

Chronology of Airport Development in Northern Santa Cruz County

By Santa Cruz City Council

Date	Development
1930	Bonny Doon Airport built.
3/1930	Olympia Airport, a tiny 300' x 900' field is under construction in San Lorenzo Valley, near Mt. Hermon.
1931	Capitola Airport is in operation under lease to Santa Cruz Chamber of Commerce.
7/1934	City of Santa Cruz approves application to the Emergency Relief Administration for funds for work on Capitola Airport.
1939	Watsonville Airport built.
1940	City of Santa Cruz, in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Commerce selects an area west of town, known as the Swanton Tract, as best location for a municipal airport.
7/1941	City of Santa Cruz seeks \$300,000 in Civil Aeronautics Authority funds for development of an airport site to be determined.
8/1941	City is informed that CAA funds are not available.
6/1946	City of Santa Cruz authorizes \$8,300 for purchase of 93 lots from the Santa Cruz Memorial Airport Association. The Association, a private, non-profit group, had been formed to acquire property for development of an airport on the Swanton Tract. Some property owners donated property, others sold it to the Association at below market value.
10/1946	The proposed Swanton Tract Site for the Santa Cruz airport is included in the National Airport Plan and the Civil Aeronautics Administration tentatively allocates \$29,795 for its development.
2/1947	Sky Park Airport, a private field built by Jack and Lola Graham on their property, begins operation in Scotts Valley. One of its primary purposes is to provide a facility for training of pilots under terms of the G.I. Bill.
4/1947	A detailed set of plans and engineering drawings for the Swanton Tract airport is completed but the City of Santa Cruz is forced to withdraw its request for CAA funds. Only about half of the property needed for the airport has been acquired and the City's funds are exhausted. No budget is available for site development.
7/1948	Santa Cruz Airport Commission encourages City Council to condemn the remaining private property required for Swanton Tract airport.

8/1948	City of Santa Cruz files a new request for CAA funds but does not receive approval.
12/1949	Funds are still lacking to complete Swanton Site acquisition. City and County discuss possibility of forming an airport district.
8/1952	Because of continuing urban development and the City's inability to acquire additional property, the Swanton Tract site no longer appears advisable as an airport location.
7/1953	State Director of Aeronautics, B.M. Doolin, submits report, requested by City of Santa Cruz, recommending an airport development policy for the City. The report recommends that if the City can obtain sufficient money from sale of Swanton airport site to acquire a more desirable site, then it should do so. Several sites are investigated in the study and none are found to be free of undesirable features. Sky Park is the most feasible site for development of a municipal airport.
10/1954	Capitola Airport is abandoned. Owners Russell and Ester Rice transfer their airport operations to Sky Park which they have been leasing from the Grahams.
5/1957	Santa Cruz Chamber of Commerce passes a resolution encouraging City to sell lands originally acquired for Swanton Airport and to use the money for acquisition and operation of Sky Park. An accompanying study cites the advantages of Sky Park. A heliport can be developed there to provide short-haul public transportation with connections to Watsonville Airport which can be expanded to meet the needs of the jet age.
11/1958	Plans are formulated for development of a coffee shop and other resort-type facilities at Bonny Doon. Local opposition is aroused.
1959	Most of Swanton Tract site is sold with money going into an Airport Fund.
8/1960	The City of Santa Cruz is again urged to acquire Sky Park, this time in a citizens' group report called "Santa Cruz of Tomorrow". Reasons are stated why Watsonville Airport cannot adequately serve the needs of the Santa Cruz area. Realignment of the Sky Park runway to add 500 feet is proposed.
7/1961	H.K. Friedland & Associates completes a Preliminary Airport Site Selection Study under contract to the City of Santa Cruz. Nine sites are examined. Sky Park is deemed inadequate because many FAA criteria cannot be met and federal aid therefore would not be obtainable. A site on the Wilder Ranch, two miles west of the city limits, is selected as the optimum location.
8/1961	Santa Cruz Airport Commission in a report to the City Council disagrees with Friedland study recommendation. Commission instead notes that Sky Park is for sale, that it is the best facility for airport purposes, and that "federal assistance is not practical nor necessary for the acquisition and development of an airport". The City -- in cooperation with the County, if possible -- is urged to acquire the Airport.
11/1961	Santa Cruz City Council requests the California Aeronautics Commission to grant waivers of certain Sky Park deficiencies and, in the event the City and/or the County of Santa Cruz purchase the airport, to reissue an airport permit.
1/1962	Santa Cruz City Council approves a resolution to acquire Sky Park.
10/1962	City Council approves agreement to purchase the 45.8 acre Sky Park property from owner Jack Graham for \$197,000. The agreement calls for an initial payment of \$120,000, obtained as proceeds from the sale of Swanton tract airport property, for approximately 27.5 acres with additional acreage to be purchased with payments of about \$10,000 per year to be spread over 8 years. The parcels not immediately acquired will be leased by the City for \$100 per month until purchased. The existing lease between Graham and Russell and Esther Rice for operation of the airport will be honored by the City.
11/1962	State Division of Aeronautics reissues airport permit for Sky Park.

10/1963	Santa Cruz City Council requests that the Sky Park property be excluded from the proposed incorporation of Scotts Valley.
1/1964	Sky Park property is annexed to the City of Santa Cruz.
3/1964	Bonny Doon Village Airport remains open, but is no longer available for public use.
1965	James Dahm takes over the Rices' lease for operation of Sky Park.
6/1966	Master Plan of the Santa Cruz Municipal Airport (Sky Park) is approved by Santa Cruz City Council.
7/1966	City of Santa Cruz requests \$11,700 in federal aid for construction of a realigned runway and parallel taxiway at Sky Park. Total project cost is estimated at \$23,400.
8/1966	Federal Aviation Administration turns down Sky Park grant application because the proposed construction would not meet federal standards: - a 20:1 approach slope from the north is impossible unless the approach path is angled; - 100' is required between runway and taxiway centerlines and only 85' is planned at the north end. - a hangar is only 125' from the runway centerline (200' is minimum); - terrain prevents extending the runway to more than 2,200' usable length, too short for Basic Utility II standards.
1966	City of Scotts Valley is incorporated.
3/1968	Lease agreement between City of Santa Cruz and James Dahm for operation of Sky Park is signed. Lease is for 25 years.
1968	Realigned runway at Sky Park is constructed.
11/1973	Bonny Doon Airport is sold by Mount Hermon Association.
8/1975	Request for a use permit to install an aircraft repair facility at Bonny Doon is denied by County Board of Supervisors because of strong local opposition. Since the airport predates land use zoning for the area it can remain, but only at the level of use occurring in 1958 when the zoning took effect.
10/1975	County does a "Preliminary Initial Study" of Sky Park to provide background for development of airport policies to be included in the County Regional Transportation Plan. The policy as ultimately adopted by the County Regional Transportation Commission recommends that Sky Park remain a recreational airport operating at a level no greater that it then is. [Note: Sky Park was closed January 1983. Ed.]

Source

Santa Cruz Sky Park Airport Master Plan Report, Santa Cruz City Council, 1979. Appendix A, pp. A-1 - A-4.

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