



Newark Airport

C. Thacker

EWR TURNS 80

A HISTORY OF
NEWARK LIBERTY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT
AN EXHIBITION AT
THE NEWARK PUBLIC LIBRARY



front cover image: Newark Airport, etching by George A. Bradshaw, done for the *Journal of Finance and Industry*, 1929.
From the Special Collections of The Newark Public Library.

above: The airport in the 1950s, with the Newark skyline in the background.

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James Lewis, Curator
The Charles F. Cummings New Jersey Information Center
The Newark Public Library

Exhibition on view April 7 – June 14, 2008
Second- and Third-Floor Galleries



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**THE PORT AUTHORITY
OF NY & NJ**

This exhibition was made possible by a grant from the Port Authority of NY & NJ.

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SPECIAL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS



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Richard Koles, Photographer/Local Historian
Shea Oakley, Aviation Hall of Fame and Museum of New Jersey

Christine Baird, *The Star-Ledger*
Lisa Boley, *The Star-Ledger*
Diana Dade, The Ninety-Nines – Garden State Chapter
Janet DeJesus, *The Star-Ledger*
Jessica Dobrin, Port Authority of NY & NJ
Patti Hudziak, Continental Airlines
Gloria Melo, TAP Portugal
David Morris, Retired, Newark Liberty International Airport
Jeffrey Moy, Newark Museum
Tom Peitz, FedEx
William Peniston, Newark Museum
H.V. Reilly, Author
Pim Van Hemmen, *The Star-Ledger*

We wish to extend a posthumous THANK YOU to Jean-Rae Turner, Local Historian.

EWR TURNS 80

A HISTORY OF NEWARK LIBERTY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

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Stephanie Vigilotti, PrimeFlight Aviation Services



April 7, 2008

Dear Friends,

This year marks the 80th anniversary of Newark Liberty International Airport. In commemoration of this event, the Newark Public Library is pleased to present *EWR Turns 80: A History of Newark Liberty International Airport*. This landmark exhibition of photos, ephemera, and memorabilia will be on view at the Library from April 7 through June 14, 2008.

On behalf of the Trustees and staff of the Newark Public Library, thank you for joining us as we celebrate this special anniversary and the development of commercial aviation in New Jersey.

We are most grateful to The Port Authority of New York & New Jersey for their generous grant in support of this exhibition and Susan Bass Levin, Port Authority First Deputy Executive Director, for serving as the honorary chairperson of the exhibit committee. We also appreciate the participation of the entire honorary exhibit committee.

Librarian and curator, James Lewis, did an outstanding job of organizing the many facets of this exhibit. In addition, we would like to acknowledge an extraordinary volunteer, Richard Koles, who conceived the idea for *EWR Turns 80* and lent his expertise throughout its development.

The exhibit draws heavily on collections from the Library's local history department, the Charles F. Cummings New Jersey Information Center. We are grateful to the many other individuals, organizations and corporations that contributed materials and expertise in support of this exhibit.

We hope that you enjoy this rich historical collection and that *EWR Turns 80* will evoke many fond memories for you!

Sincerely,

Wilma J. Grey
Director



April 7, 2008

Dear Friends,

The Port Authority of NY and NJ (PANYNJ) is proud to be the lead sponsor of the Newark Public Library's exhibit "EWR Turns 80: A History of the Newark Liberty International Airport."

The first major airport to open in the New York-New Jersey metropolitan area, Newark Airport was built by the City of Newark on 68 acres of marshland. It opened on October 1, 1928, and quickly became the world's busiest commercial airport. Its rich history—with many aviation firsts—includes flights by Charles Lindbergh and the dedication by Amelia Earhart of the Administration building in 1935, which served as the first commercial airline terminal in the nation.

During World War II, the Army Air Corps operated the airport. In 1948, after the PANYNJ assumed responsibility for its operation, the agency added an instrument runway, a terminal building, a control tower and an air cargo center. Through the 70s and 80s the PANYNJ made additional investments in terminals, which led to the eventual expansion of the facility into an international airport. Today, through its ten-year capital program, the PANYNJ is continuing its commitment to make Newark Liberty International a premiere facility. The capital program includes the modernization of Terminal B, runway rehabilitation work, safety and mechanical upgrades totaling over \$443 billion dollars.

Historically one of the nation's busiest airports, in 2006 Newark Liberty International transported over 35 million passengers. The PANYNJ has worked to be a partner and good neighbor to the surrounding communities. The agency is proud to work with Mayor Cory Booker, the City Council led by Council President Mildred Crump, Elizabeth Mayor J. Christian Bollwage and all of the elected officials in the region who support the facility. Through the rich collection of photographs, artifacts and memorabilia, the Newark Public Library's exhibit will provide to the public a view of the extraordinary history not only of the airport itself, but also of the aviation industry, the City and the region.

On behalf of the PANYNJ, I extend my appreciation to the Library's Board of Trustees and Staff for their hard work and enthusiasm at producing this great exhibit of Newark Liberty International's 80-year lifespan.

Enjoy the exhibit.

Sincerely,



Susan Bass Levin
First Deputy Executive Director



THE PORT AUTHORITY
OF NY & NJ



EWR TURNS 80

A HISTORY OF NEWARK LIBERTY INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

In the early 1920s most Americans looked upon aviation much as we look upon space flight—more as a curiosity than as a development likely to have significant economic impact. When aviation enthusiasts first asked Newark officials to consider establishing

an airport, the city's leaders showed little enthusiasm for the idea. They were convinced that upgrades to the shipping facilities at Port Newark would yield greater benefits.

Charles Lindbergh's 1927 flight across the Atlantic changed the prevailing view that aviation was

only an amusing—and probably transient—novelty. Newark officials soon reassessed their decision not to build a municipal airport and proceeded to build one with lightning speed.

On August 3, 1927, Thomas Lynch Raymond, the mayor, announced plans to provide



1. "Newark Airport Plans: Mayor Announces Details of Proposed \$6,000,000 Project," *New York Times*, August 4, 1927, p. 12.

2. "Where Airways Will Converge: Work on Big Newark Base for Planes, Intended To Serve the New York District, Is Being Rushed in Hope of Readiness for Summer," *New York Times*, February 19, 1928, p. 124.

Newark Liberty International Airport had the first paved runway in the country. From The Port of New York Authority.



Thomas Lynch Raymond was mayor of Newark in 1928 and played a key role in the development of Newark Airport. He died days before the grand opening.



Flood light system used in the 1930s at Newark Airport.

\$6,000,000 for a commercial airport at Port Newark.¹ He stated that it would be owned and operated by the city and would be “the most modern and best equipped in the nation.” Officials touted its proximity to a deep-sea waterway, “providing not only landing space and anchorage for seaplanes, but also a direct contact with twenty-one steamship lines”² as well as its proximity to five railroads, the Pennsylvania, the Baltimore & Ohio, the Philadelphia & Reading, the Lehigh, the Central Railroad of New Jersey, and to the Newark Belt line, which connected the five.



Heller Field was located in Newark’s North Ward and was in operation from December 1919 to May 1921 as a U.S. Mail airfield. Here, mail bags are dropped from wells in the forward part of the fuselage.

From the *Newark Evening News*, December 8, 1919.

Thomas Alva Edison talks with
Captain James Ray at Newark Airport.
Photo by Drew B. Peters for the *Sunday Call*.

The city engaged the American Airports Corporation to plan and oversee the construction of the facility. The airport was built on swampland, raised with landfill to eleven feet above sea level. The plans, which required diversion of three streams, provided for numerous innovations such as a circular landing field (which would facilitate optimum use of landing space despite changes in wind direction, and would make it possible for several planes to land or take off at the same time), runway marker lights, and radio beacons (which would guide a plane to a safe landing through fog),³ as well as the nation's first hard-surface runway.

"Newark makes little secret of the fact," the *New York Times* reported on February 18, 1928, "that it is rushing the development of the airport in an effort to capture the air-mail business of the metropolitan district. Several contracts which the mail-carrying air transport companies have with Hadley Field, at New Brunswick, terminate about Aug. 1."⁴ The city's efforts to accelerate construction were not in vain. The *Times* reported on August 8 of the same year:



"Postmaster General Barry S. New announced today that Hadley Field, N.J., used as an air mail port since Dec. 15, 1924, will be abandoned on Oct. 1, and a new airport located near Newark, will be used to supply New York City and surrounding territory."⁵

Passenger service was soon inaugurated. Initially the city lacked funds to build a

passenger terminal, and each airline built its own. "If passengers wanted to transfer from a United Air Lines plane to an American Airlines machine for a trip to Boston, they had to walk across the cinders, through mud or dust, as the situation might be, from United's station to American's."⁶ Nevertheless, Newark soon became the world's busiest commercial airport.

3. *Ibid.*

4. "Where Airways Will Converge," *New York Times*, February 19, 1928, p. 124.

5. "Air Mail Abandons Hadley Field Port: Postmaster General Thinks It Is Too Far Away From New York City. New Field Is Near Newark," *New York Times*, August 8, 1928, p. 15.

6. "New Airport for Newark: Some \$4,000,000 Will Be Used to Bring Busy Field Fully Up to Date," *New York Times*, November 24, 1935, p. XX5.



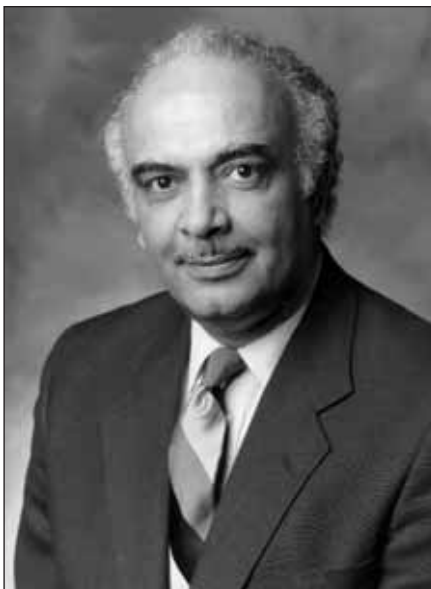
Passengers on new Newark–Washington plane line. Left to right are J.V. MacGee, former vice president of Transcontinental Air Transport; A.W. Gilliam, Washington newspaper representative; Amelia Earhart, vice president of the line; Mrs. Mabel Walker Willebrandt, former Assistant United States Attorney General; Major General J.E. Fechet, chief of the United States Army Air Corps; Commander J.Q. Walton of the Coast Guard and Sydney Gross of Washington. September 1930.

below: Entrance to Administration Building also known as Building One.

In 1931 90,177 travelers used it.⁷ Increased passenger traffic led to a demand for amenities. Consequently, an administration building that housed a passenger terminal, a restaurant, and hotel rooms was soon constructed. Even though travel from Newark Airport to the intersection of Broadway and Canal Street in Manhattan took only 12 minutes, Fiorello LaGuardia, the mayor of New York, was intent upon establishing an airport within the borders of the city. A site in northeastern Queens was chosen. The airport built there

7. Ibid.





left: Colonel Edwin E. Aldrin was commanding Officer of Newark Airport for part of 1942. His son, Edwin Eugene "Buzz" Aldrin Jr., a Glen Ridge native, was the second man on the moon. Courtesy Aviation Hall of Fame and Museum of New Jersey.

right: Gustav Heningburg.

opened in 1939. Although it was officially named "New York Municipal Airport," it soon came to be called "LaGuardia Airport," and was officially so named in 1947.

Four airlines established operations at LaGuardia, materially reducing the number of flights they made into Newark, thus depriving Newark of revenue needed to keep the Newark Airport in operation. Meyer C. Ellenstein, the mayor of Newark, complaining that the taxpayers of Newark were subsidizing the airport in the amount of \$210,000 a year, demanded that the airlines pay \$135,000 a year for use of airport facilities. They refused to pay more than

\$74,000. Therefore, on May 31, 1940, Ellenstein closed the Newark Airport.

Newark leased the municipal hangar to Brewster Aeronautical Corporation for use in the manufacture of airplanes. The city received income from the arrangement, which also promised to bring 1,500 jobs to Newark.

Negotiations involving the city, the airlines, and the Civil Aeronautics Administration, brokered by Colonel Edwin E. Aldrin of Montclair, resulted in the reopening of the airport a year later. Aldrin was chosen to manage the facility.⁸

The U.S. Army Air Corps took over the entire airport during World War II, and all commercial flights were suspended.

After the War the City of Newark entered into an agreement with the Port of New York Authority (later renamed the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey), under which the city leased the airport to the Port Authority. New York similarly leased its airports to the Port Authority.

The next two decades saw significant increases in air travel. Scheduled jet flights out of Newark Airport began on September 11, 1961. Increased traffic led the Port Authority to

8. "4 Airport Leases Signed by Newark," *New York Times*, May 8, 1941, p. 19.

plan and to effect a major expansion of the Newark Airport.

Gustav Heningburg, director of the Greater Newark Urban Coalition, spearheaded a campaign to ensure that members of ethnic minorities who lived in Newark would have access to the high-paying construction jobs that the airport expansion would create. Heningburg had support not only from the community but also from the airlines and the Port Authority. The skilled-trades unions, however, opposed his efforts vehemently. The dispute delayed completion of the work for over a year; but Heningburg and his allies ultimately prevailed.⁹ One third of the skilled workers who completed the work on all three new terminals, and, indeed, on subsequent construction projects in Newark, were members of ethnic minorities.

The first two terminals opened in August and September 1973. The expansion enabled the airport to accommodate a large number of international flights.

Accordingly, "Newark Airport" was renamed "Newark International Airport." Unfortunately, soon after the first two new terminals opened, an economic downturn coupled with sharp increases in the price of fuel led to a decrease in air travel, which was reversed only after deregulation of the airlines in 1978.

In the early 1980s a new airline, People Express, which offered "no frills" flights to England at low cost, set up its operations at Newark, generating a marked

increase in passenger traffic. Within a few years Newark became the busiest of the three major airports in the New York Metropolitan Area. Indeed, People Express undertook the completion of the third new terminal to accommodate its customers. The fledgling airline eventually faltered and was bought by Continental Airlines. Continental became the airport's largest carrier and bears responsibility for much of its subsequent development.



Allegheny Airlines hostesses: Agnes Charney, Diane Frank, Betty Gutowski. September 1968.

9. "Newark's Black Leaders Are Hopeful Of Achieving Construction-Job Goals," *New York Times*, October 17, 1972, p. B6.



People Express captains Beverly Burns of Roselle, left, and Lynn Rippelmeyer of Sparta go through pre-flight preparations in the cockpit of a Boeing 747 at Newark International Airport. They became the first women to pilot Boeing 747 passenger jumbo jets on July 18, 1984. Photo by Rick Bowmer, courtesy of *The Star-Ledger*. © 2008. The Star-Ledger.

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In time passenger traffic declined again, but increases in freight traffic offset the decline. Both Federal Express and United Parcel Service opened facilities at the airport.

On June 1, 1996, a monorail that links the terminals with each other and with the parking lots went into operation. In 2001 New Jersey Transit opened a

station on the Northeast Corridor rail line, adjacent to the airport, and the monorail was extended to transport passengers from the rail station to the airport terminals.

Today Newark Liberty International Airport stands as the 13th busiest in the nation and the 22nd busiest in the world. Its development during

the past eighty years reveals the wisdom and prescience of Thomas Lynch Raymond and other Newark leaders who in 1927 recognized its potential value and moved quickly to create it within a year.

—**Bruce E. Ford**
*Assistant Director
for Access Services
The Newark Public Library*



above: Passengers board an Eastern Airlines plane in 1951.

back cover image: Continental Flight 99 bound for Hong Kong taxis away from Terminal C, Gate 134 at Newark Liberty International Airport with the city of Newark shown in the background, March 3, 2005. Photo by Tony Kudzuk, courtesy of *The Star-Ledger*.

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