HENSELY FIELD
9200 Jefferson Blvd.
Grand Prairie, Texas

The city of Dallas purchased land at this site in 1928 and leased it to the U.S. Army for a training airfield, as Love Field, established in Dallas in 1917, had become too busy to provide safe facilities for training. The field was named for Mayor William N. Hensley, an air officer for the Eighth Corps Army Area who helped select the base site before his death. Army air operations were moved here from Love Field, and Hensley Field became the center of all area Army air training operations and a key repair and refueling point in the southwest. As World War II loomed, the U.S. War Department granted the use of part of Hensley Field to the Navy for a naval reserve aviation base. Known as "Prairie Navy" because of its inland location, it was commissioned in May 1941. Also in 1941, the North American Aviation Company transferred production of the T-6 and Navy SNJ "Texan" planes here from California, and Army Air Corps moved its Midwestern headquarters of the ferry command to Hensley Field. In 1943 the naval reserve aviation base was redesignated Dallas Naval Air Station. Personnel trained here included fleet, Coast Guard and Marine pilots, three future astronauts, a contingent of free French forces and women accepted for volunteer emergency service (Waves). In 1944 the North American Aviation facility was re-tooled to produce B-24 bombers. By the end of World War II, Hensley Field had expanded to include 4,104 people. After the war, Congress established a naval air training program to preserve the skills and expertise of ex-military personnel. The Navy officially took over Hensley Field on May 1, 1949, but the Air Force remained a tenant. Dallas Naval Air Station remained in operation until 1998. (2000)