

McCONNELL FIELD

EST. 1927

SPECIAL EDITION

NASHVILLE, TN- McConnell Field became Nashville's first municipal airport after the city purchased the 131 acres of land along Richland Creek from Warren Sloan in 1927.

The airport was named for Lt. Brower McConnell, a pilot in the Tennessee National Guard's 105th squadron, who died in an air crash in 1927.



Lt. Brower McConnell, right, with Mechanic James Wilson, 1926.
(Source: Banner 17 Aug 88.)

The 105th squadron relocated to McConnell field for training in 1928. It was understood that a pilot who learned to fly at McConnell could fly anything.

The railroad embankments on the south end as well as the greenhouses on the east created landing hazards. Overshooting the railroad embankment meant perhaps a dip in the Cumberland River on the far side, reports a McConnell Pilot.

In McConnell Field days, with few restrictions and even fewer instruments, the best trained aviators flew their small planes by what was known as "seat-of-the-pants" intuition.

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AIRMAIL

Nashville's first airmail and passenger flight took off from McConnell Field on December 1st, 1928. A Fairchild FC-2W named "Miss Chattanooga," carrying two passengers and 17 sacks of mail, lifted off on a continuation of its journey from Chattanooga to Chicago.

The flight made stops in Evansville and Terre Haute, Indiana and Champaign, Illinois. At Champaign, the plane got stuck in the mud, and the passengers had to push the plane while the pilot, Lt. Jordon Myers, gunned the engine. The plane touched down in Chicago just short of 5 hours after leaving Nashville.

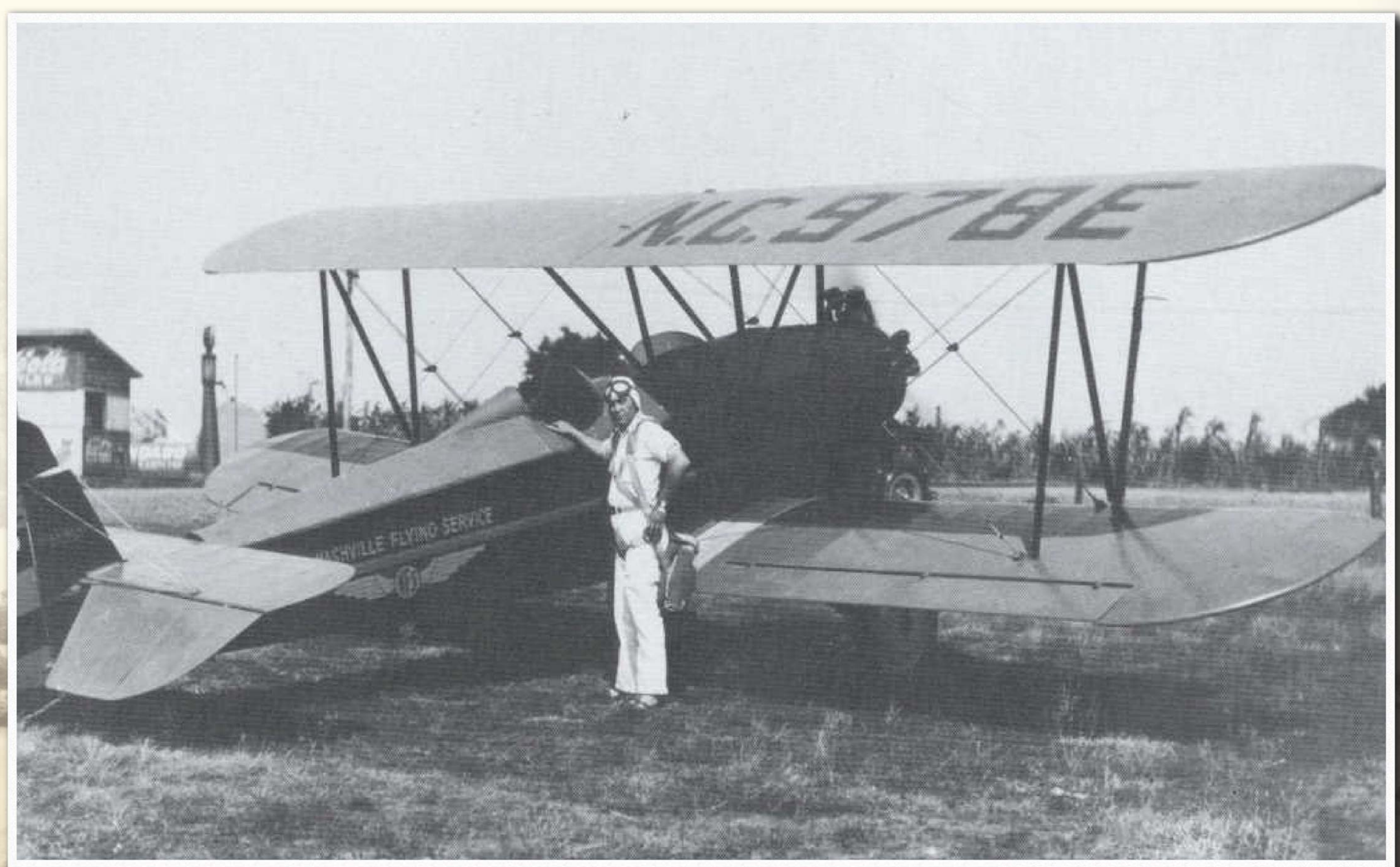


(Source: Fulbright, J. Aviation in Tennessee 1998.)

PLANES OUTGROW RUNWAY

The size of airplanes quickly outgrew the runways at McConnell Field. Before long traffic began shifting to Sky Harbor in Murfreesboro.

Berry Field, today's Nashville International Airport, was under construction in 1936. In 1937 McConnell Field was officially decommissioned.



Louis Gasser, Nashville's first commercial pilot at McConnell Field ca 1930. The aircraft is a 1929 Command-Aire 5C3-C with a 5 cylinder, 165-hp Wright J6 engine.
(Source: Fulbright, J. Aviation in Tennessee 1998.)

McConnell Field was transferred to the city park system in 1938, adjoining parcels were purchased expanding the park area to 209 acres. The airport was renamed McCabe Park in honor of Charles M. McCabe who was the Nashville Park Commissioner and died in 1939.

The first playground at McCabe Park, the athletic field and the nine-hole golf course, were constructed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA). The second nine holes were constructed in 1947, and the former runways of McConnell Field became McCabe Park Golf Course.



Airmail stamps from the 1930's

Background Image: Pre-McConnell Field 1927.
(Source: Metro Archives, Nashville Public Library.)