

1: Mountain Flying Aviation, LTD

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Grand Prairie is thirteen miles west of downtown Dallas in western Dallas and eastern Tarrant counties. The townsite comprises approximately eighty-one square miles enclosed by Dallas, Arlington, Irving, and Cedar Hill. Settlers arrived in the area before the Civil War and built several stores, including the M. Miller store and the Phillip Goetsell store. The community was not organized, however, until when A. The community became officially known as Dechman or Deckman when it received a post office in Haskett was the first postmaster, and the post office was on land donated by Dechman. By that time a daily stage ran through Deckman on its way from Dallas to Fort Worth, and in a stage was robbed right outside the community. Early churches in the area included the West Fork United Presbyterian Church, built in and located in Tarrant County in a community then known as Watson, and the Valley Church on the Dallas County side with a log building that served as both a nondenominational church and a school. When Dechman surveyed and platted the townsite, he gave the railroad alternating lots in blocks A, B, C, and D, in exchange for the operation of a depot. The post office continued to call the community Deckman until when it changed the name to Grand Prairie to agree with the railroad which had called the town Grand Prairie since The community was supposedly so named because a woman stepped off the train and said, "What a grand prairie! The first telephone was installed in In that decade rural free delivery was implemented, Grand Prairie received its own school district, and several newspapers were published. Grand Prairie incorporated in with S. Highway 80, was gravelled, and good bridges were built, making travel easier between the cities. An electrical plant and volunteer fire department were established before when Grand Prairie had four churches, two cotton gins, a bank, a furniture factory, a planing mill, and several cottonseed-oil mills. The railroad shipped cotton, grain, and livestock. In the s the city streets were paved, and Highway 80 was macadamized. In the first Grand Prairie Stock and Poultry Show was held; it continued every year until the s. The field, named for William H. The army rented Hensley Field from Dallas for a dollar a year. Improvements to the field as well as school construction in Grand Prairie took place under the Public Works Administration in the s. Mountain Creek Lake was completed just east of the city limits in After failing as a flight school operated by the Curtis Flying Service Corporation, it served as the Grand Prairie municipal airport from until , when it was purchased by the Lou Foote Flying School. During World War II the field was used as a training school for the navy. Because it was too small for jets, it was bought by the city and turned into an industrial park. The first wartime-era addition was the Naval Reserve Aviation Base, built in on thirty acres of Hensley Field to be used by the army and navy for flight training. The area just east of Grand Prairie was chosen as the site for a federally operated defense plant, North American Aviation, Incorporated. By the plant had 5, employees. The city rushed to provide services and expanded utilities, built new schools, increased fire protection, and implemented city mail service. At its peak production the airplane plant employed 38, workers. Between and the end of the war the population of Grand Prairie grew from 1, to 18, On August 14, , there was a complete shutdown of the airplane plant, and the remaining 15, employees lost their jobs. Grand Prairie feared a collapse of its economy, but it was able to recover by encouraging the development of such businesses as furniture, boat, and chemical manufacturing. At that time there were 2, dwellings and twenty-one businesses in Grand Prairie. The town had another setback in when the city of Dallas annexed the industrial area to the east of Grand Prairie, including the aircraft plants, Hensley Field, and Mountain Creek Lake. In , however, Chance Vought then a subsidiary of United Aircraft Corporation moved to the site of the old aircraft plant with 1, employees. Many of them lived in Grand Prairie, and the town provided city services without receiving the industrial taxes. In Grand Prairie began annexing land around it in order to keep Dallas from taking it. To facilitate annexation Grand Prairie voted in a new home-rule city charter with a city manager. By the population of Grand Prairie was 30,

In the city unsuccessfully attempted to persuade Dallas to disannex the strip with the factories. Through the next several decades Grand Prairie continued to grow, and by the population was 99, In , 84 percent of the population was white and 7 percent black; Hispanics made up only 1 percent. The city was run by a council-manager form of government and had police officers, paid firemen, ten banks, a library, and churches of fourteen communions. The Grand Prairie Independent School District had seventeen elementary, six junior high, and two high schools. Industries produced aircraft and aircraft parts, plastics, machine parts, and mobile homes. Grand Prairie had its own tourist attractions. Lone Star Park, a one-mile-long horse racing track, opened in A 6,seat indoor theater and convert venue later renamed Verizon Theatre at Grand Prairie opened in , followed by a minor league baseball stadium in In the population was ,, and in it was , The TSHA makes every effort to conform to the principles of fair use and to comply with copyright law. For more information go to: Citation The following, adapted from the Chicago Manual of Style, 15th edition, is the preferred citation for this article. Handbook of Texas Online, Lisa C. Uploaded on June 15, Modified on November 10, Published by the Texas State Historical Association.

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