

## Norfolk International Airport History

As early as 1903, Hampton Roads was making a connection with aviation. The Virginian-Pilot based in Norfolk, Va. was one of the first newspapers in the country to publish an eyewitness account of the Wright Brothers' historic first flight.

### **1920s**

In 1926, Norfolk citizens flew commercially for the first time on the Mitten Line, operated by Philadelphia Rapid Transit Air Service, Inc. Round-trip service to Washington and Philadelphia was available only a few months before high costs forced its discontinuance. In 1929, Ben Epstein, a veteran World War I flyer, started an air taxi service between Norfolk and Richmond from his airfield on Granby Street in Norfolk. That same year, the Luddington Line began the first daily scheduled service from Epstein's field to Washington, D.C. Far from today's routine business travel, a flight in 1929 was an occasion for family, friends, photographs and fine clothes. Women dressed in their finest climbed aboard the 10-passenger Fokker Trimotor and men followed in their broad brimmed hats. A week later, Eddie Rickenbacker's booming Eastern Airlines made its first appearance in Norfolk with twice daily round trips to Richmond, Va.

### **1930s**

Commercial air travel hit a snag in 1932 when the Navy opposed the expansion of the Granby Street field because of its proximity to flying operations at Norfolk Naval Air Station. Commercial air flight operations moved to Glenrock Airport, but in 1932, the Great Depression had taken its effects on aviation and all commercial flights were suspended indefinitely. Norfolk was ground bound for the next five years.

In 1938, city-owned Truxton Manor Golf Course was converted to Norfolk Municipal Airport, complete with a 3,500-foot runway. This site would become southern Tidewater's permanent home of commercial air travel. Penn Central Airlines (now United Airlines) used a renovated clubhouse for a passenger terminal. The first permanent terminal was complete by 1940.

### **1940s**

With World War II, Norfolk Municipal Airport became a vital resource to the war effort. The Army Air Corps assumed control of airport operations between 1942 -1947, extending the runway and adding two more to handle the vastly increased number of flights with larger and larger aircraft. As the troops returned from the war, the Army Air Corps returned the Airport to the city's domain, and commercial travel took off with two new airlines providing regular flights.

In 1948, Piedmont Airlines initiated flights. That same year, ground was broken for a larger, more modern terminal building.

### **1950s**

By the early 1950s, there were more daily flights in Norfolk than New York's La Guardia Airport. In 1950, responsibility for the airport was turned over to the newly established Norfolk

Port and Industrial Authority (NPIA) which could proudly call Norfolk Municipal Airport one of the finest in the nation and one of the busiest. In 1951, the new terminal was officially dedicated.

### **1960s**

In the 1960s, the transition from propeller driven aircraft to jets gathered full steam. Norfolk Municipal Airport took on the new demands for longer and stronger runway and taxiway facilities easily, and jetliners here became the rule, not the exception. As a result, in 1968, the Airport was officially recognized as the air transportation center for the entire Hampton Roads region, and became known as Norfolk Regional Airport. To prepare for exponential growth over the next three decades, NPIA developed a comprehensive master plan that would move the airport into the 21st century in full stride.

### **1970s**

In 1974, the Airport dedicated its new, state-of-the-art terminal and additional land was secured for further expansion. In 1976, the Airport's name was changed to Norfolk International Airport with the addition of Federal Customs facilities. New outbuildings housing the fire station, maintenance depot, ATC tower and more were also planned and came on line as needed. However, one of the challenges in expanding was capitalizing on the location of the Airport's neighboring Botanical Garden, creating a beautiful buffer zone between the Airport and the outside world. Norfolk International Airport, surrounded by year-round beauty, has become a national role model for reconciling expanding air facilities and a delicate ecological sanctuary.

### **1980s**

In the 1980s, many changes were taking place. A new general aviation facility opened and a new air cargo terminal was completed for all operations. Parking facilities were also expanded. Even the name of the supervising body changed in 1988 - from Norfolk Port and Industrial Authority to Norfolk Airport Authority.

### **1990s**

Changes continued throughout the 1990s as Norfolk International prepared for growth. The air cargo terminal and parking facilities expanded and public areas of the passenger terminal were renovated. In 1991, Norfolk International completed a new concourse extension comprised of 10 additional gates, for a total of 24 gates. A new state-of-the-art fire station and new FAA air traffic control tower facility also began operation.

To take advantage of the ever-changing computer age, Norfolk International was the first airport to develop an official web site in August 1994, and new Internet access booths were installed to let travelers plug in and log on for e-mail, banking, business, or reservations.

### **2000+**

The Norfolk Airport Authority continues the master plan process to pave Norfolk International's way for the next 30 years. The Airport's largest capital improvement project, Arrival 2002, was completed in June 2002. The \$133 million project included a new 243,000-square-foot arrivals building with an automated baggage handling system; a 2,850-space covered parking garage; runway and taxiway rehabilitation and upgrades; main terminal lobby refurbishment; and a new

food/beverage and retail concession program. Future expansion of long-term parking, air cargo and general aviation facilities in addition to the construction of an additional runway are key elements to the Airport's master plan. All of these improvements have been designed and carefully scheduled to become a reality before the need is critical.

## **Norfolk International Airport Historic Highlights**

### **April 7, 1938**

The present Airport site opened with Penn Central (now United Airlines) providing the first air service. The facility was named Norfolk Municipal Airport.

### **March 3, 1940**

The first terminal was dedicated.

### **1942 -1947**

During World War II, the U.S. Army Air Corps assumed command of the Airport.

### **October 1947**

The Airport was returned to the city by the U.S. Army Air Corps.

### **July 1, 1948**

Norfolk Port and Industrial Authority (NPIA) was created.

### **May 1, 1949**

NPIA given "supervision" of the operation and maintenance of the Airport.

### **January 1, 1950**

NPIA received full responsibility for the operation of the Airport.

### **May 5, 1951**

What is now the International Terminal was dedicated, then serving as the primary passenger terminal facility.

### **1968**

Name changed to Norfolk Regional Airport.

### **October 6, 1970**

City conveyed Airport title to NPIA.

### **January 18, 1974**

New state-of-the-art terminal building was dedicated by local dignitaries and national celebrities.

**January 21, 1974**

Flight operations commenced in the new terminal buildings by the airlines.

**January 19, 1976**

Name officially changed to Norfolk International Airport due to availability of federal inspection facilities; the International Terminal facility dedicated.

**February 1, 1983**

New FBO (general aviation facilities) opened by the Airport.

**January 1, 1985**

New air cargo terminal opened for all operations.

**October 1, 1986**

Phase I of Airport Parking garage opened.

**April 4, 1988**

Name of supervising body officially changed from Norfolk Port and Industrial Authority to Norfolk Airport Authority.

**April 7, 1988**

Norfolk International Airport celebrated its 50th anniversary.

**May 1, 1988**

Cargo terminal Phase II completed.

**October 1, 1990**

Phase II of Airport parking garage completed.

**June 1991**

Expansion of concourse B is completed, adding 10 gates.

**June 1992**

Refurbishing of public areas of passenger terminal completed.

**August 1993**

New fire station completed, boasting leading edge aviation industry standards.

**January 22, 1995**

New FAA air traffic control tower facility began operation.

**August 1996**

New field maintenance facility completed to house snow removal and maintenance equipment, as well as field maintenance personnel.

**January 1, 1998**

Airport begins celebration of 60 years of service to Hampton Roads.

**August 2000**

Airport completes new retail and food/beverage concessions program; New fire training facility opens, complete with leading edge emergency preparedness equipment and systems.

**August 2001**

Main terminal lobby refurbishment completed.

**June 27, 2002**

Arrivals terminal and parking garage dedicated.

**July 1, 2002**

New arrivals terminal complex opens to the public.