



■ Lindbergh Terminal, 1962

Lindbergh Turns 50

We take a look back at air travel and the Lindbergh Terminal as the ever-expanding building celebrates its golden anniversary.



BY AMANDA FRETHEIM GATES

WHEN WE THINK ABOUT AIR TRAVEL IN THE 1960s, it's hard not to imagine *Mad Men's* Don Draper and Roger Sterling wearing suits and ties, sipping whiskey and lighting up a cigarette while flying the friendly skies. In fact, this isn't too far from the truth. In the '60s, flying was expensive and considered a prestigious way to travel. Case in point: When the Lindbergh Terminal opened in 1962, it had a formal, white-linen-crystal-stemware dining room and a ticket to Chicago cost more than \$300.

Times have changed. We wear yoga pants and drink Caribou Coffee on flights. And no matter what we think, we pay way less for a ticket than someone like Don Draper ever did. Air travel and our airport have come a long way. The Lindbergh Terminal (Terminal 1) has served us very well—so well in fact that *Travel + Leisure* readers recently named MSP the country's best airport. To learn more about the last 50 years, we sat down with Metropolitan Airports Commission Executive Director Jeff

Hamiel. Not only is Hamiel the second-longest tenured airport executive in the country (soon he'll be the longest), but as a teenager, he spent time at the old terminal and watched the Lindbergh being built. "I remember the fundamental assets we had before we built the terminal building and I can remember the size of the building we had compared to the gigantic space the new terminal building was taking up; it was the biggest construction project I had ever seen as a young person."



■ The airport before 1962



■ Lindbergh Terminal, 1976

In the early days, Minnesota aviation had a huge supporter in Governor Harold Stassen, who served the state from 1939-1943. He was one of the first visionaries to suggest a large system of airports throughout the country, and he thought Minneapolis-St. Paul was the perfect central location for stops during cross-country and European or Asian flights. "This guy had a vision way beyond what anyone else thought," says Hamiel. "He set a tone. That's how we created the Airport Commission in 1943 and how we developed the concept of the MSP Airport and the smaller suburban airports."

The Lindbergh Terminal was designed between 1958 and 1960 and completed construction and opened to the public in 1962. "This was an important time in aviation history," says Hamiel. "During the war years it became pretty clear that long-range, high-speed, transcontinental travel could be accomplished safely. The whole war enter-

prise elevated that technology to a level of reliability to where it was safe and it was clear that air transportation was going to be the way to travel."

The Lindbergh Terminal (named after legendary Minnesota pilot Charles Lindbergh) opened on Jan. 21, 1962. It covered 600,000 square feet and had two piers, B and C. The "pier" concept (now called concourses) was a new idea. "Passengers used to have to walk on the tarmac, unprotected, for hundreds of yards to get to their plane," says Hamiel. "This new technology with the new terminal allowed for ground loading or pulling up to the gate." In 1962, passengers still boarded from the ground, but the walk? Not so far.

The Lindbergh Terminal was projected to serve 4 million passengers a year by 1975; in actuality, it served more than 4 million just five years after opening. Air travel expanded considerably when companies started offering programs like United's 12-21 Club. The



■ Security checkpoint, 1976

"I doubt the architect who designed this building in 1958 ever expected it to evolve into what it is today. While it's busy, it's not congested and because it's spread out the way it is, people find they can navigate it easily."



■ Northwest Orient ticket counter, 1962



■ Lindbergh Mall, 1996

12-21 Club catered to kids under 22 years of age, letting them fly anywhere for half price. "That was the beginning of trying to competitively price tickets so more ordinary people could afford to fly," Hamiel says. "United's philosophy was if we can get young people to think of flying as a means of transportation, as they grow older they'll become users of the system."

But the biggest change to the airline industry came in 1978 with the Airline Deregulation Act. Before 1978, the government controlled who could fly, where they could fly and what they could charge. After 1978, anyone could fly any route, any time, in any plane and charge whatever they wanted. This welcomed new startup companies (Southwest was one) that decided to take on large, relatively inefficient carriers

like United. "Lots of us thought in 1978 it would take about 5 years for all of this to sift through and we'd be left with about three major airline companies," Hamiel says. "But we still see consolidations happening today, 30-plus years later. Consolidation builds strength for the company to survive in a competitive world, but too much merging reduces

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TIMELINE

1920 Established as Speedway Field (renamed Wold-Chamberlain Field in 1923)

1926 Northwest Airways buys its only hangar

1929 Passenger service begins

1948 Renamed Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport

1958 Breaks ground on Lindbergh Terminal

1962 Lindbergh Terminal opens

1969 Begins service to Europe

1970 First baggage carousels and first parking ramp added

1984 Delta launches service at MSP

1978 Airline Deregulation Act opens the airline industry to free enterprise

2001 New Humphrey Terminal opens

2008 Delta acquires Northwest

2010 The airport's \$3.2 billion expansion completed; more improvements are scheduled for the coming years



■ Airport entrance, 1960s

the competitive choice for the flier. I think deregulation has been a good thing for the most part for air travelers. We would not have 138 nonstop destinations out of MSP today. We wouldn't have become a 'hub'.

As air travel became more accessible and continued to grow, the MSP Airport and the Lindbergh Terminal continued to reap the rewards and grow. At one time, MSP was the home of four local airline companies, includ-

ing Northwest, Republic and Sun Country. "We had a lot of air service here," Hamiel says. "We ended up being a great place to connect through. Prices started to come down. Because we had so many pilots, mechanics and flight attendants in town, a lot of those people bought single-engine planes and owned hangers in the suburbs."

The Lindbergh Terminal needed to grow with the industry. It expanded Concourse G in 1986 and added the airport's first moving walkway. That same year, Northwest and Republic merged to become the country's fourth largest carrier. Then in 1990, the Airports Commission had to give a hard look at the location and whether there was enough room to continue to expand. While the Met Council studied other locations within the seven-county metro area to move the airport (they settled on acreage in Hastings), the commission came up with a plan to stay. Between 1998 and 2010, the \$3.2 billion "MSP 2010 Plan" expanded Concourse C and added two new concourses, more parking, two tram systems and new concessions (not to mention the new 10-gate Humphrey building next door). While Lindbergh had



■ Today, tram entrance (left), A-B Rotunda (right) and the Mall (below).

fewer than 70 gates before this expansion, it now offers 115 gates.

One of the reasons MSP lands on the "best airports" lists so frequently is the amenities offered, including the more than 50 restaurants and more than 50 shops housed within the airport, and the open, airy feeling of the rotunda and the mall. "People have a choice on where they connect, and you want people to pick your airport over another," says Patrick Hogan, director of public affairs and marketing. "The more people we have connect here, the more flights we can offer to the community. Also airports don't receive any money from state taxes. We have to generate the money to exist. As the airlines have been struggling, airports have been looking for

non-aeronautical revenues, like parking—which is a \$75 million business for us every year—and concessions."

But sitting on just 3,200 acres (and surrounded by houses), the airport has no more room to expand. After the airport's current 2030 plan, which further expands concourses, parking and tram service, it will be as large as it can be. "We're reaching capacity, but the capacity with the current figuration will take us beyond 50 million passengers a year; today we're at 34 million," says Hamiel. "I doubt the architect who designed this building in 1958 ever expected it to evolve into what it is today. While it's busy, it's not congested and because it's spread out the way it is, people find they can navigate it easily."



The past several years have been tough on the airline industry and the MSP Airport is no exception. It saw its hometown airline, Northwest, file for bankruptcy and then merge with Delta in the late 2000s, and after that the bottom fell out of business and leisure travel in the fourth quarter of 2010. But Hamiel says he's seeing about 1.5 percent annual growth, which is very promising.

"Growth that's slow and steady is better than the spikes that collapse because it's not sustainable," he says. "We're building a stronger foundation that the house can stand on. The decision to stall or slow the growth of an airport is the decision to stall the economy of our region. This thing is an economic engine. As long as the airport is healthy and growing, to meet the growing needs of business and leisure travelers, we'll have a vivacious, healthy economy in our region. I happen to believe the airport is just one little piece of why Minnesota has such a diverse economy." ■

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MSP AIRPORT	1962	2012
Lindbergh size (square feet)	600,000	2.8 million
People served per day	14,000	80,000 (120,000 capacity)
Airlines	Served seven airlines	13 (of those from 1962, only United remains)
Concourses	two (called "piers")	seven
Parking	First ramp (built in 1970) had 1,100 spaces	16,000 spaces
Concessions	Dining room, coffee shop and snack bar	50 restaurants