

AIRPORT DISTRICT HISTORY

Aviation, through its civil and military applications has affected the lives of all humanity in its relatively short period of existence, even more than ocean shipping or the railroads and comparable to the automobile.

Albany was the scene of the initial flight of the first aircraft built in the state of Oregon. The aeroplane was built and flown in 1910 by John Burkhart, a Cornell University graduate, who had been inspired by watching experiments of the Wright Brothers at Kitty Hawk in North Carolina.

Goltra Field was also known as the old Linn County Fairgrounds and the Albany Race Track. It was located between the railroad tracks and Queen Avenue and between Ferry Street and Howard Street.

This location at the southern edge of Albany, became the first airport in the Northwest. It was established in the fall of 1909 by John C. Burkhart and his cousin Del Burkhart. John and Del Burkhart and Willie Crawford built a plane and hanger for it at Goltra Field, this was the second airport in the United States. [Morris Park race track in the Bronx, New York could be the first.

The first "official" airport in America was founded by the Wright brothers earlier in 1909 in College Park, Maryland. It had to close due to recent added security requirements.

Goltra Park continued as a public airfield administered by the American Legion until 1929 when the City of Albany purchased Charles Langmack's airfield.

The origin of Albany's Municipal Airport: the air field was rented for the personal flying operations of a 13-year old enthusiast, Charles Langmack of Lebanon, beginning in 1920. Born in 1907, Langmack was introduced to aviation by his older brother, pursued his vision independently, advancing in skill and instructing others. His pioneering role in aviation in the Willamette Valley and creating a dispersion of professional pilots throughout the Pacific Northwest and Alaska holds powerful associations for aviation history in Oregon. Langmack proceeded to a distinguished flying career of 30 years as an Air Force test pilot. Retiring with the rank of Colonel in 1968, he returned to his hometown of Lebanon. Charles Langmack was the first pilot registered in Oregon in 1929.

The phase of municipal airport operation began in 1929, after Langmack's recommendation that the City acquire his base was acted on. Despite its earlier origin, the airport's historic period of significance is defined as 1929-1947. During this period, Albany Airport was the busiest community airport in Oregon, second only to Portland International. Within the area lies the nucleus of the oldest airport in continuous service on its original site in western Oregon.

In 1958 the big hangar and the steel beacon tower, built in 1929, along with the small workshop hangar, built in 1930, were moved 350 feet east and 100 feet south of the original location to make way for Interstate 5. The agreement made possible the grading and paving of the present runway location. The remains of the original diagonal runway intersect the present runway about mid point.

Even today the airport epitomizes the small, early 20th century airfield developed for light air craft. Albany Municipal Airport is the only airport in Oregon to be on the National Register of Historic Places. It became Albany's fourth National Historic District in 1998.

