

'50s a significant era in airport's history

By TESA CULLI

tesa.culli@register-news.com

MT. VERNON — The ground which later became the Mt. Vernon Outland Airport has been used as an airfield by local aviators since the 1930s, but it was in the 1950s when its namesake became the airport manager, and a concrete runway was built.

The airport became an official part of the city in 1942, when 60 acres were purchased and a small hangar was built. The runway was built in 1959, the same year Earl Outland became the manager of the facility.

The all-weather runway was a 2,000-foot-long, 60-foot-wide paved runway, which is part of the main runway that exists to this day.

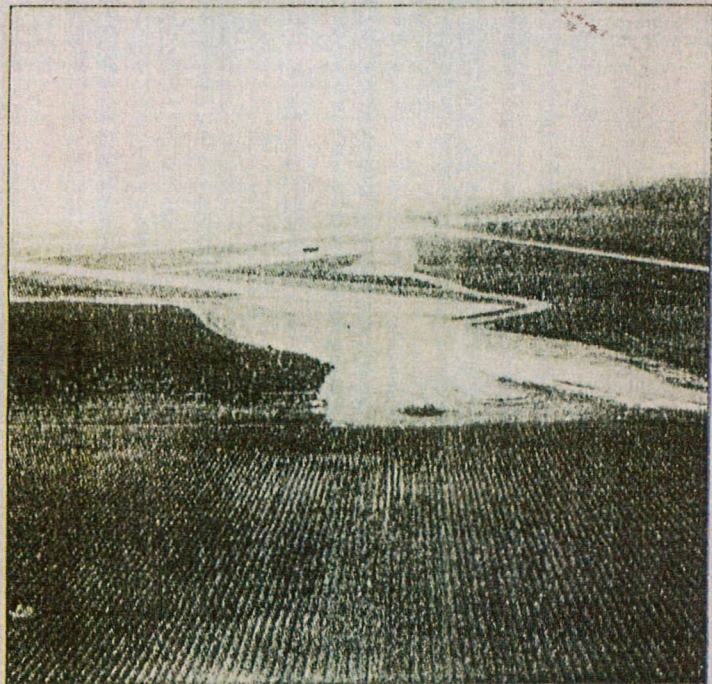
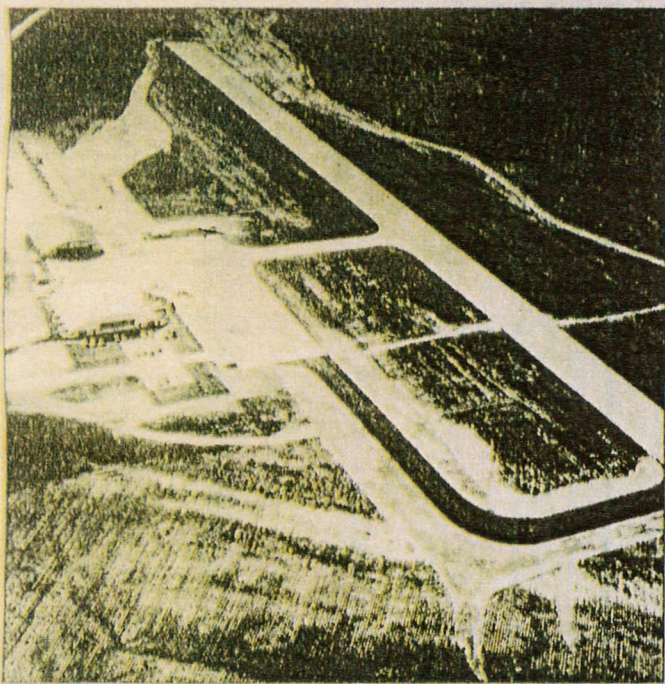
The Airport Authority was formed in 1956, when bonding and revenue powers were granted. The first airport board consisted of President George M. Ward,

Jimmy McLaughlin, Frank Smoot, Tom Oakley and Joe Frank Allen.

The airport received a huge boost in 1962, when Ozark Airlines became an air carrier at the airport and continued to serve the area for 17 years. At the time Ozark served Mt. Vernon, only 14 airports in the state were offering flight service. During its first year, Ozark flew 4,496 passengers and by 1972, there were 8,000 passengers coming through the airport.

Outland continued as manager of the airport until his death in 1966, when Max Firebaugh took the reins until 1989. The 1970s were a time of expansion at the Mt. Vernon Airport, with the expansion of the small runway in 1972, which allowed DC-9 jets and other large aircraft to use the facility. The airport received federal, state and local funds

see AIRPORT/Page 3D



AIRPORT

continued from 1A

for an \$8 million expansion, which included an instrument landing system, lengthening the runways and taxiways, and relocate the terminal building and an apron was constructed. Construction of the Kozaria Terminal began in 1974, and was completed in 1976.

The Kozaria Terminal was dedicated on May 23, 1977, with many dignitaries in attendance. Among those present was then-Federal Aviation Administration Administrator Langhorn Bond.

Firebaugh left the airport as manager in 1989, to be

replaced by Vince Waters, who served from 1990 to 1999. Waters was replaced by Jim Zimmer, who only from 2000 to 2001, to be replaced by Jerry Nicholson. Nicholson served as manager of the facility until 2004, when Waters returned as an interim manager until the hiring of Chris Collins in 2005. Collins continues as manager of the airport at present.

Expansion continues at the facility, with a hangar project underway as well as a runway safety area project.

The Mt. Vernon Outland Airport hosts the Experimental Aircraft Association Little Egypt Fly-In, and more recently, the Light Sport Aircraft Expo.