



This envelope from 1931 has been stamped with an imprint boasting the airport dedication ceremony.

Courtesy of Betty Lewis

Donated land planted seed for Watsonville Airport

Airports
Land was donated by Tom Trafton on Salinas Road for an airfield and was approved by the Department of Commerce. The Watsonville Airport Company Limited was incorporated and stock was sold. Workers graded three runways, dug a water well and built a hangar, shop and other facilities. The big dedication day came on May 9, 1931, when California Gov. James Rolph was flown to the new airport and delivered an address to the large crowd gathered for the occasion. A monoplane carrying airport manager Claude Wilson, R.H. Hudson, Perry Andrews and Gov. Rolph swept down the runway and broke the ribbon stretched across the field while another



That Was
Watsonville

Betty Lewis

plane flew overhead and blossoms were sprinkled over Watsonville's new airport.

During World War II, the field was taken over by the Navy and used as a lighter-than air base. In October of 1942, construction began on a new airport in the Roache district off of Airport Road. The city had passed a bond issue of \$125,000 for the purchase of approximately 300 acres, and the Navy then purchased the completed airport and later made more improvements.

The following appeared in the Register-Pajaronian in March of 1946: "The City of

the naval airport in the Roache district on a temporary permit basis Tuesday night when the Board of Aldermen authorized Mayor C.H. Baker to sign the agreement permitting use of the facilities and equipment by the city. Signing of the agreement culminated negotiations of several months between the city officials and the 12th Naval district officers and terms of the contract were termed very satisfactory by the local group. Facilities at the airport will now permit the housing of about 32 private type planes in the hangars and tie-down facilities for 250 more ... Bob Hudson has been employed by the city to manage the base. His experience in the management line is extensive, having served as operations officer at numerous air fields, including huge Hamilton Field near San Francisco. ..."

Commercial air service finally came to Watsonville on Dec. 2, 1946, when a Southwest Airlines plane touched down on its way to Los Angeles. Today, the

French with Sharon Reader serving as operations supervisor, and there are more than 300 planes stored at the airport.

The Fly-In, since 1964, has brought every kind of antique plane into the airport. Many people donated their time for the various booths and festivities, making this one of the more popular events of its kind. Hopefully, there will be about 40,000 people at the Fly-In this year — May 23-25 — as they celebrate for the 44th time. There will be P38 and a car show on Saturday, along with a spaghetti feed on Saturday and Sunday night. Awards will be given out on Saturday.

Come to the Fly-In and see a wonderful show plus all the many, many activities available to everyone there, including all the planes and helicopters. A great way to spend that interesting weekend, you will like it!

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Betty Lewis, a local historian and Watsonville resident, is a regular columnist for the