By the 1920s, the affordability of automobiles meant that travel was no longer just for the wealthy. Travelers were now free to design their own itineraries. In 1926, the section of the transcontinental National Old Trails Highway that passed through downtown Winslow on Second Street became part of US Route 66. The highway was designed to link small towns to bigger cities and to enhance their economies in the process. The “main street of America” spurred service stations, motor courts, campgrounds, diners, curio shops, and roadside attractions. Several thousand cars a day drove through downtown Winslow during the 1950s boom years. Route 66 brought more tourists through Winslow than the Santa Fe or Harvey Houses.

The Winslow Airport

Winslow’s airport played a pioneering role in commercial air travel. Though travel times were drastically reduced, early aircraft needed to stop for fuel often. In 1929, aviator and Transcontinental Air Transport (TAT) advisor Charles A. Lindbergh chose Winslow as one of twelve critical refueling stops for the airline’s first coast-to-coast passenger service. He chose the location for the terrain, weather patterns, and access to the Santa Fe line. Passengers taking the 48-hour, New York-to-Los Angeles trip would fly during the day and ride the train at night. Lindbergh’s TAT colleagues chose the flat, open landscape south of town for a terminal, hangar, parking apron, and three long asphalt runways.

TAT flew a fleet of Ford Tri-Motor planes that held ten passengers and had small kitchens for in-flight meals. In 1930, TAT and Western Air Express merged as Transcontinental & Western Air (TWA). Joseph Kasulaitis (left, with friend Vida Norman) worked at the airport from 1929 to 1948. He met many famous aviators including Lindbergh, Amelia Earhart, and Pancho Barnes, as well as many passengers from Hollywood. Kasulaitis reflected on his days at the airport: “…passengers would walk on a carpet to the plane, all dressed up in their best, because flying then was the most glamorous adventure one way to travel… movie stars were in and out of here constantly. Usually they were very friendly… I remember meeting the Barrowsmore brothers, Jimmy Stewart, Mary Pickford, John Wayne, Gary Cooper, and Clark Gable and his wife, Carole Lombard.” Bob Thomas article for Arizona Highways, September 2000

Tourist camps like Camp Keyton (seen here during a 1930s parade) offered cabins, gasoline, and groceries to weary travelers during the Great Depression and World War II.