

Grand Forks International Airport

1964 • 2014

A Brief Tour Through Its 50 Year History

50 Years of Progress

In early 1964 the Grand Forks airport was moved from the west edge of Grand Forks to its current location five miles west, and those who made that happen would be proud to see how successful the airport is now, 50 years later. Back then the airport combined with tenants employed just 20 people and had only a handful of hangars and a terminal for buildings. Now with over 30 buildings, 20 service providers and four runways, GFK is the 20th busiest airport in the country and employs over 800 people combined. No one could have predicted they'd ever have grown that much. This year they expect to board close to 150,000 passengers compared to just 21,000 passengers in 1964.

Monday's anniversary celebration is all about thanking the community for their support over the past 50 years.



The 1943-1964 terminal building still stands and is now the home of Brekke Tours & Travel. The horseshoe shaped driveway to the old airport is now what surrounds the Speedway Restaurant and leads up to the back of the Brekke building. (Airport Photos Norman Midboe)

Before 1964

Grand Forks' first airport and municipal landing field was started in 1928 and was located just south of Highway 2 where I-29 is today. For years the runway was nothing more than a well drained and leveled landing strip in a field. Large yellow letters "GRAND FORKS" and an arrow pointing toward the airport with the words "TWO MILES" were painted atop the elevator section of the mill and elevator to guide visiting aviators to the city's airport. With the arrival of commercial air service and to accommodate

their much larger aircraft, concrete runways and a terminal were built in 1942 and 1943. Eventually the commercial aircraft became too large to use the runways and passengers were driving to Fargo to board the larger aircraft. The runways were inadequate for landing any aircraft larger than a DC-3, and even those were often too heavy to land during spring thaw. In the late '50s, while contemplating the expense to upgrade and lengthen the runways, city leaders learned that the State

Highway Department was offering over \$576,000 for a portion of the airport for the right-of-way for a new interstate highway as part of a bridge-highway-airport "package". In January of 1961, all 14 city council members voted to construct a new airport five miles west of the city, where the airport is now. The State Highway Department's offer was lowered to \$440,000 in 1962, causing much controversy, but the City worked tirelessly to secure enough funding to move forward with the project.

The 1964 Airport

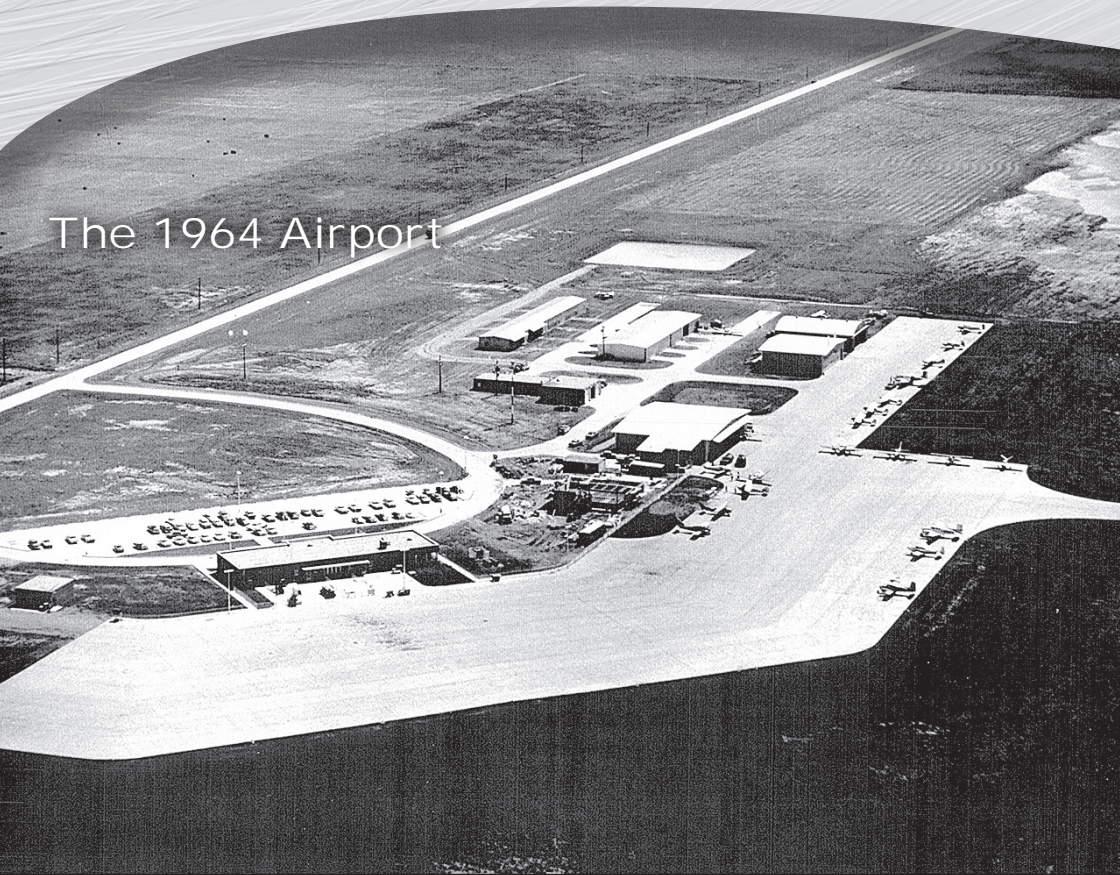


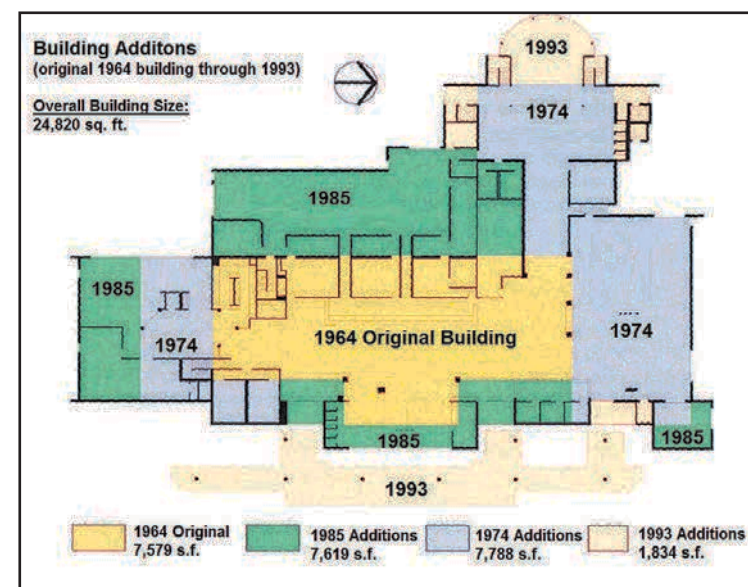
Photo Norman Midboe

The 1963-64 airport project cost almost \$3 million including the terminal, 2 runways, taxiways and drainage facilities. In present day value that would equate to \$26 million. Two steel hangars were relocated and another three were built at the new airport. The 7,579 sq. ft. terminal was built for \$300,000. There were additions in 1974, 1985 and 1993 until it was 25,000 sq. ft. In 2012, one year after its \$22 million 50,000 sq. ft. replacement was built, the 48 year old terminal was demolished.

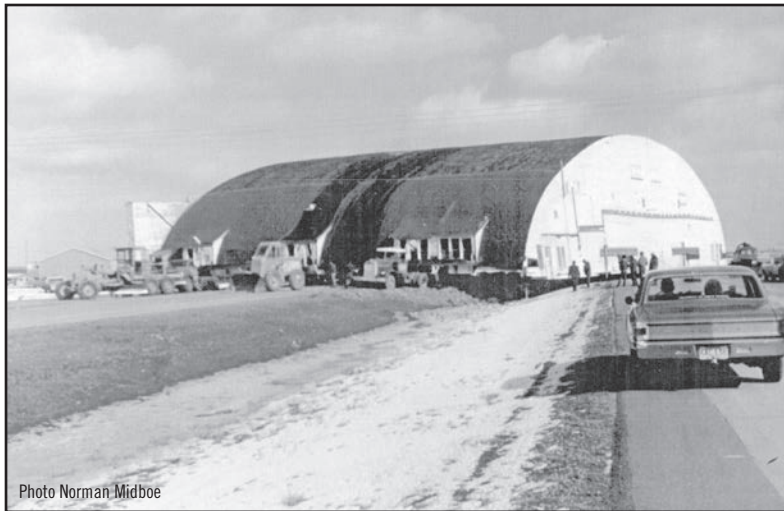
The new airport was nearing completion in November of 1963 but the terminal wasn't quite ready. Herald reporter Lloyd C. Tinnes was keeping everyone updated with numerous articles about its progress. One of his November 1963 articles said Northwest Airlines manager Howard Peterson was finalizing his plans "for the shift of flight service from the bumpy old one to the slick new one." Northwest passengers rode a bus back and forth between the old airport terminal and a temporary trailer at the new airport from November 15, 1963 until February 1, 1964, when the airport became fully operational. Northwest's larger Electra prop jets were setting down nicely on the "glistening" 150-foot-wide runway. North Central was the other airline serving Grand Forks at the time, but their smaller planes continued using the old airport until February 1st. When the airport officially opened, the two airlines were operating a total of 12 daily flights, and 65 private aircraft had a new home.

The Dedication

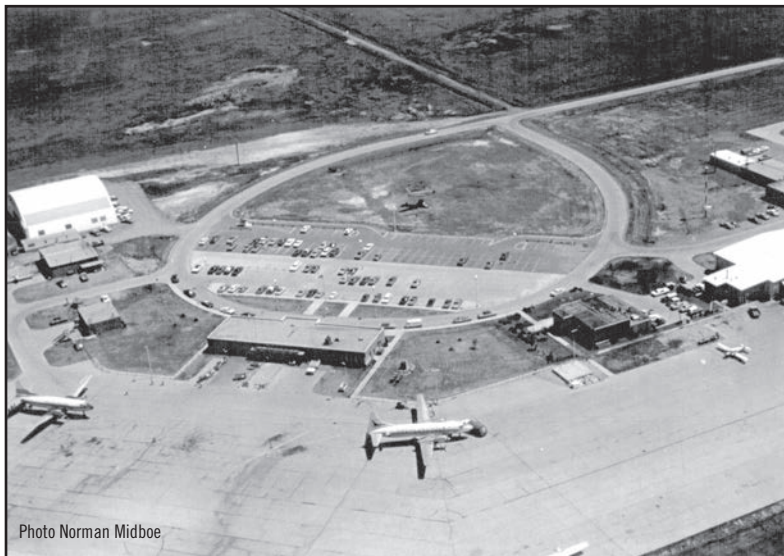
A two day celebration of the new airport's dedication was held on the weekend of August 22-23, 1964 with an open house, a fly-in breakfast, sky divers, plane rides and a Voodoo 101 Jet flyover. There was also a static display of private, commercial and military aircraft. Estimated attendance was well over 10,000 people.



1968 – Another Big Move



112 rubber wheels were placed beneath the 150'x100' round top storage hangar when it was moved from the old airport in 1968. The building had to cross Interstate 29 and travel down Highway 2. While it sat overnight just north of Highway 2, a strong wind blew the entire back wall out.



This photo from 1971 shows the same round top storage hangar (from the top photo) at its new location with a new metal roof. By this time the University of North Dakota was leasing it for its growing flight program that started in 1968.

1968 – Flight School's Start



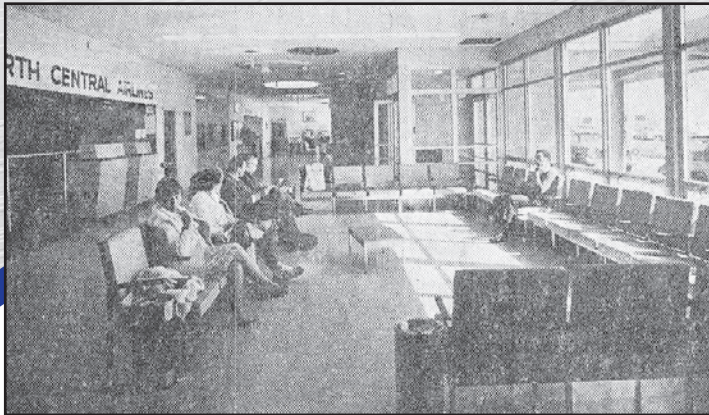
Left to right: John Odegard and Ernie Fox with 2 donated Cessna 150's.

In 1968 at the Grand Forks International Airport, John D. Odegard started what became the most prestigious flight school in the world with only two donated aircraft, twelve students, and one other faculty member. Now the University of North Dakota's John D. Odegard School of Aerospace Sciences maintains a large and growing campus at our airport with 113 faculty and 1,783 students currently attending. Thousands of students from all over the world have been trained and educated in the school's many aerospace related programs. Pilots training with Aerospace's fleet of over 100 aircraft keep the control tower busy with up to 1,800 operations per day.



UND Aerospace Flight Operations 2010

THEN



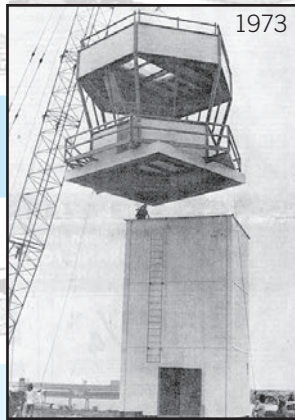
1964 Waiting Area

1964 Aerial



1971

First Air Traffic Control Towers



1973

In 1964 Northwest was using Lockheed Electra turbo-prop airliners and operated 6 flights daily. The Electras carried 66-80 passengers. Their first jet came in 1965.

North Central Airlines also operated 6 flights daily in 1964 using 21 passenger DC-3s and 30-40 passenger twin turbo-prop Convairs.



First Jet (727) 1965

First Presidential Visit
Nixon 1970



Photo Norman Midboe

NOW



Current Airfield



Current Waiting Area

Current Airlines

Delta Air Lines operates up to 6 daily flights carrying 50-76 passengers in regional jets.



Allegiant operates 6-12 flights per week carrying 156-218 passengers using MD 80 (series), Airbus 319 and 320 and Boeing 757 aircraft.



Besides our current Delta and Allegiant carriers, GFK has had a number of different airlines come and go over the past 50 years including Frontier, North Central/Republic, United Express, Mesaba, Northern Airways and Northwest Orient.

Current Tower



2008 Future President Obama



2012 Former President Clinton



Photo Wayne Wetzel

Airport Managers & Executive Directors



Norman Midboe
1960 - 1984



Tom Breton
1985 - 1988



Robert Selig
1988 - 1997



Steve Johnson
1998 - 2009



Patrick Dame
2009 - Present

The Grand Forks Regional Airport Authority was established in 1987 by a joint resolution between the City of Grand Forks and Grand Forks County. Before then the airport manager was an employee of the City of Grand Forks. Now the Executive Director is in charge of the airport facilities and is advised by the Authority's Board of Commissioners. Curious about what the airport is doing these days? Look up the records on the airport's website and see where they are heading in the future.

Past & Present Airport Authority Board Members



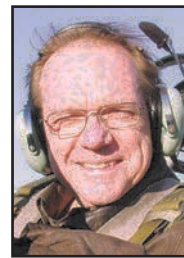
Monica Larivee
1987-1988



Donald Hemmingsen
1987-1989



Hal Gershman
1987-1992; 2007-2014



George Unruh Jr
1987-1993



Jim Weber
1987-1996



Jim Kennelly
1988-1989



Clint Rodningen
1989-1993



Dave Molmen
1992-2007



Doug Norby
1993-1997



Bill Coutts
1993-2000



Rich Becker
2000-2010



Tim Mutchler
1989-Present



Clark Cronquist
1996-Present



Brad Beyer
1997-Present



Gary Malm
2007-Present



Steve Kuhlman
2007-Present



Karl Bollingberg
2010-Present



Dana Sande
2014-Present

Airport Authority Staff

The Airport Authority Operations department (*left*) is responsible for the safety and security of the airport and its facilities. The Maintenance department (*right*) also has many responsibilities – maintaining buildings, grounds, roads, parking lots and the airfield - but their main concern is always keeping the runways clear and safe. Airport Administration (*center top*) takes care of the business side of the airport – compliance, finance, leases, improvements, air service development and public relations. The Custodial staff (*center bottom*) works hard to keep the 50,000 sq. ft. terminal sparkling clean and looking great.



Photos by Wayne Wetzel

Significant Supporters

Former U.S. Senator Mark Andrews served in the U.S. Congress from 1981-1987 (ND-R) and was well known for his significant contributions to aviation throughout the Grand Forks Region which, among other things, resulted directly in the FAA locating the Automated Flight Service Station at Grand Forks. Andrews was also instrumental in funding a number of buildings at UND Aerospace. In the 1980's, the City renamed the airport the Grand Forks Mark Andrews International Airport and in 1996 it was changed to the Grand Forks International Airport Mark Andrews Field.

Former U.S. Senator Byron Dorgan (ND-D) served in the U.S. Congress for thirty years and in the Senate Leadership for 16. Senator Dorgan was a tireless advocate and builder, building our economy and creating new jobs in our region. He's been especially important in the area of aviation. He created the Center for Unmanned Aerial Vehicles at the University of North Dakota. He secured the funding for the helicopter training program at UND and helped secure funding for airport improvements including the new terminal in Grand Forks. The Airport Authority Board resolved in 2010 to name the new terminal the Byron L. Dorgan Terminal.



Sen. Mark Andrews



Sen. Byron L. Dorgan

Community Impact

When a major flood in the spring of 1997 devastated much of Grand Forks/East Grand Forks and surrounding areas, the Grand Forks International Airport provided a critical link to air service for relief supplies and volunteers to be flown into the area. Northwest Airlines greatly contributed to the relief effort by transporting volunteers and supplies into Grand Forks to help with cleanup efforts. These supplies were stored in aircraft hangars and distributed to the affected area communities.



Photo Grand Forks Herald Photographer John Stennes



Photo St. Paul Pioneer Press Photographer Scott Takushi

The photo on the right shows Airport Authority employee Jerry Aase atop the airport fire truck in 1997. "While working for the Grand Forks International Airport's Fire Department, one of the events I will remember forever is helping the Grand Forks City Fire Department fight fire during the flood/fire of 1997," recalls Aase. "It was very unusual to have an airport fire truck driving through 3½ to 4 feet of water on the downtown streets, at night, with no lights anywhere, and major fires burning in many locations. There was a swift river current and we had dumpsters, logs, railroad ties and all sorts of debris going past and ramming into our truck which made our job all the more challenging."

This photo was taken the morning after the fire, when the truck was called back to check on a reported hot spot in one of the buildings. Aase will retire this fall after almost 40 years with the airport.

GFK's Service Providers are the cogs that turn the Grand Forks International Airport. With the FAA's safety regulations and TSA's security procedures, air travel is kept safe at GFK. The friendly services provided by car rental agencies Avis, Hertz, and National/Enterprise, and the food and unique gifts offered by the Red River Valley Grill and Market are conveniences the airport is proud to offer. IAS Air and Corporate Air are also assets to the airport community with their assistance in transporting mail and parcels. Customs & Border Protection's presence at the airport is the reason for "International" in its name.

UND Aerospace occupies much of the northern and eastern sides of the airport and fields a large variety of aircraft. UND not only conducts flight training but houses a Cessna Citation outfitted for weather research. With such a fleet students are able to receive some of the best flight training in the world right here at the Grand Forks Airport.



Photo Neil Nowatzki – UND Aerospace



Photo Wayne Wetzel

FedEx began operations at the Grand Forks Airport in 1984 with a dozen workers and two 727's that stopped at GFK on their way to Winnipeg. Now their enormous Boeing 757's and Airbus A300's are dominating the southern end of the airport and continue to provide daily cargo transportation to the company's main hub in Memphis, TN. In addition, six Cessna Caravans provide service across much of North Dakota and parts of northwestern Minnesota. In just last year alone, FedEx enplaned almost 20 million pounds of cargo!



Photo courtesy Grand Forks Herald (Kiel)



Photo courtesy Grand Forks Herald (Kiel)

GFK Flight Support provides a variety of services from a 15 minute turn around time for corporate air to maintenance and charter services. Their modern facilities accommodate crew lounge areas, excellent conference meeting rooms and flight planning stations. If you're just starting out flying you can get your first taste of flight with their discovery flights in a C-172 with a computerized cockpit.





Delta Air Lines has been with GFK since 2009 and even longer if you consider their merger with Northwest Airlines who served GFK since the early 1930s. Last year alone over 71,000 people departed from GFK on Delta Air Lines flights. Aircraft depart daily to Minneapolis and in so doing continue the legacy of the airport by connecting the Grand Forks area to the rest of the world for nearly a century.



Allegiant has been serving Grand Forks since 2008 and offers a variety of low cost direct flights from GFK to Las Vegas, Phoenix and Orlando. Allegiant's business model is geared toward leisure travelers from the north that want to travel to warmer climates, and as a result GFK sees hundreds of Northern Red River Valley and Southern Manitoba residents depart to those sunny destinations each week. The travel company is also charitable - Allegiant has teamed up with Make-A-Wish to celebrate their continued carriage of sick children and their families to life changing destinations.



Founded in February the **Green and White Flight Club** has been flying at the Grand Forks Airport since April. With membership well over a dozen and continuing to grow rapidly the airport looks forward to a long relationship with one of their newest members. Currently the club operates a C-172 and plans to expand as it grows.



Valley Med Flight is dedicated to serving the Red River Valley by providing air ambulance service for the area. By providing streamlined services a simple phone call can get you transport and care even while on board. Their on board medical team attends to patients during quick transport across the region. Founded in 2010 at GFK, Valley Med Flight currently houses three of their Pilatus PC-12 turbine powered aircraft at GFK to ensure ready transportation is standing by.

Grand Forks Cargo and Enplanement Total

Year	Passengers	Cargo	Operations	Employees
1964	21,358			20
1966	31,226		50,000	
1967	40,133			
1968	51,620			70
1976	81,000		187,000	200
1980	82,000			
1981	68,000			
1988	87,667			
1989	98,404			
1990	94,007	1,076,459	307,136	
1991	93,238	2,086,714	261,675	
1992	99,240	5,747,063	242,466	
1993	96,182	5,768,117	242,466	
1994	100,569	3,279,450	223,180	
1995	93,419	7,579,020	178,387	
1996	92,583	11,990,266	176,021	
1997	95,602	11,919,721	178,507	
1998	85,340	6,526,103	213,385	
1999	85,000	6,537,466	222,903	
2000	90,465	6,177,296	236,348	
2001	71,600	9,984,631	269,940	
2002	87,569	19,472,367	285,510	
2003	89,662	20,000,397	288,637	
2004	91,746	22,643,115	266,437	
2005	88,065	21,351,933	243,778	
2006	86,353	19,829,396	229,501	
2007	82,700	20,005,936	224,261	
2008	88,093	18,702,001	241,423	654
2009	97,361	15,686,254	347,533	748
2010	117,980	17,299,817	341,945	
2011	118,872	17,767,441	348,203	
2012	137,953	17,494,803	366,431	803
2013	148,663	19,830,416	345,964	



GFK  **50**
YEARS
Grand Forks International Airport 1964 • 2014

Timeline

