

Los Angeles ARTCC

On March 15, 1937, the Department of Commerce Bureau of Air Commerce commissioned its sixth (the first in the western U.S.) airway traffic control station in Burbank, CA. A teletype notice to airmen on that day stated that all inbound flights from the control boundaries, or within the area surrounded by those points, must be immediately reported to the new airway traffic control center. All inbound aircraft would receive clearance as to the time and altitude over the outer markers, cleared as to time and altitude over the inner markers, and then cleared to the control tower for landing instructions. The inner markers were Saugus, Palmdale, Fontana, and Oceanside and the outer markers were Daggett and Palm Springs.



Union Air Terminal, 1935

The station, located on the third floor of the Union Air Terminal administration building in Burbank, originally had responsibility for airspace bounded by San Diego, Mexicali, Tucson, Albuquerque, Salt Lake City, and San Francisco. Controllers provided service between the hours of 7:00 am and 12:00

midnight Pacific Standard Time, but demand required the hours be expanded to 24/7 within the first few months of operation. The station, adjacent to the Los Angeles airway radio station, comprised less than 400 square feet.



Amelia Earhart at Burbank
Lockheed plant, 1936

The controllers did not have direct contact with aircraft. If they needed to talk to an airline dispatcher, controllers used the interoffice telephone line, already in use between the airport-owned tower and the airlines. For all other communications, they worked with the airway radio station personnel to send teletype messages. Those messages moved between the two facilities through a hole in the wall.

Many aviation pioneers used Union Air Terminal, in particular, those connected with nearby Lockheed Aircraft Company, such as Wiley Post, Amelia Earhart, and Charles Lindbergh. In fact, the early airway traffic control station controllers saw Amelia Earhart off on her last flight. Earhart lived near the Burbank airport, where she honed her flying skills and worked with Lockheed to refine her aircraft. On May 21, 1937, she departed the airport in her Lockheed Vega

to begin her ill-fated round the world flight.

In December 1938, the Bureau's successor agency, the Civil Aeronautics Authority (CAA), changed the name of the en route facilities from airway traffic control station to airway traffic control center. The Civil Aeronautics Administration moved operations to 7th and Flower in Downtown Los Angeles in 1943, and then to a building south of the Los Angeles Airport on Manchester Blvd. in 1946. The center moved to its current location in Palmdale in March 1963.

Union Air Terminal, in the northwest corner of Burbank opened in 1930 as United Airport. By 1934 the airport had become Los Angeles' primary airport known as Union Air Terminal. During the 1930s Lockheed Aircraft Company, adjacent to the field, evolved into one of the nation's largest aircraft manufacturers, and in 1940 the company purchased the airport and renamed it Lockheed Air Terminal. In 1947, when Mines Field was expanded to become Los Angeles' primary airport, Lockheed Air Terminal became a secondary airport. Lockheed renamed the airport Hollywood-Burbank Airport in 1967. In 1975 the cities of Burbank, Glendale and Pasadena bought the airport and renamed it Burbank Glendale-Pasadena Airport. It became Bob Hope Airport in 2003.