



CITIZEN AIRMEN *Strengthening* FREEDOM



MINNESOTA AIR NATIONAL GUARD

Curtiss Park Proposal

Lt Col Jamie Lindman

SSgt Taylor Nielsen



133d Airlift Wing, since 1921

- 2020/2021 marks our 100th Anniversary, planned celebration events include:
 - Sep 26, 2020:** Commemorative celebration at Curtiss Park (Falcon Heights, MN)
 - Dec, 2020:** Wing Awards Ceremony with DVs
 - Jul 16, 2021:** Commemorative Hangar Dance
 - Jul 17-18, 2021:** Centennial Airshow
 - Largest airshow ever, at Mpls International airport
 - Major aerial performances / demonstrations
 - Open & free to the public, honoring MN aviation
 - Governor endorsed & community supported
 - Major media

Founding of the Air National Guard

On September 26, 1920
Capt Ray Miller departed
from Curtiss Field, MN

- Daring 8 day trip to D.C.
 - Few landing options
 - No navigational aids
 - Limited support
- Objective: to lobby military generals & US Congress to form the first Aviation unit in the country, with federal funding & approval



Capt Miller (right) at Curtiss Field.

Miller was a WWI pilot and was the first pilot hired at Curtiss Field.

Military pilots trained at Curtiss Field from post WWI until 1921.

First in the Air National Guard

Jan 1921, US Congress approves Miller's request:

- The first federally recognized Air Guard unit in the country!
- Designated as the 109th Observation Squadron
- \$500,000 was given to the state to purchase aircraft and build aircraft hangars



MN Governor Burnquist (in top hat) and General Rhinow welcoming Capt Ray Miller

Note: This picture is currently displayed at Curtiss Park

Capt Miller is the first
109th Commander

- Miller later became known as the Grandfather of the Air National Guard

Curtiss Park Historical Walk

Two professional signs along the sidewalk highlight early Minnesota aviation.

Excellent venue to preserve and dedicate one of the earliest airfields in the US



Placard highlighting early aviators

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Curtiss Northwest Airport and its Fliers



Curtiss Northwest Airport

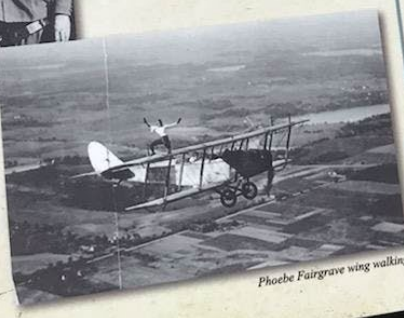
Curtiss Northwest Airport – In 1919, Snelling and Larpenteur Avenues were two-lane, unpaved roads in what was then Rose Township. The southeast corner of the intersection had most recently been a farm field. But now it became home to the first major airport in Minnesota and, for a brief time, the center of aviation in the state. You could buy a plane here, learn to fly it, and have it serviced and repaired. Hundreds, sometimes thousands, of people would come here on summer Sundays to watch air shows.

Glenn Curtiss
 Glenn Curtiss – An aviation pioneer and rival of the Wright Brothers, Curtiss was the first to fly an airplane in Minnesota. On June 23, 1910, 12,000 people watched as he took off from the Minnesota State Fairgrounds and flew to Lake Johanna and back, airborne for an impressive 10 minutes. By 1916, Curtiss headed the world's largest aviation company, establishing dealerships to sell planes across the United States, one of the first being right here.



Phoebe Fairgrave and Vernon Omlie

Phoebe Fairgrave and Vernon Omlie – This duo first teamed up at Curtiss Northwest Airport in 1921 when Fairgrave set a world's record 15,200-foot parachute jump with Omlie at the plane's controls. Fairgrave and Omlie left St. Paul to barnstorm and eventually married. She became the first woman to achieve a Transport Pilot's License and went on to win several national air races. Together, they established the first airport in the mid-South.



Phoebe Fairgrave wing walking

Bill Kidder – A former real estate salesman with a flair for promotion, Kidder learned to fly at a Curtiss Company flight school in Newport News, Virginia. Following World War I, he got his start in the aviation business by acquiring a trainload of second-hand Curtiss Jenny biplanes for pennies on the dollar. Kidder's contract with Curtiss gave him exclusive rights to represent the company in Minnesota, Montana, North Dakota and South Dakota. He was a pivotal figure in the early days of transition between the barnstorming era and commercial aviation.



Curtiss Northwest Airplane Company sales counter

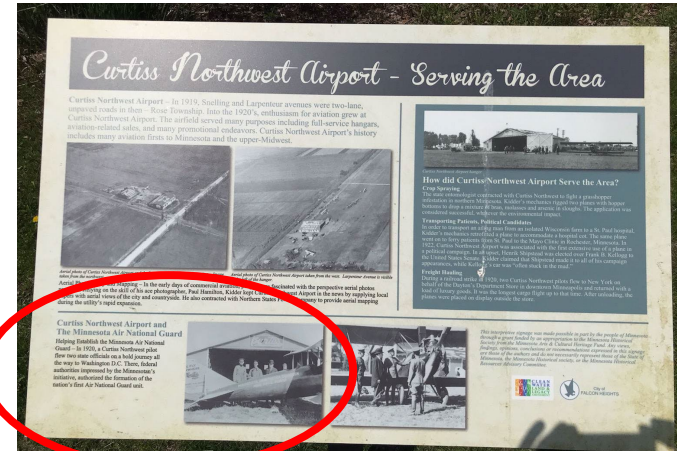
Charles "Speed" Holman – The legendary barnstormer and Northwest Airway's first pilot was an enthusiastic promoter of aviation across the region. In 1924, Curtiss Northwest mechanics helped him prepare his Thomas-Morse Scout biplane to compete in the Nation Air Race at Dayton, Ohio. Holman finished second, adding to his growing reputation. St. Paul's downtown airport is named for him.

This interpretive signage was made possible in part by the people of Minnesota through a grant funded by an appropriation to the Minnesota Historical Society from the Minnesota Arts & Cultural Heritage Fund. Any views, findings, opinions, conclusions or recommendations expressed in this signage are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the State of Minnesota, the Minnesota Historical Society, or the Minnesota Historical Resources Advisory Committee.



Placard highlighting Air Service

- Miller pictured but not named.
- Much more to the story
 - Godfather of Air National Guard
 - Pioneer for MN Aviation
 - Championed Northwest Airlines and the Mpls International Airport



Curtiss Northwest Airport and The Minnesota Air National Guard

Helping Establish the Minnesota Air National Guard – In 1920, a Curtiss Northwest pilot flew two state officials on a bold journey all the way to Washington D.C. There, federal authorities impressed by the Minnesotan's initiative, authorized the formation of the nation's first Air National Guard unit.



Proposed Monument at Curtiss Field



- Monument above was recently dedicated on base at the 133d Airlift Wing
- Cost: ~ \$6000, funded by MN Air National Guard Museum and Sponsors
- Professionally designed to withstand elements with zero maintenance



Proposed Monument Placements



Possible monument locations

Plaque proposal

- Plaque manufactured in bronze relief
- Relief photo of Capt Miller and Lt Col Garris in front of Curtiss Oriole aircraft (top 2/3 of plaque)
- Proposed inscription (bottom 1/3 of plaque):

September 26, 1920: Captain Ray S. Miller of the Minnesota National Guard piloted a Curtiss Oriole biplane from this site. He led a daring and bold 8-day journey to Washington D.C. to lobby military and congressional leaders for military aviation funding.

This mission established the 109th Observation Squadron, the first federally recognized aviation unit in the National Guard, effective January 17, 1921.

Currently known as the 109th Airlift Squadron, the unit is part of the 133rd Airlift Wing (Minnesota Air National Guard) and is based at Minneapolis/St. Paul International Airport.

With numerous successes and promotions, Brigadier General Ray Miller was considered a the godfather of the Air National Guard. He was also a pioneer of early civil aviation, was the first Chief Pilot of Northwest Airlines, and also founded and dedicated Wold-Chamberlain Airport (modern day MSP International Airport).

Dedicated on September 27, 2020 by the 133rd Airlift Wing, in recognition of the 100th Anniversary of the inaugural flight



Monument Dedication Ceremony

- Dedication and kick-off for the Centennial celebration.
- **Saturday, September 26, 2020**
- Invites:
 - Community members
 - Local and State officials
 - Television and Print media
 - Minnesota History Center
 - General Public



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Questions?