



Welcome to the Chapter 770 newsletter. Please share your news and updates from the chapter, upcoming flying events, info and more. If you have flying stories, photos etc to include feel free to send them to [etf6911@gmail.com](mailto:etf6911@gmail.com).

#### UPCOMING EVENTS

- VMC/IMC Club** : February 1, 2022
- Chapter Meeting**: February 17, 2022
- Young Eagle Rally**: April 30,2022 (rain date May 7)
- Ford Trimotor AT5 Visit**: May 19-22, 2022
- EAA Air Venture**: July 25-31, 2022

#### UPCOMING EAA WEBINARS

- |   |        |        |
|---|--------|--------|
| <b>Cylinder Rescue</b> (Wings)  | Feb 2  | 7:00pm |
| <b>Mustang The History of EAA's P-51's</b>  | Feb 8  | 7:00pm |
| <b>ATC and You: Getting the Most Out of Flying in Controlled Airspace</b> (Wings) | Feb 9  | 7:00pm |
| <b>Become a Better Chapter Leader</b> (Secretary/Treasurer)                       | Feb 15 | 7:00pm |

Register for upcoming webinars at:  
[www.eaa.org/ea/news-and-publications/ea-webinars](http://www.eaa.org/ea/news-and-publications/ea-webinars)

# CLASSIC WOOD,FABRIC,AND METAL ABOVE LINCOLN LAND

By Eric Fromm

With the upcoming visit of the EAA Ford Trimotor, a type that served Springfield with American Airways/Airlines, I thought it would be interesting to discuss some of the first generation airliners that once took Springfieldians on their first travels by air to nearby cities and beyond connecting through like St. Louis and Chicago.

Some reading this might have childhood memories of Springfield Southwest (Also known as Springfield Municipal, and Commercial Airport) located on Chatham Rd. at what is now the Westchester subdivision. I'm sure most are familiar with the remnants of this old aerodrome that still exist today. Several buildings and a large hangar still stand and are used for various businesses now.

While the first air mail flights were flown into Bosa (Lindbergh) Field just southwest of where Capital Airport is today, passenger service became common at Springfield Municipal. The earliest airline flights I could find by timetable was in 1929 operated by American Airways predecessor Universal operating under the Robertson Aircraft Corporation Division.

The June 15, 1929 timetable shows Springfield on one northbound and one southbound flight from Chicago to St.Louis via Peoria. The flights were numbered 3 and 4, odds being southbound, evens being north. They were known as the "Air Mail Limited" and were operated with the Boeing Model 40

which was touted in the timetable as "4 passenger cabin planes carrying mail in a separate compartment".

The October 1931 timetable cover advertises "Chicago -St.Louis via Springfield". Based on the route map it appears Peoria might have been discontinued by this point although by 1934 Peoria reappears.

Universal/American Airways flew several different types in to Springfield including the Fokker Universal, the Pilgrim 100, Ford Tri Motor, Curtis Condor and ultimately the Stinson Model A. Job Conger's book "Springfield Aviation" contains many great photos of these early aircraft at Springfield.

Competing with American for a short time was Century Airways who operated several flights a day also on the Chicago-St.Louis route. Century operated the Stinson Model B which was the high wing Stinson Tri Motor, while the Model A operated by American was a low wing and more recognizable as a Stinson because of the tapered vertical stabilizer.



(American Airways Stinson Model A at AirVenture 2019)

The other airline serving Springfield Southwest was Chicago and Southern which would become a good sized international airline that would become a member of the Delta Airlines family a few decades later.

Chicago and Southern's operations came about in the region after a US Mail Scandal shook up the existing contracts of Air Mail carriers in 1934. Anyone holding contracts were forced to give them up and could not bid for the new contracts that were to be awarded. Several airlines used loopholes and simple smarts to circumvent this though, for instance American Airways changed their name to American Airlines, and were then eligible to bid on the contracts.

Chicago and Southern had been operating as Pacific Seaboard Airlines in California, but after the rebidding for the mail contracts, they were awarded a mail contract and operated a route from Chicago-Springfield-St. Louis-Memphis-Jackson MS, and ultimately New Orleans. For the new midwest operation, Chicago and Southern began operating the Lockheed Electra 10, the model made famous by Amelia Earhart.



Electra 10 at AirVenture 2019)

The timetable I have from Chicago and Southern is dated December 1, 1937. It is obvious aviation made great strides in the 30s as even the timetable is on vivid color orange paper and the centerfold highlights how equipped they were for winter flying. "A more powerful simultaneous radio range and broadcast at St. Louis" makes you wonder if they were attempting to make it sound good as most travelers probably had no clue what a "simultaneous radio range" was , admittedly I'm not sure I know!

"New homing devices (direction finders) " is another of the technological selling points to choose C&S. Having flown NDB approaches this one has a special place in my heart.. I still have nightmares of NDB approaches, beep beep beep beep beep. Also interesting, "deicing equipment for propellers and windshields", yet to include leading edge deicing equipment.

The airline's slogan was "The Valley Level Route" and from everything I've ever researched no one has ever been able to determine exactly what they meant. Perhaps since they followed the Illinois River valley and then the Mississippi there wasn't much terrain? Each flight had its own name and at least in 1937 Springfield saw 1 of the 4 that they operated and was a flagstop on one northbound. Flight 1 and 2 were known as the Acadian.

Springfield was only a flagstop on flight 2. With the touted radio equipment they were carrying, I assume they would radio ahead and see if there were any passengers or mail that needed to go north, and if so they would drop in and board passengers and cargo.



Springfield's regular scheduled northbound was flight 4 the "Cotton King", making the stop regularly.

All of this new technology, greater demand for passenger service and larger aircraft being designed to fill that demand limited the amount of time Southwest/Commercial/Municipal Airport would be able to sustain service. By 1939 Chicago and Southern had removed the Electras for DC-3s as American had also moved on from the smaller Fords and Stinsons in favor of the DC-2 which were already being phased out for the DC-3. The DC-3 had operational issues with the airport and the airlines would discontinue service to Springfield until 1947 when Capital Airport would open.

Southwest would remain open for several decades longer as a general aviation airport even though Capital was also in operation. It hasn't been terribly long since a row of metal t-hangars were removed from the north end of the field. If I only had a time machine, this would definitely be a place I'd go back and spend some time.

One of my favorite parts of going to AirVenture is to walk down the Past Grand Champions and Vintage Showplanes areas at the south end of the field. There you will find airworthy examples of aircraft types that served Springfield nearly 90 years ago. While the Ford's fly overhead, walking around the Stinson Model A, and the Electra that are annual visitors, you get a little taste of what it was like here in Springfield back in those days.

