

## **How Cleveland Invented the Modern Airport**

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In July of 1925 a crowd of over 250,000 cheered the opening of Cleveland's new Municipal Airport, located on a thousand acres of newly acquired land several miles southwest of the city's center. Through the end of the 1920s, Cleveland Municipal Airport was the world's largest air transportation facility. Through the 1930s and 1940s technical innovations made at Cleveland, such as a control tower, radioed instructions to fliers, nighttime landing lights, and radio control beacons would help to shape the form of the modern airport. The initial impetus on the part of the city to build such a large and innovative facility came from the desire to be a part of the growing network of federally-funded national airmail routes, but the continuing work at Cleveland was spurred on by the development and growth of commercial passenger and freight aviation. The Cleveland Air Races established the airport as a national venue for the testing of aircraft design, adding a large dose of excitement and adventure to otherwise normal airport operations. Wartime needs lead to the building of a bomber plant and a NACA (later NASA) facility on airport grounds. While Cleveland Municipal Airport (renamed Hopkins after the City Manager who pushed for its construction) would lose its international stature in the 1950s and 1960s, its history is tied directly to the development of the modern airport.