

Paton Field Centennial Moment—April

Area Aviation: Stow Field, Akron and Mid-City Airports

1920-1929

Akron's struggle for an airport from early in the 1920s to a concerted effort in 1927 was driven by businessmen who saw its potential commercial value. The site committee's top recommendations were for Darrowville ("a one-street town from Barlow Road in Hudson to beyond Fishcreek Road in Stow") and Fulton Field southeast of Akron. Akron City Council chose Fulton Field and began airport construction in 1928.

With the Akron decision made, private investors leased the Darrowville property in 1929 for a commercial airport. The business was initially called Issoudun Mid-City Airport, with "Mid-City" referring to its location between Akron and Cleveland. As with the Akron airport, flight instruction was a major focus. By 1929, the Akron and Mid-City airports competed with Stow Field for the area's aviation business.

The Depression

Just as Stow Field experienced hard times during the 1930s, so did the other airports. Akron airport's major tenant was forced into receivership. It was replaced by Akron Airways, owned by R. A. "Rudy" Van Devere. At Mid-City Airport, the period was characterized by a series of management changes. Stability was reached in 1939 when Van Devere leased this airfield as well. He would be a major player in area aviation for the next decade.

Federal Pilot Training Programs

Kent State's first federal program--the Civilian Pilot Training Program (CPTP)--began in 1939. Akron Airways provided the flight training using both Akron and Mid-City airports. In 1941, increased military traffic moved most flight training to Mid-City. Stow Field was in foreclosure and saw little activity during this period.



Akron Airways' CPTP instructors at Akron Municipal Airport. 1940 (Van Devere Family Collection)

Following the nation's entry into World War II, the CPTP became the War Training Service (WTS). Goodyear Aircraft's construction of the Corsair fighter at Akron Airport called a halt to all private flying there. As the area's only lighted airport, it was available to flight students when night flying was required.



Mid-City Airport with line of Piper J3 Cubs, 1943 (Van Devere Family Collection)

When the State of Ohio made funds available for schools with CPTP programs to acquire their own airports, Kent State considered several sites. In September 1942, it decided to purchase Stow Field from Van Devere who had purchased it in 1940. Van Devere sold only the airfield and retained the parcel with the hangars.

The WTS program was followed by the Army Air Forces College Training Program that brought the 336th College Training Detachment to Kent State. Again, flight training was provided by Akron Airways. Poor conditions at the newly acquired Kent State Airport necessitated that flying be done at Mid-City. Beginning in 1946, Kent State flight training through the GI Bill was provided by Akron Airways at all three airports. With the establishment of an Air Force Reserve Officer Training Corps (AFROTC) unit on campus in 1948, Kent State made every effort to utilize its own airport.

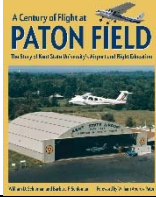


Van Devere Hangars at Kent State Airport. 1948 (Kent State University Libraries. Special Collections and Archives)

In 1953, Van Devere sold the hangar parcel to the University, giving it complete airport ownership. Nonetheless, lower flight fees drove most KSU students to Mid-City. This came to an end in 1956 when General Motors purchased Mid-City for its Terex plant. Today this is the site of Joann Fabrics. Mid-City had played an important role in the training of KSU pilots dating back to 1939.

DID YOU KNOW?

The Kent State Airport received its official identifier as 1G3 as a public-use aviation field by the Civil Aeronautics Authority (CAA) in 1947. The installation of an Automated Weather Observation Station (AWOS) in 2019 maintained the 1G3 identifier as part of the airport's history.



Excerpted from *A Century of Flight at Paton Field: The Story of Kent State University's Airport and Flight Education* by William D. Schloman and Barbara F. Schloman. (Kent State University Press, 2019). Used by permission. Available at the Kent State University Airport, from the [Kent State University Press](#), and wherever books are sold.