

September 2019 Volume 17, number 3

In this issue:

Northwest's intra-Asia network finally dismantled - see the 2020 system evolution

Exclusive photos of the NWA/KLM Alliance DC-10

Midfield terminal at Memphis?

Our Mission:

To preserve and display the memory of Northwest Airlines' colorful history.

To tell the stories of carriers merged and allied with NWA, and the stations and regions they served.

To show how the legacy of NWA carries on into the future.

Reflections

The Quarterly Journal of the Northwest Airlines History Center

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Regional operations using Jetstream 31 and Saap 340 equipment gave Memphis reach from the Gulf Coast well into the Midwest and underscored the Heartland Strategy for both Republic and Northwest. NWAHC Collection.

Crossroads

Fortress hub no more, Memphis Airport at 90 builds a new path --by Scott Norris

Time and again, the people who came to the bluff overlooking the wide Mississippi River recognized its potential not just as an opportune place to settle, but as a travel and trading hub:

• The Middle Missippian indigenous culture of the 1200s-1400s built a pyramid mound and small city at the place called Chucalissa to serve as an agricultural center as well as a market between the mountain tribes of the Rockies and the coastal peoples along the Atlantic.

• The Spanish built Fort San Fernando de las Barrancas at Chickasaw Bluffs in 1975 for trade and military control - as the French and Americans had also recognized the potential of the site.

• Andrew Jackson and his comrades founded Memphis at this spot in 1819 as the brokerage warehouses they planned would sit above floodwaters yet still have easy access.

• While still a small settlement, the railroads also recognized this spot, and in 1857 the first tracks to reach the Mississippi arrived. In the 20th Century the city was the "southern Chicago" for its wealth of rail interchanges: the easiest routes from Los Angeles to New York, the Great Lakes to the Gulf, and the Northwest to the Southeast all connected here.

Little wonder then that the early airline networks followed the rails to Memphis. The airport was dedicated in 1929 with east-west links on American, and north-south routes on Chicago & Southern.

Crossroads: to page 6

Flight Plan



From the Executive Director

Northwest Airlines employees created the Northwest Airlines History Center. While the museum carries the name of one airline, the NWAHC's goal is to commemorate the work that each of us made to ensure the airline we started with was the best, even if its last name was Northwest. But how best to accomplish that?...NEWSPAPERS!

In 1953, Northwest Orient Airlines decided the company newspaper was to be the medium for top down communication to employees. Until then, copies of Northwest Airlines News, the predecessor of Passages (its title from1974 to early 2008), were distributed to work areas where employees could take a copy – or not. Once placed in this 'must read' status, postage costs became an accepted expense. In March, 1953, Northwest employees began receiving Passages at home. Republic Airlines began mailing copies of its newspaper, People, to employees in 1976.

Northwest ceased to exist 11 years ago but the newspapers exist. They have become both a prized window into the airlines and, from the museum's perspective, an important source to recognize employees. Newspapers are a donation staple to the museum, from a single copy to, in several cases, years worth of issues. Starting with grad students from St. Catherine in the fall of 2018, and continuing this summer with students from the University of St. Thomas, we have sorted, saved the best copy, and begun to catalog every newspaper from Northwest, North Central, and Republic Airlines.

We're missing North Central's July 1953 Northliner issue. We are missing 61 Northwest issues, primarily between 1944-1946, including NWA's WWII Modification Center. The final step will be to apply for a grant to digitally copy this treasure into a format that can be searched by name, event, or date.

The remaining duplicate copies were donated to the Minnesota Historical Society, the Museum of Flight in Seattle, and the Delta Flight Museum so our history is preserved beyond Northwest's home base.

Have items you'd be interested in donating to the NWAHC? Please contact Bruce at bruce.kitt@northwestairlineshistory.org with details of your items, photos if possible, and how we can reach you.



Now, shopping on Amazon helps the NWAHC! 0.5% of every sale is contributed when you shop via this link: smile.amazon.com/ch/41-2020975

THE NORTHWEST AIRLINES HISTORY CENTER, INC.

We are an independent, not-for-profit 501(c)(3) corporation registered in the State of Minnesota.

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Henry V. "Pete" Patzke (1925-2012)

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REFLECTIONS is published quarterly by the NWAHC and is a membership benefit. Submissions are welcomed, and are subject to editing for content and length.

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Printed at Bayport Printing, Stillwater, MN.

In order to name as many individuals as possible, we created two sub-directories, one by date of issue; one by mailing label name. In this manner, future newspaper donations can be compared against the lists: names that appear more than once can be substituted with a new name. We would like to have one newspaper from each employee, making this the largest single memorial of individual recognition to the best airline we finally worked for. Perfection would be to include newspapers from the remaining airlines that were part of our history: Air West, Bonanza, Empire, Hughes Airwest, Pacific, Southern Airways, Southwest Airways, West Coast, Wisconsin Central, and Zimmerly. You can help us preserve their history by encouraging those former employees to consider our goal to preserve our shared history and donate their employee newspapers.

I am pleased at the progress to preserve this particular piece of our history. While collecting our history is important, making it available to the public is the purpose of the Northwest Airlines History Center. It is s-I-o-w process, but with the help of our volunteers – and student volunteers – we are keeping our history from fading away like jet contrails. CAVU.

Preflight Briefing



From the Editor





Welcome to another anniversary-themed issue of *REFLECTIONS* - our cover story this quarter incorporates both Southern's and Republic's birthdays with Memphis Airport's 90th. And just as Republic's brief history was a story of constant change, so too are the plans at play on the passenger side of MEM for the last several years. How *does* an airport that has lost hub status find a new purpose and make the case for investment?

We at the Museum know that once the carrier has departed, there are only so many artifacts left. But that doesn't mean the stories go away - as long as there are people who remember their Northwest Family experiences as employees and passengers, and as long as those stories find context and re-interpretation in the industry's actions today and the future, NWA still lives on. Part of my mission in keeping the NWA legacy vital is expanding the geographic scope of the stories we tell - so I'll take you to Holland, Asia, and the South in these pages!

I'd like to give thanks to some of the folks who helped me with research for this issue: for the KLM Alliance DC-10, I emailed with Jeffrey Smith, Doug Killian, and Jon Austin, all former NWA public relations & marketing folks who I'm looking forward to having more conversations with! Marie Force and the crew at the Delta Flight Museum pointed me to DL and KLM resources that will pay off in future editions. And Glen Thomas, Director of Strategic Marketing at the Memphis Airport, stayed in touch and provided several great photos in this issue and our online blog.

Hope you enjoy these stories! Cross-check and prepare for departure. --Scott

VISITING THE MUSEUM

Current schedule:

Wednesday - Saturday	11 am - 5 pm
Closed Sunday-Tuesday, ar	nd major holidays.

Admission and parking are FREE

(Special events may incur a charge.)

Directions:

FROM MSP INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT:

Use the Metro Blue Line light rail from either Terminal 1 or Terminal 2. Take the southbound train (towards the Mall of America) and exit at the American Boulevard station, which is the stop immediately beyond Terminal 2. The Crowne Plaza Aire Hotel is immediately east, across the street from the station. Trains run every 10 minutes and fares are \$2.50 peak / \$2.00 offpeak. A ticket is good for 2.5 hours of unlimited travel, so depending on the length of your visit to the museum, a separate return ticket may not be necesary.

FROM THE TWIN CITIES METRO AREA:

Head toward MSP International Airport. From I-494, get off at the 34th Ave. S. exit (second exit east of Hwy 77/Cedar) Go south on 34th Ave. S. for one block to American Blvd. Turn left (east) onto American Blvd. Crowne Plaza Aire Hotel is on your right. Free parking is available on the top two floors of the

The museum is on the third floor, across from the

ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP

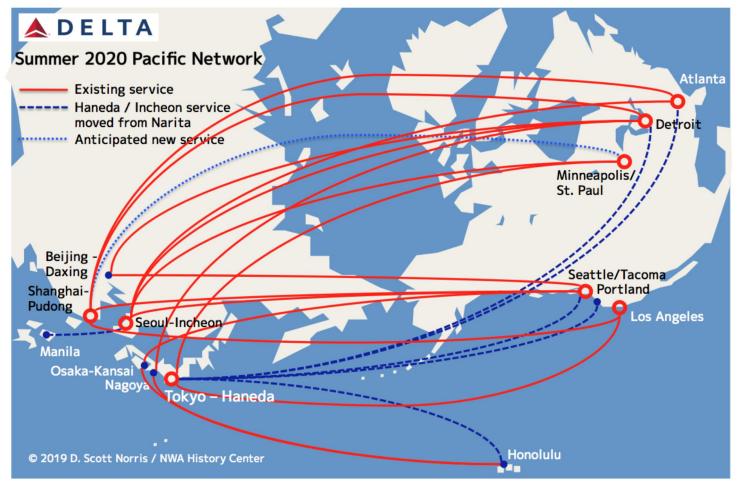
hotel's ramp.

Fitness Center.

\$30 level - receives the REFLECTIONS digital edition early access via email

\$35 level - receives the REFLECTIONS print edition via U.S. Postal Service. (Be sure to give us your email address if you'd also like the early online access.)

Compass Readings



Delta's post-Narita 2020 Pacific network plans unveiled

As expected, the dismantling of Northwest's intra-Asia service will be essentially complete next year. Major changes to the network will include: **TOKYO:**

With the US Department of Transportation giving approval to all of Delta's requested routes and frequencies for Haneda Airport, Delta announced in August they would be suspending all operations at Narita Airport at the beginning of the Summer 2020 schedule change (late March). Service on the Narita-Singapore route will be terminated in September 2019 and that station will be closed, with equity partner Korean Air picking up connecting traffic over Seoul.

For the March 2020 edition of *REFLECTIONS*, we will feature a retrospective on Narita airport. We want to include your memories of working and visiting there - please visit our Facebook page and comment!

SEOUL:

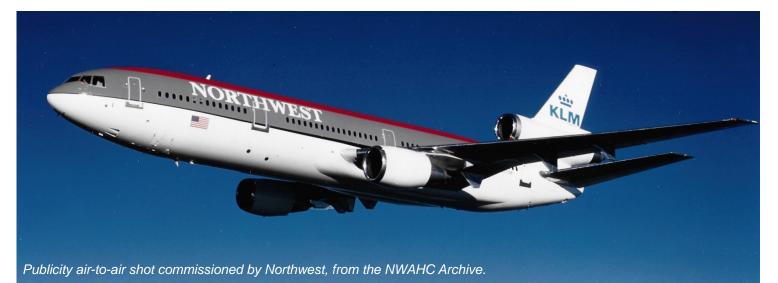
The Narita-Manila route will be transferred to Incheon so that Delta's own-metal service to the Philippines is maintained. As of press time Delta had not announced where the MNL-ICN flight will continue to in the US or what aircraft type would operate the flight. Meanwhile, with the Fall 2019 schedule change, Delta will upgrade its Minneapolis-Seoul service from Boeing 777 to Airbus A350 equipment.

BEIJING:

The opening of the city's massive reliever airport, Daxing, on the south side of the city, is scheduled for September 2019, and equity partner China Eastern will have a large quasi-hub presence there, moving nearly all operations over from Capital Airport. Daxing is expected to receive all SkyTeam flying over the course of 2020, with Delta expected to make the move early on, although timing has not been announced.

SHANGHAI:

With American Airlines' formal abandonment of its Chicago-China Tier 1 frequencies, these valuable slots became available to United and Delta, who plan to use them in Spring 2020 for, respectively, an extra frequency from Newark and new service from the Twin Cities. Delta has announced it will use its Airbus A350-900 on the MSP route. The start date has not been announced, but we expect to cover this launch for the March 2020 *REFLECTIONS*.



KLM turns 100 remembering the Alliance DC-10

In the late 1990s, Northwest had developed a taste for special promotional aircraft paint schemes, in both the cargo and passenger fleets. Following the popular 1997-98 deployment of the 747-400 WorldPlane (*REFLECTIONS*, March 2019, pages 6-7) and with the launch of a unified global sales & marketing team in Fall 1998 - where Northwest handled KLM in the Americas and East Asia, and KLM handled Northwest in Europe, West Asia, and Africa - NW wanted some way to show off its most comprehensive alliance in markets all around the globe.

Northwest's DC-10 fleet covered Atlantic, Pacific, and even domestic sectors, making it a natural choice for the paint shop to work marketing magic. Ship 1237, N237NW, was given a unique split scheme and debuted in November 1998.

Photo searches on Google and Flickr show the special scheme was seen as far afield as Honolulu and Osaka, with many visits to London, Frankfurt, and of course Amsterdam. This craft was the last DC-10 to wear KLM colors - as they had retired their own fleet in 1990. #1237 wore her Alliance colors until late 2000, when she was repainted into the Bowling Shoe scheme, which she retained for the rest of her career with NWA. She was withdrawn at Marana in February 2007, and flew briefly with ATA and World Airways before her decommissioning in July 2010.



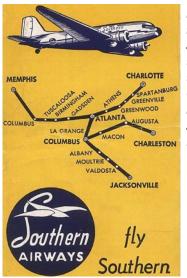


Feature Article

While starting with just a sod runway and three hangars, a functional terminal was constructed and the facilility was lit by 1930. Eastern arrived in 1939 with a link to Atlanta along with a new, larger WPA terminal building, and the US Army came in force during World War II, paving three long, intersecting runways (in a snowflake pattern so that wind direction was never a concern) for use as a staging area for overseas aircraft deliveries as well as cargo.

After the war, service continued on American's Southern Transcontinental route and Eastern's link to Atlanta, but Chicago & Southern would be merged into Delta - by 1959 DL was running a dozen daily departures with a southbound midmorning bank and a northbound bank at dinnertime. Capital Airlines started a route into North Carolina, Virginia, and Washington DC in 1953. And Braniff entered the scene in 1956 on the Dallas - Nashville - New York corridor, later also picking up service out toward Denver and interchanging with Eastern to reach Florida. MEM was clearly well-served on the trunk lines by the early 1960s.

Of course, also after the war the Local Service Airlines came into being, and just as with the railroads decades earlier, these carriers also saw MEM as a logical interchange point. Trans-Texas (later Texas International) worked its way up in 1953 through the small towns of east Texas, northwest Louisiana, and southern Arkansas. Central applied for service from Oklahoma and northern Arkansas, realized after the 1967 merger with Frontier. Allegheny made it all the way down from Pittsburgh and Phildelphia in 1968. And not least, Southern Airways chose Memphis as its western terminus in 1949.



Left: routemap from Southern's June 10, 1949 timetable. From the collection of Craig Morris via Bjorn Larsson's Airline Timetable Images website.



The original 1929 terminal also served as a Standard Oil gasoline filling station. Public domain image provided via the excellent Historic-Memphis.com website.



1940s illustration postcard showing the 1937-era terminal building.



Right: The 1937-era terminal building in 1962 showing its extensions, with two Trans-Texas DC-3, two Southern DC-3, and one Southern Martinliner on the ramp. Image from Zeamays via Wikimedia Commons, GNU 1.2 license.



Images courtesy of the Memphis Airport archives. Above, the 1963 original structure. Below, expansion in progress during 1973-74.





MEM images from 1970s Southern annual reports.



As traffic from Southern and other regional and mainline carriers continued to build, and especially once jet aircraft were introduced, the 1937-era terminal strained to handle the load. Noted architect Roy Harrover was commissioned to design a new headhouse and concourse, which was opened in June 1963 with one central terminal and a Y-shaped pier extending to the south. In 1974 this structure would be again expanded (as anticipated), with Harrover adding eastern and western terminal pods and concourses.

Southern Airways grew in cadence with the airport: from just one route and two daily departures in 1950 touching five stations, by 1960 SO was up to six routes with sixteen departures, touching 28 stations. In 1961 Southern added Martin 404 equipment to its DC-3 fleet and in 1967 brought the DC-9 on line. However, even as late as 1968, SO's route network retained Memphis as a terminus, bringing passengers and freight in from the south and east and interlining with other regional or longer-haul carriers, with Delta and American receiving most of the connecting traffic.



Southern's routes from Memphis, per the September 1968 System Timetable. Graphic by author.

With the successful introduction of jet equipment, the CAB finally started to grant Southern new route authorities outside their 1950s core network. Memphis was not hooked into the "Atlanta bypass" route from the Gulf Coast via Columbus, GA to Washington DC and New York City - but in 1969 flights from MEM to St. Louis were launched, and in 1970, flights to Chicago began. The Chicago run would become Southern's "trunk route" with up to 7 daily nonstop roundtrips.

Multi-stop service to Orlando and Miami also started in 1970. It would take until 1978 for the next phase of routes from Memphis to be released: Minneapolis/St. Paul, Milwaukee and Wichita -Denver. At last Southern achieved north-south connecting balance - but too late to save the company, and in 1979 SO merged with North Central to form Republic.

Reflections, September 2019



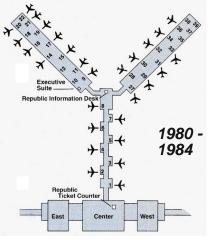
While new signage went up and new paint stripes went on aircraft in 1979, Republic's ability to grow its Memphis operation quickly was stymied by several factors: the failure to quickly negotiate a unified pilots' seniority list, rear pressure bulkhead issues on most of the Southern DC-9 fleet, and the urgent servicerecovery need rising from Southern's replacement of Martin 404s with underpowered, cramped Metroliners. (See the March 2019 issue of *REFLECTIONS* for more on these issues.)

And while Deregulation was being implemented, the ability for any airline to open any route would not fully kick in until 1982. North Central had ordered factory-new Boeing 727-200s, but only enough to augment the northern system - and Southern's order for factory-new MD-80 jets was still more than a year away from delivery. The industry-wide crises of doubling fuel costs, the ballooning of interest rates, and the fallout from Ronald Reagan's firing of PATCO air traffic controllers only added more headwind to the challenges to growth at Memphis.

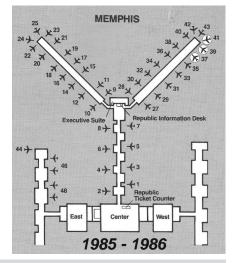
No thanks to the Metroliner fiasco, Southern/Republic daily departures at MEM actually dropped from their peak at 71 in July 1979 to just 49 by December 1980. The lack of commuter feed, plus Republic's (some would say foolhardy) pursuit of market share at Atlanta (using scarce DC-9s to open routes to New York LaGuardia and Chicago O'hare as well as feeder service into the Deep South), kept the company from investing at Memphis. Likewise, Republic's merger with Hughes Airwest in Fall 1980 added no new service as RW did not serve MEM. Las Vegas and Los Angeles would not get connected to Memphis unitl 1982, and Phoenix was not linked until 1983.

Amazingly, even hub-to-hub service was deficient in the front half of the 1980s: Detroit and Minneapolis only had two daily nonstops each at July 1982, and ATL only one. At least by then MEM had 65 daily departures, but it wouldn't exceed the pre-merger total until July 1983 with 82.

As Republic changed leadership and rationalized the former Hughes Airwest system, it also confronted its failure to grow share at Atlanta and Chicago. The phrase "Heartland Strategy" was used as early as February 1980, but its true implementation didn't begin until 1984 as aircraft were finally reassigned to build up the Memphis hub and add frequencies to the hubs and Gulf Coast markets. RC had 87 daily departures in June of that year, and 97 daily departures in December, adding spokes to cities like Dallas/Ft. Worth, Indianapolis, Oklahoma City, Washington-Dulles, and Miami. This was just the prelude, however, as the rest of the decade would see a whirlwind of growth.







Reflections, September 2019

Air-to-air shot taken by Capt. Ellis Chernoff, who ran the maintenance operations for Express Airlines I and was responsible for the carrier quickly receiving FAA approvals.



Republic Express - the breakthrough needed to build the MEM hub

As described in the June 2019 issue of *REFLECTIONS*, Southern's fleet of Swearingen Metroliners was incapable of replacing its Martin 404 feeder service to Atlanta and Memphis from smaller stations such as Tupelo, MS and Muscle Shoals, AL. Republic was forced to swap in Convair 580s and retain DC-9s on short-haul routes: while local flyers appreciated "mainline" aircraft, load factors were too low to support high-frequency service, and this hampered Republic's ability to build connecting traffic at MEM. As RC planners determined in 1984 the Atlanta mini-hub had to close to focus southern traffic through Memphis, they also realized that smaller markets had to be served more efficiently and more often.

At the same time, Michael J. Brady was building the Eastern Metro Express commuter network in Atlanta, and desired to start his own carrier to repeat the concept at other airlines' hubs. Republic signed a 10-year contract with Brady and in June 1985 Express Airlines I began operations from MEM with 18-passenger Jetstream turboprops to Monroe, LA, Greenville, MS, and Golden Triangle Airport, MS. By Fall 1986, Republic Express had not only completely replaced short-haul Convair and DC-9 flying to existing stations, but had also opened extensive new routes to places like Springfield, MO, Evansville, IN, and Paducah, KY. Stations usually saw 4 to 6 flights daily, and boardings actually increased: frequency was more important to grow traffic than aircraft gauge. The freed-up mainline aircraft were used to expand MEM service to places like Little Rock, Tulsa, and Philadelphia - which further built connecting traffic and profit for Republic.

Republic worked its schedule up to five daily connecting banks; West Coast stations like Los Angeles and San Francisco saw two daily departures but most Midwest and Southern stations got 4 or 5. International routes to Cancun and Puerto Vallarta opened with two weekly frequencies each. Several MSP and DTW frequencies flew "wingtip to wingtip" to handle high traffic; RC's new 757 fleet was just the right aircraft with the range and capacity to keep Memphis expanding. And the merger with Northwest was seen by local leaders as further growth potential.

MEM hub statistics before and just after the merger:December 198497 daily departures (all mainline)April 1985154 daily departures (all mainline)September 1985198 daily departures (154 mainline / 44 Express)January 1986213 daily departures (160 mainline / 53 Express)June 1986223 daily departures (164 mainline / 59 Express)January 1987289 daily departures (211 mainline / 78 Express)





Post-merger ramp shots taken by aviation photography legend George Hamlin at MEM in November 1986. Used with Mr. Hamlin's permission.

What Might Have Been - Midfield Concourses & Underground People Movers

After the Republic merger, Northwest sought to reassure Memphis-area corporate accounts and the labor force that it had every intention of growing the MEM hub.

An advertisement in the Fall 1986 Memphis Chamber of Commerce mailing stated, "...Republic's smaller DC-9 aircraft will largely be replaced with DC-10s, Boeing 757s and 727s, and MD-80s... Eventually, two new midfield subterminals for domestic and international passengers will be built and linked by subway trains operating in tunnels prepared 11 years ago."

Memphis Airport officials in 2019 could not locate any planning documents to corroborate this statement, so we've created our own speculative artwork of a possible midfield complex: this gate arrangement could have supported about as many flights as Delta's ATL hub in the early 1990s. A U-shaped subway route would have connected the ends of each concourse.





Northwest marketed heavily and consistently to secure its position as Memphis' hometown carrier.

Northwest embraced the "Heartland Strategy" and continued to add spokes to Memphis such as Austin and San Antonio, Seattle and Boston, in order to provide comprehensive coverage of major business centers and compete for national and regional corporate contracts. MEM low costs allowed Northwest to compete in Southern and Gulf Coast markets against American at DFW, Continental at IAH, and Delta at ATL. NWA also grew its Airlink relationship with Express I, whose Saab 340s and Jetstreams would reach as far as Cincinnati and Columbus, OH, Panama City and Tallahassee, FL, Wichita, KS, and Greenville/Spartanburg, SC.

The economic crisis after the first Gulf War put a block on any massive growth plans for the 1990s, including the long-desired nonstop link to Tokyo-Narita (despite the airport's construction of the World Runway to allow FedEx the ability to execute the same route for cargo). Departures through most of the decade varied between 200 - 220 per day, with a handful of international warmweather leisure flights, concentrated into 3 to 4 main banks. The KLM Alliance paid a dividend, with a nonstop to Amsterdam beginning in June 1995, initially operated with KLM 767-300 equipment but eventually passing over to NWA metal with DC-10s and A330s used in the 2000s.

Northwest kept tinkering with the hub to improve yield, buying Canadair Regional Jets for Express I, deploying Mesaba's Avro Regional Jets, and sending in mainline A319s by the end of the 1990s. RJs were able to finally displace Southern's DC-9-10s which had called MEM home for over 30 years.



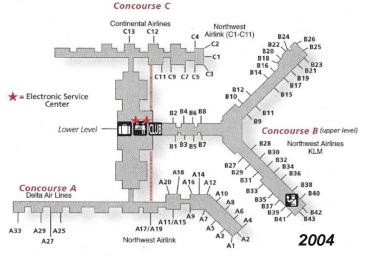




Image courtesy of the Memphis Airport archives.

regional jets, and the airport's low handling costs, NWA rolled out the

up over 260 in five daily banks and built out additional gate space for

In Summer 2000, again relying on its efficient local workforce, heavy use of "MemphIS on the Move" strategy, which brought total daily departures back Field and McAllen, TX, and Delta's more-economical 767-300 replaced A330 metal on the Amsterdam run. Perpetual construction and weather delays in Atlanta made having a regional backup operation seem like a good idea.

regional operations on the southern end of the A and C concourses. The investment was a success, with annual enplanements moving into the 10.5-11 million range through the first half of the 2000s - even despite the economic shock after September 11 - and staying above 10 million all the way to decade's end. When Northwest announced its pioneering order for the Boeing 787, officials stated they intended to use it to open the Narita link at long last.

But the economic crash of 2007-2008 was too much for Northwest to handle, and despite cost improvements gained through bankruptcy, merger was the course decided upon. If with Continental, MEM would parallel Houston; if with Delta, MEM would be a smaller copy of Atlanta.

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Moving forward - adapting to life as a post-hub airport

Memphis-Shelby County officials and airport staff had no illusions that they would be able to entice another carrier to build a conventional transfer hub needing 20 or 30 gates, and understood they would have to market the airport differently to attract flights for local passengers and events.

MEM set up a team to find ways to continue to keep servicing costs low, and built a fund to subsidize new service to Top 50 markets. They continued work on new parking ramps and commissioned new architecture to re-build Concourse B with wider hallways, larger gaterooms, higher ceilings, and more food and retail options.

Work is well underway, with Concourse B mostly torn apart and all remaining carriers relocated to the A and C piers. In 2021 the "new" B pier will open and house all airlines with jet service. Most of the A and C piers will be closed off at that point but kept intact should future demand increase.

Southwest, Frontier, and Allegiant have entered the market, as has Air Canada, all relying on a heavy base of leisure traffic. And with new service, enplanements have grown to 4.4 million in 2018. MEM is also hoping to attract European leisure operators and is cross-marketing riverboat cruises and its unique musical and social justice history to foreign visitors curious about this important part of America.



Images courtesy UrbanARCH with Alliance.

607 Image by Scott Sherrin via Wikimedia Commons, CC 2.0 license. During the merger process in 2008-2009, Delta pledged to retain Memphis' hub status despite the obvious overlap with their mega operation at ATL. Regional jets from MEM were used to scout new markets like Dallas Love

But as Delta's prior Cincinnati hub was pulled down, and a new concourse opened at ATL, closure also awaited Memphis: RJs were redeployed and mainline services concentrated on core origin-destination business markets. Eventually those too disappeared, and in 2019 Delta's routes reach only domestic hub cities. Enplanements fell from 10 million in 2010 to just 3.5 million in 2015. Despite the arrival of low-cost carriers, their no-interlining policies mean Memphis will no longer function as a Crossroads: a hub no more.



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