~~MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT~~
WOLD-CHAMBERLAIN FIELD
Minneapolis
Hennepin County
Minnesota

HABS No. MN-158

HABS
MINN
27-MINAP,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
Great Lakes Systems Office
1709 Jackson Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68102-2571

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

~~MINNEAPOLIS-ST. PAUL INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT~~
WOLD-CHAMBERLAIN FIELD

HABS No. MN-158

For information about individual structures at the Wold-Chamberlain Field site, see:

HABS No. MN-158-A Wold-Chamberlain Field, Universal Airlines Hangar
HABS No. MN-158-B Wold-Chamberlain Field, Northwest Municipal Hangar
HABS No. MN-158-C Wold-Chamberlain Field, Minneapolis-Honeywell Hangar
HABS No. MN-158-D Wold-Chamberlain Field, Administration Building
HABS No. MN-158-E Wold-Chamberlain Field, Army Transport Command Hangar (Naval Air Reserve Hangar)

Location: Minneapolis, Hennepin County, Minnesota

Construction Dates: 1928-1942

Present Owner: Metropolitan Airports Commission
6040 28th Avenue South, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Present Use: Office and storage space

Significance: The buildings of the Original Wold-Chamberlain Terminal Historic District at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport served as the center of the facility's operations from the 1920s until 1962. Built over a period of fourteen years, the buildings reflect three distinct periods in the growth of the airport before the dawn of the jet age: early development, expansion, and wartime buildup.

Project Information: The historic district was identified by Hess, Roise and Company during an historic/architectural survey of the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. The Federal Aviation Administration and the State Historic Preservation Office concurred that the district was eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. The survey was completed during preparation of the airport's long-term comprehensive plan. The plan found no feasible or prudent alternative to avoid the demolition of some or all of the properties in the historic district to accommodate necessary growth at the land-locked airport. To carry out its responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the Federal Aviation Administration entered into a Programmatic Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Officer, and the Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC), with a number of concurring parties. The agreement contained two provisions related to the historic district. MAC

agreed to offer the Smithsonian Institution and the Minnesota Historical Society the opportunity to select architectural elements or historical objects from any of the contributing structures in the historic district for curation and display. Both organizations declined the offer. The agreement also stipulated that the historic district be documented to the standards of the Historic American Buildings Survey. MAC retained Hess, Roise and Company to prepare this report to comply with that stipulation. Mark Ryan oversaw the project for MAC. Charlene Roise served as principal investigator for Hess Roise. Cynthia de Miranda was senior historian with primary responsibility for writing and managing the report's production. Denis Gardner was research historian for the project. Ann Gaasch provided clerical assistance.

OVERVIEW

Wold-Chamberlain Field, which holds the runways for the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport, has regularly served as a landing field since about 1919. Since the erection of the first hangar in that year, construction has been a nearly constant activity at the field. Developments in the aeronautical industry generally dictated the type and timing of building projects. Both from the air and from the ground, the airport and its facilities have evolved to fit the constantly changing technological and commercial needs of the field.

The buildings in the original terminal district at Wold-Chamberlain Field reflect three early eras in the growth of the airport. The earliest phase of development was marked by the erection of hangars by private groups on land leased from the airport's owner. During this period, the potential of aviation was envisioned, and efforts were begun to establish the industry. Two sections of the Universal Airlines Hangar (HABS No. MN-158-A, demolished in 1995) were erected at the end of this initial period of growth in the 1920s.

As the industry grew throughout the 1920s and 1930s, planes evolved into larger aircraft, prompting an expansion period characterized by larger buildings erected with public financing. This expansion period was officially inaugurated by the dedication of the Administration Building (HABS No. MN-158-D) in 1930 and was epitomized by the municipally funded Northwest Municipal Hangar (HABS No. MN-158-B), built in 1939 to maintain Northwest Airlines' new state-of-the-art planes. That hangar's construction allowed the company to remain competitive with other airlines and ultimately become one of the nation's largest air carriers.

The entry of the United States in World War II dramatically changed activities at the airport, resulting in more new structures and different uses for existing facilities. Two hangars depict this era. The Minneapolis-Honeywell Hangar (HABS No. MN-158-C) is an excellent example of the public-private partnerships produced by the war. The Army Transport Command Center (HABS No. MN-158-E), built by the military, reflects the extensive activity undertaken at the airport by the armed forces during World War II.

SITE DESCRIPTION

The original terminal complex at Wold-Chamberlain Field edges the east side of 34th Avenue South in Minneapolis. Once a through street, 34th Avenue is now cut off by airport runways on both ends. It is accessed by a fragment of 62nd Street, which runs perpendicularly to the west. The area also includes a military complex west of 34th Avenue, now occupied by the Naval Air Reserve and the Marine Corps Reserve. The entire area is within the boundaries of the city of Minneapolis in Hennepin County, Minnesota.[1]

Four buildings make up the complex today; a fifth, the Universal Airlines Hangar, was demolished in 1995 (HABS No. MN-158-A). At the north end of the 34th Avenue fragment stands the Northwest Municipal Hangar (HABS No. MN-158-B), erected in 1939 and expanded with complementary additions throughout the 1940s. The building overlooks the street to the west and the airfield to the east. The west and south sides of the hangar are obscured by the two-story, flat-roofed brick structure that housed offices and shops. Industrial sash windows with concrete sills fill much of the walls of the brick building. The windows and the flat metal cornice that stretches across the roofline provide most of the building's decoration. A formal personnel entry near the south end of the west facade is articulated by four engaged concrete columns, triangular in section, supporting an oversized concrete lintel.

Barely visible above the roof of the brick section is the low gable of the attached steel-frame hangar, oriented to airport runways to the east. Sliding hangar doors fill the aircraft entry in the east wall. A small rectangular notch cut into the gable end over the center of the doorway allows tail clearance for the larger planes that have come into use since the hangar's construction. The building's north wall displays a narrow brick base with a large, multiple-light industrial steel-sash window spanning most of the facade. Above the window is corrugated metal siding. A metal stringcourse separates the window from the sheathing above, and a matching cornice finishes the edge of the roof-wall junction on this side. The building is connected by a skyway and an enclosed first-floor passageway to the Minneapolis-Honeywell Hangar (HABS No. MN-158-C) immediately to the south.

Bands of industrial sash fill the lower portion of the Minneapolis-Honeywell Hangar's north, west, and south walls. Corrugated metal sheathes the steel-framed building above the windows. Buff-colored brick towers pierced with glass-block windows mark the building's four corners. Entryways from 34th Avenue in the northwest and southwest corner towers are outlined by courses of projecting brick headers topped with scalloped concrete trim. The east facade, like that of the Northwest Municipal Hangar, holds the massive hangar doors for the building's aircraft entry, bordered on either side by brick towers painted white. Multiple-light,

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[1] The description is based on a site survey completed by the authors in March 1997 and on engineering and architectural drawings kept at the offices of the Metropolitan Airports Commission in Minneapolis.

fixed-sash windows extend across the panels of the two lifting doors. A two-story brick and concrete-block addition projects south from the southeast corner of the hangar.

The lot south of the Minneapolis-Honeywell Hangar is occupied by the Administration Building (HABS No. MN-158-D), erected in 1930 and altered many times since. The walls of the building feature projecting stringcourses and some patterned brickwork. A low parapet topped by a row of angled brick and concrete coping hides the building's flat roof. The earliest version of the building was two stories tall and rectangular in plan, its long north-south axis paralleling the taxiway to the east. A central three-story section, which matched the original design, was added in 1939 along with a new single-story addition encircling the entire first story of the original building. The addition expanded the building to the north and south and contributed a rounded projecting entrance to the airfield side. In 1944, the third floor was extended over the remaining section of the second-floor roof; the light-colored siding of these sections contrasts with the building's red-brown brick walls.

Today, the Streamline Moderne design of the west facade is mostly obscured by an arched-roof addition from 1946, meant to be a temporary measure to relieve overcrowding in the building. The addition, created from two relocated hangars placed end to end, is edged with a wide canopy that extended over the sidewalk and ran along the west side of the addition. Now partly infilled to provide more office space, the canopy rests on squared columns that flare toward the top. Walls are covered with painted tongue-and-groove wood siding. A two-story addition extending to the south was built in 1957.

To the south and west of the buildings aligned on 34th Avenue South is the Army Transport Command Hangar (HABS No. MN-158-E), erected in 1942. The steel-framed, arched-roof hangar is lined with one- and two-story concrete-block shops and offices on its north and south sides. These low extensions display irregular fenestration consisting of personnel doors, garage doors, and industrial steel-sash windows. Above, in the concrete-block walls of the hangar, a large band of industrial steel-sash windows stretches across the length of the building, admitting light to the interior hangar space.

The hangar is distinguished from others in the complex by having hangar doors on both the east and west sides, allowing aircraft to pass through the building. The massive sliding pocket doors are framed on either end by towers that hold the door panels when the entry is open. Above the doors, metal siding sheathes the arched wall plain that follows the profile of the bowstring trusses supporting the roof. A flat metal cornice finishes all roof edges on the hangar.

Non-contributing buildings in the district include the air control tower (built southeast of the Administration Building in 1962 and expanded in 1995); the fire rescue station (erected next door in 1965); and the Zantop Hangar at 6401 34th Avenue South (built around 1941). An electrical facility replaced the Universal Airlines Hangar (HABS No. MN-158-A) in 1995.

HISTORY OF WOLD-CHAMBERLAIN FIELD

Early Airport Development

The development of the air transportation industry generally echoed that of the only slightly older automobile industry. This was quite literally the case at the site that would eventually become the landing field for the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. In 1915, local enthusiasts of the Indianapolis 500 racetrack dreamed of bringing a similar spectacle to Minnesota. Investors transformed a farm field straddling the southern border of the city of Minneapolis into the Twin City Motor Speedway. The facility featured a two-mile elliptical concrete track, a grandstand, service and administration buildings, and parking lots. Of the fourteen cars that lined up for the first 500-mile contest on September 4, 1915, only six managed to finish. The concrete Twin City track, intended to rival the brick-lined Indy 500 raceway, was rough on cars. Minnesota's climate soon made evident additional problems, as the pavement buckled under the stress of the harsh winters. The United States' entry into World War I also drew attention and resources away from automobile racing. Ultimately, the financial rewards anticipated by the investors failed to materialize, and the speedway closed after the American Red Cross Auto Derby in July 1917.[2]

That same year, Dunwoody Institute in Minneapolis became the Navy's first inland aeronautical training school in the United States. In its two years of operation, the school provided ground training for about 5,000 men and helped focus attention on the potential military and economic benefits of aviation. Meanwhile, a group of prominent Minneapolis businessmen formed the Aero Club of Minneapolis to assist in recruiting and training local men for aviation activities in World War I. The Aero Club energetically promoted aviation activities at home as well, dropping pamphlets and membership information on the city from

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[2] The airport's early history is outlined in Theodore Wirth, "Aviation—The Municipal Airport (Wold-Chamberlain Field) 1917-1945," in *Minneapolis Park System: Retrospective Glimpses into the History of the Board of Park Commissioners of Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the City's Park, Parkway, and Playground System* (Minneapolis: Minneapolis Park Board, 1945), 293-316; and in Noel E. Allard and Gerald N. Sandvick, *Minnesota Aviation History 1857-1945* (Chaska, Minn.: MAHB Publishing, 1993). Other information was obtained from the following manuscript sources, located in the Manuscripts Collection of the Minnesota Historical Society in St. Paul: Minnesota State Aeronautics Department, "Selection of a Site for Airport: Findings," circa 1937; Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners, "Short History of the Minneapolis Municipal Airport (Wold-Chamberlain Field) and Memorandum of the Principal Official Transactions from its Inception up to the Present Time," typescript, January 25, 1930; Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners, "Short History of the Minneapolis Municipal Airport (Wold-Chamberlain Field) and Memorandum of the Principal Official Transactions from its Inception up to the Present Time—Supplement," typescript, September 23, 1937. See also John Nyberg, "'Growing Pains' is Wold Disease," *Minneapolis Star*, March 13, 1953.

the air. Within a six-month period in 1917, the number of Minneapolitans holding a pilot's license soared from a few to eighty-six.[3]

The war's end in November 1918 enabled the Aero Club to shift its focus entirely to commercial aviation activities. Services provided by local entrepreneurs—flight instruction, cargo flights, and sight-seeing tours—originated from a variety of sites throughout the Twin Cities. Late in 1919, the Aero Club began advocating for the establishment of a single designated flying field that would be recognized by the federal government. By this time, St. Paul businessmen had joined the club, which reorganized in 1920 as the Twin City Aero Corporation. The group leased the old Twin City Motor Speedway and began to promote it as the ideal site for a landing field.[4]

In April 1920, local aviation enthusiasts realized a previously elusive goal when Congress established an air mail route from the Twin Cities to Chicago. By August, the Aero Corporation had erected a wood-frame hangar for the service in the northwest quarter of the old race track. The route was plagued with crashes, however, and was suspended in June 1921 after losing four pilots and eight planes. Northwest Airways (now Northwest Airlines) later took over the hangar upon receiving a contract in 1926 from the U.S. Post Office to revive the Chicago-Twin Cities mail route.[5]

"Speedway Field" saw more construction throughout the 1920s. The Minnesota legislature appropriated $45,000 for three wood-frame hangars along the north edge of the field in 1921. The hangars housed airplanes furnished by the federal government for use by the 109th Observation Squadron, the nation's first Air National Guard unit. Local businessmen erected a hangar in 1928 at the field's north end to shelter the newly established Naval Reserve Aviation Base. Also in 1928, Universal Airlines built two hangars (HABS No. MN-158-A) east of 34th Avenue to house a passenger terminal and flying school in addition to sheltering its fleet.[6]

The 1920s also saw the field's official dedication as Wold-Chamberlain, a name that honored Ernest G. Wold and Cyrus Chamberlain, local aviators killed in aerial combat during World

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[3] Wirth, 294.

[4] Wirth, 296-297.

[5] Ibid.

[6] The Naval Reserve took over the 109th's hangars when the Air National Guard moved to St. Paul in 1931; see Nyberg, "Growing Pains." In 1949, two of the three hangars were moved across the field to form an addition to the Administration Building (HABS No. MN-158-D). For more on the development of the military presence, see Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners, "Short History," 1-4; and State Aeronautics Department, 7. The development of Universal Air Lines is chronicled in Allard and Sandvick, 132, 178-179. The Universal Air Lines Hangars were later combined into a single structure, which was demolished in 1995.

War I. The field was dedicated on July 10, 1923, and 7,000 spectators came to watch air races and competitions staged along with the dedication.[7]

Despite the steady development experienced at Wold-Chamberlain throughout the 1920s, businessmen from the capital city withdrew their support and established Holman Field near downtown St. Paul. The Aero Corporation continued to operate Wold-Chamberlain until the city of Minneapolis purchased the field in 1928. The city's acquisition was made possible by enabling legislation passed by the state in 1927 allowing municipal ownership of airfields. The legislation had been encouraged by the energetic lobbying of local business interests and by famed aviator Charles Lindbergh, who landed at the field in August 1927 on a nationwide tour to promote airport development. The Minneapolis Park Board became responsible for the airport's management on behalf of the city and guided the field through its next sixteen years of growth.[8]

Expansion Period

When the park board acquired Wold-Chamberlain Field, the board's most influential superintendent, Theodore Wirth, was in the twenty-first year of what would be a thirty-year tenure. Most of the hallmarks of the Minneapolis park system had been developed under Wirth's direction, including the Chain of Lakes, Minnehaha Parkway, and Lyndale Rose Garden in south Minneapolis, and Victory Memorial Drive at the north end of the city. "Under Mr. Wirth's leadership," the *Minneapolis Tribune* would report in 1935, "the Minneapolis Park system achieved national fame, and he has achieved national recognition as a park planner and executive." Even in his lifetime, Wirth was "known to all Minneapolitans as 'father of the parks.'"[9]

Wold-Chamberlain Field still looked more like a racetrack than an airfield when the park board began managing the facility. The concrete oval that had served as the raceway still outlined the landing area. Hangars and other structures were scattered around the field, particularly along the perimeter of the old racetrack. By the end of 1928, Wirth had a plan to develop the field and transform Wold-Chamberlain into an A-1-A airport, the highest rating the Commerce Department could bestow upon a field.[10]

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[7] Katherine Spear, "Minnesota's the Airplane Center of All America Now," *St. Paul Daily News*, July 8, 1923; Karl D. Bremer, *America's North Coast Gateway: Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport* (Encino, Calif.: Josten's Publishing Group, 1993), 15.

[8] Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners, "Short History," 2-3; State Aeronautics Department, 7.

[9] "Veteran Given Honorary Post After 35 Years," *Minneapolis Tribune*, June 20, 1935; "Wirth, Park System 'Dad,' to Leave City," *Minneapolis Tribune*, October 8, 1946.

[10] Allard and Sandvick, 125; Tom Haberkorn, et. al., "Minneapolis-St. Paul Metropolitan Airports Commission History," typescript, copy in possession of Metropolitan Airports Commission, viii-1.

Although a preliminary scheme drafted by Wirth in 1927 indicates little more development than four intersecting runways, his 1928 version is an elegant, park-like design. Wirth's plan showed 60th Street and 34th Avenue, the field's north and west boundaries, as broad, tree-lined boulevards. Runways were bounded to the east by 46th Avenue and to the south by 66th Street. The main entrance to the field, on 34th Avenue at 63rd Street, was marked by a formally landscaped plaza flanked by surface parking lots, and a circular drive led to the site of a future administration building. Smaller landscaped squares north and south of the building site set it off from hangars and other utilitarian structures at the airfield. With city streets to its west and the airfield to its east, the proposed building would serve as a gateway between land and air travel.[11]

The plan accommodated existing hangars, including those Universal Air Lines had built in 1928: one to the north of the administration building site and two to the south (HABS No. MN-158-A). Lots for future free-standing hangars edged the west side of the field. Three hangars of the 109th Air Squadron, the U.S. Naval Reserve Hangar, and the Municipal Maintenance Building were shown south of 60th Street between 37th and 40th Avenues. An unnamed hangar stood near 42nd Avenue and 61st Street, bringing the young airport's total hangar count to eight, housing fifty-eight airplanes by the end of 1928. The park board established a policy of retaining ownership of the land and leasing lots to companies or other entities, which then erected hangars at their own expense.[12]

In addition to upgrading the facility, Wirth's design responded to a pastime that already enjoyed great popularity: watching planes come and go at the airfield. Drawing from his wealth of experience creating public park spaces, Wirth pictured an airport complete with spaces to accommodate sightseers as well as travelers. His plans included landscaping the field as a public space and erecting a warming house and concession stands for use by visitors.[13]

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[11] Theodore Wirth, "Preliminary Survey and Suggestive Plan for the Acquisition and Improvement of a Municipal Airport at the Wold Chamberlain Field," July 18, 1927, in collection of Noel Allard, Chaska, Minnesota; Theodore Wirth, A. E. Berthe, and Harold W. Lathrop, "The Present Plan for the Development of Minneapolis Municipal Airport, Wold-Chamberlain Field," November 1928. Prepared for the Minneapolis Park Board of Commissioners and published the same year in the board's *Forty-sixth Annual Report,* 64-66 and fold-out map.

[12] Wirth, Berthe, and Lathrop, *Present Plan.* The unnamed hangar was apparently the old municipal hangar, which was leased by Northwest Airways in the late 1920s, and which was moved several times around the field before being sold in 1940 and moved again, this time to White Bear Lake, a community north of St. Paul; see Allard and Sandvick, 131.

[13] "Park Head Outlines Plans to Improve Municipal Airport," December 6, 1928, newspaper clipping in Wold-Chamberlain folder, Vertical Files, Minneapolis Collection, Minneapolis Public Library; Allard and Sandvick, 130-131.

In order to implement their plans, the park board first had to remove the speedway track—some 14,300 cubic yards of concrete—and level the field, a process that took about four years to complete. The board also recognized the urgent need for the Administration Building (HABS No. MN-158-D) that had been included in the plan. By April 1930, construction of the building had begun, based on the Streamline Moderne designs prepared by Minneapolis architect Harold H. Eads. The plan showed a two-story building consisting of a series of symmetrical rectangular forms articulated by a coping along the edge of the flat roof. As counterpoint to this horizontality, recessed panels with windows and darker trim ran from top to bottom on the west facade. As the Administration Building was developed, city crews built a concrete taxiway in front of the structure. A city water main was extended to the area, the airport's perimeter was fenced, and a lighting system was installed. The more elaborate landscaping plans—including the tree-lined boulevards leading to the airport—were apparently not implemented. The Administration Building was dedicated in September 1930 with festivities featuring famous French transatlantic fliers Dieudonne Coste and Maurice Bellonte.[14]

Also during this period, new hangars and related facilities began occupying vacant lots. The park board suggested that Northwest Airways, which had been leasing the airmail hangar, build a new hangar along 34th Avenue by May 1929. Instead, the airline bought an existing hangar just north of the terminal, one of the three built by Universal Air Lines in 1928. Universal expanded one of its hangars south of the terminal in 1929 (demolished, HABS No. MN-158-A). Skelly Oil Company erected a fueling station south of the Universal hangars in 1930.[15]

Like the field itself, the Administration Building (HABS No. MN-158-D) constantly underwent changes and alterations in order to accommodate the needs of the airport. Most early efforts were focused on rearranging interior space. By 1937, the Board began planning exterior changes as well. A temporary control room was added to the roof of the terminal that year, initiating visual air traffic control. In response to increased pressure for office and other space, the park board drafted plans to more than double the building's size and hoped to get financial assistance for construction from the federal Public Works Administration. The City

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[14] Preliminary elevation for terminal is in possession of Metropolitan Airports Commission in Minneapolis; photographs of elevations and interior of completed terminal are included in Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners, *Forty-eighth Annual Report* (Minneapolis: The Board, 1930), 74, 88-91. Details of work on field are in Wirth, 301-302; and Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners, "Short History," 5-6. Information on opening ceremonies and another photograph of the front elevation are in "Newest Air Heroes Open Minneapolis Airport Building," *Minneapolis: Metropolis of the Northwest*, a magazine produced by the Minneapolis Civic and Commerce Association, 1930, n.p.

[15] Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners, "Short History," 5-6; Wirth, 301.

Council refused to sponsor the application, however, anticipating that the federal government would soon be supplying an even greater level of aid to municipal airports. Interest in aviation continued to grow, spurred by well-publicized feats such as Howard Hughes' record-breaking ninety-one-hour round-the-world trip, which included a refueling stop in Minneapolis. He was serviced at Wold-Chamberlain in only fourteen minutes, the fastest stop on his route.[16]

Developments in the aviation industry during the 1930s created a dilemma on the airfield. Early hangars were too small to house new generations of aircraft, but the airlines claimed an inability to fund erection of the significantly larger facilities required. By 1937, the situation had become particularly acute for Northwest Airlines, which was considering use of larger planes by 1939. The growing airline had subleased the 1928 hangar built by Universal Airlines and later purchased by De Ponti Aviation (demolished, HABS No. MN-158-A) but maintained its headquarters at St. Paul's Holman Field.[17]

In the mid-1930s, the park board began exploring forms of public financing for hangars and related structures, a major change from former policy. By 1939, the board was in the construction business, breaking ground for a municipally-owned hangar designed specifically for lease to Northwest Airlines (HABS No. MN-158-B) in a successful effort to lure Northwest's headquarters to Minneapolis. The steel-framed hangar measured 147'-0" x 130'-0", with a 140'-long, 22'-high door filling its east wall. A two-story administration block was attached to the hangar's south elevation. Northwest's rent was based on amortization of the construction cost over a twenty-year period, plus the standard ground rent. Two years later, a two-story shop and office section was added, covering the structure's street-side elevation and wrapping around the southwest corner. A free-standing boiler house was also erected, which was joined with the hangar by a later expansion.[18]

Also in 1939, the park board finally began implementing its plans to expand the Administration Building (HABS No. MN-158-D). Single-story wings extended the building's length by 105'-0" and its width by 26'-0". A third floor was added, matching the design of the earlier building, with a permanent, glass-enclosed control tower on the roof over the central bay. The new space housed offices, post office operations, seven hotel rooms, a new lunch

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[16] Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners, *Fifty-fifth Annual Report* (Minneapolis: The Board, 1937), 90; and *Fifty-sixth Annual Report* (Minneapolis: The Board, 1938), 13, 89.

[17] Wirth, 306; Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners, *Fifty-ninth Annual Report* (Minneapolis: The Board, 1941), 43.

[18] A floor plan of the hangar showing addition dates appears in "Metropolitan Airports Financial and Statistical History Exhibit," 89-90, at the Manuscripts Collection, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul. Other information is in Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners, *Fifty-sixth Annual Report* (Minneapolis: The Board, 1938), 13-14; *Fifty-seventh Annual Report* (Minneapolis: The Board, 1939), 107; *Fifty-eighth Annual Report* (Minneapolis: The Board, 1940), 66; *Fifty-ninth Annual Report* (Minneapolis: The Board, 1941), 39.

counter, and garages for service equipment. Improvements to roads, sidewalks, and concrete aprons around the terminal and the new hangar were completed with federal Works Projects Administration (WPA) assistance. Also in cooperation with the WPA, runways were paved with concrete for the first time in 1936. Novel methods of rolling snow on the runways rather than pushing it to the sides, which formed barriers to visibility, were developed during this period and received international attention.[19]

Military Presence and World War II

The war dramatically changed activities at the airfield as the federal government and the military took over runways and facilities. A few smaller structures located between the Administration Building (HABS No. MN-158-D) and the new Northwest Municipal Hangar (HABS No. MN-158-B) were moved in 1942 to make room for construction of a hangar for the Minneapolis-Honeywell Regulator Company, the largest commercial hangar at the airport when completed in 1943 (HABS No. MN-158-C). Built by the federal government, the hangar was used by Minneapolis-Honeywell to complete work under a military contract.[20]

Additional air traffic, larger aircraft, and military defense concerns also pointed to expansion of the airport itself into a Class 4 facility, the highest level authorized by the Civil Aeronautics Authority. In 1940, the park board sought acquisition of 240 acres south of 66th Street in Richfield, 105 acres from the Fort Snelling Military Reservation to the east, and 90 acres from Minneapolis to the north, the latter for use by the Navy base. These additions would have doubled the airport's size from about 339 acres to 750 acres. Although the War Department refused to relinquish Fort Snelling land, the field soon grew to 614 acres with the addition of land south of 66th Street.[21]

In 1942, the U.S. Army made the first move west of 34th Avenue when it purchased thirty acres of land south of 62nd Street and built a hangar (HABS No. MN-158-E) to facilitate an

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[19] Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners, *Fifty-seventh Annual Report* (Minneapolis: The Board, 1939), 105-107. The Administration Building continued to undergo alteration, often in the form of temporary additions that have not been removed. See HABS No. MN-158-D for details.

[20] The hangar at 6401 34th Avenue South is not shown in the *1940 Atlas of the City of Minneapolis*, which was drawn from WPA Records and copyrighted by the City of Minneapolis in 1941. It appears, however, in 1945 aerial photographs in the possession of Metropolitan Airports Commission, Minneapolis. Information about the Minneapolis-Honeywell Hangar is in Wirth, 313.

[21] Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners, *Fifty-eighth Annual Report* (Minneapolis: The Board, 1940), 64-66; Jack H. Cleland, "Wings over Minnesota," *Northwestern Life*, September 1943, 18-20.

inland air cargo route to Alaska. Office and storage facilities were added to this site during the following fifteen years.[22]

Post-War Period and the Metropolitan Airports Commission

The increasing complexity and scale of the aviation industry encouraged coordination between airfields on a regional basis. As a result, the Minnesota legislature established the Metropolitan Airports Commission in 1943, and in the following year the commission took over operations at both Wold-Chamberlain and Holman fields. One of the commission's first major construction projects, underway in 1950, was a second northwest-southeast runway south of the terminal area at Wold-Chamberlain, which severed access from 34th Avenue in that direction. The original northeast-southwest runway, located north of the terminal, was extended as well.[23]

By the mid-1950s, the piecemeal expansion along 34th Avenue was failing to keep pace with the frenetic growth in the aviation industry at the dawn of the jet age. Traffic had increased from just over 5,000 passengers in 1929 to more than half a million in 1946. The volume of mail increased eighty-fold during that same period, and air freight traffic was 200 times greater. As early as 1943, the park board drafted a plan envisioning a new terminal west of 34th Avenue, flanked by new hangars and maintenance buildings, with runways extending northwest to 58th Street and 28th Avenue, southwest to 70th Street and 28th Avenue, and east to Highway 5. The plan may have been rejected due to the chaos that would have resulted during its implementation, which would have required demolition of all buildings along 34th Avenue.[24]

Instead, a more radical plan was adopted. The commission decided to move terminal operations southeast of the existing runways, onto land used for military training by Fort Snelling during the world wars. The new $8.5 million terminal, which opened in 1962, contained 590,000 square feet with two loading concourses. The design, featuring an accordion-fold concrete roof, was prepared by Minneapolis architects Cerny and Associates.[25]

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[22] State Aeronautics Department, 8. The property is now used by air reserve units of the Navy and the Marines.

[23] Ibid.; Peter Marcus, "Airport Expansion Nears Completion," *Minneapolis Tribune*, October 3, 1950; Northwest Airlines, *Annual Report to Shareholders, 1949,* at Manuscripts Collection, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

[24] Minneapolis Board of Park Commissioners, *Sixtieth Annual Report* (Minneapolis: The Board, 1942), map between pages 68 and 69.

[25] "New Terminal is as Modern as Jet Planes," *Minneapolis Sunday Tribune Picture Magazine,* February 18, 1962, 4-7; "New T.C. Airport Terminal will have 'Jet Age' Look," *Minnesota Motorist,* August 1961, 13.

In conjunction with the airport's reorientation, the Metropolitan Airports Commission agreed in 1956 to build and lease to Northwest Airlines a completely new headquarters and overhaul base southeast of the airfield. This investment lured Northwest's headquarters away from St. Paul's Holman Field and allowed the airline better efficiency in its Minneapolis operations. The $18 million project covered seventy-five acres of land.[26]

Other improvements included a $1.3 million hangar for Western Airlines, a $1.35 million Northern States Power electrical substation, and a $1.25 million underground fuel system. The northeast-southwest runway was extended to the northeast, cutting off 34th Avenue north of the old terminal area. The small glass control room perched atop the Administration Building was replaced by a $500,000 control tower to the south, also designed by Cerny and Associates and finished in 1962. A fire rescue station was erected next to the air control tower in 1965.[27]

Since the new terminal opened, the Administration Building (HABS No. MN-158-D) has been used for office space. Hangars along 34th Avenue have been taken over by regional airlines or are used for storage. Some, like the Universal Airlines Hangar (HABS No. MN-158-A), have been demolished to make way for new facilities. The original terminal area, once the focal point of aviation in the city and a symbol to Minneapolitans of this modern industry, has become something of a backwater. Today, it is just a fragment of the pre-jet era, encircled by the modern behemoth it spawned.

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[26] State Aeronautics Board, 13; Northwest Airlines, *Annual Report to Stockholders, 1956*, and *Annual Report to Stockholders, 1959*, Manuscripts Collection, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul.

[27] Plans for the control tower and fire rescue station are at Metropolitan Airports Commission, Minneapolis.

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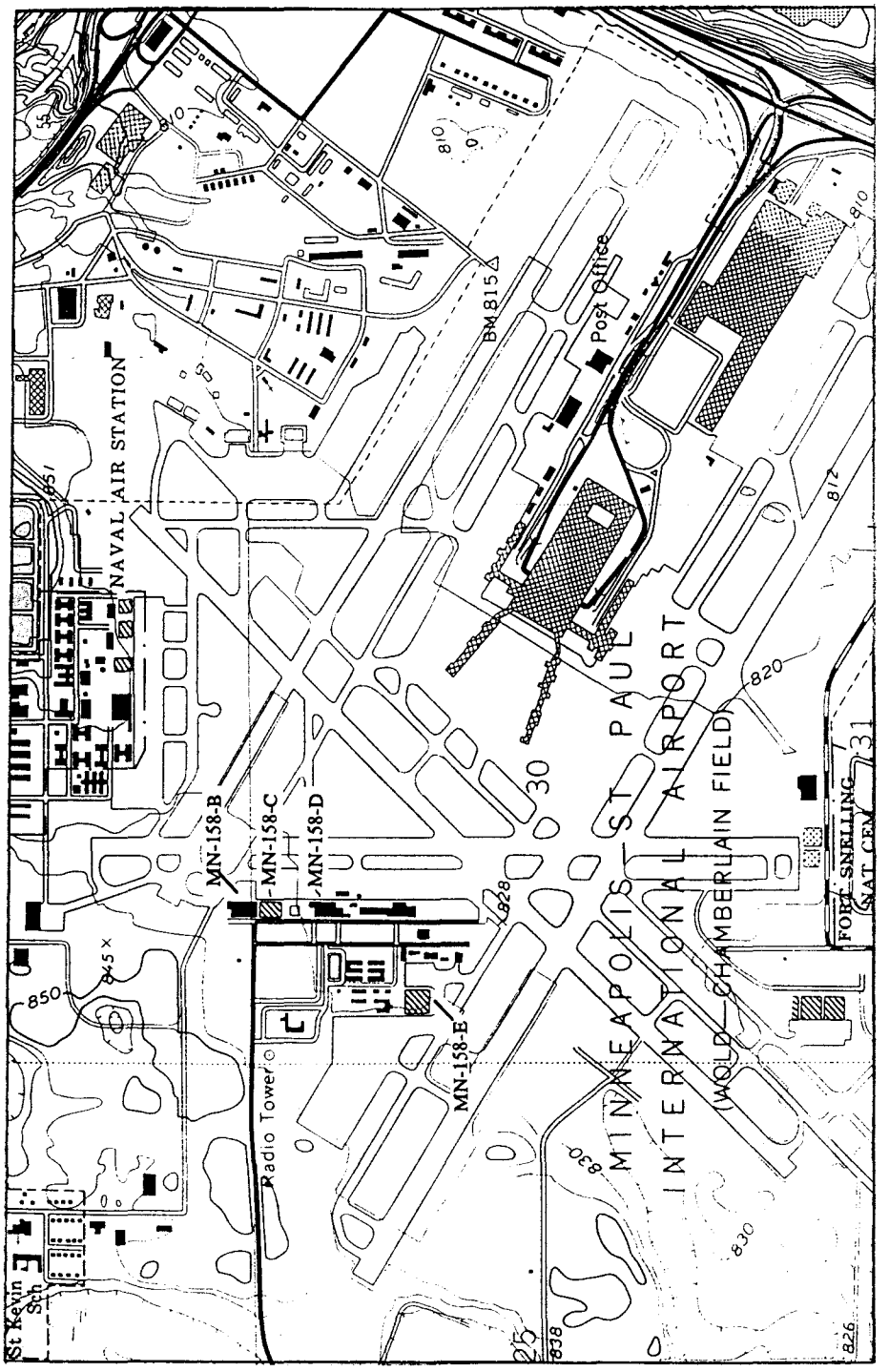
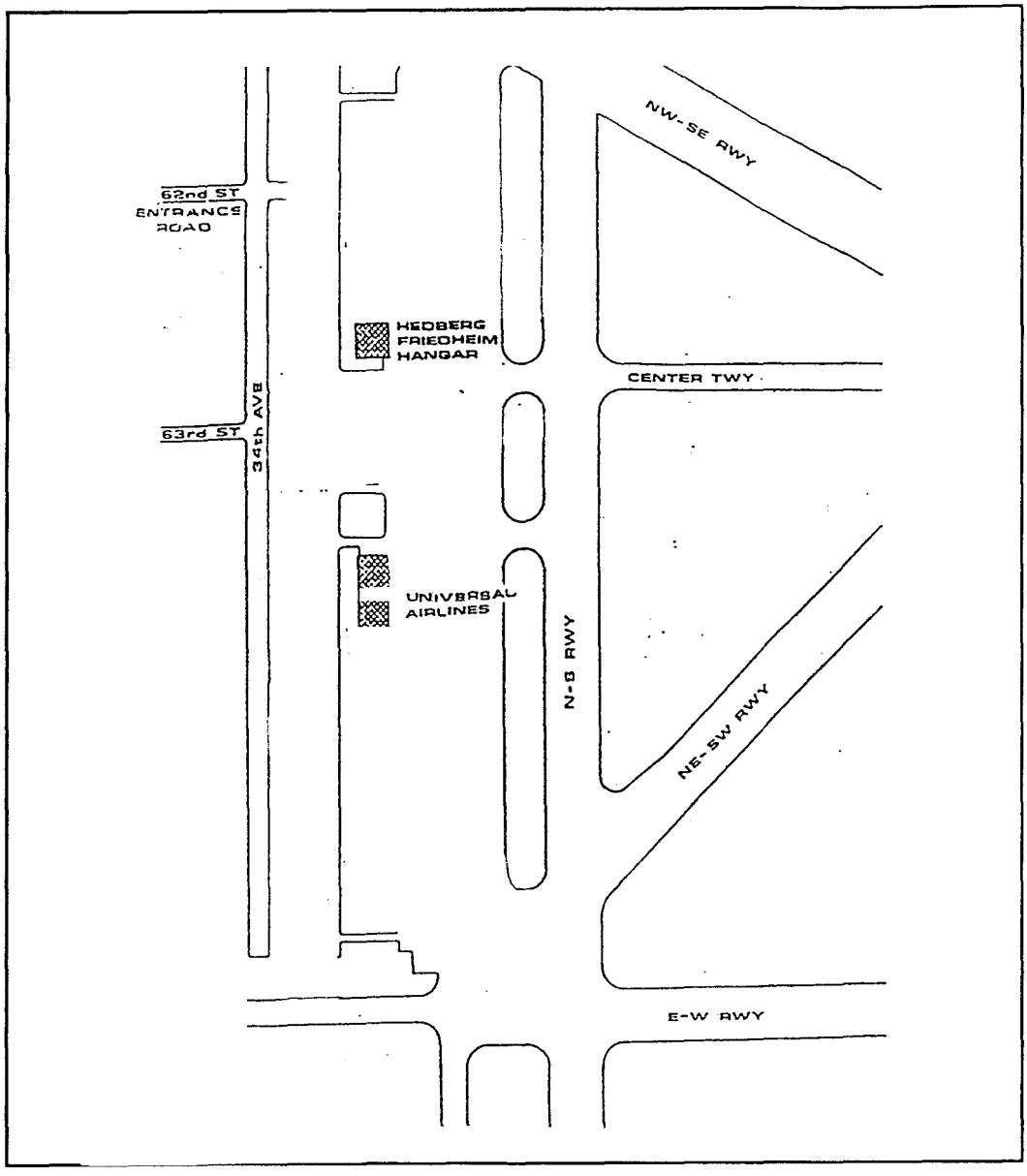
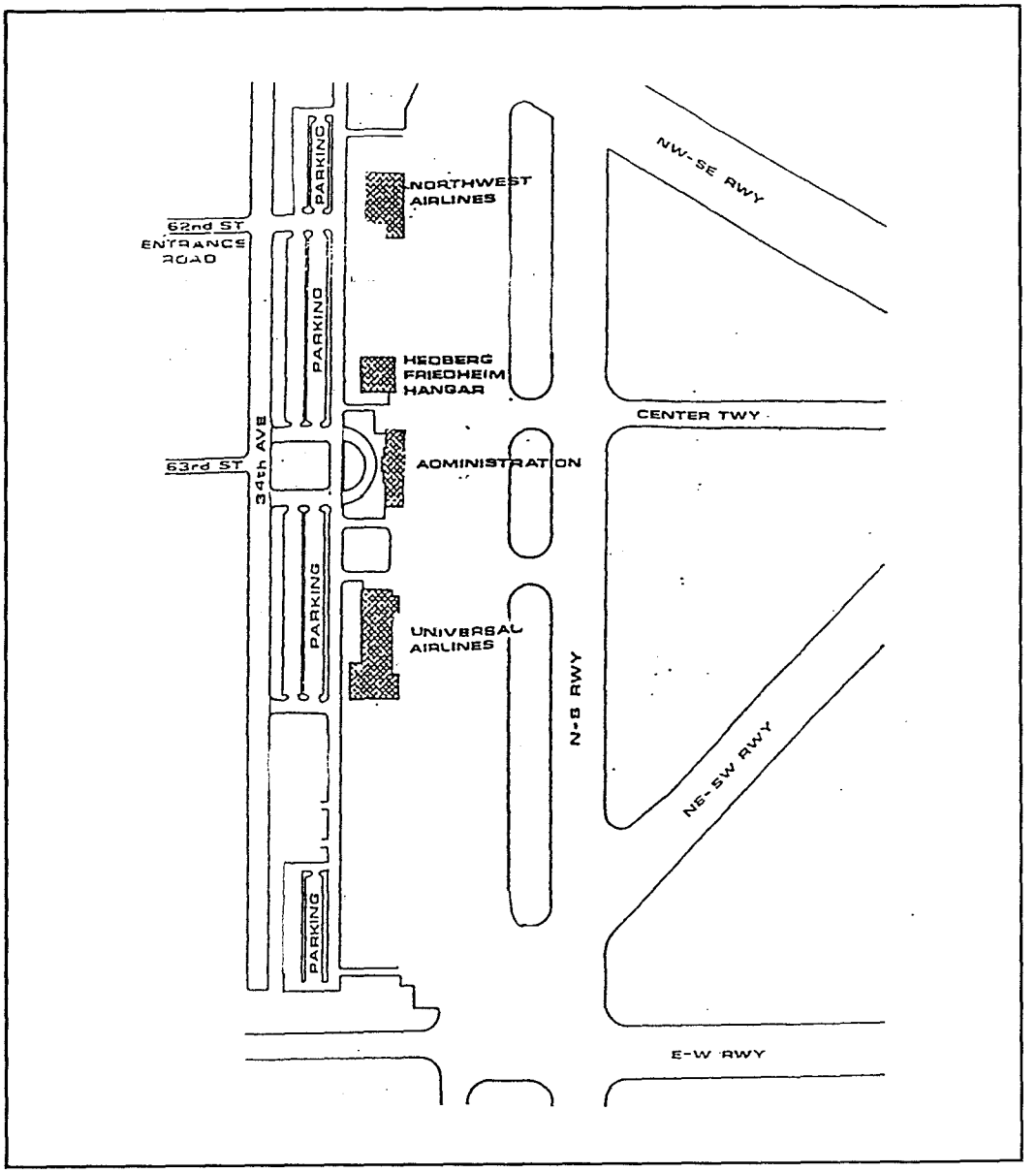


HABS No. MN-158-B Northwest Municipal Hangar
HABS No. MN-158-C Minneapolis-Honeywell Hangar
HABS No. MN-158-D Administration Building
HABS No. MN-158-E Army Transport Command Hangar (Naval Air Reserve Hangar)

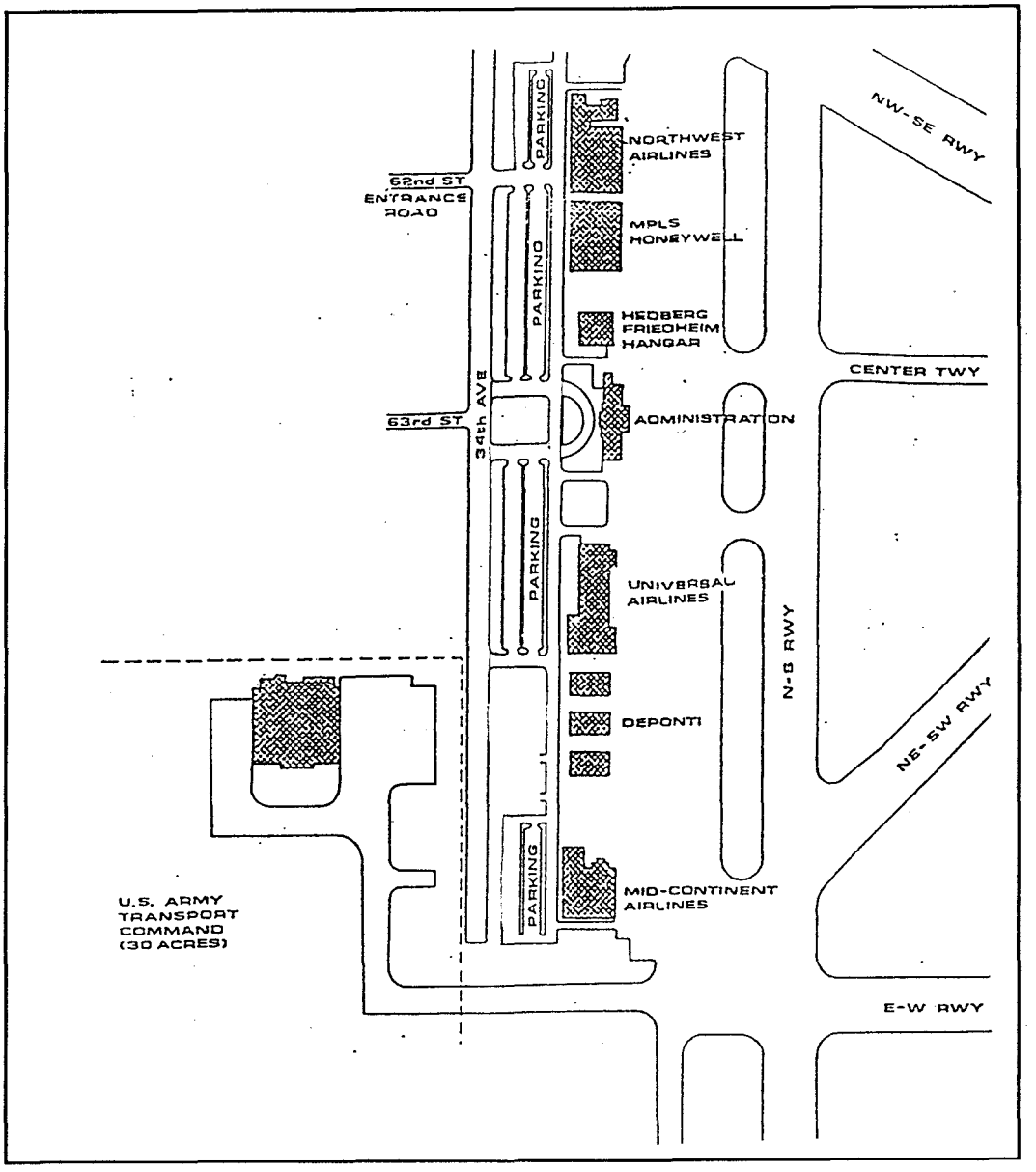
Wold-Chamberlain Field, Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport. From USGS, St. Paul West (Minn.) Quadrangle, 1967, revised 1972.



Site Plan 1: Early Development, 1929. Wold-Chamberlain Field, Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.



Site Plan 2: Expansion, 1939. Wold-Chamberlain Field, Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.



Site Plan 3: Wartime Buildup, 1945. Wold-Chamberlain Field, Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport.