

# EARLY BROWARD COUNTY AIRPORTS

by Patrick S. Scott



1925 view, looking north toward the newly-extended Andrews Avenue, of the South Side Golf Course, future site of Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport.

*Photo courtesy of the City of Hollywood Records and Archives Division*

## Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport

Merle Fogg Field was laid out on the site of the former South Side Golf Course, the city's first course, which closed in December 1928. The nine-hole golf course was originally well south of town, on Miami Road before the government laid out Federal Highway in 1927.

Business fell off after the end of the land boom and the opening of an 18-hole course west of the city. Even before the course closed, the Junior Chamber of Commerce proposed that it would make an ideal location for an airfield. The other choice of Sunset Boulevard, present-date Southeast 5th St., was rejected because planes would have had to share the road with automobile traffic. The clearing of trees began as soon as the golf course

closed. By January, a government beacon had been obtained, and the first 60 acres cleared became the base for two Ford tri-motored planes and the Goodyear blimp Defender.<sup>1</sup>

The original field had a clearance of 2,000 feet by 1,750 feet. When formally dedicated on May 2, 1929, the field featured a large circle cleared in the weeds of the former course, visible by airplanes from miles away. "FT. LAUDERDALE" was spelled out beneath the circle, the work of the Fort Lauderdale Aeronautical Association headed by H.W. "Bill" Langmead. Later an aerial directional was painted on the roof of the gymnasium at Fort Lauderdale Central School.

# Miami Herald

FLORIDA'S MOST IMPORTANT NEWSPAPER

WEDNESDAY MORNING, MAY 2, 1929.

TWENTY PAGES TODAY.

NEW FORT LAUDERDALE AIRPORT AS IT LOOKS FROM THE AIR



A large circle indicated the location of Fogg Field to aviators.

*Photo courtesy of the Fort Lauderdale Historical Society*



More than 5,000 people attended the Fogg Field dedication. Three planes showered the crowd with flowers. A Curtiss Robin monoplane No. 3 was the first to land on the day of the official opening.<sup>2</sup>

Long-time Fort Lauderdale resident Max Daughtrey recalls the ride that he and his mother took in a small plane from Fogg Field in 1933 or 1934, when Daughtrey was six. The weeds were

so high that the pilot first taxied a couple of times down the field, using the propeller to clear the weeds from wing height, before Daughtrey and his mother climbed aboard.<sup>3</sup>

Bill Langmead was the city's unpaid "director of aviation" for years, but he was unable to convince officials to build a regular hangar or spend monies on any fixed base operation for aircraft maintenance at the field. Although two runways were cleared



The Fort Lauderdale Central School gymnasium roof can be seen in the bottom right-hand side of this 1958 image.

*Photo courtesy of the Fort Lauderdale Historical Society Hyde Collection*



Opening day crowd at Fogg Field, May 2, 1929

*Kelcy Photo & Book Shop image courtesy of Maxwell B. Daughtrey.*

A biplane at Fogg Field.



Fogg Field, around 1939.

in the weeds around 1934, palmettoes, holes, and other obstacles presented a daunting view from the air.

In 1936, Theodore H. "Ted" Thompson, a flying instructor, moved to Fort Lauderdale and married local swimming star Katherine Rawls. Ted Thompson was an energetic entrepreneur, opening the Thompson School of Aviation around 1936, and Thompson Aero Corporation in 1938. The hangar, large enough to hold scores of small planes at the same time, was completed in 1940. Additional hangars, runways, and lights were added by the U.S. Navy before and during World War II, when the airport served as a naval air station. The thunder of World War II brought

big changes to the sleepy little airport. The Navy purchased it, and quickly began improving the airfield and constructing military barracks. The field was designed to train pilots of aircraft-carrier based torpedo attack planes. At the peak of the effort, 3,600 naval personnel were stationed at the airport.<sup>4</sup>

After the war, in August 1946, the Navy closed the airport. Weeds grew around the runways and a 1947 hurricane damaged the buildings. The U.S. Government leased the airport to the city of Fort Lauderdale from 1948 to 1956, as a general aviation facility, and renamed it Broward Airport. The aerial photo on page 6 shows the airport in 1949, north of the Dania cut-off canal. The main entrance to the airport for many years was in the



These two images show Foggy Field after the runways were laid out. The bottom view, taken before 1936, is looking southeast and the top view, taken after 1936, is looking northeast. The bottom image shows the proving ground for the Pittsburgh Paint Company. Paint samples were exposed to the intense South Florida sun to test their durability.

*Kelcy images courtesy of Max Daughtrey*



northwest corner. In the 1980s, Federal Highway was relocated farther to the east to provide room for airport expansion.

Joseph Mackey began the first scheduled passenger air service from the airport in 1953, but development prospects were limited by the revocable nature of the government's lease. The City finally acquired the airport by deed from the federal government on October 4, 1956. The original air terminal building was completed in

March 1959, and the airport began scheduled trunk line service under the name "Broward International Airport." Within five years, Northeast Airlines, Eastern Air Lines, and Northwest Airlines, along with Mackey, would serve the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport, so named on October 5, 1963. By 1966, heavy use by private aircraft made it the nation's fifth busiest airport in non-airline traffic.<sup>5</sup>



Naval Air Station, 1949.





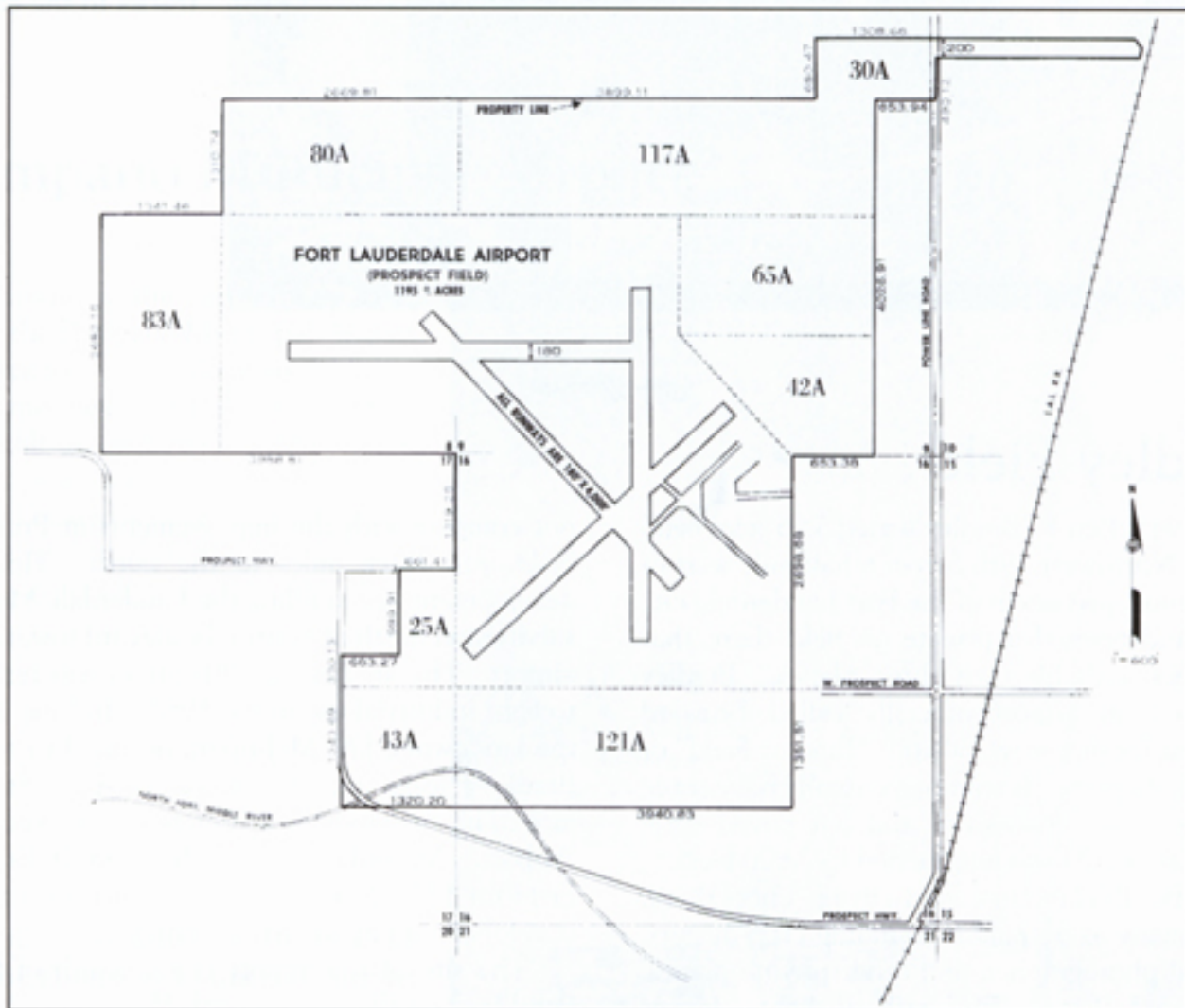
# Executive Airport

Today's Executive Airport was originally laid out by the United States Navy as an auxiliary training and emergency landing field for pilots on duty at the Naval Air Station and at Opa Locka Air Base in northwest Miami. Commissioned in 1942 as West Prospect Satellite Field, or simply "Prospect Field," it was a pilot and crew training station for the Torpedo Bomber, as well as the F3F and the F8F fighter planes. One of 59 air fields in the nation declared surplus by the War Assets Administration, it was deeded to the city of Fort Lauderdale on March 11, 1947. Although it retained the name Prospect Field, it also was called Fort Lauderdale Municipal Airport until 1959,

when the city commission renamed it Executive Airport.<sup>6</sup>

When, in 1954, the city published a magazine-style brochure "to acquaint industrialists with the tremendous possibilities which Fort Lauderdale in general and Prospect Field in particular offer," the former Navy buildings housed light industry manufacturing "everything from bamboo furniture to electronic equipment."<sup>7</sup>

Today, Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport, with more than 1,000 acres, is one of the most active facilities in the nation for private jets and other aircraft.



Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport, 1954. From the collections of the Fort Lauderdale Historical Society





This 1949 view of Prospect Satellite Field, also known as the Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport, shows the airport bounded by Commercial Boulevard on the south and the Seaboard Railway tracks to the east.



## Bradley Field

In 1945, Ben R. Bradley leased a 95-acre bean field on Northwest 19th Street a half mile west of 9th Avenue, just north of the Fort Lauderdale city limits, and opened a private air field there that December with his own three planes. Bradley developed an airport officially called Broward Field, but locals always called it "Bradley Field" or "Bradley Airport." It would eventually have three runways -- two grass strips and one paved strip, which eventually was lengthened to 2,800 feet.

Mr. Bradley later operated a flying school there, and as many as 35 planes including crop dusters, an aerial photographer, and other private planes, were based there. But without lights, longer runways, or aviation-support facilities, it could

not compete with the improvements at Prospect Field, just three miles to the north. Housing development began filling the Lauderdale Manors subdivision north of Sunrise Boulevard toward the airport. The area along 19th Street was rezoned to light industrial use in the 1950s. In June 1965, the landowner, J.N. McJunkin, declined to renew Bradley's lease and the airport closed. Bradley moved his operation to a 10-acre site at Executive Airport. McJunkin offered the land at Bradley Field for \$10,000 per acre, and it was eventually developed into an industrial center.<sup>8</sup>

The site of the airport is just south of Mills Pond Park on the east side of I-95.



## North Perry A

The Broward Airport was also known as Bradley Field. In this 1949 view, two planes are visible in the lower left corner, next to the hangar which Bradley had built in 1947.



## Pompano Municipal Airport

Shown in this aerial view from 1947, the Pompano Municipal Airport, also known as the Pompano Airport, Pompano Field and Pompano Airpark, was built around 1943. After World War II, it was deeded to the city by the Navy. Located west of Federal Highway and north of Tenth Street it is still in use as an airport today.



Shown in this aerial view from 1947, the Pompano Municipal Airport, also known as the Pompano Airport and Pompano Airpark.





# South Perry Field

South Perry Field was simply a grass field which is difficult to pinpoint, east of University Drive and south of Pembroke Road on this 1947 image. Also

located on the Perry property, it was used to take the overflow from North Perry Airfield.



South Perry Field in 1947.

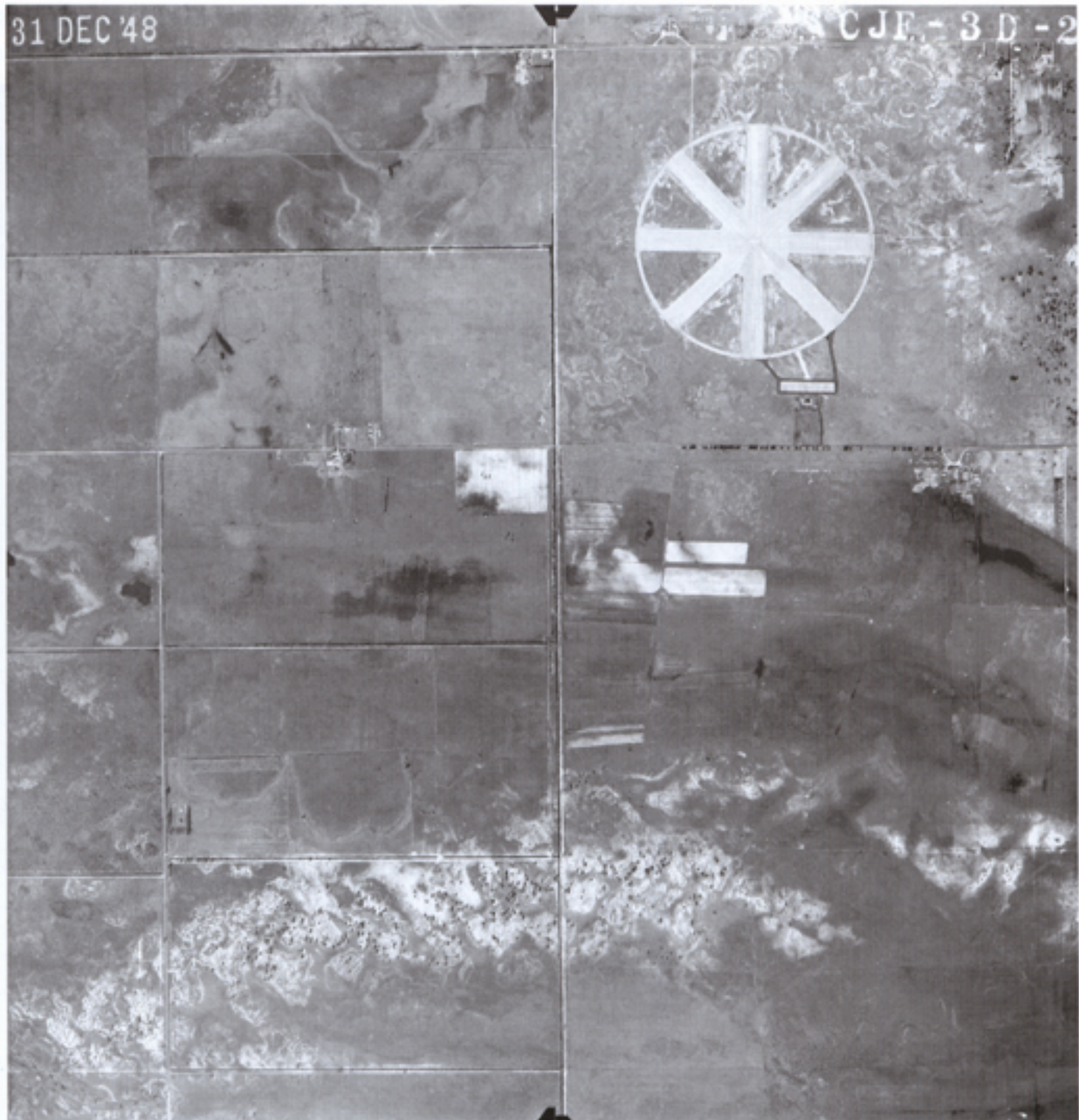




# North Perry Airport

North Perry Airport, also known as Davie Airport or North Perry Field, was built by the Navy on land owned by early farmers Henry and Annabel Perry. The one-square-mile property north of Pembroke

Road was used as a training field, and the partly-drained area across Palm Avenue to the west was used for a bombing range.



North Perry Airport (also known as Davie Airport or North Perry Field) in 1948.





## Hollywood Airport

Land for the Hollywood Airport, also known as the Hollywood Airpark and MacArthur Field, was acquired by the city of Hollywood in 1941. The tract of land was bordered by Moffat Street on the south and Dixie Highway on the east and extended nearly to Washington Street. During World War

II, it was the only airport in Broward County open to private planes. The city sold it to a private concern. By 1952, due to rising property values and neighbors' complaints about the noise and danger, the Airpark was closed and subdivided into lots. It is now a residential section of Hollywood.



Hollywood Airport, also known as the Hollywood Airpark and MacArthur Field, in 1949.





## Forman Field

Forman Field was built on early pioneers Blanche and Hamilton Forman's cow pastures. The land was purchased by the Navy at the beginning of World War II. Eventually, the government-held property would become the site of Nova High School and McFatter Vocational Technical Center and High School, Broward Community College, Nova Southeastern University and other

educational facilities. The wagon-wheel design of the former airfield can still be seen in the oblique aerial photograph from the 1970s. A small portion of one of the original paved runways and perimeter road still exists today on a portion of the University of Florida Branch Campus on the northwest quadrant of the former airfield.

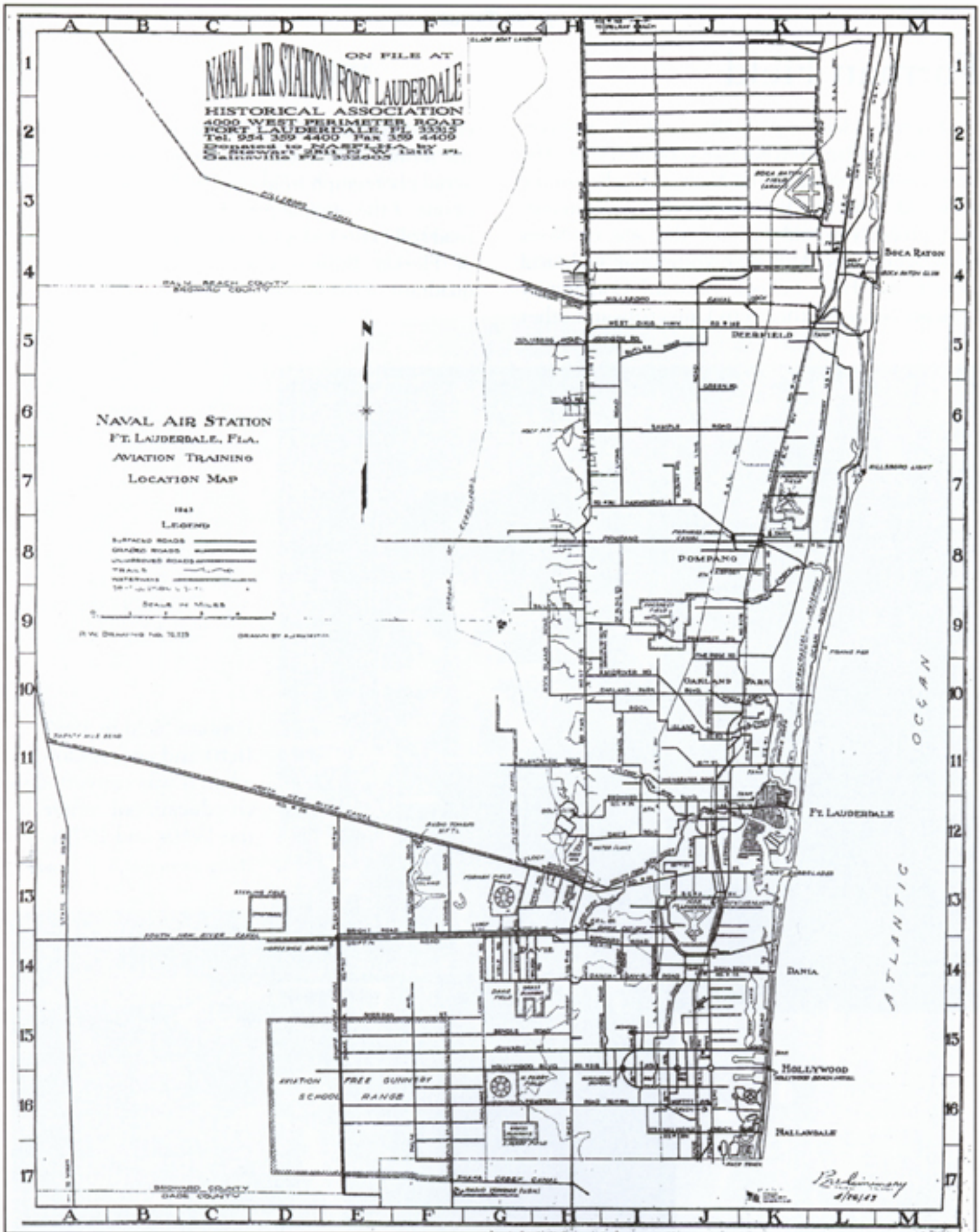


Forman Field in 1947 (left) and later (below) when it was converted to an educational center in the 1960s and 1970s.

*Photos courtesy of R. L. Landers*







Airfields and Stations in Broward County in 1943. From the collections of the Fort Lauderdale Naval Air Station Historical Association



## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Goodyear built the nonrigid airship *Defender* in 1929. At least five blimps, and two rigid zeppelins, barnstormed around the nation for six years, visiting Miami and Fort Lauderdale, in Goodyear's perennial promotions. The *Defender* was sold to the U.S. Navy in 1935, and crashed, with a loss of 12 lives, in 1942. A succession of Goodyear blimps made Opa Locka's airport their winter base until 1980 when the base was relocated to the northwest corner of the Pompano Beach Municipal Airport., [*Fort Lauderdale Times*, October 30, 1941. FLHS Simpson Collection, vertical files, "Aviation: Fogg Field"] The City of Fort Lauderdale acquired the property some years earlier. The boundaries of the city were enlarged, effective December 31, 1929. The newly annexed lands southwest of the city generally included all of the land east of West Dixie Highway (today's State Road 7) and north of the Dania Cut-off Canal, but excluding portions of the future airport and Port Everglades lands that had already been incorporated into the City of Hollywood. Laws of Florida 1929, ch. 14044 (June 7, 1929). This portion of the city was later reduced in size.  
The city was given the power to use, occupy and maintain the tract of land owned by the city and previously used at the "South Side Golf Course" as "a landing place or field for aeroplanes and for airport purposes." Laws of Florida 1929, ch. 14045 (May 25, 1929). Whether the land was already within the city limits, prior to the December 31, 1929 expansion of the city, or was merely treated informally as being within the city limits, does not appear in the special legislation.
- <sup>2</sup> *Fort Lauderdale Times*, October 30, 1941; *Miami Herald*, May 2, 1929, p. 1A. FLHS vertical files, "Aviation: Fogg Field"
- <sup>3</sup> Broward County Historian Helen Landers interview of Max Daughtrey, January 3, 2005
- <sup>4</sup> Broward County Aviation Department, Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport, Airport History, [www.broward.org/airport](http://www.broward.org/airport) and click on History.  
*Fort Lauderdale Times*, October 30, 1941; *Miami Herald*, May 2, 1929, p. 1A. FLHS vertical files, "Aviation: Fogg Field." The most dramatic story of the naval air station's history was that of the famed Lost Squadron of 1945. It has been the subject of several books, and an article in *Broward Legacy*, vol. 18, no. 1 & 2, (1995). Tape-recorded interviews of many of those involved with the naval air station can be found in the Fort Lauderdale Historical Society's oral histories collection. Substantial historical materials have been collected by the Naval Air Station Fort Lauderdale Historical Museum.
- <sup>5</sup> History of Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport, February 23, 1965, author unknown; "The Moving History of One of Our Airports," *Fort Lauderdale Magazine*, 1966. FLHS vertical files, "Ft. Lauderdale-Hollywood Airport"
- <sup>6</sup> "Fort Lauderdale Executive Airport," *Fort Lauderdale Magazine*, 1967. FLHS vertical files, "Aviation."
- <sup>7</sup> Brochure, "Fort Lauderdale Invites You to Consider Prospect Field." FLHS vertical files, "Aviation."
- <sup>8</sup> *Miami Herald*, August 9, 1964, September 7, 1964, and May 3, 1965. FLHS vertical files, "Aviation: Bradley Field"