



Janes Field and the U of MN

A mission of teaching, research and service

By Karen Klinkenberg

The story of the Anoka County Airport (one of seven airports owned and operated by the Metropolitan Airports Commission) begins in 1929 with the University of Minnesota's flying club and the work of aeronautical engineering professor John D. Akerman.

By 1938, fearing a shortage of trained pilots and in response to the danger of a new world war, President Franklin D. Roosevelt ordered the launch of a program to train 20,000 pilots at colleges around the country. Because its flying club was already in operation, the University of Minnesota was selected as one of twelve colleges to participate and the University's pilot training program was launched in 1939.

With the advent of World War II, the University's flight training and flying club were forced to leave Wold-Chamberlain for military purposes in 1940. Faced with a government contract to provide pilot training and no airport, the University became interested in providing its own airport for aeronautical research and experimentation as well as for flight training. Professor Akerman and F.L. O'Hearn, an attorney and real estate manager, located a new site at U.S. Highway 8 and County Road J, two miles north of New Brighton on a farm owned by Anthony and Catherine Skiba.

Due to a lack of University funds, friends of aviation were canvassed to purchase the required land. On April, 29, 1941, Lawrence Melvor Steiner of the American Linen Company, furnished the funds to finance the purchase of 260 acres of land owned by the Skibas at the cost of approximately \$33,000. It became known as the University Airport.

In 1948, due to lack of expansion opportunities at the University Airport, discussions were held between the Metropolitan Airports Commission and the University to embark upon a land purchase program across Highway 8 from the University Airport, as a

possible future major airport site and to relocate the University Airport within the new larger tract, making it essentially an airport within an airport.

The University's Board of Regents voted to authorize the purchase of 300 acres of land in Blaine Township that year. In 1950 the Metropolitan Airports Commission agreed to acquire, improve and construct an airport on a 1,200 acre site on the southern line of Blaine Township – primarily from land owned by township farmers.

The Anoka County Airport opened on December 1, 1952. Flight Training and Flight Services were moved from the old airport to the new site on a 30 year lease. In 1959, the Metropolitan Airports Commission acquired the Radisson Farm in Blaine, owned by Stanley Skiba, whose parents had owned the original University Airport land. In 1966 the Anoka County Airport was named Janes Field in honor of Phillip Janes, director of the reliever airports for the Metropolitan Airports Commission.

Flight training was discontinued in 1989 due to decreased interest.

The University's charter planes served the University Hospital's organ transplant program (1976-1996) and provided an on-call ambulance service for the hospital's neo-natal unit (1983-1986). By 1996, Flight Services was discontinued upon the sale of University Hospital to Fairview and was replaced by private charter companies at other airports.

University Airport land was purchased from the University of Minnesota in 1996 by Minneapolis businessman, Greg Herrick, who established the Golden Wings Museum at the old University Airport hangar, featuring vintage planes.

An Airport Promotions Group was established at the airport in 2010 to promote an interest in flying and aviation in general in cooperation with area schools, continuing the mission started by John D. Akerman and the University of Minnesota.

Background for this article

Much of the timeline and information here comes from Diane Mabon—University of Minnesota employee from 1975 to 2012. She supported the staff at the University Flight Facilities from 1982 to 1996.



*Anoka County Airport
University hangar and administration building—1951*



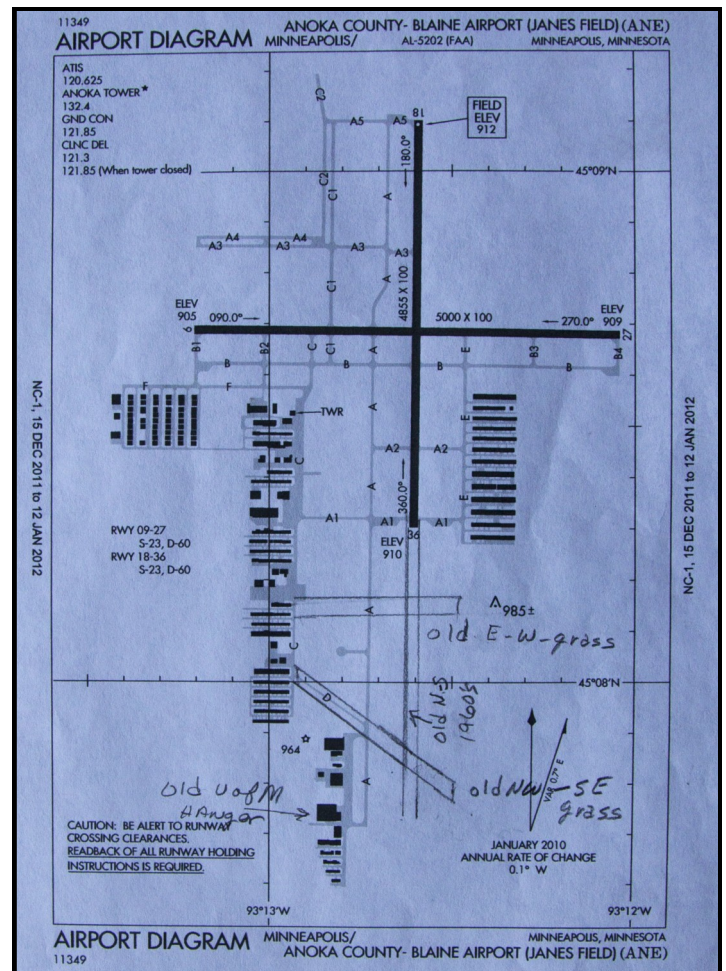
Light tower in the mist at Janes Field



*Modern view of former U of MN flight facilities
(hangar at left and admin building at right)*



*Professor Edward Ney's cosmic ray research
program using Skyhook balloons was conducted
between 1946 and 1967 – at both the University
Airport and the Anoka County Airport*



*1959 airport layout, hand overlaid on a map
from 2012 by Waldo Anderson, long-time staffer
(1959-1996) and chief pilot for flight services*