FLYING THROUGH HISTORY: THE WINSLOW-LINDBERGH REGIONAL AIRPORT

INTRODUCTION

The Santa Fe Railway and US Route 66 have not been the only transportation corridors to have a dramatic impact on Winslow. The city is also known for its historic airport, which played a pioneering role in early passenger air travel. *Flying Through History* explores the story of the Winslow-Lindbergh Regional Airport from its celebrated beginnings through the present day.

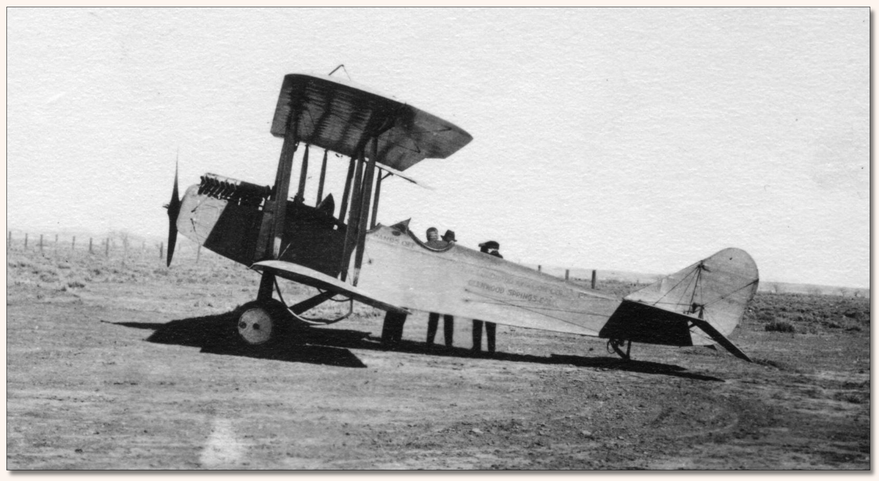
EARLY AVIATION IN THE UNITED STATES & ARIZONA

Transcontinental travel underwent an amazing transformation over the course of the 20th century. Commercial airlines were founded and matured, which in turn sparked advances in airplane technology and passenger service. Cross-country travel went from 96 hours on the train to 48 hours by train-and-plane in 1929, to 15 hours by plane in the mid-1930s, and to five hours by jetliner in 1959 -- a standard that continues today.

The Wright brothers made their historic flight in 1903, and adventurous aviators pushed the limits of early aircraft until the outbreak of World War I in 1914. The war thrust airplane technology into a new era, and the potential for bombers to carry commercial cargo did not go unnoticed by American entrepreneurs. The federal government directed the US Post Office to provide airmail service, which began on the East Coast in 1918 and reached the West Coast in 1920.

Airmail service created a basic infrastructure of airfields, night-flying beacons, safety practices, and over 2,500 trained pilots, mechanics, and personnel. But railroad executives soon complained that the subsidized service was costing them mail revenue. They argued unfair competition and demanded privatization, resulting in the Airmail Act of 1925 that authorized the US Post Office to award contracts to private operators. By 1927, the government's airmail service had ceased operations while the network of civil routes grew, though none of them passed though Arizona.

Even as civil airmail service expanded, passenger air service could not compete with the safety, comfort, and convenience of the railroads. But the turning point for commercial air travel was just on the horizon, and Winslow was to play a crucial role. With the passage of the Air Commerce Act in 1926, the federal government was responsible for the regulation of aerial interstate commerce including establishing airways, issuing and enforcing air traffic rules, licensing pilots and certifying aircraft, and operating and maintaining aids to air navigation. Aviation was now a less risky proposition for bankers and investors as well as the flying public, and the stage was set for the founding of Transcontinental Air Transport.



In 1922, this US Army J-1 trainer was part of the first group of planes to land in Winslow. They were photographed by John P. Clark at the baseball park/aeroplane landing grounds.

WINSLOW'S BERRIGEN FIELD

As early as 1919, barnstormers landed their aircraft in Tucker Flats just northwest of Winslow. Mayor W. E. Carver received a letter that same year requesting a safe landing place for cross-country flights, so the city designated the baseball park on the north edge of town as its "aeroplane landing grounds."

Robert Hausler, a visionary ex-army pilot with influence in Washington, promoted a string of improved landing fields from the West Coast to Albuquerque. In 1925, Hausler was in town monitoring construction of a new municipal airport near where present-day Interstate 40 intersects North Park Drive. The *Winslow Mail* published a special edition dedicated to Hausler and suggesting he be called "Bob Hustler" for his persistence in developing western aviation.

On May 16 and 17, 1925, Winslow's new Berrigen Field was dedicated in honor of deceased US Army Lt. John A. Berrigen, who was killed in the Philippines. The two-day celebration included a parade, banquet, and ball; an air show with parachute drops, aerial stunts, and aerial parades featuring army and navy planes; and photo opportunities with local Laguna and Navajo tribal members.

Winslow was now one in a string of towns across Northern Arizona maintaining good airports for use by both civilian and military aircraft. City officials hoped that Winslow would soon receive airmail service and host scenic flights to the Grand Canyon and Monument Valley.

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Research sources included articles from the *Winslow Mail*, Linda and Bruce Lazzarini's *Paths in the Sky* exhibit developed for *Second Saturdays in Winslow*; *Turbulent Skies: The History of Commercial Aviation* by T.A. Heppenheimer (1995); *Sky Pioneering: Arizona in Aviation History* by Ruth Reinhold (1982); *Flying the Lindbergh Line: Then and Now* by Robert F. Kirk (2013); *Flying Across America: The Airline Passenger Experience and the West* by Daniel L. Rust (*Montana The Magazine Of Western History*, July 1, 2007); *Transcontinental Air Transport, Inc.* by George E. Hopkins *(American Heritage Magazine*, December 1975); *The Lindbergh Line* by Neal Davis, Sr. (*Route 66 Magazine*, Spring 2010), *Winslow International* by Bob Thomas (*Arizona Highways*, September 2000), and Björn Larsson at www.timetableimages.com.