



OLD GRAND PRAIRIE AIRPORT
GRAND PRAIRIE SIGNIFICANT LANDMARK
Site Medallion No. 49
(1930-1976: no longer standing)

In 1929, the Curtiss Flying Service Corporation of New York purchased a 275 acre tract of land one mile east of the Grand Prairie Corporate Limits on which to establish a school for advanced flyers. On October 30, 1929, ceremonies took place for the ground breaking of the Curtiss-Wright Airport of Ft. Worth-Dallas, as it would be known. The flying school was dedicated on the weekend of April 12 and 13, 1930. The program was well planned and attracted some 15,000 people on Saturday and 25,000 on Sunday.

Although a new industry was introduced to Grand Prairie, the flying school was not overly successful and was sold in late 1930 and became the Grand Prairie Municipal Airport. In 1940, Lou Foote purchased the improvements and added new equipment to such an extent that before the close of the year, he was training 116 fliers in preparation for more advanced schooling. The airport was now a thriving operation and helping contribute to the growth of Grand Prairie.

With the announcement that North American Aircraft (Later LTV, then Northrup-Grumman) would be constructing a huge aircraft plant along the west side of Hensley Field, the airport was sold again, this time to the U.S. Navy at a cost of \$120,336. The airport was developed by the Navy as a flight training facility. With new runways, operational and maintenance facilities at an approximate cost of \$823,000, the Navy operated the airfield until after World War II.

On July 12, 1954, the Aviation Section (Later the 149th Aviation Battalion) of the 49th Armored Division and the Texas National Guard moved to the Grand Prairie Airport from Eagle Mountain Lake.

By deed dated May 22, 1962, the Secretary of the Army for the United States conveyed 193.82 acres, without monetary considerations, to the City of Grand Prairie, Texas for use as a public airport. The remaining two acres, with all of the operational and maintenance buildings, were retained by Department of the Army for continued use by the National Guard. The City's portion of the airport was operated as the Grand Prairie Municipal Airport.

Because of its small size and the fact that the city was starting to grow up around the airport, the airport was considered unsafe for public use, and it was decided that a new airport was needed. In 1964, the Department of the Army granted the City of Grand Prairie the right to sell 127 acres of the 193 acres in order that the city could build a new airport south of the current location. The remaining 66 acres used by the 149th was eventually sold and the 149th moved to the Dallas Naval Air Station (formerly Hensely Field) in 1976.

The Old Grand Prairie Airport served the area well from its inception in 1930 until its closing in 1976. The early flying schools, the private operators, the operation of a flight training facility by the U.S. Navy during World War II, the home of the 149th Aviation Battalion of the Texas National Guard from 1954 to 1976, the presence of the Civil Air Patrol, a glider operation, and for a time the airport serving as the Grand Prairie Municipal Airport, all helped to contribute to the growth and development of Grand Prairie and to the defense of the country. Today, there is no trace of the airport. Industrial developments, private businesses, and city and government buildings now cover the grounds of the old airport. Only memories remain with those who are still around to remember what occurred there. The Old Grand Prairie Airport is a part of the history of Grand Prairie, as are the thousands of individuals who participated in its existence.