

American Institute of
Aeronautics and Astronautics
HISTORIC AEROSPACE SITE



Lunken Field
Cincinnati, Ohio



Lunken Airport in the early 1930s.

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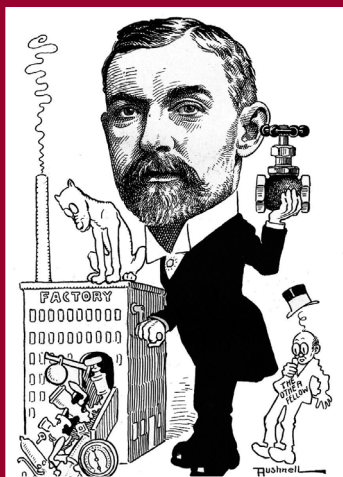
Lunken Field

Cincinnati, Ohio



The Lunkenheimer Company

In 1845 19-year-old Frederick Lunkenheimer, a skilled metal worker, emigrated from Germany to the U.S. After working in New York, he headed for New Orleans but ended up in Cincinnati, where he worked at a local foundry. In 1862, he started the Cincinnati Brass Works and did well by manufacturing parts for steamboats and military equipment during the Civil War. After the war his son Edmund took over the company, now called the Lunkenheimer Valve Company.



Edmund Lunken, for whom the airport is named.

The company continued to grow, and thanks to the growing automobile industry and another war, the company prospered. Around this time Edmund shortened the family name to Lunken but kept the full company name.

By 1921 Edmund's son Eshelby, who had an interest in flying, was now president of the company, and it was he who persuaded his father to buy the Turkey Bottoms land and later donate it to the city of Cincinnati, as long it was named for the Lunken family. The company also made parts for Charles Lindbergh's plane, the Spirit of St. Louis, of which Eshelby was very proud.

The history of Lunken Field really started in 1788, when visitors came to what would become the Cincinnati area and established the settlement of Columbia, Ohio. Columbia remained a quiet farming community for more than a century. After the first World War, life there began to change, as it did everywhere. One of the first signs of change was the excitement of flying airplanes.

Many World War I pilots turned to barnstorming after the war. One of the main types of airplanes manufactured for the war was the Curtiss JN-4, known as the Jenny. After the war the government had such a surplus that it sold the planes for practically nothing, and many of the pilots bought them. The pilots would fly to a town, perhaps perform a few stunts, and then land for a few days to give rides and earn some money.

A popular landing site for these barnstormers was a large field, known as Turkey Bottoms for the wild turkeys roaming there, in what had been Columbia. One particular pilot, Dixie Davis, capitalized on the growing interest in aviation and started a flying school there in 1921. The rest of the field was used by the Cincinnati Polo Club.



Talton Higbee Embry and John Paul Riddle.

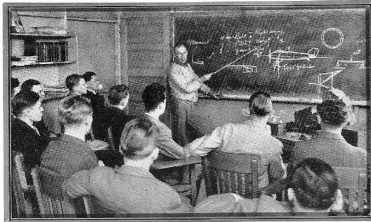
Dixie Davis established a permanent airfield there in 1925, and this caught the attention of the Grisard Company, who owned another field in Blue Ash, Ohio. One of the owners of the company, Eshelby Lunken, recognized the potential of the Turkey Bottoms site with its proximity to Cincinnati, and in December of 1925 he persuaded his father, Edmund, to provide the funding to buy the land owned by the Polo Club. The airfield was now known as Lunken Airport.

Airmail routes and a military squadron that had been based in Blue Ash were moved to Lunken, and the airport began to solicit federal funding for additional growth.

The company did well over the new few decades, with still another war to



An Embry-Riddle Flying School plane.



School Scene
An Embry-Riddle Class in Aerodynamics

A Flying School of National Reputation

WITHOUT doubt, American aviation today enjoys the advantage of some excellent schools of flying, but we of The Embry-Riddle Co. Flying School point with pardonable pride to the national reputation our school enjoys and which brings to its classes students from all over the country.

Embry-Riddle Methods

They are rigid, they are resultful. They fully anticipate and provide for the welfare of every student, thru strict adherence to the rules and regulations of U. S. Dept. of Commerce and its physical standards. Every student must have one of the official medical examiner's certificates reproduced below before starting training.

Embry-Riddle Methods are the culmination of years of experience in giving flying instruction, the crystallization of ideas, procedure and every possible effort to perfect and maintain a highly efficient organization of pilots, mechanics and expert instructors in both theory and practical flying.



Flying Ability of Every Embry-Riddle Graduate Assured

When an Embry-Riddle Student receives a diploma, he or she can really fly. Thence, only experience and hours in the air are necessary to fullest attainment. We back this up by entrusting the graduate with a costly ship for one whole hour of solo flying without bond.

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What the Ideal Flying School Should Be

The Embry-Riddle organization has been organized with the following ideas and ideals in mind of what a flying school should be:

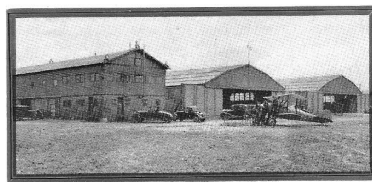
- ☐ We believe that the student should learn in a school employing only licensed pilots and modern licensed planes.
- ☐ It should have financial and moral standing and stability back of every statement or promise. It should have and merit the good will and respect of the entire industry.
- ☐ It should provide a thorough ground school training, with competent instructors, so that there will be an adequate background of the theory of flight to form the basis of a student's advancement in the profession of flying or to enhance his skill at the controls in flying for sport or pleasure.
- ☐ It should adhere strictly to the rules of the U. S. Dept. of Commerce, Aeronautics Branch, governing flying schools, both in spirit as well as technically.
- ☐ It should be conscientious, its diplomas presented for evidence of skill and knowledge attained only, and not for the mere cost of tuition.

Only High-Grade, Modern Ships and Equipment Used

We have no obsolete war surplus airplanes—Jennies, Standards or others. All instruction ships are modern Waco planes, admittedly the finest training plane made. They are kept in first class condition, inspected daily by competent, licensed mechanics. There are ships to tear down and build up in the instruction of rigging, motors, design, construction, etc. Whirlwinds, Hissos, OX 5's and other modern motors are available for student study. The servicing department of the Embry-Riddle Co., is open to students for observation of repairs and practical work if desired.

Our 100% Safety Record

The Embry-Riddle Flying School enjoys the distinction of a 100% safety record. No student has ever even suffered a minor injury due to flying, so methodically and safely do we go about the task of instruction.



Extensive Hangars and Shops at Lunken Airport

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Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University

Although the Embry-Riddle Aviation Corporation no longer existed, John Riddle decided to go back to training pilots in 1939. He contacted Embry, who had no interest in reentering a partnership with Riddle. Riddle was now living in Florida, and took on a new partner, John McKay, and his wife, Isabel. Keeping the Embry-Riddle name, they reestablished the Embry-Riddle School of Aviation, partnering with the University of Miami to provide flight training.

McKay purchased Riddle's share of Embry-Riddle in 1944 and after that the co-founders were no longer involved. Riddle went on to establish many other aviation-related schools and companies.

A advertisement for the Embry-Riddle School of Aviation.

increase production. After the war, however, family members did not join the company and it was eventually absorbed into other companies.

In 1925, Talton Higbee Embry and John Paul Riddle formed the Embry-Riddle Company. Embry, who was born in Cincinnati, was trying unsuccessfully to start a bus company when he met

Riddle, who had landed at the polo field in 1921. Riddle offered Embry a ride, and from then on Embry was hooked on aviation. On December 17, 1925, they formed the company, financed by Embry. For a while they sold planes manufactured by the Waco (pronounced Wah-co) Aircraft Company, located in Troy, Ohio.





Aeronca Aircraft Corporation

The Aeronca Aircraft Corporation was founded on November 11, 1928 at Lunken Field. Aeronca became the first company to build a commercially successful general aviation aircraft. Their first plane was the Aeronca C-2 monoplane, often called the "Flying Bathtub," in 1929. The next major model was the Scout of 1937, a two-seater, which was developed into the Chief and Super Chief the next year. All of the airplanes produced from the start of production in 1929 to 1937 are known as the "Lunken" Aeroncas.

In 1937 there was a major flood at the Lunken Airport, resulting in the entire airport area being washed away. Aeronca's factory was destroyed, along with the tooling and almost all of the very early blueprints and drawings, and the company moved to Middletown, Ohio.

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An advertisement for the Aeronca Company.



Roscoe Turner and his Flying Cigar Store.

In 1926, the two men founded the Embry-Riddle Flying School, the first government-approved flight school in the nation.

One of the airfield's early famous visitors arrived in 1927, when Charles Lindbergh landed there to refuel. This was soon after his historic solo nonstop flight across the Atlantic Ocean, and a huge crowd welcomed him to Cincinnati.

One of the more unusual commercial ventures at the airport in those early years was “The Flying Cigar Store” of Col. Roscoe Turner. In the late 1920s, Turner frequently flew into Lunken to sell cigars, razors, watches, lipstick and other items.

City voters approved a \$500,000 bond issue to fund the development of the airport. That enabled Cincinnati to buy 870 acres adjoining Lunken and improve and expand the facility.

The Embry-Riddle Company, now the Embry-Riddle Aviation Corporation, and its school continued to grow, and

in 1929 it merged with the Aviation Corporation of Delaware (AVCO), along with other companies. AVCO ended the school, and shortly thereafter was renamed American Airways. Their earliest flights included ferrying passengers to Chicago.

In 1929, more than 8,000 passengers and 80,000 pounds of mail flew out of Lunken on 29,000 airplanes. The city held a three-day dedication celebration for the airport on September 26–28, 1930. Celebrities such as Howard Hughes, Jean Harlow and stunt pilot Jimmy Doolittle participated in the dedication, with Harlow handing out prizes to the winners of the aerobatic contest. At the time, it was the largest municipal airport in the world.

The city had hoped that Lunken would become the main municipal airport for Cincinnati and grow to encompass the burgeoning air transportation business, and in 1936 construction began on the terminal building still in use today. Unfortunately, the catastrophic flood of



An interior view of the art deco-style terminal building.

1937 ended those hopes. The flood water levels reached to the top of the terminal building's control tower, just weeks from completion. A single black brick on the tower facing the airfield marks the high water mark. The airport took on the nickname "Sunken Lunken."

The damage to the terminal was repaired and the building was completed, but the airfield's location in a flood plain was one geographical disadvantage and heavy fog and surrounding hilltops were others. All these factors put a damper on serious thought to expand Lunken airport into a major airport. Some civic leaders looked to the Blue Ash airfield location as the site of Cincinnati's major airport, but ultimately the Greater Cincinnati Airport was located just across the river in Northern Kentucky.

In 1946, the major airlines began to pull out of Lunken and moved to the larger airport. Many national and international dignitaries, including U.S. presidents, have flown in and out of Lunken. In 1964, the Beatles flew into Lunken for their concert at Crosley Field. They walked through the terminal to their limousine. Most of Cincinnati's corporations base their flight departments here, and today the airport fulfills an important role as a "reliever" airport, handling most general aviation traffic operations in the Cincinnati area.



The Metal Aircraft Corporation and the Flamingo

The Metal Aircraft Corporation was another company in operation at Lunken Field. The company produced the G-W-2 Flamingo, a small monoplane. The plan was used as the startup for many companies, including Embry-Riddle, US Airways, and Mason & Dixon Air Lines. The plane is best remembered for its role in the discovery of Venezuela's Angel Falls by Jimmy Angel in 1935. Although well known to the local indigenous population, the falls had only been glimpsed by European explorers until Jimmy Angel crash landed while attempting to land above the falls on Auyán-tepui during gold exploration.

Above: A Metal Aircraft Corporation G-W-2 Flamingo.

THE AIAA HISTORIC AEROSPACE SITES PROGRAM

For over 75 years, the American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) has served as the principal society of the aerospace engineer and scientist. Formed in 1963 through a merger of the American Rocket Society (ARS) and the Institute of the Aerospace Sciences (IAS), AIAA now serves a diverse range of more than 35,000 individual and corporate members from 80 countries.

AIAA's wide variety of programs keep our members at the cutting edge of new thinking, best practices, and stimulating idea exchanges. We convene the profession's most original thinkers and curate the essential research information our members rely on to inform and inspire their work. That may be why AIAA members have been involved in nearly every advancement in modern U.S. aerospace – from major space missions and the modernization of the aviation system to the many inventive uses of aerospace technology to improve everyday life.

At AIAA, we are dedicated to igniting and celebrating aerospace ingenuity and collaboration, which fulfills the human drive to explore, create, and be a part of something bigger than ourselves. It's all part of our shared commitment to inspire innovation and drive technological progress in the U.S. and throughout the world.

In honor of the long tradition of aerospace achievement, in January 2000 AIAA established the Historic Aerospace Sites Program, to promote the preservation and dissemination of knowledge about significant accomplishments of the aerospace profession. More than 35 historic aerospace sites have been officially recognized, including the site of the first balloon launch, in Annonay, France; Getafe Air Base in Spain, the site of the first Autogiro flight; "Aunt Effie's Farm" in Massachusetts, where Robert H. Goddard launched the first liquid-fueled rocket; Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, where the Wright brothers flew the first successful powered aircraft; and Tranquility Base, where humans first landed on the moon.



**American Institute of
Aeronautics and Astronautics**
1801 Alexander Bell Drive, Suite 500
Reston, VA 20191-4344
www.aiaa.org