

LOS ANGELES NEEDS *An Airport Program*

By T. C. COLEMAN

- (2) Union Air Terminal (now Lockheed Air Terminal); used by: Airlines, Lockheed.
- (3) Long Beach Municipal Airport; used by: Douglas, Military, Airlines.

Class 3 (Feeder Airports)—5

- (6) Santa Monica Airport; used by: Douglas.
- (7) Metropolitan Airport, Van Nuys; used by: Timm, Military.
- (9) Lancaster Airport.
- (10) Reeves Field, San Pedro; used by: Military.
- (8) Vail Field, East Los Angeles.

Class 2 (Feeder Airports)—11

- (11) Compton Airport.
- (12) Alhambra Airport; used by: Harlow Aircraft.
- (13) Grand Central Airport.
- (16) Culver City Airport; used by: Hughes Aircraft.
- (17) Gardena Valley Airport.
- (18) Los Angeles Eastside Airport.
- (20) Pomona Airport.
- (22) Newhall Airport.
- (23) Palmdale Airport; used by: Military.
- (25) Monrovia Airport.
- (36) Wilmington Airport.

Class 2 (Feeder Seaplane Bases)—1

- (41) Avalon Seaplane Landing.

Class 2 (Factory Airports)—3

- (31) Vultee Airport, Downey; used by: Vultee.
- (32) Lockheed Airport, Burbank.
- (33) Northrop Field, Hawthorne; used by: Northrop.

From the above tabulation of 23 airports of all descriptions, it was apparent to the Los Angeles County Regional Planning District engineers that this number was hardly adequate for the prewar needs of our community. Therefore, a study was undertaken by that organization and the results of the study made public early in 1940, when the "Master Plan of Airports" was published under the direction of Colonel Wm. J. Fox, Chief Engineer, and sponsored by the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, Lockheed Aircraft Corporation, and the California Air Industries Association, Ltd.

At that time the maximum length of concrete runway for any airport in the county was 5,000 feet (Los Angeles Municipal). The average length of runway for Class 4 (Major Terminals) airports was 4,200 feet and for Class 2 (Feeder Airports) under 2,000 feet. Pavement was the exception rather than the rule in the latter case, and most airports were far from presenting a pleasing appearance. Only three were at all suitable for commercial use.

NEW AIRPORTS PROPOSED

The "Master Plan of Airports" in 1940 proposed many new sites, shown on the accompanying map. None

UNLESS we have more intelligently directed action in planning for and acquiring sites for airports in California during 1945 and 1946, it is likely that California will no longer remain the "10 per cent State in Aviation." For many years our state has been the home of about 10 per cent of the airplanes of the country and over 10 per cent of the pilots. In January, 1939, with 4 per cent of the nation's population, we had 1,179 airplanes based in the state, or 10 per cent of the total non-military aircraft, and 4,207 licensed pilots, or 18 per cent of the total. No other state had as many airplanes as California and only five states had more than the 501 planes based in Los Angeles County. In California 84 per cent of the airplanes were light, privately-owned craft.

INSURE LEADERSHIP IN FLYING

Most people assume that Los Angeles will lead in postwar flying because we are likely to continue to lead in building airplanes. But where are the estimated 30,000 airplanes in California going to take off, land, and be serviced and stored if we reach the five-to-10-year national forecast of 300,000 airplanes and maintain our 10 per cent position? In earlier studies made before the outbreak of war in Europe it had been more conservatively estimated that if the rate of increase in private flying continued on a straight-line basis, there would be 5,000 airplanes in Los Angeles County by 1950 and 9,000 by 1960. This estimate is based on a population of 5,000,000 in 1960 (we have nearly 3,350,000 now) and the ratio of one airplane per 600 persons. No provision is made for visiting airplanes in these estimates. The author assumes that California will continue to be a popular destination for out-of-state private fliers, if we have airports to handle them.

HOW MANY AIRPORTS DO WE HAVE?

Just before the war we had the following airport facilities in Los Angeles County: (See map)

Class 4 (Major Air Terminals)—3

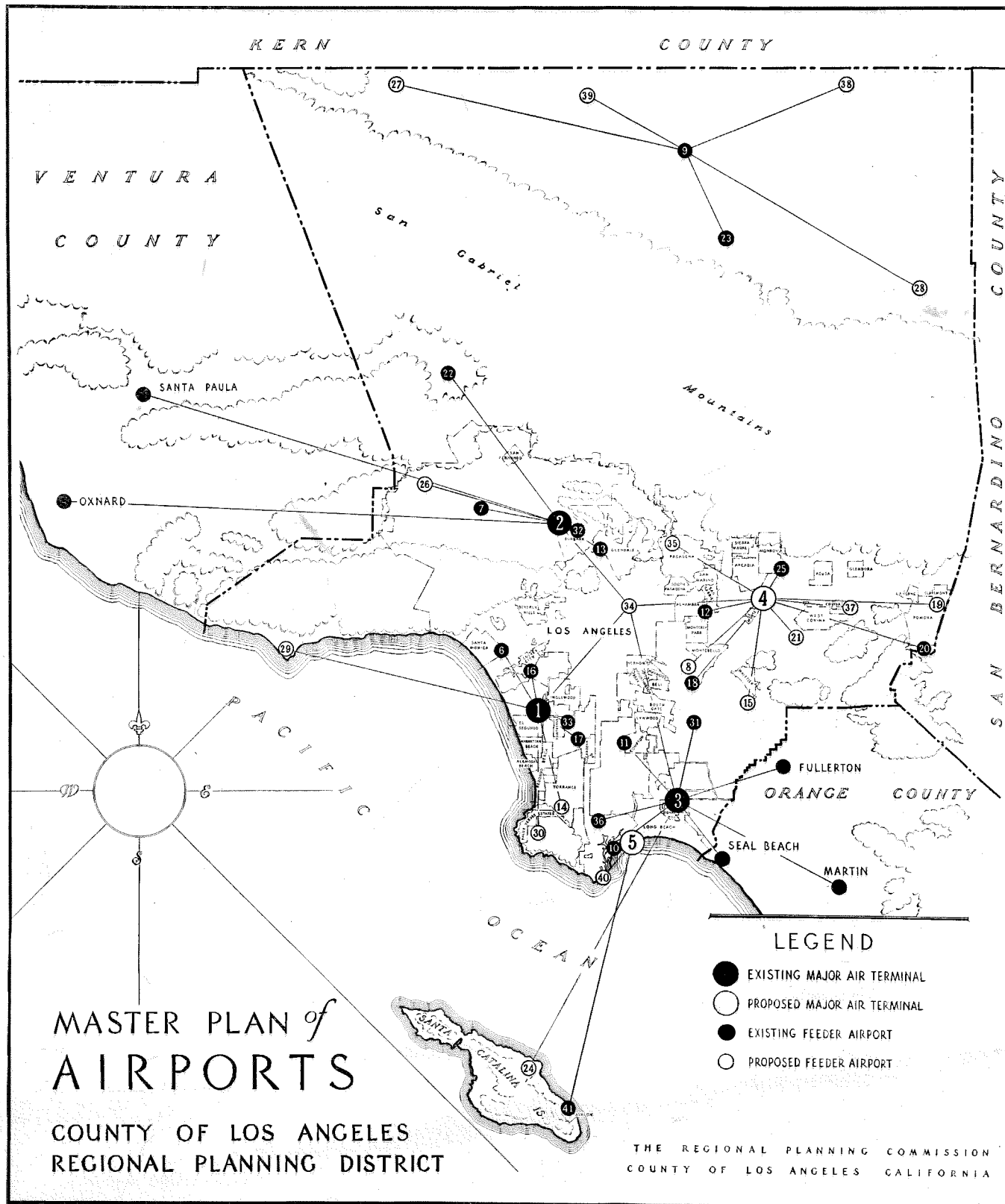
Map Key

- (1) Los Angeles Municipal Airport; used by: North American, Douglas, El Segundo, Military.

of these sites has been acquired for airport purposes, to the author's knowledge, with the possible exception of military installations which are not announced publicly. Most of the development of military airports since the war has been in remote sections of the state, which are practically inaccessible by automobile to the large centers of population—a condition prohibitive to the private flier. Furthermore, some of the airports listed as available in 1940 may continue to be used exclusively by manufacturers or commercial operators,

and some of the privately-owned small airports have been abandoned because of the recent restrictions on private flying while the war is in progress.

With the trend so decidedly away from providing facilities for the private flier (a trend which was in evidence long before the war began), unless some of the sites named below, or others, are acquired and improved, it is hard to visualize the healthy revival of private flying in and around Los Angeles. The "Master Plan" suggested the following additional airport im-



provements; they are listed in recommended order of priority:

Class 4 (Major Air Terminal)—1

Map Key

- (4) San Gabriel Valley Airport.

Class 4 (Seaplane Terminal)—1

- (5) Los Angeles-Long Beach Seaplane Base.

Class 2 (Feeder Airports)—15

- (14) Lomita Airport.
- (15) South Whittier Airport.
- (19) Pomona-C Claremont Airport.
- (21) Puente Airport.
- (24) Buffalo Springs Airport (Catalina Island).
- (26) Reseda Airport.
- (27) Quail Lake Airport.
- (28) Black Butte Airport.
- (29) Point Dume Airport.
- (30) Palos Verdes Airport.
- (34) Downtown Landing Field.
- (35) Arroyo Seco Landing Field.
- (37) Covina Airport.
- (38) Joshua Airport.
- (39) Antelope Airport.

Class 2 (Feeder Seaplane Base)—1

- (40) Cabrillo Beach.

HOW MANY AIRPLANES WILL THIS PLAN HANDLE?

This number of additional airports (18), together with expansion and improvement of existing airports, may sound ambitious, but when one considers the fact that only one additional major air terminal, one new major seaplane terminal, and 16 Class 2 (small feeder type) terminals are involved, it may not even be adequate for immediate postwar needs. Of the less than 40 land airports listed, one was used before the war exclusively by the Navy, nine are remote, and three are private factory fields, leaving only 25 for ordinary civilian and commercial use. "These 25 must harbor practically all civil airplanes in the county. At least two of the major air terminals will be required to accommodate transport planes, and heavy transport traffic may ban the private flier from their use. Two feeder airports are proposed as taxi or local stations with limited storage facilities. One is a special site more adaptable for factory or military use. Therefore, about 20 airports can provide accommodation and hangar space for private flying," says the "Master Plan."

The planners further estimated that the capacity of these airports, if provided with single runways, is: 3 large airports—300 airplanes; 17 smaller airports—1,000 airplanes.

This number of airplanes is little more than twice the number of civil airplanes in use in Los Angeles County in 1939. Further expansion would be possible by improving and expanding all existing airports, or adopting a more ambitious plan. Some airports have been improved since the war.

SOME PLANNING NOW UNDER WAY

On the more optimistic side, it is encouraging to note that such civic groups as the aviation committees of the Los Angeles and Pasadena Chambers of Commerce have succeeded in getting the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors to appropriate funds for a revision of the "Master Plan for Airports," now under way at the Regional Planning Commission's engineering office under the able direction of Taylor Sues. Also, the City of

Los Angeles Department of Airports, under the guidance of the Board of Municipal Airport Commissioners and the newly created Aviation Ways and Means Committee, is planning a large-scale expansion for the Los Angeles Municipal Airport.

WHERE DO WE GET THE MONEY?

The stumbling block is, of course, money. To complete the full plans for the expansion of the Los Angeles Municipal Airport alone will call for at least \$25,000,000. Investments in private and municipal airports in Los Angeles County by 1940 had reached only about \$12,000,000, and the Regional Planning Commission originally estimated that an additional \$16,000,000 (exclusive of the Los Angeles Municipal Airport) would be required to complete its plans.

This is still a modest sum when compared with the cost of improving harbors and highway systems. Private capital cannot do a large part of this financing. Except for some of the large ones, few airports can be made entirely self-supporting. Various proposals for federal aid, state and local bond issues, aviation gasoline tax, and license fees are currently being made. Because aviation has rapidly become big business, the whole issue of airport development may get well snarled in politics.

A FEW SUGGESTIONS

The creation of a County Airport Authority with power to act, soliciting the help of the Federal government, adequate planning, land acquisition before speculation in land for airports can become too prevalent, and a realistic approach to the fact that the aviation industry is already paying a big local and state tax without benefit of state and local funds for airports are a few of the first steps which can be taken now. We must get down to earth before we can get Los Angeles into the air.

The Month in Focus

(Continued from Page 3)

which has grown up literally with the aircraft industry, Los Angeles' air terminal situation is notoriously unsatisfactory. T. C. Coleman's authoritative article relates the problem of providing suitable freight and passenger handling facilities, then presents some possible solutions. It has been said that only a dozen fields in the world are adequate for handling B-29 bombers, and that postwar commercial transports will be even larger than these giants of the sky. The strategic value of early action to attain Mr. Coleman's objectives is thus quite apparent.

ELECTRIC UTILITIES MEET WARTIME PROBLEMS

The article by Alex A. Kroneberg, senior electrical engineer for the Southern California Edison Company, appearing in this issue, discusses problems met by Mr. Kroneberg's company in satisfying ever-increasing demands of war industries for electric power. The April issue will present a very informative discussion by Alan Capon on the solution of municipal utility problems arising from the dramatic aircraft-accelerated growth of Burbank. Ten years ago Burbank was a typical residential, marketing, and small-scale manufacturing center in the suburban fringe of metropolitan Los Angeles. Today it is a booming aircraft-production center with greatly enlarged domestic and industrial demand on its municipal utilities. Tomorrow, what?