the company's new Grand Canyon South Rim Airport. The Army aviators dined at the El Tovar Hotel before returning to Prescott. Apparently, the winds at the Canyon were as brisk as they had been at Ernest A. Love Field. (*Arizona Historical Society, Reinhold Collection*)

The Decade Comes to an End

September 1928 through 1929

After the planes departed and the dust, quite literally, settled. Ernest A. Love Field was still in essentially the same condition as it was following the 1926 dedication. During the previous spring, the runways had been lengthened, widened and conditioned and there was now a telephone. Those were significant improvements. However, there were no buildings or structures of any kind, and aside from the one-way phone line to town, there were no other amenities.

The need for a hangar had been recognized from the beginning and it seems that efforts were always underway to raise the funds.

> "The Ernest A. Love port has taken its place in the aviation world.
> "It will be rated with the war department, as the result of yesterday's ceremonies and the visit of the army and navy planes, as a field where, in time of emergency, government planes may make a landing. When the city's ambition has been realized and a hangar built, then the field really will come into its own, for then, and only then, will it be on the war department's map as a standard field, rather than an emergency for greater things. A hangar, for which part of the funds already have been raised, will be constructed within the very near future, and this will be followed, it is planned, by the installation of a service station for planes and the construction of some sort of quarters for men, who may be left at the field to condition and guard the planes."
>
> *Prescott Evening Courier,* August 27, 1928: 1, 5

In its attempt to encourage funding for the construction of a hangar and other basic facilities at the airport, the *Courier* may have laid it on a little thick. In truth, the Army's designation of Prescott's airport as an "emergency" field had little impact on its actual use by visiting military aviators. The new Aeronautics Branch of the Department of Commerce now had the responsibility for rating civil airports and the criteria were still under development. Regardless, it was a hardship to leave an expensive airplane – military or civilian – in the open on the barren flats eight miles north of town. In the case of the Army, it usually meant that a hapless noncom would be bivouacking with the plane while the officer was in town.

A municipal hangar did not materialize before the Great Depression. And then it was too late. In the early 1930s, it became a challenge just to keep the runways maintained and open for use.

On September 14, 1928, famous air racing pilot, Art Goebel, was flying a Wasp-powered Lockheed Vega 5, the "Yankee Doodle," on a non-stop transcontinental race westbound from New York to Los Angeles. Goebel and his passenger, Harry J. Tucker, the wealthy owner of the plane, had encountered strong headwinds along the route, as well as storms over New Mexico. The increased fuel consumption was compounded by a faulty carburetor. Over central Arizona, they determined they would have to land. Incredibly,

Goebel and Tucker managed to spot a Shell Oil truck on the road north of Prescott. They attracted the driver's attention, then landed nearby in Chino Valley. The location was just north of Ernest A. Love Field. One report indicated that the aviators thought they were landing at Prescott's airport.

Fuel of adequate grade was pumped and the Yankee Doodle was airborne again in less than an hour. Goebel was the only one of the non-stop racers to make it to Los Angeles, but he was disqualified when he disclosed his Arizona landing.

A few weeks later, the Yankee Doodle would once more streak over Yavapai County, but this flight would be its last. On November 4, with Charles B. D. Collyer as pilot and Harry Tucker as passenger, the Yankee Doodle was attempting to break its own Los Angeles-New York transcontinental record.[7] The two men got a late start due to a social engagement, then they encountered severe weather at night over the Bradshaw Mountains south of Prescott. Things deteriorated quickly and the aviators found themselves disoriented in low clouds and heavy rain. The mountains were unforgiving. The wreckage was scattered across Crooks Canyon in the vicinity of Venezia, roughly 12 miles south-southeast of Prescott. There was no lack of speculation as to the circumstances, but actual evidence was scarce. No effective guards were posted and the crash site was ravaged by souvenir hunters. It was reported that the two men were still wearing tuxedos under their flying coveralls.

For many more years, transcontinental air racers flying to or from Los Angeles continued to plot courses that took them over Yavapai County.

In March 1929, young Bobby Manship, of Kingman, landed at Prescott in his new Eaglerock biplane. Accompanying him was parachute jumper, Percy Miller, who was planning to give a demonstration at the airport on March 31. An estimated 2000 persons gathered to watch him make his jump. Manship sold rides and outlined his plans to return to Prescott later in April to operate a flying service at Ernest A. Love Field through the late spring and summer months.

Since the previous summer, Scenic Airways had been providing occasional flights between Prescott and Montana for Robert E. Tally and other officials of the United Verde Copper Company. At the end of April, A. D. Smith and R. E. "Kit" Kintner, landed at Ernest A. Love Field on a survey flight of the company's proposed airline route between Phoenix and Prescott. While addressing a meeting of the Jaycees, the two men announced that Scenic Airways intended to establish an aviation school at Prescott that would, according to the *Prescott Evening Courier,* "teach all phases of the flying racket." A few days later, one of the company's Ford Tri-Motors transported a U.S. Marshal and seven prisoners to Prescott.

While Scenic Airways didn't open a flight school at Prescott, two other small flight training outfits did set up shop at Ernest A. Love Field in late Spring 1929. Bobby Manship returned as promised, operating his Prescott Air Service. He even built a 30-ft. x 60-ft. hangar, the first at the airport. John Harrison's Copper State Airways also began operations at the field.

THE SUMMER OF 1929

Smoki Dances, Frontier Days and air shows



Arizona Republic, May 5, 1929: Sec. 3, p. 5

The Smoki dances, performed annually by the "Smoki People," a group of Prescott citizens, were scheduled for Saturday, June 8, 1929. An air show at Ernest A. Love Field was planned for the following day. Sponsored by Copper State Airways and the Yavapai County Chamber of Commerce, the show was to include stunt flying, passenger flights, a "bathing beauty contest" to select the "Queen of the Air" and, in the evening, an aviation dance at the airport with a demonstration of night flying. "Sky High" Taylor would attempt to break the world's record of parachute jumps in a single day, and a "beautiful Prescott girl" would make her first parachute descent. The show was managed by the M. C. Cox Air Circus.

> "Some of these visitors will come by automobile, some by train, and some by airplane – for all highways and all airways lead to Prescott tomorrow."
>
> *Prescott Evening Courier,* June 7, 1929: 1

Ten Army airplanes, one Boeing PW-9 and nine Douglas O-2K's, reportedly with 15 officers and at least two noncoms, arrived from March Field to attend the Smoki dances. The group included, once again, Capt. Joe Davidson and Lt. Leonard Weddington. (see Appendix A for the full list, which includes no fewer than ten future generals).

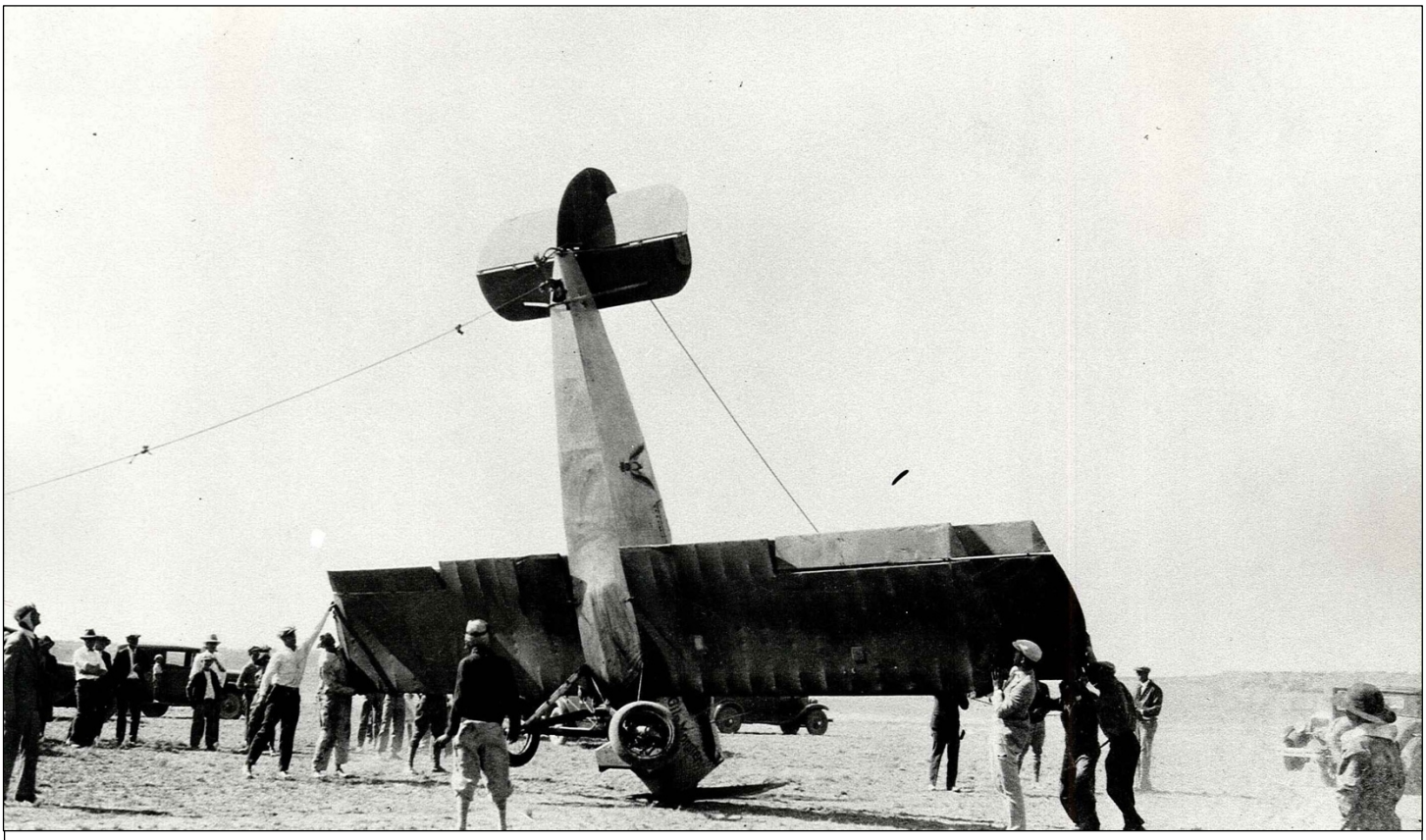


Prescott Evening Courier, May 5, 1929: 10

High winds greatly altered the air show plans. Stunt flying had to be curtailed and many of the planes remained tied down for the duration, including Union Oil's Travel Air biplane. Sky High Taylor fell short of his goal to break a record. He did manage to make eight jumps, but took a terrible beating for his efforts. On the first jump, he landed two or three miles away and then was dragged 1,500 feet through the brush before he could detach his parachute. The jumps that followed weren't much better.

Passenger flights were made, but not without some drama. Bill Daniels, in his American Eagle biplane, "Gila Monster," had just returned from taking two passengers for a ride:

> "Upon taxiing towards the crowd a sudden vicious burst of wind lifted the plane about 15 feet off of the ground and hurled it, nose down, into the earth. The propeller was broken and the right wheel on the landing gear smashed, but neither the pilot nor the two passengers were injured."
>
> *Prescott Evening Courier,* June 10, 1929



High winds hampered the "air circus" held at Ernest A. Love Field on June 9, 1929. Caught by a strong gust, Bill Daniels' American Eagle biplane, dubbed "Gila Monster," was upended while taxiing. Neither he nor his two passengers were injured, but the plane required substantial repairs. *(Marcus Rawlins photo; Arizona Historical Society, Reinhold Collection)*

The "beautiful Prescott girl" who was to make her first parachute leap during the show was actually 21-year-old Texas girl, Buelah Settle. Mercifully, her jump was canceled. It was wisely decided that given the conditions, it would be suicidal. She was, however, taken up for her *first ever* airplane ride.

The promised "moonlight flying" was also scrapped. The improvised floodlighting proved to be inadequate and there was no moon. While the air show may not have met expectations, the aviation dance at the airport, with music provided by Art Long and His Jazzcopating Marvels, was considered a success.

The men from March departed on the 9th, taking with them at least one of the big bullsnakes used for the Smoki dances. The snake was to be turned loose on March Field in hopes that it might reduce the gopher population. Near the end of the month, a nice write-up appeared in the Army Air Service's official newsletter describing the trip to Prescott.

In the midst of all this activity, another plane visited Prescott. A Maddux Air Lines Ford Tri-Motor, chartered by Warner Brothers Pictures, landed at Ernest A. Love Field on June 6. Flown by well-known California aviator, Dick Ranaldi, the plane had traveled to San Francisco, Grand Canyon and Tucson before arriving at Prescott. The party, which included director Michael Curtiz, was scouting locations for scenes in upcoming motion pictures. They stayed overnight at the Hassayampa Hotel and departed for Los Angeles the next morning.

Frontier Days continued to attract airplanes and aviators to Prescott. In 1929, the event was held July 4-7. Five "powerful Douglas planes" from March Field, most likely Douglas O-2K's, arrived on the 3rd. Nine officers and one sergeant were aboard. (see Appendix A for the full list). One brief report indicated that another Army plane, flown by Lt. C. E. O'Connor and Lt. Waddell, landed on July 2 and then departed the next day for Colorado Springs, intending to return to Prescott on the 4th.

Another air show, again sponsored by Copper State Airways, was planned during Frontier Days, although this time there was no connection to the Chamber of Commerce. Copper State would have its American Eagle at the field and Ernest Wickersham's Waco 10 was scheduled to perform, along with parachutist, Percy Miller.

> "There is to be parachute jumping by Percy Miller, the one-legged daredevil, stunt flying and, each afternoon about 3:30 o'clock, a 'wild eyed cowbuster' sitting in a saddle rigged up on the plane will swoop low over the fair grounds whooping it up. The name of this "plane buster" is being withheld."
>
> *Prescott Evening Courier,* July 2, 1929: 6

An evening dance was slated at the airport during which another try at night flying was planned. Copper State's John Harrison believed that an array of carbide floodlights would allow his company to provide passenger rides after dark. It's not known whether any of these events actually transpired. No follow-up reports have yet been located.

On the first of August, capricious winds once again damaged an airplane at Prescott. A student pilot had just completed his first solo flight when a strong gust flipped the biplane on its back. The pilot was uninjured, but the plane had to be shipped to Phoenix for rebuilding.

The first Women's Transcontinental Air Derby traversed Arizona in mid-August 1929. The course from Santa Monica to Cleveland followed the southern route across the deserts, mountains and borderlands of Arizona and New Mexico. Stops included Yuma, Phoenix and Douglas. The racers, which included many of the famous women aviators of the day, would normally have passed well south of Prescott.

Unfortunately, the portion of the air race through Arizona and New Mexico was marked by mishaps and tragedy. One of the competitors, Marvel Crossan, was killed after bailing out of her Travel Air biplane near Wellton, Ariz. Fourteen entrants made it to the Phoenix overnight stop on August 19, but one landed more than two hours after the rest of the group. That plane, flown by Opal Logan Kunz, flew off-course to the north of the planned route. Running low on fuel, she made a forced landing at Prescott. She didn't make it to Ernest A. Love Field – it's unlikely she knew it existed. Instead, Kunz skillfully brought her Travel Air biplane down "in the bed of Granite Creek, near the city ranch," in the general vicinity of today's Prescott Lakes Parkway and Highway 89. J. F. Better, of the Prescott Fire Department, saw her land and a Union Oil fuel truck was summoned. After refueling, the *Courier* reported that she "made a prettier take-off, clearing the trees on the side of the bed of the stream by just a few feet." When Kunz finally arrived at Sky Harbor, she was well behind the rest of the competitors. But most of the race was ahead and she was still in it.

High Hopes and Airline Dreams

As early as 1926, around the same time Prescott was establishing its airport, Bob Hausler and his California associates were planning an airline that would combine service along what he called the Tri-State Airway (Los Angeles - Albuquerque) with tourism flights to the Grand Canyon. The implication was that Prescott would be included. He was a little too early and a lot undercapitalized. The venture evaporated before the end of the year as larger aviation concerns began to focus on the same goals.

In truth, few people at that time really knew what the business model of a scheduled airline would be. There was an enormous amount of trial and error. Obviously, federal Air Mail route contracts were prized. They offered subsidies that gave an airline operator time to get established, determine what works and build a profitable passenger system. In the absence of a mail contract, airline managers could only search for niche routes that might provide a steady stream of passengers.

Following Lindbergh's flight, would-be "airlines" began to pop up across the country. In Arizona, there were many. From 1928 and into the early 1930s, more than a dozen companies proposed scheduled airline service within and through the state. From a research standpoint, it is important know the following:

1) Terms like "airline" and "airways" were not well-defined and used loosely. Today, we consider an airline to be a company that provides *scheduled* service between two or more points. In the 1920s, a pilot with an open-cockpit biplane could go into business as an air taxi and flying school using the word "airline" in the company name.

2) There were well-organized, well-financed scheduled airlines operating in Arizona by 1928-29. However, most of Arizona's "airlines" were tiny operations consisting of one or two biplanes flown and managed by enthusiastic company "officers" with high hopes and financial reserves sufficient only to buy gas for a few weeks.

3) Airline companies in the late 1920s and early 1930s frequently announced their intentions to provide regular service to particular points in the state. These announcements were most often made to test the waters or generate investment. Only in a few instances was service actually inaugurated. In Arizona, air taxi (charter) and airline companies were required to seek operating authority from the Corporation Commission, and more applications were denied than approved. In short, a newspaper report of impending airline service does not confirm that the service actually commenced.

By the end of 1927, Jack Frye's Aero Corporation of California had begun to build its passenger service from Los Angeles to Phoenix and Tucson. As Standard Air Lines, the company later extended the route to Douglas, El Paso and finally Dallas. By the middle of 1929, Western Air Express and Transcontinental Air Transport were both flying across Northern Arizona.

The awarding of transcontinental Air Mail contracts by the Post Office Department in 1930 was the result of an unexpected and somewhat convoluted game of musical chairs. There were winners and losers. Arguably the strongest and most established carriers now operated the three transcontinental routes, two of which crossed Arizona. That left only intrastate routes for the Arizona operators that still aspired to run an airline. With established interstate airlines operating across northern and southern Arizona, small operators were quick to recognize that a north-south route linking the two transcontinental airways might be profitable. There were many variations of this proposed north-south route, but almost all of them included a stop at Prescott.

Adding to the hurdles faced by aspiring airline companies was the requirement to obtain an operating certificate from the Arizona Corporation Commission (ACC), *in addition* to all of the federal requirements. Under the broad principle of "public convenience and necessity," the Commission passed judgement on every aspect of proposed service. Airlines in the state were treated just like bus lines and taxi companies. Once awarded an ACC certificate, an operator was, to a large extent, protected from any meaningful competition. The ACC, empowered by the state legislature, believed the system prevented chaos and failure, while protecting consumers. Critics believed that it stifled competition and arbitrarily picked winners and losers.

As the decade came to a close, the financial centers of the country were roiled by the Wall Street Crash of October 1929. In aviation, the early casualties were the enterprises that were most heavily leveraged. However, it would be some time before the cascading effects of the Great Depression would reach Arizona with full force.

The flying schools at Prescott were gone by October 1929. Bobby Manship closed Prescott Air Service, dismantled his hangar and left for parts unknown. Copper State Airways dissolved, leaving a few partially-trained students in Prescott. Those who were determined to obtain a license had to finish their coursework in Phoenix.

One by one, nearly all of Arizona's would-be airlines disappeared. The table on the following page lists the companies that are known to have proposed airline service to Prescott prior to World War II. A more detailed history of Prescott's airline service is presented in a separate monograph.

Airline Dreams

Pre-World War II Airline Service Proposals

This list includes only those airline companies that specifically proposed scheduled service to Prescott. Some of these were composed of little more than company officers, good intentions and wishful thinking. A few, however, were well-capitalized going concerns.

No evidence has yet been found to confirm that *scheduled* service was ever operated at Prescott prior to 1946. Some companies with names that included the words airline, air service or airways would occasionally announce that they were providing service to Prescott, but these were essentially on-demand charters, not regularly-scheduled flights.

The dates are the approximate month and year that the intention to provide service was first reported. Company names in bold type were true airlines that actually provided scheduled service in Arizona. Although they proposed scheduled service to Prescott, there is currently no evidence that it commenced. Only two of these companies were still operating in 1933 and only one (TWA) was operating in 1940.

DATE	NAME (or dba)	PRINCIPAL(S)
1926 (May)	proposed Grand Canyon airline	Robert "Bob" Hausler, Frank Clarke
1928 (Apr)	Apache Aircraft Corporation (aka Apache Air Lines)	E. H. Jolley, S. T. Nelson, Thomas Woodman, G. V. Hays, M. Van Horst
1928 (Apr)	**Aero Corporation of California / Standard Airlines**	Jack Frye, Paul E. Richter, Walter Hamilton
1928 (Apr) > 1929 >	**Scenic Airways**	J. Parker Van Zandt, G. Hall Roosevelt, William B. Stout et al.
1928 (May)	Aero Corporation of Arizona	T. L. Weatherford, Herb R. Askins, R. E. "Kern" Warren, Charles Goldtrap
1928 (Sep)	Southwest Air Service	Del Jones, C. B. Cosgrove, H. W. Durham
1929 (Jun)	Arizona Flying Service	G. W. Brophy, V. R. Quintal, H. E. Frederickson, G. C. Quick
1929 (Jul)	Copper State Airways	John H. Harrison, Manuel Gutierrez, Norman Wykoff
1929 (Jul)	All-American Airways (aka Aero Corporation of America)	William J. Touhey, John A. Wheeler
1929 (Jul)	Arizona Aero Corporation	Leslie P. Arnold, D. E. Jones, William Black, D. E. Ellis
1929 (Oct)	Union Air Lines	Leslie P. Arnold et al. (reportedly a merger of Southwest, Copper State and Aero Corporation of Arizona)
1930 (Jun)	**Apache Airlines**	Ralph G. Vaughan
1932 (Jan) > 1936-37	**Grand Canyon Airlines**	Jack Thornburg, Glover E. "Roxy" Ruckstell
1938	**Transcontinental & Western Air (TWA)**	Jack Frye, Paul E. Richter, F. G. Wilson, L. G. Fritz

1930s

and the Great Depression

The last two years of the 1920s were marked by unrestrained optimism about the future of aviation and, in particular, its potential profitability. Former barnstormers, would-be entrepreneurs, aircraft builders, Eastern capitalists and many others were competing to find and exploit new opportunities.

This period of high expectations continued into 1930-31, past the onset of the Great Depression. The effects of the Depression came in waves and impacted some regions of the country more than others. However, by 1932, the full force of the downturn was being felt by Arizona's major industries.

Initially, the Depression carried away the high flyers – the companies that had expanded very rapidly and were heavily-leveraged. Among those was Scenic Airways, builder of Sky Harbor and a pioneer in air tourism. Scenic had a major impact on aviation development in Arizona and the Southwest during its brief existence, but by the middle of 1930, the company's liquidation was complete.

One-by-one, most of the small operators – the flying schools, charter companies and tiny airlines – disappeared. Only those with the least amount of debt and the greatest amount of tenacity were able to hang on. Nevertheless, during that post-Lindbergh period a tremendous amount of pioneering work was accomplished, and a few airline companies managed to position themselves to dig-in and survive – even grow – during the 1930s.

That Ernest A. Love Field survived the Great Depression was due entirely to a small group of local residents who loved to fly. The term "small" is relative. It was a large group for a city the size of Prescott. Aside from Phoenix and Tucson, nowhere else in Arizona was there a more active band of local aviators during the 1930s.

The low-water mark for Prescott's airport, and most other Arizona airports, was the period 1932-1933. Except for the scheduled airline flights of American Airways, Phoenix Sky Harbor often looked deserted – maybe three or four planes in the big hangar, but an otherwise empty or nearly empty ramp. Transcontinental airline traffic helped to keep some of the state's airports maintained. American Airways stopped at Douglas, Tucson and Phoenix on the southern route. Transcontinental & Western Air (TWA) operated its own airports at Winslow and Kingman on the route across Northern Arizona. Transient Army and Navy planes also used these airports, as well as Yuma's Fly Field, on cross-country flights to and from bases at San Diego and Riverside, Calif.

However, many of the state's smaller airports became dormant or vanished altogether. So it was no shame that Ernest A. Love Field struggled to keep its runways open. In those early Depression years, city and county governments were focused on more pressing matters. If an airport had no regular airline or military flights, then only one thing could save it: local pilots who were determined, committed and willing to do whatever was necessary to keep it operating. Prescott had that.

The Prescott pilots of the 1930s did not always share politics or backgrounds. What they did have in common was a desire to fly, which made them not only friends, but a cohesive and influential force in the steady development of Ernest A. Love Field. While some of these aviators flew at the airport through the entire decade, others were there for varying periods, with enough overlap to ensure that the field remained active.

Aviation in the state was still a very small world. From Flagstaff to Nogales, Yuma to Winslow and everywhere in between, most of Arizona's aviators knew each other. They supported efforts throughout the state to keep airports open. In particular, Prescott's airport benefitted from the close camaraderie between its pilots and the flyers in Phoenix. The Prescott aviators often attended the social events of the Phoenix group and the Phoenix pilots were regular visitors to Ernest A. Love Field, especially during the annual air shows.

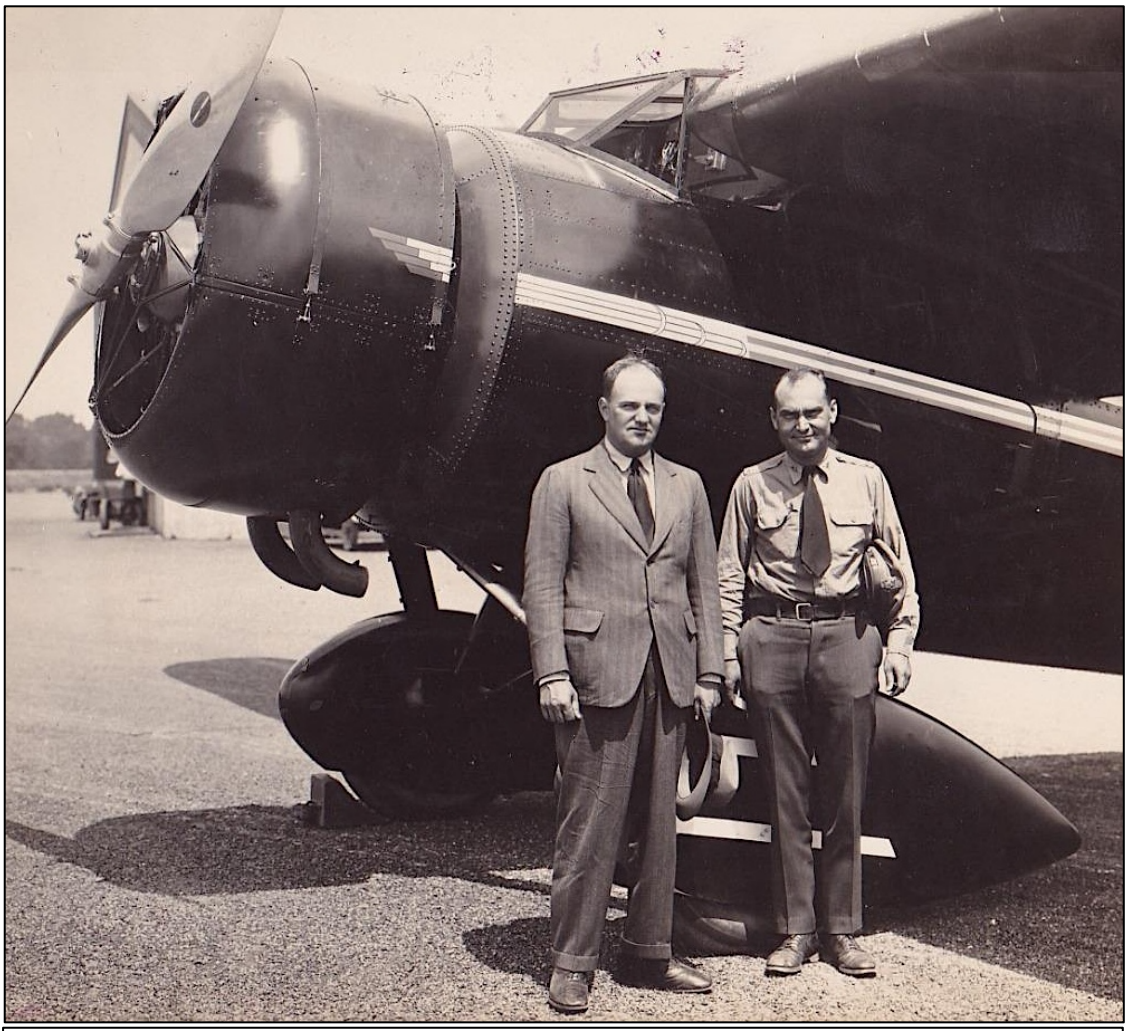
The most important takeaway from the 1930s is that Ernest A. Love Field remained open! The airport was depicted on every edition of the Department of Commerce aeronautical charts and was listed in all of the published airport directories. As can be seen in the *Index of Newspaper Articles* (posted separately), there was never a period of closure or inactivity. There was always at least one airplane based at the field, and more typically four or five.

Pivotal to the continued operation of Ernest A. Love Field during the worst years of the Depression were the flight schools that had been established in 1929-30. Those small, short-lived flying schools – Bobby Manship's Prescott Air Service and John Harrison's Copper State Airways – were more important to the airport's future than one might imagine. Several Prescott aviators received flight instruction at the airport during that brief period. Some of them bought airplanes. This group included most of the stalwarts that kept the airport going long after the Depression swept the flying schools away. We can only speculate as to whether these pilots would have pursued their licenses if they had been required to go to Phoenix for instruction.

IRA C. EAKER AND F. TRUBEE DAVISON

In May 1931, Ira Eaker, now a captain, returned to Prescott. He had been the third aviator to fly to Prescott back in 1919. This time he flew from Sacramento with Assistant Secretary of War for Aviation, F. Trubee Davison. The type of aircraft was not recorded, but in 1930, the Army acquired a Consolidated Model 17 Fleetster Special "for the personal use of Assistant Secretary of War Davison."

Davison was a frequent visitor to Arizona, sometimes visiting Lewis Douglas, who in 1931 was serving in the U.S. House of Representatives for Arizona. On this occasion, he was Douglas' guest at Jimmy Minotto's Triangle Z Ranch near Wagoner.



Assistant Secretary of War for Aviation, F. Trubee Davison (L), and Capt. Ira C. Eaker with their Consolidated Model 17 Fleetster Special (Y1C-11). This was taken several months prior to their May 1931 landing at Ernest A. Love Field. It's likely that the Fleetster was used for the Prescott trip. (author's collection)

ROSCOE TURNER DROPS IN

On April 28, 1933, another transcontinental speed pilot should have passed over Yavapai County unnoticed on his way from Los Angeles to Newark, N.J. Unfortunately for Roscoe Turner, it didn't work out that way. Attempting to set a new west-to-east record in his Wedell-Williams Model 44 Special, Turner departed Burbank, Calif. before sunrise. Crossing Arizona, he encountered heavy weather, which he was expecting. However, over Clarkdale, his engine began vibrating and his vacuum pump, which operated his "blind flying instruments," malfunctioned. What happened after that varies somewhat, depending on which newspaper you read.

The *Prescott Evening Courier* presented detailed reports on each of the three days that Turner was in Prescott. According to the aviator's account of his flight, as quoted in the *Courier* (April 28, 1933, pages 1, 4):

" 'I circled over Clarkdale three or four times and it quit [the engine vibration] and I started on. But when I opened the throttle it began vibrating again, so I picked out a place in a river valley (the Verde river) and set the ship down to see what was the matter.' "

At one point, Turner said he considered bailing out. Reports varied, but after landing, he apparently satisfied himself that the engine was fine and the malfunctioning vacuum pump was the cause of the vibration. He then returned to the air, aborting his record attempt and heading back to Burbank. He made it only as far as Prescott when the weather forced another landing.

" 'So I turned on the motor again and she sounded fine. I got this far and got hemmed in all of a sudden by the snow clouds which made it impossible to see. The clouds and my instruments out of whack, you know, put me up against it, but all of a sudden I sighted your field out there and set down right now.

" 'When I stuck my head out it was snowing and sleeting heavily. In fact, the sleet that peppered my face was so stinging I crawled right back in again.' "

The airport's original amenity, the telephone, paid for itself that day.

"Col. Turner went to the telephone booth at the field, and asked the operator to put him in touch with some aviator here. She turned him over to Davis.

" 'I've had the pleasure of meeting and driving to town with the most famous aviator on earth,' Davis declared.

[...]

"His plane, with the help of Cliff Davis, Prescott flier, was moved into one of the three hangars at the Love field. Davis brought the famous flyer to the Hassayampa hotel, where he will stay until the weather clears and permits his return to Los Angeles."

Prescott Evening Courier, April 28, 1933: 1, 4

"Every favor that lay in its power was offered Col. Turner by the aviation committee of the Yavapai County chamber of commerce, headed by Gail Gardner as chairman, including the use of a car and two Reconstruction Finance corporation workmen as guards over the famous flier's fleet little craft that is tucked in a hangar at the field [...] When word reached here that Col. Turner was down, the aviation committee sent out three cars to commence a search, but their occupants found him safe and sound at the field."

Prescott Evening Courier, April 28, 1933: 1, 4

The *Arizona Republic's* report on April 29 differed slightly:

"Turner's ship was staked down on the Prescott landing field eight miles north of the city and covered with a tarpaulin to protect it from the elements. The field hangar was not large enough to accommodate it."

The weather was still poor the following day and Turner stayed over another night. During his time in Prescott, he visited a sick boy at his home, autographing an album and admiring his model airplanes. The boy, 16, had reportedly been bedridden for a year and a half.

On April 30, the weather finally cleared and Turner was able to return to Burbank, departing just after noon.

"A crowd of fifty or more persons was present to see him take off after warming up his motor for a half to three-quarters of an hour and waving a farewell..."

"He took a long run in his specially-built, low-wing racing craft, yellow in color, and shot toward Prescott from whence he vanished over the western horizon like a dart."

"The aviator wired back to Cliff Davis, Prescott flier, that he arrived without mishap at two o'clock, coast time, or three hours and fifteen minutes after leaving here."

Prescott Evening Courier, May 1, 1933: 3

Turner's fortunes improved. Two months later, he won the Bendix Trophy Race, flying from New York to Los Angeles in 11 hours, 30 minutes, and setting a new transcontinental speed record. This despite stiff headwinds and strong competition.



Col. Roscoe Turner and his Wedell-Williams Model 44 Special in 1935. These top-tier race planes were constantly being modified and tweaked. Changes in sponsors, paint schemes and engines were common. Despite those differences, this is the same plane that landed at Ernest A. Love Field in 1933. The always-flamboyant Turner was a consummate showman, but he backed it up with blue-ribbon flying skills. (author's collection)

Honor Roll

The men and women who kept Ernest A. Love Field operating during the Great Depression

Many people received flight instruction and soloed at Prescott in the late 1920s and 1930s. The following is a list of local pilots who are known to have made significant contributions to the survival and development of the airport during the Depression. Their planes, when known, are also listed. While some of these aviators flew at the airport through the entire decade, others were there for varying periods, with enough overlap to ensure that the field remained active.

This centennial project will include biographical profiles of most of the pilots listed below.

GEORGE H. VOLLER Auto Parts & Service	American Eagle A-129 NC627E (first airplane owned by a Prescott resident and based at the airport)
LOUIS B. PRICE Auto Parts Store Owner	Barling (Nicholas-Beazley) NB-3 (60-hp LeBlond) > Rearwin Sportster [1]
Minnie May Price (wife)	soloed at Prescott 1935 (believed to be the first woman to solo at PRC)
William "Bill" Price (son)	soloed at Prescott 9/1/36, age 16
James "Jim" Price (son)	soloed at Prescott 3/29/37, age 16
CARL W. HICKERSON County School Supt.	American Eagle biplane > Aeronca [2]
CLIFFORD E. "CLIFF" DAVIS Commercial Pilot	Curtiss Robin C (185-hp Challenger) > Taylor Cub > Stinson
ERNEST A. "POSS" KUHN AT&SF Railroad Foreman	Thomas-Morse Scout > ?
MANUEL S. GUTIERREZ Grocery Store Owner [6]	Alexander Eaglerock A-1 NC7487 (J-4) [3] > Monocoupe [4] > Luscombe [5]
FLOYD MURPHY Commercial Pilot	American Eagle biplane (Kinner) > Aeronca [2]
RAY J. PURVES Motel Owner	Monocoupe (Lambert) > Curtiss Robin (115-hp Milwaukee Tank)
LATE 1930s:	
ROBERT V. "BOB" BORN Deputy Sheriff	Aeronca [2] > Piper J-5 Cruiser
MARGARET A. GARBER Deputy School Supt.	Aeronca [2]
DR. NEWTON FERGUSON Dentist	[unknown; probably flew one of the based aircraft]

continued

Honor Roll

CONTINUED

There were other Prescott residents who flew at Ernest A. Love Field during the 1930s, including Clair Scholey, Clarence Stukey, Arthur Andres and Otho Greenway. Grant B. Schley II and his wife, Viola, were active aviators and owned two large ranches north of Prescott (Bar Heart and Walnut Creek). They reportedly built their own airstrip when they bought the ranches in 1935, but often landed at Prescott.

Pilots in the Verde Valley also frequented and supported Ernest A. Love Field. In particular, pioneer flyers, Ersel Garrison (brief bio. on p. 14) and Marcus Rawlins, contributed to the airport's development.

Finally, several Phoenix pilots lent their support to Prescott's airport during the Depression. They included A. Lee Moore, Ruth Reinhold (née Chalmers), Carl Knier, Dr. Joseph Greer, Loyal Penn, Charles Hurst, Dr. J. Gordon Shackelford and others.

Three flight instructors, Charles "Charley" Goldtrap, Ralph Vaughan and Paul Odneal, all of them true aviation pioneers, flew up from Phoenix at various times to provide flight instruction to Prescott's aspiring aviators. Also, former Phoenix pilot, William "Bill" Daniels, moved to Prescott and began teaching a formal aviation ground school. The importance of this instruction, in the air and on the ground, can't be overstated. The airport needed active pilots to survive and these men produced them.

Several Prescott civic groups provided support and encouragement to the airport at various times. Three organizations, however, were steadfast. The old Yavapai County Chamber of Commerce founded and operated Ernest A. Love Field. The American Legion assisted whenever help was needed. Finally, the Prescott Kiwanis Club, through its Aviation Committee, remained engaged in airport affairs through good times and bad.

Finally, there were the spouses and children of the Prescott pilots. When mechanized equipment was unavailable from the city or county, as was often the case, the flying families walked the runways removing rocks, grubbing weeds and filling in the ever-present prairie dog holes.

These were the people who kept the airport going when it could have simply evaporated. The torch has been successfully passed many times since those days. And that's why Ernest A. Love Field is Arizona's oldest airport.

Notes

1 the NB-3 was sold and the Rearwin purchased in 1936
2 the Aeronca was purchased Feb. 1938 and owned in partnership, first by Murphy and Hickerson, then later by Murphy, Born and Garber
3 purchased in 1930
4 probably a Monocoupe 90 NC548W; sold in late 1938
5 purchased in Jan. 1939
6 Gutierrez was a Jerome merchant; he based his planes at Prescott and built a stucco hangar

In 1934, things began to improve at the airport. Flying clubs were organized, formal flight instruction became available again and there were air shows – some quite elaborate – held annually through 1938. There were also federal aid programs, primarily administered by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), that specifically targeted aviation. It was reported that more than 100 Prescott-area residents enrolled in federally-sponsored aviation ground school classes at Prescott between October 1934 and July 1935. In January 1934, 16 pilots or student pilots were listed as active at the field, and all of the privately-owned planes based at the airport were being made available for student instruction. There were many novice pilots during that period who made their first solo flights at Love Field.

FACILITIES

The first airplane owned by a Prescott resident and based at Ernest A. Love Field is believed to have been George Voller's American Eagle biplane. The hangar that he built to shelter his plane is credited as being the first building on the field. Actually, Bobby Manship and Billy Browning erected the first hangar at Prescott in 1929 for their Prescott Air Service. That hangar was described as being 30 feet by 60 feet. Unfortunately, by the end of 1929, Manship had closed his little flying service and dismantled the hangar.

Voller must have built his hangar sometime after March 1931. We know this because of the recollections of another aviator that landed at Prescott in mid-March. West Moreau was a well-known California pilot. On March 17, 1931, he married his sweetheart, Bessie, in Denver. They departed in Moreau's airplane for a one-day honeymoon in Albuquerque. The couple then planned to fly to Los Angeles to drop off a family friend, and on to Oakland. In his undated memoirs, Moreau gives us a snapshot description of Ernest A. Love Field in 1931:

> "The next day we took off to come to the coast. During that period of time, the weather was real clear, but the wind was blowing, and I drifted quite a bit off of my course. Finally, in looking around, I couldn't even see a road anyplace to make any point of location, except that finally I located, I saw a little airport with no hangar, and no town around. I went in there and landed. There was one little airplane there that had a license on it--Prescott, Arizona. Prescott was the town that was located near this airport, but you were unable to see the city because it was over a high layer of rocks and there was no civilian life distinguishable at all."

Moreau regained his bearings and continued to Kingman, where he was grounded by winds measured at 50 mph on the surface and 70 mph aloft.

Clearly, Love Field could be a very lonely place in the early 1930s. It must have been agonizing to leave your pride and joy tied-down out there on that deserted prairie. Visiting pilots would have been reluctant to stay overnight in town, when it meant leaving their planes unprotected.

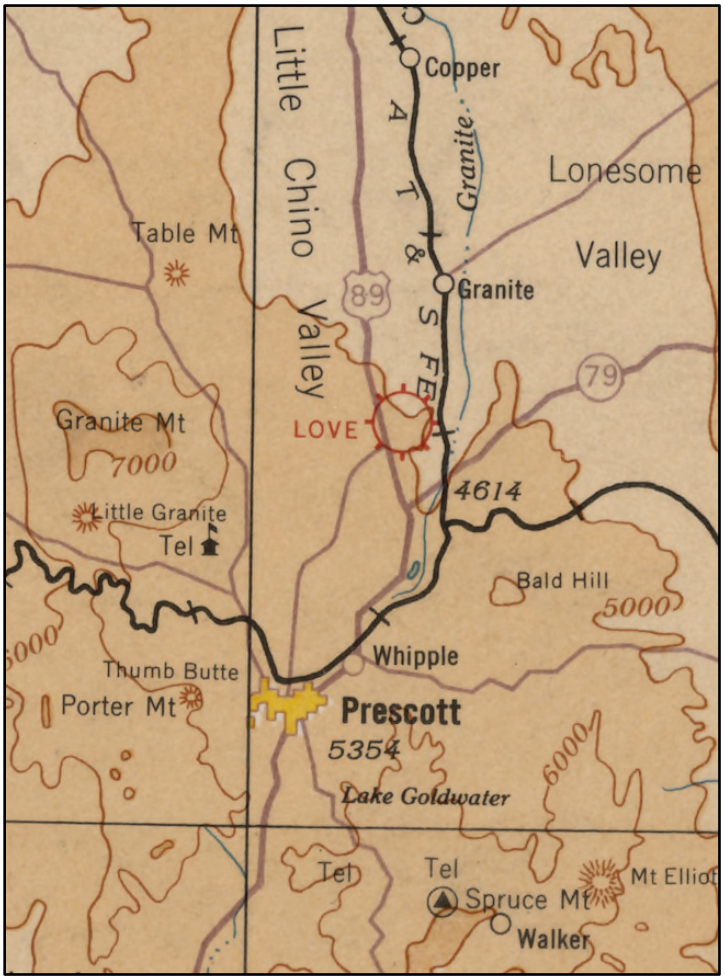
Ralph G. Vaughan, operator of Apache Airlines, landed his Kreutzer tri-motor at Prescott in April and strongly urged the city to build a hangar capable of accommodating three airplanes. He described it as the most "outstanding need" at the field. He had built a very nice multi-plane hangar at his Midland Airport near Globe.

The reader will recall that almost from the beginning, a municipal hangar was identified as a pressing need at the airport. Several civic organizations campaigned for a hangar. At one point, it was reported that a substantial amount of money had been raised. Apparently, the Depression extinguished any such ambitions, and the funds were apparently used for some other purpose.

George Voller most likely built his hangar soon after the visits of Moreau and Vaughan. Standard Oil Co. of California's "Landing Fields of the Pacific West," dated May 15, 1931, notes the presence of a "private hangar" at the field. Succeeding editions of the Dept. of Commerce airport directories also confirm the presence of a hangar (Appendix C)



George Voller's American Eagle A-129, NC627E, circa early to mid-1930s. This is believed to be the first airplane owned by a Prescott resident and based at Ernest A. Love Field. Photos of the early hangars are scarce. (*Sharlot Hall Museum Library & Archives*)



Ernest A. Love Field as it was depicted on the first edition of the Prescott Sectional Aeronautical Chart, dated February, 1932. At that time, it was one of only two charted civil airports in Yavapai County, the other being Clemenceau Airport (today's Cottonwood Municipal Airport). There were also two U.S. Dept. of Commerce intermediate landing fields along the Los Angeles-Amarillo Airway in the far northern part of the county.

Cliff Davis and his brother, E. J., built a hangar for Cliff's Curtiss Robin sometime prior to April 1932. By April 1933, three hangars were on the field, and as the decade progressed, at least two more appeared. These were strictly owner-built structures, most commonly of wood frame construction covered by corrugated sheet iron, often salvaged from other projects. An exception was a stucco hangar built by Manuel Gutierrez. Prescott's

early aviators were a can-do, resourceful bunch. It must have looked like a rag-tag cluster of sheds, but these hangars offered the planes (and pilots) much-needed protection from the elements.

In August 1933, Cliff Davis arrived at the airport to find two men exiting his hangar. They sped away in a car after breaking into the hangar and taking a pistol and fire extinguisher from Davis' plane. This underscored the need for a watchman or resident caretaker at the field, but it would be a while before that could be arranged.

The following May, several improvements at the airport were described. Two 10-ft. x 10-ft. concrete warm-up pads were poured and the outhouses were upgraded in stature to "public toilets." It was also reported that an "underground fuel pump" had been installed. It was actually the storage tank that was underground, there was still no electricity and the hand-crank "visible" pump was mounted on a high, mortared-rock base.

In terms of facilities, the highlight of the 1930s was the acquisition of the airport's first administration building. It was a railroad boxcar. E. A. "Poss" Kuhn was one of Prescott's ardent aviators. He was also a highly-regarded roundhouse foreman for the Santa Fe Railroad. Some AT&SF boxcars were due to be retired, and Kuhn knew which one was the best. In the summer of 1933, he purchased it for use at the airport as an "emergency bunk house and workshop for aviators." With the aid of local Kiwanis members and a heavy truck offered by the Alabam trucking company, the "well-preserved" boxcar was moved from the trainyard to the airport.

First, a stove was installed and the fairly spacious boxcar was divided into quarters and a work area. By the end of the year, a caretaker was found. On December 1, Elbert McWilliams began his tenure as the airport's first resident airport attendant. The telephone, which had suffered some abuse, could now be moved inside. Over the next year, the local pilots continued to lend their skills to remodeling the boxcar into proper living quarters. The city even kicked in $35 for the finer appointments such as windows.

Even as late as 1938-39, there was still no electricity at the field. Water probably had to be hauled. Fortunately, many people in the 1930s were still proficient with wood stoves, kerosene lamps, wash basins and manual tools. McWilliams must have been one of them.

In June 1938, strong winds damaged two of the hangars.

> "A sudden gust of wind that almost reached gale proportions swept down on Ernest A. Love field Sunday afternoon and left a trail of wreckage in its wake.
>
> "The Hickerson and Murphy hangar was demolished with a loss of about $300, according to Carl Hickerson. Strangely enough an auto stored in the hangar was not even scratched. Manuel Guitterez' [Gutierrez] stucco hangar was lifted four or five feet off its base and otherwise damaged. As luck would have it both planes usually occupying these hangars were off the field at the time. Several spectators had narrow escapes from flying debris."
>
> "Hangars Damaged By Sudden Gust."
> *Prescott Evening Courier,* June 6, 1938: 2

Presumably, the hangars were repaired or replaced. One more hangar was built in 1939 for a reported total of five.



"Visible" fuel pump in operation at Ernest A. Love Field, circa mid to late 1930s. It is mounted on a high, mortared-stone base. The storage tank was reported to be underground by mid-1934. The attendant used a hand crank to pump gas up into the glass jar at the top. The jar usually held up to 10 gallons. When the nozzle was inserted into the plane's gas tank and the valve opened, the gas would flow by gravity. This unique stonework installation may have been a WPA project. (*Sharlot Hall Museum Library & Archives*)

PROPOSED AIRPORT RELOCATIONS

and the purchase of Ernest A. Love Field

During the 1930s, specifically in 1935-36 and again in 1937-39, Prescott investigated the possibility of relocating the airport. The primary motivation for this was the looming expiration of the airport lease and the fact that federal airport aid would not be forthcoming unless the city owned the land.

The details of the city's leasehold interest in the airport land remain to be fully assembled. Some documents are currently unavailable and the few contemporary references (newspaper reports and council meeting minutes) are incomplete or conflicting. When the airport was established in July 1926, Dan Fain or Fain & Wilkins held a grazing lease for the airport land (Section 25, Township 15 North, Range 2 West). The Yavapai County Chamber of Commerce was granted use of the airport tract either by a formal sublease or, possibly, by informal agreement. We know that during the August 1928 rededication, a formal sublease, said to be of 10 years duration, was handed ceremonially by Norman Fain to officials of the Chamber.

The actual owner of the land in 1926 and 1928 has not been confirmed, but it was probably Alpheus H. Favour, prominent Prescott banker, attorney and state legislator. By 1932, Favour *was* the owner of record, because in September, he sold Section 25 and several other grazing sections to the Perkins Cattle Company.

There were conflicting reports as to when the airport lease was due to expire. In 1935, the *Prescott Evening Courier* reported that the lease was due to expire in "about a year." On October 16, 1935, the *Arizona Republic* reported, "The City's lease on the present city airport, some nine miles from town, expires in a year, without provision for renewal." On February 20, 1937, the *Republic* reported, "The lease on the Ernest A. Love airport six miles from the city is scheduled to expire in July."

It was the Depression and Prescott was not inclined to spend a lot of money on land. Likewise, Perkins was in no position to give land away. The effects of the Depression had reached Arizona's ranching industry and many of the state's livestock growers were hit hard. A fair price was agreed upon, but it took more than a year for the city to conclude the deal. Around that time, a title abstract was ordered and it was found that the Yavapai County Chamber of Commerce did, in fact, hold a valid lease to August 1938 – 10 years after the August 1928 rededication of the airport.

The airport leases and land acquisitions will be covered in much greater detail in a separate monograph. The foregoing summary is presented only to explain the motivation for the relocation proposals.

THE CITY RANCH

In September 1935, city leaders began to explore the possibility of relocating the airport to what was then known as the City Ranch. The site under consideration was between the old city dump and Granite Dells, alongside Highway 89 and Granite Creek. It was in the general area of Highway 89 and today's Prescott Lakes Parkway – the same place that Opal Logan Kunz selected for her successful forced landing during the first Women's Transcontinental Air Derby in August 1929.

The most attractive feature of this location was that the city already owned the land. That fact is made obvious today by the presence of municipal facilities like the water treatment plant, transfer station and the old (now-covered) city dump. The site was also touted as being much closer to town.

Initially, the proposal failed to gain traction. But then, inexplicably, Bureau of Air Commerce Inspector, E. V. Pettis, gave it his whole-hearted support. Pettis was an experienced, pragmatic aviator.

> "This site meets with the inspector's approval. To those who know Pettis for his hard-boiled grasp of situations, his approval means a whole lot for he is the kind of man who would turn it down without batting an eye if he thought the site unsuitable or not feasible.
> [...]
> "It is the type of work calling for a maximum of labor, which the WPA wants, and a minimum of material, which the city would be called upon to provide."
>
> "Airport Project Almost Certain." *Prescott Evening Courier,* October 15, 1935: 1, 5

With no previous experience in airport design, Prescott's city engineer drew up plans for an airport with three runways – a main northeast-southwest runway 3,200 feet in length and "two diagonal runways at acute angles," each approximately 2,000 feet in length.

In October, Pettis and another Air Commerce official, J. Hall Mckenney, were joined by representatives of the city and WPA for an inspection of the site. Pettis had previously made an inspection and voiced his approval of the plans. It's important to note that, at this time, they were evaluating whether the site would qualify for WPA funds as a small-town airport. They were determining only if the proposed site could function in that capacity. The criteria were quite different than the qualifications, just a few years later, for what was termed a "Class 3" airport under the national defense airport-aid programs. The experts examined the site from the air and ground and made their preliminary determinations.

> "But rather than having one main runway and two short, oblique ones, McKenney's recommendation is that one runway be constructed. Instead of being only 300 feet wide and 3200 feet long, it should be made 500 feet wide and the trees and underbrush cleared another 100 feet wide on each side, while the length should be a minimum of 3800 to 4000 feet, later extended to the standard 4500 feet for this elevation. These dimensions are within the physical possibilities of the site.
> [...]

"The project involves labor mostly to grade and fill and rip-rap Granite creek in places to keep it within a prescribed channel, Material for this rip-rapping is available by the carload within a few hundred yards, in the form of a thousand and one old automobile and truck chassis at the city dump.

"Incidentally, the project will call for completely covering the old dump and building a connecting road to the airport from a point near the Santa Fe overpass just north of Whipple.

"McKenney is advising against any oblique runways for the reason that a 700-foot pathway [?] is wide enough for the type of ships that will use the field and for the additional reason that oblique runways lead into hills and invite inexperienced fliers to take a chance of clearing them."

"Gives Approval To New Airport." *Prescott Evening Courier,* October 17, 1935: 1, 8

At a December conference in Phoenix, McKenney used Prescott's proposal as an example of the Arizona airport projects currently in the WPA pipeline. Fortunately, despite the brief flurry of enthusiasm, this plan went no further.

By early 1937, Prescott was again examining its options as the airport lease approached its expiration. Purchasing the airport tract had not been ruled out, but it would be an understatement to say that city leaders were cost conscious (it was, after all, the Depression). To that end, the city was simultaneously pondering the purchase of the airport land while also looking at alternate sites. From the city's perspective, the best deal was the one that required little or no outlay from the meager municipal coffers.

Robert E. Perkins, of the Perkins Cattle Company, had set $2500 as the price for the 320± acres on which Ernest A. Love Field was situated – essentially the west half of Section 25. There does not appear to have been any dispute as to whether this was a fair price. However, $2500 in 1937-38 was equivalent to about $59,000 in 2026. By today's standards ($2 million here, $10 million there), that kind of airport expenditure seems trivial, but it represented a *major* municipal expense in the 1930s.

And so, while the Perkins offer percolated, as it did for many months, the city explored alternatives, ever mindful that it had to hold title to the land in order to qualify for federal airport aid.

WHIPPLE TARGET RANGE

Initially, Prescott revisited its old aviation venue, the Whipple Barracks Target Range. Overtures were made to acquire a full section from the War Department. The deal involved transferring some unspecified land at Groom Creek to the Forest Service in exchange for the land at the Target Range (or some variation of that arrangement). At first, the idea was to develop a new airport at the Range, but it quickly evolved into a more practical land swap. If the city was successful in acquiring title to the land at the Target Range, it would then be traded for the airport land. Robert Perkins was amenable to the trade, but apparently the federal government was not ready to part with any portion of the Range.

PRESCOTT BUYS ITS AIRPORT

Robert Perkins was patient while Prescott investigated its options. As early as May 1937, council minutes indicated that a purchase contract was imminent. It wasn't. The process was drawn out for months. Finally, in March 1938, the city made a $1000 initial payment to Perkins and a deed was recorded transferring title to 318.92 acres. The following December, the second payment of $1500 was made. Prescott now owned Ernest A. Love Field.

In 1941, the city acquired additional land from Perkins as well as other area landowners to assemble the acreage needed to qualify as a "Class 3" airport under the national defense airport-aid program.

BALD HILL SITE (Lonesome Valley)

One mystery that remains from this period is the proposal to acquire what was referred to as the Bald Hill site for use as a new municipal airport. Investigation of this site began *after* the city had made its down payment and received the deed to Ernest A. Love Field. A possible motivation for continuing to evaluate alternate sites might have been comments made by officials of Transcontinental & Western Air (TWA) to the effect that Ernest A. Love Field was inadequate for larger transports like the Douglas DC-3. Having been awarded an Air Mail contract from the Post Office Department, TWA was preparing to inaugurate Air Mail and passenger service from Las Vegas to Phoenix with planned stops at Boulder City, Kingman and Prescott. TWA's critiques of Prescott's airport most likely referred to the current *condition* of the field rather than its potential as an air carrier airport. The remarks were undoubtedly intended to build a fire under the city to improve Love Field. In any event, more sites were inspected, with the most promising being the Bald Hill location in Lonesome Valley.

The precise location that was under consideration is hard to determine. Sketchy newspaper reports varied from "near the A. J. Savage [H. A. Savage] gold dredge on Lynx creek" to three or four miles north of the "Lynx creek placers." They would have been seeking at least a section (640 acres), perhaps more. The proposed tract was on the flats east of Bald Hill (now Glassford Hill) and north of Lynx Creek, placing it somewhere near the middle of what emerged as the Town of Prescott Valley in the 1970s.

It's not clear why this site would have been considered superior to Ernest A. Love Field. It was no closer to town, and while Love Field was on one of the better highways that existed in Arizona, the roads into Lonesome Valley were still primitive. The Bald Hill site would also require the extension of a power line (but then again, Love Field was also awaiting power). The investigation of the Bald Hill tract and other unspecified locations continued through the second half of 1938 and into early 1939. Technical representatives from TWA and the newly-organized Civil Aeronautics Authority participated. Maps and surveys were made and studied. In the end, Ernest A. Love Field was determined to be the best of all the potential airport sites – a tribute to Bob Hausler, Frank Clarke, Grace Sparkes and the others who selected and secured the tract in 1926.

AIR MAIL (Almost)

Through much of the 1930s, Grace Sparks and others lobbied for Air Mail service to Prescott. Phoenix, Tucson, Douglas and Winslow had been stops on the two transcontinental Air Mail routes across Arizona since 1930-31. However, in 1937, Prescott and most other Arizona cities were still receiving mail by train and truck. Prescott's efforts, punctuated by Sparkes' uniquely persuasive letters to politicians and federal officials, seemed to bear fruit. Rumors began to circulate about a new Air Mail route under consideration between Las Vegas and Phoenix.

Jack Frye, president of Transcontinental & Western Air, Inc. (TWA), and other TWA officials had been encouraging city leaders in Prescott and Kingman to keep writing letters to the Post Office Department. Frye was well-known in Prescott and throughout the state for his pioneering work in establishing Standard Airlines a decade earlier. He intended to compete for the contract should it be put out for bid. With planned stops at Boulder City, Nev., Kingman (which had been dropped from TWA's system in the early 1930s) and Prescott, this would be the long-awaited north-south line connecting the state's two transcontinental routes. It would also tie into TWA's existing route from San Francisco to Las Vegas, ultimately providing Phoenix with service to San Francisco.

The Post Office Department called for bids, which were opened in May 1938. TWA was awarded the contract. On June 25, the *Arizona Republic* ran a story under the headline, "Prescott Wins Air-Mail Route," with information provided by Prescott's postmaster, Gail Gardner. Unfortunately, as the November 1 commencement of the new service drew near, TWA announced that "Prescott and Kingman will be added as stops later."

That had to be a bitter pill to swallow for Sparkes and other civic leaders. TWA had already laid the groundwork for bypassing Prescott with its constructive criticism of Prescott's airport. There was truth in TWA's assessment. The purse strings for the airport had been *very* tight and some city officials were still thinking in terms of the tri-motored Fords and Fokkers of an earlier time. Prescott's airport had no large hangar, no passenger terminal, no snow removal capability and no lighting. In fact, there was still no electricity. Runway maintenance in the late 1930s undoubtedly suffered due to all the attention placed on searching for alternate airport sites. The volunteer laborers were probably inclined to maintain only those portions of the runways needed for their light airplanes. Nobody knew better than Grace Sparkes that the city's investment in the airport had fallen far short of what was needed to attract a modern airline. Flying the mail in smaller, single-engine airplanes was no longer being done. Mail flew with the passengers in the ever-larger and faster transports.

Having said all that, it is likely that the decision to bypass Prescott was primarily a matter of economics. Kingman's commercial airport, Port Kingman, had been built and operated by TAT/TWA. It had all of the facilities to handle the airline's most modern Douglas transports. Yet it, too, was passed over for Air Mail service. In fairness to Jack Frye, who had strong connections to Arizona and, in particular, the Verde Valley, it is likely that he intended to serve Prescott in the near future. However, World War II intervened and Prescott would have to wait until 1947 for Trans World Airlines to keep its promise.

"The biggest planes in the world"

The 1930s ended on what, in retrospect, was a humorous note. In June 1939, both the *Courier* and *Republic* reported on improvements that were underway at Ernest A. Love Field. The runways were being lengthened, dragged and conditioned. Also a new metal hangar had been built. The runway project was described as follows:

> "When two runways now being leveled and lengthened are completed early this summer, the airport will provide one 10,000-foot runway extending northeast and southwest, and a 7,000-foot runway on a north-south line. These two runways, local airport officials declare, will be large enough for the biggest planes in the world to land and take off in safety."
>
> *Prescott Evening Courier,* June 2, 1939: 1, 4

The *Arizona Republic* repeated the story the following day, but changed the longest runway's orientation to southeast-northwest. Then, in a report on June 21, the *Courier* added, "the field is being scraped and levelled, providing six runways, the longest of which will be 10,000 feet in a northeast-southwest direction."

Six runways! 10,000 feet! There were very few 10,000-ft. runways in North America in 1939. At that time, the airport was comprised of just a half-section of land. We can only wonder where or from whom this information originated. Were they having fun with the reporter? Perhaps the "airport officials" referenced in the report were the men operating the bulldozer. 10,000 feet is more than 2,000 feet longer than today's jet-capable runway. There is no physical evidence that anything like this was attempted. The large-scale, federally-funded improvements of 1941-42 took the runway to a *very* respectable 6,000 feet (after a lot more land was acquired). It remained at 6,000 feet until 1952-53.

As the decade came to a close, the city was refocusing on improvements to the airport. The runway maintenance lapses of 1938 and early 1939 were being addressed. Prescott held title to its airport, and city and federal officials had thoroughly satisfied themselves that there was no better location for it. Ernest A. Love Field was now positioned for the transformative events ahead.

DECISIONS AND CHOICES

The story of Prescott's airport includes a sequence of "fork-in-the-road" moments. There were several opportunities to make what would have turned out to be the wrong decision. Sometimes the wrong path looked very attractive or expedient at the time. Each correct decision positioned the airport to take advantage of unforeseen opportunities that lay ahead.

Several watershed events, each building on previous events, highlight the history of Ernest A. Love Field during its first 50 years:

1) Because of Bob Hausler's expertise and the foresight of some city leaders, an excellent airport site was selected in 1926. And because of the cooperation of two prominent ranching families, the tract was made available for use as an airport. Through the 1930s, this location repeatedly prevailed in comparisons to other proposed airport sites.

2) Because of previous decisions by city leaders, the airport was able to qualify – just in the nick of time – for the massive federal airport improvement program in the months prior to WWII. In terms of infrastructure, this created the foundation for today's airport.

3) Because the airport emerged from WWII with long, lighted runways and good ground facilities, when Green Civil Airway No. 4 was finally realigned in 1946, Prescott was in a position reap the benefits.

4) Because Ernest A. Love Field thrived and grew during the early postwar period, and continued to develop during the 1960s and 1970s, it had the minimum required facilities *in place* to accommodate the early flight operations of Embry-Riddle's western campus. The availability and attractiveness of the former Prescott College campus would have meant little to ERAU without adequate airport infrastructure nearby.

There would be more decisions and choices during the decades that followed. Many more await Prescott's future leaders. Mistakes have been made in the past, but nothing that couldn't be rectified. Will this record of good decisions continue? Only time will tell.

Historically, the airport hasn't been hemmed in by the types of incompatible land uses that could unduly restrict flight operations or compromise safety. It remains to be seen if that will remain a priority. It took about 90 years for consequential levels of development to reach the airport, and there are now many competing interests at work.

What If?

Decisions have consequences. Sometimes it's interesting to imagine the outcome if an alternate course had been chosen:

WHAT IF the Whipple Barracks Target Range had been chosen in 1926 to continue as Prescott's airport?

The Target Range might have served adequately for a few years, but it would have been completely unsuitable for the higher-performance military airplanes that began visiting in the late 1920s and 1930s. In the unlikely event that it continued to operate through the 1930s, the site would not have qualified for the national defense appropriations of the early 1940s. Prescott would have been passed over for the federally-funded improvements that laid the foundation for today's regional airport.

WHAT IF the airport had been moved in the 1920s to Miller Valley?

Fortunately, this proposal was carefully considered, but quickly rejected. Prescott would have been looking for a new airport within a very few years.

WHAT IF the airport had been moved in 1936 to the City Ranch location?

This site was between the old city dump and Granite Dells, alongside Highway 89 and Granite Creek (the general area of Highway 89 and today's Prescott Lakes Parkway / water treatment plant). Its most desirable attribute was that the city already owned the land and would not have to purchase the grazing section on which Ernest A. Love Field was situated.

In retrospect, this location was so poor that it's hard to believe that it received serious consideration. Nevertheless, it did. It might have been eligible for WPA funding in 1935-36, but it's very unlikely that it would have qualified for the national defense programs that followed in the early 1940s. In any case, it could not have continued to develop into a regional jetport. Stripped of all the optimism, the plan was to build a tiny municipal airport with a single runway that was marginal for the altitude, completely hemmed-in by menacing hills and protected from flooding by piles of rusting cars and trucks. Had Ernest A. Love Field been abandoned in favor of this site, Prescott's aviation history would have been far less remarkable.

WHAT IF the airport had been moved in 1938 to the Bald Hill site in Lonesome Valley?

The site was somewhere in or near one of the original five or six land sections that were developed decades later into the Town of Prescott Valley.

This large, relatively level area would have been quite suitable for an airport. It almost certainly would have qualified for defense funding. The only drawback for its later development into a regional airport would have been the closer proximity to Glassford Hill and the mountains to the south. If this site had been acquired and developed into the municipal airport, it's likely that Prescott would have eventually begun annexing land in that direction. One thing is certain, it would have profoundly altered the development of the Quad Cities area.

ENDNOTES

PART 1

1. Development of Landing Areas for National Defense (DLAND), 1940–1942; a comprehensive nationwide airport building and improvement program to meet the anticipated large-scale expansion of military aviation; Appropriations came through the Departments of War, Commerce and the Navy; Civil airport construction projects were primarily administered by the Civil Aeronautics Administration.

2. A separate monograph will be devoted to the minor controversies, old and new, regarding the airport's name.

3. In the days before optical character recognition (OCR), a large part of local history research was searching, page by page, microfilm copies of the old newspapers. It was tedious, headache-inducing work that required a lot of motivation. It took a couple of decades for OCR technology to compete with weary eyeball tech in terms of thoroughness, but it's there now. Today's OCR searches eliminate many of the research pitfalls, particularly those associated with "working backwards" through the references.

4. The following year, 1928, Tilman C. Alexander was the chief engineer for the MacClatchie Manufacturing Co. of Compton, Calif. He designed and tested the MacClatchie "Panther" 150-hp radial aircraft engine. After just two short test flights at Compton, Alexander's bride, Helen, accompanied him on a flight from Compton to Mohave over the Sierra Madre Mountains.

5. A separate monograph will deal specifically with the land acquisitions – leases and deeds – that created and enlarged Ernest A. Love Field.

6. In fairness, it should be acknowledged that Arizona Governor George W. P. Hunt attended two airport dedications in Northern Arizona during 1925 (pre-Lindbergh). Hunt served a total of seven terms as Governor, including a term (1923-1928) that straddled Lindbergh's flight (1927). In contrast to some other politicians, he was early in his public support for aviation development.

7. "Yankee Doodle," with Art Goebel flying and Harry Tucker riding, had previously broken the transcontinental speed record on August 19-20, 1928. That was also the first *non-stop* eastbound transcontinental flight. On Sunday, August 19, members of the Yavapai County Chamber of Commerce Aviation Committee were laboring at Ernest A. Love Field in preparation for the airport's rededication when they heard a fast plane passing overhead. They checked Goebel's Los Angeles departure time and concluded that it must have been the Yankee Doodle.

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ERNEST A. LOVE FIELD

Prescott, Arizona

APPENDIX A

Military Pilots and Planes 1926-1929

List of known, *recorded* visits to Ernest A. Love Field by military aircraft during the period 1927-1929. Dates in parenthesis are the dates of the event (i.e., Frontier Days). Arrival and departure dates are listed when known. There were undoubtedly additional landings by military aviators during this period that went unreported.

This list currently contains 48 military aircraft that landed at Prescott between the airport's first dedication on July 4, 1926 and the end of the decade. This is a remarkable number considering that Prescott was not near the Army's Model Airway, which extended across southern Arizona. These aviators were not just stopping to refuel; Prescott was the destination. Ernest A. Love Field was within the 500-mile cross-country training radius established by the Army at March Field and Rockwell Field. There were officers at March Field that particularly enjoyed visiting Prescott, and the flights offered novice pilots excellent off-airway navigation training along with some mountain flying experience.

There were a surprising number of future generals among these early military aviators (as well as colonels). The generals are indicated with a star symbol (★).

1927 (May 12) – NATIONAL HOSPITAL DAY

1 Army Douglas O-2 from Rockwell Field, San Diego; arrived 5/12.

Lt. Oliver P. Gothlin (with unidentified passenger)

1927 (Sep. 4) – Visit

1 Army de Havilland DH-4 from March Field, Riverside, arrived 9/4, departed 9/5; Plummer was visiting his brother at St. Luke's sanatorium.

Lt. William G. Plummer [1]
Sgt. Maj. Walter Christina

1928 (July 1-4) – FRONTIER DAYS

4 Army Consolidated PT-3's from March Field, Riverside, arrived 7/1&2; departed 7/5.

Capt. Joseph H. "Joe" Davidson ★
Lt. Leonard D. "Pop" Weddington ★
Lt. William G. Plummer [1]
Lt. Alvan C. Kincaid ★
Lt. Aubrey Hornsby ★
Sgt. Jannis
Sgt. Fulkrod
Sgt. Stewart Wilson

1928 (Aug. 25-26) – AIRPORT DEDICATION

25 military airplanes from four different air bases:

MARCH FIELD, Riverside, Calif.

14 Army aircraft total (Consolidated PT-3's and some de Havilland DH-4's); 16 officers and a complement of mechanics; Capt. Davidson arrived Thu. PM, 8/23; the rest of the group arrived in sections on Fri., 8/24; all 14 departed Mon. AM, 8/27.

Maj. Millard F. Harmon ★
Capt. Joseph H. "Joe" Davidson ★
Capt. Idwal H. Edwards ★
Lt. Leonard D. "Pop" Weddington ★
Lt. William G. Plummer [1]
Lt. Hoyt S. Vandenberg ★
Lt. Byron. J. Peters (flight surgeon)
Lt. Wilfred. H. Hardy ★
Lt. David M. Schlatter ★
Lt. S. P. Wilson
Lt. Kenneth Garrett
Lt. Walter L. "Peewee" Taylor
Lt. Fred C. Nelson
Lt. Ralph E. Fisher ★
Lt. Ned Schramm ★
Lt. W. C. Goldsborough

AIRPORT DEDICATION (Cont'd.)

NAVAL AIR STATION SAN DIEGO (North Island), Calif.

2 Navy "Vought ships" (most likely Vought O2U Corsairs); arrived Sat., 8/25; departed Sun. PM, 8/26.

Lt. Thomas G. "Bubbles" Fisher [2]
Lt. H. A. Brandenberger

FORT SAM HOUSTON (Dodd Field), San Antonio, Texas

3 Army Douglas O-2's; arrived Sat., 8/25; departed Mon. AM, 8/27 by way of Phoenix; this group flew to the Grand Canyon on Sun., 8/26, dined at the El Tovar and returned to Prescott.

Maj. William N. Hensley
Lt. Lawrence H. Douthit
Lt. Jordan F. Haney [3]
Lt. Thad V. Foster

ROCKWELL FIELD, Coronado (San Diego), Calif.

6 Army pursuits (most likely Boeing PW-9's); arrived Sat., 8/25; departed Sun. PM, 8/26.

Lt. Aubey C. Strickland (flight leader) ★
5 other pilots - not identified

1929 (June 8) – SMOKI DANCES

10 planes from March Field, Riverside, arrived 6-7; 1 Boeing PW-9 and 9 Douglas O-2K's; 15 officers and at least 2 noncoms.

Maj. Millard F. Harmon ★
Maj. Leo A. Walton [4] ★
Capt. Joseph H. "Joe" Davidson ★
Lt. Patrick W. Timberlake ★
Lt. Wilfred H. Hardy ★
Lt. W. C. Goldsborough
Lt. Nathan F. Twining ★
Lt. Bernard J. "Barney" Tooher
Lt. Kenneth Garrett
Lt. Leonard D. Weddington ★
Lt. James M. Bevans ★
Lt. W. B. Clark [or Clarke]
Lt. Clinton W. Davies ★
Lt. Ralph E. Fisher ★
Lt. F. C. Wolfe
Sgt. L. F. Mckenna
Sgt. Gilmore

1929 (July 4-7) – FRONTIER DAYS

5 "powerful Douglas planes" (most likely Douglas O-2K's) from March Field, Riverside, arrived 7/3.

Maj. Millard F. Harmon ★
Maj. C. L. Chase (chief of med. service)
Capt. Joseph H. "Joe" Davidson ★
Capt. Idwal H. Edwards ★
Capt. Byron J. Peters (flight surgeon)
Capt. W. H. Jamison (reserve)
Lt. W. C. White
Lt. F. F. Wolf
Lt. George E. Rice [5]
Staff Sgt. McLane

There was also a report that another plane from March Field arrived on 7/2, then departed 7/3 on a flight to Colorado Springs, with the intent of returning to Prescott on the 4th. The aircraft type was not reported, but the officers were identified as:

Lt. Cornelius E. O'Connor
Lt. Waddell

1929 (July 9) – Visit

1 Army "Douglas bomber" (more likely an O-2) from March Field stayed for only about an hour before returning to March.

Lt. Wilfred H. Hardy ★

NOTES:

1 West Point graduate; killed 6/28/29 while instructing at March Field; midair collision during formation training.
2 Naval Academy graduate; killed 7/30/31 when the wings of his plane separated during gunnery practice.
3 Died 2/23/33 in the hospital at Kelly Field.
4 Arrived by auto with relatives; departed by plane.
5 Killed 12/4/35 in the crash of his plane near Bolling Field.

APPENDIX B

Airway Bulletins

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

On the following four pages are presented the two Airway Bulletins that were published by the Department of Commerce for Ernest A. Love Airport. The first was issued on June 21, 1928 and a revision was issued on August 16, 1929.

AIRWAY BULLETINS - Background

In January 1923, the Army's Airway Service began publishing "Aeronautical Bulletins" as an aid to military and civilian pilots. These were single-page documents containing relevant information about specific airports. They were printed in a looseleaf format so that pilots could insert the individual 4¼" x 7¼" pages into a binder as they were issued. On the front were two maps, the first showing the airport in relation to the nearest town and landmarks, and the second showing a more detailed layout of the airport. On the back was the airport data, listed in a standardized sequence.

Each airport was assigned its own bulletin number. The airport name, location and date of issuance was displayed in the heading. Subsequent revisions were marked as such, retaining the same bulletin number, but with the new date of issuance.

When the U.S. Department of Commerce assumed responsibility for civil aviation in 1927, it continued publishing what then became "Airway Bulletins," closely following the Army's format. Airway Bulletin No. 1 was issued in January 1928.

While the Army had relied heavily on its own pilots and trusted civilians to gather accurate information for the bulletins, the newly-formed Aeronautics Branch of the Department of Commerce had to rely to a larger degree on the airport owners and operators, some of whom had limited knowledge of aviation (i.e., the local chamber of commerce).

During the airport-building frenzy that followed Lindbergh's transatlantic flight, the bulletins proliferated. The looseleaf format, requiring constant updating, became cumbersome for pilots and a logistical burden for the Aeronautics Branch.

In 1931, the individual looseleaf bulletins were discontinued in favor of a softbound airport directory, published annually and titled "Descriptions of Airports and Landing Fields in The United States" ("Airway Bulletin No. 2," not to be confused with the previous airway bulletins). The new directories contained only the pertinent data for each airport. Gone were the wonderful maps of the those early flying fields.

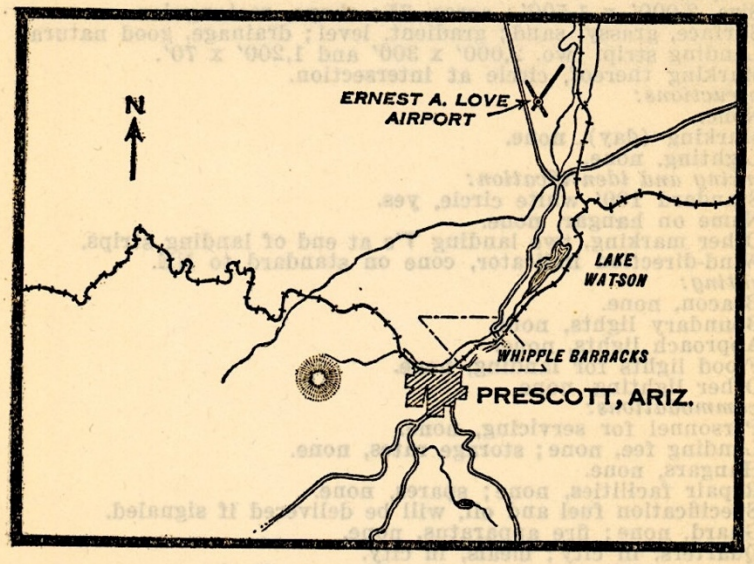
DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

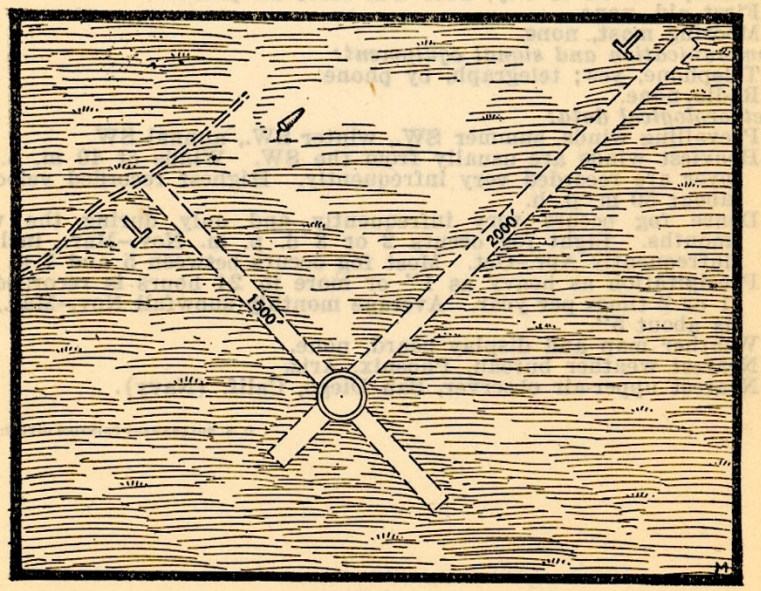
AERONAUTICS BRANCH

Airway Bulletin

No. 386, Washington, June 21, 1928

ARIZONA PRESCOTT





111589—28

PRESCOTT, ARIZ., (REVISED)

Name: Ernest A. Love Airport.
Class:
Municipal. Rating, ———.
Owner and operator, city and Yavapai County Chamber of Commerce.
Position:
Lat. 34° 39′ 00″, long. 112° 25′ 45″; alt. above sea level, 5,000′; mag. var., 14° 42′ 30″ E., 1929; annual decrease, 1′.
Distance and direction from city, 7½ miles NE.
Description:
Size, see sketch; acres, 640; shape, rectangular.
Surface, grassy, sand; gradient, level; drainage, good natural.
Landing strips, two, 4,500′ x 300′ and 2,500′ x 200′.
Marking thereof, circle at intersection.
Obstructions:
None.
Marking, (day), none.
Lighting, none.
Marking and identification:
Standard 100′ white circle, yes.
Name on hangar, none.
Other marking, two landing T's at end of landing strips.
Wind-direction indicator, cone on standard to N.
Lighting:
Beacon, none.
Boundary lights, none.
Approach lights, none.
Flood lights for landing, none.
Other lighting, none.
Accommodations:
Personnel for servicing, yes.
Landing fee, none; storage rates, reasonable.
Hangars, one, 80′ x 50′.
Repair facilities, none, spares, none.
Specification fuel and oil, will be delivered if signaled.
Guard, none; fire apparatus, none.
Quarters, in city; meals, in city.
Transportation to city, auto will meet all planes.
First aid, none.
Mooring mast, none.
Communication and signal equipment:
Telephone, yes; telegraph, by phone.
Radio, none.
Meteorological data:
Prevailing winds, summer SW., winter SW., annual SW.
Heaviest winds are usually from the SW. Winds of 40 m. p. h. or over are recorded very infrequently. Highest recorded velocity is about 50 m. p. h.
Dense fog occurs very infrequently and only during the winter months. Light fog occurs 2 or 3 d. p. m. Nov.–Mar., incl., and infrequently Apr.–Oct. Most fog occurs between 5 and 7 a. m.
Precipitation as heavy as 1″ or more in 24 hours is recorded only 1 or 2 times per year. Average monthly snowfall Nov.–Mar., incl., is about 5″.
Nearest weather bureau, Phoenix, Ariz.
Nearest upper-air observer, San Diego, Calif., (Navy).

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1929

DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE

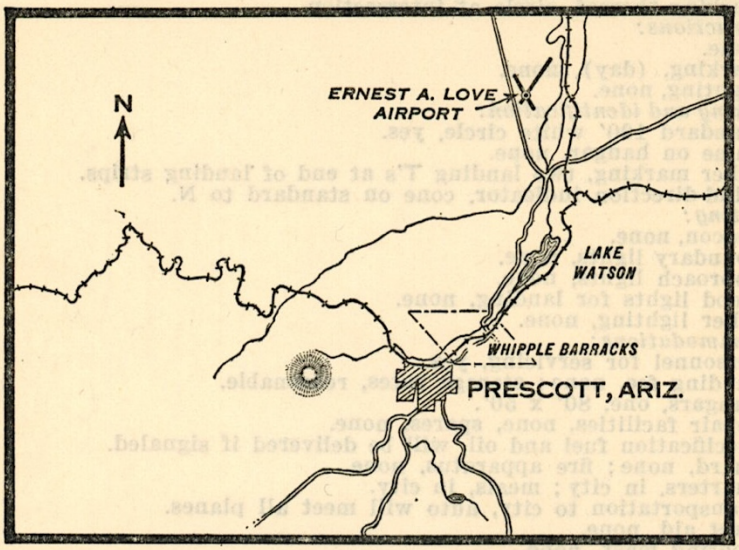
AERONAUTICS BRANCH

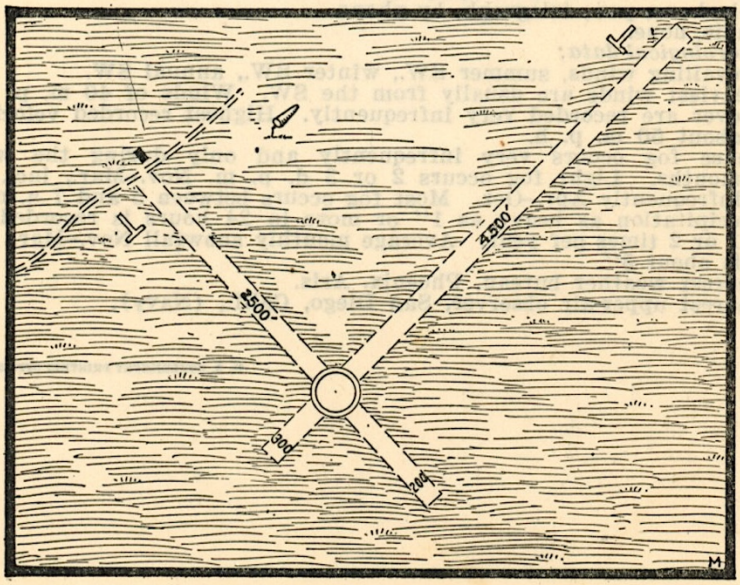
Airway Bulletin

No. 386, (revised), Washington, August 16, 1929

ARIZONA PRESCOTT

Ernest A. Love Airport





66815—29

PRESCOTT, ARIZ., (REVISED)

Name: Ernest A. Love Airport.
Class:
Municipal. Rating, ———.
Owner and operator, city and Yavapai County Chamber of Commerce.
Position:
Lat. 34° 39′ 00″, long. 112° 25′ 45″; alt. above sea level, 5,000′; mag. var., 14° 42′ 30″ E., 1929; annual decrease, 1′.
Distance and direction from city, 7½ miles NE.
Description:
Size, see sketch; acres, 640; shape, rectangular.
Surface, grassy, sand; gradient, level; drainage, good natural.
Landing strips, two, 4,500′ x 300′ and 2,500′ x 200′.
Marking thereof, circle at intersection.
Obstructions:
None.
Marking, (day), none.
Lighting, none.
Marking and identification:
Standard 100′ white circle, yes.
Name on hangar, none.
Other marking, two landing T's at end of landing strips.
Wind-direction indicator, cone on standard to N.
Lighting:
Beacon, none.
Boundary lights, none.
Approach lights, none.
Flood lights for landing, none.
Other lighting, none.
Accommodations:
Personnel for servicing, yes.
Landing fee, none; storage rates, reasonable.
Hangars, one, 80′ x 50′.
Repair facilities, none, spares, none.
Specification fuel and oil, will be delivered if signaled.
Guard, none; fire apparatus, none.
Quarters, in city; meals, in city.
Transportation to city, auto will meet all planes.
First aid, none.
Mooring mast, none.
Communication and signal equipment:
Telephone, yes; telegraph, by phone.
Radio, none.
Meteorological data:
Prevailing winds, summer SW., winter SW., annual SW.
Heaviest winds are usually from the SW. Winds of 40 m. p. h. or over are recorded very infrequently. Highest recorded velocity is about 50 m. p. h.
Dense fog occurs very infrequently and only during the winter months. Light fog occurs 2 or 3 d. p. m. Nov.–Mar., incl., and infrequently Apr.–Oct. Most fog occurs between 5 and 7 a. m.
Precipitation as heavy as 1″ or more in 24 hours is recorded only 1 or 2 times per year. Average monthly snowfall Nov.–Mar., incl., is about 5″.
Nearest weather bureau, Phoenix, Ariz.
Nearest upper-air observer, San Diego, Calif., (Navy).

U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE: 1929

ERNEST A. LOVE FIELD

APPENDIX C
Airport Directory Listings

1928 (July) Standard Oil Co. of California "Landing Fields of the Pacific West"

PRESCOTT.——Permanent. Size 300x4500 feet; elevation, 5200 feet. Eight miles northeast and east of city; east of highway. The field is marked with large white circle; 'T' on east end of east and west runway; 'T' on the north end of north and south runway. Field lies between railroad and Ash Fork-Prescott highway.

Wind cone on north side of east and west runway. All level, clear approach from all directions. Prevailing wind from the west. Surface sandy loam; OK for wet weather landings. Eight miles northeast of Standard Oil Plant marked 'Prescott,' with arrow. [as republished in the *Prescott Evening Courier,* July 18, 1928, p. 3)

1931 (May 15) Standard Oil Co. of California "Landing Fields of the Pacific West" (5th Edition)

MUNICIPAL. Operator, Yavapai County Chamber of Commerce. Size 300' x 4500'. Elevation 5200'. RATING —— . 8 miles NE of city and Standard Oil plant marked PRESCOTT, with arrow. R. R. on E and highway on W. White circle; "T" on E end of E and W runway; "T" on N end of N and S runway.

Runway, E and W 4500'. Surface, decomposed granite. Private hangar on field. For gasoline, oil and water, call Standard Oil plant, phone No. 184.

U.S. Department of Commerce, Aeronautics Branch
Airway Bulletin No. 2 – "Descriptions of Airports and Landing Fields in The United States"

1931 (September 1) and **1932** (September 1)

Prescott.—Ernest A. Love Airport municipal, rating —— . Seven and one-half miles NE. Altitude, 5,000 feet. Cross shape, 640 acres, decomposed granite, level, natural drainage; two landing strips, 4,500 by 300 feet and 2,500 by 200 feet. Hangar and aviation fuel, day only. Craft arriving after dark notify chamber of commerce in advance for service.

1933 (June 1)

Prescott.—Ernest A. Love Airport, municipal, rating —— . Seven and one-half miles NE. Altitude, 5,000 feet. Cross shape, decomposed granite, level, natural drainage; two landing strips, 4,500 by 300 feet and 2,500 by 200 feet. Hangar and aviation fuel, day only. Craft arriving after dark notify chamber of commerce in advance for service.

1934 (September 1)

Prescott.—Ernest A. Love Airport, municipal rating —— . Seven and one-half miles NE of Prescott, one-fourth mile E. of Highway No. 89. Altitude, 5,000 feet. Cross shape, decomposed granite, level, natural drainage; two landing strips, 4,500 by 300 feet and 2,500 by 200 feet. Hangar and aviation fuel, day only. Craft arriving after dark notify chamber of commerce in advance for service.

continued

APPENDIX C (Cont'd.)
Airport Directory Listings – 1930s

1936 (January 1)

Prescott.—Ernest A. Love Airport, municipal. Seven and one-half miles NE of Prescott, one-fourth mile E. of Highway No. 89. Lat. 34° 39'; long. 112° 26'. Alt. 5,000 feet. Cross-shape, decomposed granite, level, natural drainage; two landing strips, 4,500 by 300 feet and 2,500 by 200 feet. Hangar and aviation fuel, day and night.

1937 (January 1)

Prescott.—Ernest A. Love Airport, auxiliary. Seven and one-half miles NE of Prescott, one-fourth mile E. of Highway No. 89. Lat. 34° 39'; long. 112° 26'. Alt. 5,000 feet. Cross-shape, decomposed granite, level, natural drainage; two landing strips, 4,500 by 300 feet and 2,500 by 200 feet. No servicing.

1938 (January 1)

Prescott.—Ernest A. Love Airport, auxiliary. Seven and one-half miles NE of Prescott, one-fourth mile E. of Highway No. 89. Lat. 34° 39'; long. 112° 26'. Alt. 5,000 feet. Cross-shape, decomposed granite, level, natural drainage; two landing strips, 4,500 by 300 feet and 2,500 by 200 feet. No servicing.

APPENDIX D
Arizona's Oldest Airports
PROJECT NOTES, CRITERIA and LIST

The author strenuously avoids historical superlatives – first, oldest, etc. – unless they come from reliable sources that can be corroborated and cited. When historians make such claims without at least evaluating and citing the source (which could, of course, be erroneous), then they must accept the burden of proving the statement and defending the research.

About 30 years ago, a well-intentioned "band of aviation buffs" found some old articles about their small, historic airport and concluded that it must be the oldest in the state: *"We think this is the oldest, in-use, continuous airport in Arizona. So far, nobody has disputed our claim."* The assertion was taken at face value by a succession of reporters and the airport was proclaimed "Arizona's oldest." It wasn't. It has a wonderful history, but it is not the oldest. Nevertheless, in this digital age, it is enshrined, perhaps forever, on the web and in AI mashups as Arizona's oldest airport.

At some point during the broader research of Arizona's aviation history, the author decided that it might be worthwhile to determine which of Arizona's extant airports *is* the oldest. It's a more involved process than one might think. First, the term "airport" must be defined, taking into account all of the likely disputes and qualifiers. Next, and perhaps most importantly, the date or period of establishment must be determined beyond any doubt for every extant airport in the state. The research began in 1990 in the old basement archives of the state capital building.

Over time, the list of contenders grew shorter, until three airports remained:

1) Yuma International Airport / Yuma Marine Corps Air Station (joint-use; originally established as Fly Field)
2) Prescott's Ernest A. Love Field
3) Tucson's Davis-Monthan Air Force Base (originally dedicated as Davis-Monthan Municipal Airport)

YUMA: For a number of years this airport was considered to be the likely candidate for oldest extant airport in Arizona. It was believed that the original 1925 Fly Field runway was immediately adjacent to the 640 acres acquired from the U.S. government for the Fly Field of 1928. For purposes of this project, that was close enough to be considered the same airport. However, additional evidence was needed, and that evidence has since confirmed that the 1925 airport was actually located well west of the current airport. The two tracts are not contiguous, being separated by more than a mile.

TUCSON: Early in the research process, Davis-Monthan AFB was eliminated as Arizona's oldest extant airport. However, it did emerge as the state's second oldest. Whether it should be considered, along with Prescott, as a "pre-Lindbergh" airport is open to debate. The first airplane landed at Tucson's Davis-Monthan Municipal Airport (now D-M AFB) months after Lindbergh's transatlantic flight. Lindbergh himself dedicated the new airport on September 23, 1927. However, the land was acquired and planning begun well before Lindbergh's flight. When it came to aviation, Tucson was the most forward-thinking city in the state. The field was constructed under the direction of the U.S. Army, but progress was slow. It will be left to the reader to decide whether Davis-Monthan should qualify as a "pre-Lindbergh" airport. The author would vote "yes."

APPENDIX D (Cont'd.)

Once the WWII and postwar airfields were removed from the list of extant airports, the research could be focused on the pre-WWII fields. Over time, the lineup started to fall into place. Most of the conflicts and discrepancies were resolved and the grey areas became clearer. However, there are a few extant airports that were established in the 1930s that still have questions regarding location and/or continuity.

Summary of Project Criteria, Terms and Definitions:

"AIRPORT"

For purposes of this project, "airport" is defined as follows:

1. PUBLIC USE – it must have been open for public use for a significant portion of its existence; private airstrips (farm, ranch, etc.) are not included.
2. FACILITIES – at some point after opening, an airport must have provided facilities for pilots or aircraft. Facilities include at least one of the following:
   - aviation-grade fuel and oil readily available
   - repair service (minor or major)
   - restaurant and/or accommodations on or adjacent to the field
   - public-use hangar
   - manned airway / air traffic control facility on the field

CONTINUOUS OPERATION

"Continuously operated" means that, other than brief periods of closure for construction, national emergency (i.e., WWII), floods, disasters, etc., the airport has been operated and maintained without interruption since the date of establishment.

Supporting evidence to establish continuity of operation will include:

- Dept. of Commerce or early Army aeronautical chart depictions
- listings in airport directories produced by the U.S. Department of Commerce or reputable publishers
- other reliable references

ESTABLISHMENT

Date of establishment is the date of the first recorded airplane landing on a field that has been improved for the express and publicized purpose of serving as an airport, verifiable by reliable primary sources. That first landing must be closely followed by subsequent flights. If commencement of flight operations is not documented, the date of the formal dedication is the date of establishment. For instance, Phoenix Sky Harbor International Airport was formally dedicated on September 2, 1929, but regular, well-documented flight operations began on November 18, 1928.

In the absence of early recorded flights or a formal dedication, listings in Department of Commerce publications or reliable airport directories may be used.

For this project, the clock starts when documented flight operations begin. It stops if the airport is closed (with the exceptions noted above) or dormant for a significant period of time.

LOCATION

The original site must be part of or contiguous to the current airport. Initially, the criteria was for the original site to be part of the current site. To be more inclusive, specifically with regard to Yuma, it was decided that if the original airport shared a border with the current airport, it should be considered the same facility. Opinions were unanimous about that. Unfortunately, after more research, it was determined that Yuma's original 1925 Fly Field was well west of the 1928 Fly Field (today's Yuma International / MCAS).

APPENDIX D (Cont'd.)

Arizona's Oldest Extant Airports

CONTINUOUSLY OPERATED

CITY	AIRPORT	ESTABLISHED	
Prescott	PRESCOTT ERNEST A. LOVE FIELD (PRC) (Prescott Regional Airport)	**7/4/1926** 8/26/1928	Dedication Rededication
Tucson	DAVIS-MONTHAN AIR FORCE BASE (DMA) formerly ● Davis-Monthan Army Air Field ● Davis-Monthan Municipal Airport	**9/23/1927** [1]	Dedication (Lindbergh)
Nogales	NOGALES INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (OLS)	**1/8/1928** 1/21/1928	First landing [2] Dedication
Yuma	YUMA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT / YUMA MARINE CORPS AIR STATION (NYL) formerly ● Yuma County Airport ● Vincent Air Force Base ● Yuma Army Air Field ● Fly Field	**1928**	Flight operations by **May**
Phoenix	SKY HARBOR INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT (PHX)	**11/18/1928** 9/2/1929	Flight operations began Dedication
Douglas	DOUGLAS MUNICIPAL AIRPORT (DGL) formerly Douglas International Airport	**11/*25*/1928** 8/20/1929	First landing [3] Dedication [3]
Winslow	WINSLOW-LINDBERGH REGIONAL AIRPORT (INW) formerly Winslow Municipal Airport	**6/20/1929** 6/26/1929	TAT trial flights began Dedication (TAT)
Bisbee	BISBEE MUNICIPAL AIRPORT (P04)	**1929** 8/1/1931	Flight operations by **Sept.** Dedication
St. Johns	ST. JOHNS INDUSTRIAL AIR PARK (SJN) aka Harry Saunders Airport	**5/15/1931** (prior to)	Standard Oil directory
Cottonwood	COTTONWOOD MUNICIPAL AIRPORT (P52) formerly ● Cottonwood-Clemenceau Airport ● Clemenceau Airport	6/21/1929 [4] **3/19/1932** [4]	Flight operations and informal dedication Dedication
Parker	AVI SUQUILLA AIRPORT (P20) formerly Parker Municipal Airport	**4/1/32** (prior to)	Air Commerce Bulletin

1. Tucson Davis-Monthan Field (2nd): the process of acquiring land from the U.S. was begun in the Fall of 1925; acquisition was completed April 1926; construction began in November 1926 and was completed in September 1927 (in time for the Lindbergh dedication ceremonies).
2. The first landing was made by a Scenic Airways Stinson flown by J. Parker Van Zandt.
3. The first landing was made by Burrell Smith, pilot for Aero Corporation of California, on or about 11/25/29; he was flying an Alexander Eaglerock, X7981. An informal dedication is believed to have occurred Dec. 1-2; formal dedication was scheduled twice and canceled due to revolution in Mexico; finally took place on 8/20/29.
4. Flight operations at this airport probably go back to 1929, or even 1928. However, there are some discrepancies regarding location and continuity that need to be resolved. Until then, 3/19/32 is being used as the date of establishment.

2026 DAVID M. DUPREE