

AIRPORTS ASSUMING PROMINENT PLACE IN PRESENT DAY PLANS FOR MUNICIPAL DEVELOPMENT

The following article by Ralph D. Weyelbacher, commander, U. S. Navy, in a recent issue of the Saturday Evening Post, is of supreme importance to the people of Medford at this time:

The future of commercial aviation in America is dependent on its terminals. About 90 per cent of all air-line activities, operators estimate, are confined to the ground. Aircraft factories, flying schools, taxi and other commercial services also demand adequate equipped and popularly known landing fields from which to start and operate their planes. For these reasons the airport is assuming a prominent place in all modern plans for a municipal development.

"Make our city a terminal, or at least a port of call for the air lines of the future," has become, in one form or another, the slogan of virtually every progressive community.

There is sound economics behind this demand. Commercial and other organizations which encourage it can point to the fact that, whatever the relation of operating income to invested capital, the modern airport may pay generous dividends to the community it serves, in the form of expanded business, increased prestige and the attraction of new industries related to aviation. The experience of one city which acquired a profitable airport factory shortly after completing its municipal airport is more typical than unusual.

That municipalities recognize these possibilities is attested by the tremendous interest in airport construction now evident throughout the country. Approximately 800 new airports will be started within the next year, if plans now existing are carried into effect. When it is remembered that only 725 airports, other than government operated fields, existed in the United States in October of 1928, the extent of this expansion may be realized.

An unofficial survey conducted last summer estimated that approximately \$300,000,000 had been expended in the construction of airports in this country during the preceding eighteen months. Estimates of the amount to be spent for similar developments in the succeeding year and a half reached the amazing total of \$500,000,000.

Nor are municipalities, in general, plunging blindly into such construction. Realizing that an adequate airport means more than a wind cone and a landing field, many cities are applying to the Aeronautics branch of the department of commerce, and to that newest of consultants, the airport engineer, for surveys and advice. They are learning, too, that any port which would adequately serve the air lines must include hangars, repair shops, night-lighting equipment, mooring mast, weather-forecasting service, administration and passenger facilities, and many other features.

Problems attending airport development divide naturally into two classes: financial and engineering. Of these, the first is today probably the more important; at least in the eyes of municipal administrators.

Official opinion strongly favors municipal ownership. The very dependence of air lines on their terminals, it holds, makes a publicly owned airport necessary in the city which hopes to cooperate with and benefit from aeronautical activity. "If any community is to get the best transportation service, it must be in a position to assure equal opportunity for terminal facilities to the various operators," William P. McCracken, Jr., assistant secretary of commerce for aeronautics, has explained.

Municipal ownership of airport facilities has shown, in frequent instances, an encouraging gain to the city in the form of new trade acquired, of enhanced property values in the immediate vicinity, and of increased tax income due to ready appreciation.

What an Adequate Airport Should Be

In view of this urgent demand for municipal ownership and control of airports, it seems pertinent to ask just what an adequate airport should be; what it costs to construct and maintain; what it can promise in direct income from operating expenses apart from such indirect benefits as are represented by business expansion, increased property values and the like. The first of these three questions can be answered accurately and in detail; the others await longer experience with commercial aeronautics before definite and dependable statements can be made; at the a quantity of information more or less speculative in nature is now available.

The physical characteristics of a thoroughly modern and adequate airport have been established, after careful and prolonged study, by the department of commerce. To assure conformity with its requirements, it has developed a series of ratings which fix and identify the suitability of the field as a terminal or way station for air traffic. Of these ratings the highest is A-1-A. The symbol expresses, actually, three distinct ratings, rather than one. The first A indicates that the general facilities and equipment at the airport are good; the figure 1 that the available landing area is sufficient to meet present-day needs; the second A that the night-lighting equipment is excellent. If the airport falls below the highest standards in any of these features, a lower rating is indicated by the letters B, C, D, and so on.

It should be borne in mind, however, that mere compliance with the minimum requirements for an A-1-A rating will not always assure an airport capable of handling the

full needs of every city. As air transportation develops, many cases will be found where airports limited to those minimum requirements will be unable to meet the demands of the air commerce which seeks to use them.

Certain fundamental requirements apply to any airport, regardless of its rating. It must, for example, be on a firm, level, well-drained field, free of dangerous obstructions, or else supplied with wide landing strips which enable the pilot to avoid any obstacles in the way of a safe landing or take-off. It must be clear of surrounding obstructions which would endanger planes landing on or rising from the field. It must be located on an improved road. It must be suitably marked so as to be distinguishable from the air; it must show a wind-direction indicator visible at all times; it must maintain facilities for the fueling of aircraft and the comfort of pilots and passengers.

The surface of the prospective landing field is of great importance. If bumps or holes near the surface, these must be leveled out. It must be surfaced throughout with firm, solid sand. Runways of crushed rock, slag, asphalt or other solid materials, at least 100 feet in width, must be constructed thereon. These must be marked clearly enough to be recognizable from the air, and well drained, either by reason of natural conditions or artificial construction. Other facilities, such as electric and water systems and telephone, telegraph and mail communications, are also necessary.

The purchase of a site which meets all the requirements for a class A airport must represent, in most communities, a large expenditure. Because of the great range of land values in cities scattered over a nation, it is impossible to estimate even roughly the average cost.

The purchase of land, however, represents only a portion of the cost of a modern airport. Equipment expenditures run high.

Equipment of Class A Airport

The airport which hopes to merit the A rating for equipment and facilities must provide one or more hangars and wind indicators of approved type, repair shops and equipment, weather instruments and service, fire-fighting apparatus, first-aid equipment, sleeping accommodations for airport personnel and others, waiting rooms, rest rooms and restaurant.

Arrangements must also be made to maintain a register, listing the license numbers, model owner, pilot and pilot's license, time of landing and take-off, number of crew, number of passengers and other information concerning all arriving and departing planes.

In addition to these requirements there must be, of course, administration building, adequate provisions for fuel and oil supply, and a system of markings both on and near the airport. The markings include a white or yellow circle, 100 feet in diameter, with a band four feet wide of crushed rock or gravel, or near the center of the landing area; the name of the airport or city, in letters at least twelve feet high, near the circle or on hangar roofs. Further marking on the roofs of near-by large buildings with names and symbols which will guide the pilot to the airport is also desirable.

Night Lighting Class A Airport

Night lighting presents a formidable and expensive problem to airport construction. One engineer has computed that the night-lighting system for an adequate and modern airport represents an average investment of \$15,000. This estimate will naturally vary in accordance with the layout, size, shape and use of the terminal.

Briefly listed, equipment required for any airport receiving an A rating on night lighting includes a beacon, an illuminated wind-direction indicator, boundary lights, obstruction lights, hangar and landing area flood lights and a rotating projector.

Bond issues, some running into millions of dollars, have been enthusiastically approved by voters of various municipalities determined to place their cities definitely on the air map and to reap the benefits of increased trade, prestige and position in the aerial-transport systems of the immediate future which that achievement promises.

The general problem of operating income from airports is still one for future experience to solve. A recent compilation of data from more than 100 airports shows that the fixed and common rate of charges for storage and service for existing planes has developed thus far: Storage rates average \$1.50 for single-motored planes and \$2 for multimotored planes on a d.o.y. basis, and from \$10 to \$50 monthly. The sale of fuel and mechanical parts offers further income. As has been said, the benefits from airport construction must, for a while, in most instances, be represented principally by increased real estate values and commercial expansion.

Indications are that landing areas of the immediate future will not only be huge but will be either solidly paved or so cross-crossed by hard-surface or gravel landing strips as to permit landings and take-offs in any direction, regardless of the wind. For this purpose a field with 5000-foot runways, in most appropriate. The hangars, repair shops and administration and other buildings must be at one end or side of the field, outside the actual landing area, and close to facilities for automobile parking.

Municipal Airports to Be Required

That the establishment and maintenance of an adequate air-

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Main Street Is Defended

Before Harry Sinclair Lewis became the famous author of "Main Street" he used to sharpen his wit, as a red-haired youth in Sauk Center, Minn., in arguments with his old friend and neighbor, Dr. J. A. Dulbois. In the St. Paul Pioneer Press, the doctor comes back with a defense of Sauk Center's Main street. He admits Lewis's charge that it is crude, but maintains that it is a place of "infinite merit."

For nearly a half century, two doctors lived only two doors apart in a street in Sauk Center, Minn.—a residence street, not Main street.

One of them, Dr. E. J. Lewis, was methodical and precise in his manner. The other, Dr. J. A. Dulbois, was, and is, just the opposite. He was inclined to view the world with a large and liberal view, being fond of comedy and not overmuch bothered by trifles. There have been some, he admitted, who have even accused him of being careless.

Once in the Lewis household there came a red-haired youth "all eyes and energy," as Dr. Dulbois recalls him, who was much puzzled by life as he saw it unfold in the Minnesota town. That was Harry Sinclair Lewis.

His restless nature used to keep him awake long after the others had gone to bed in his well-lighted home. Often, nights, as he grew older, he used to go calling on the doctor down the street to discuss and argue about the things that puzzled him—things which he came to criticize strongly as time went on. Sometimes they sat until 3 o'clock in the morning discussing and wrangling, though it is not of record that they really settled any of the problems of the universe.

Leaves Home Town

Then the youth went away—to Yale, to Upton Sinclair's New Jersey colony, to the west coast where he became a friend of Jack London. He became a novelist and now the only times that the old doctor sees Harry Lewis is when he comes back to the home town for a visit. Though they are kind-

red spirits they can still find much over which to disagree.

Lewis, being a novelist, has had an opportunity to express his opinion of small town life in a scathing book called "Main Street."

The doctor's chance came recently, however, when he was asked to set forth some of his ideas on "Both Sides of Main Street" for publication. Dr. DuBois consented. He began by accepting Lewis's charge that life on Main street is or used to be lacking in some of the refinements.

"I shall not dwell on its crudities," he said. "They have been sufficiently paraded before a sensation loving public that has greedily swallowed them, book, bob and slinker. We offer no apologies. We accept the stigma. Sufficient to say that we have mended our ways and straightened our byways, which latter is more than crudity. Boston has its crooked streets, following the early cowpath formation.

"And now, when I call up the old times, it is not the crudeness of that period which attracts my attention but it is the spirit of infinite merit which seemed to pervade the entire community. I verily believe that there was more fun to the square inch of Main street than in any city the wide world over. The fastidiously minded may call it horseplay if they choose. But it was invigorating.

How Meet Life?

The doctor cites incidents which have helped him to sweeten life on Main street for him. The time, for example, when Mr. Mattson and a defender of orthodox ways were having a religious argument which someone ended with a firecracker. There was a time, too, when Mr. Oehl, village watch tinker and band leader, was hoisted into the air because the tails of his coat became attached to the curtain in

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Hunting Easter Eggs

The chief celebration of Easter in olden days was not a new Easter or bonnet but an Easter egg. English children today hunt eggs in the garden before breakfast on Easter morning, and afterward they eat a colored boiled egg—in the shell, not broken into a cup as we eat them. Little most of them know that these two customs are very ancient. That of hunting Easter eggs has come down from the earliest days when men believed that the earth was hatched at the spring of the year from a vast "mundane egg." The custom of eating colored eggs for breakfast originated in Oxford, among the scholars, who were not allowed to eat eggs during Lent, and who, to celebrate, colored their first treat on Easter morning.

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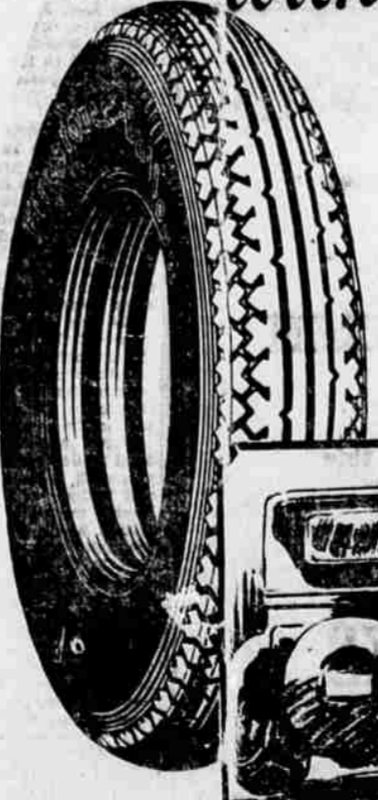
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