



Lunken Airport Terminal Building, built 1936. "Fleming" Aircraft was built at Lunken Field in the 1920s. Charles Lindbergh arrived at Lunken Field on August 6, 1927 to promote aviation.

Early Flight Paths Over Terrace Park

By Esther H. M. Power

With and without field glasses a pair of eyes in Terrace Park regularly watched for planes over the village and recorded his observations and comments in 1928 and 1931 diaries.

These were years of burgeoning activity in aviation. In 1927 Lindbergh made his historic flight across the Atlantic and in 1932 Amelia Earhart was the first woman to make a solo flight across the ocean.

The diarist's interest in aviation led him to subscribe to aviation magazines, to order U. S. model aircraft catalogues and to build models in his workshop near his home on Park Avenue.

On a sunny Sunday in 1928 he counted eight airplanes in two hours that flew over his house and identified one as the new seven passenger "Fleming" manufactured at Lunken Field by the All Metal Aircraft Factory.

Diary entries included accidents as well as successes such as an American Eagle plane that went down near Coney resulting in three deaths.

Another Sunday in May he saw a group of planes "visible for just a few minutes" that flew over Miami Grove. They were "part of a big air circus" over Watson Airport – now Blue Ash Airport. During this time Sunday afternoon air shows attracted many viewers.

One disappointment came in October when the Graf Zeppelin, built in Germany in 1926-27, was held at Lakehurst Field in New Jersey and didn't make the flight over Cincinnati because of bad weather. It did come in 1929 bringing Suzie, the gorilla, for the Cincinnati Zoo.

The same October week the diarist included mention of the deaths of two pilots killed in the crash of the Yankee Doodle in New Mexico, attempting to complete a non-stop transcontinental flight.

A number of diary entries in 1931 focus on mail planes. He would go out in good weather to watch for them. Originally civilian mail was flown by army pilots in army planes. After the Postmaster General awarded airmail contracts to private companies in 1926, competition for mail contracts grew. The next step came when passengers were added. Seeing a plane with passengers was an event.

One time the diarist wrote that he could see "cabin windows all lit up" assuming that that plane carried passengers. He noted whether a plane was on time, whether the direction changed and whether a new morning flight had been added.

He could identify planes and recorded seeing three Fords [probably the Ford tri-motor]. Admiral Richard E. Byrd flew an all metal Ford tri-motor over the South Pole in 1928. And the writer recognized the "new Pilgrims used as a mail plane flying south over the hill at a new time."

He thought the airship, Akron, commissioned in 1931, flew over the city on a test flight but not in his viewing area. Opportunity to see it ceased when a storm at sea took it down in 1933.

A highpoint came when he got a good look at a Goodyear blimp flying very low following the railroad.

With the writer's interest and power of observation he would have made an excellent plane spotter in WW II. He did leave a sliver of Terrace Park history

Note – This is an expanded version of the piece published in the October 2010 issue of the Village Views.