

Where the Stinson 108 Voyager was Built
<http://www.westin553.net>
Larry Westin - 11/28/04
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Since I first became interested in the Stinson 108 I had always heard the airplane was built in Wayne, Michigan, a suburb of Detroit. Original Stinson documentation I have accumulated over the years all show Wayne, Michigan as the home address of Stinson. Reprinted documentation doesn't show that address, rather the address of Univair (who now holds the type certificate for the Stinson 108 and reprints the documentation) in Aurora, Colorado.

During a business trip to Detroit I decided to physically locate the location where the Stinson 108 was built. Wayne, Michigan, is right next to Detroit, actually a pretty small city about 2 by 3 miles in size. My first stop was the Wayne Public Library. My concern was that Stinson had been out of business for more than 50 years and no one would know anything about such out of business airplane company, was a needless concern. My first question was to ask about an "aircraft company which worked in Wayne 50 years ago" was met immediately by - "you mean Stinson?" The public library was a big help, and one way they assisted was to show me where the Wayne Historical Society was located. That was my next visit, and again they were well aware of Stinson.

The historical society allowed me to examine the aviation material they have in their archives. One of the first surprises was to learn that while Stinson always used a Wayne, Michigan, address, the factory was not located in Wayne.

Stinson built aircraft at Detroit Wayne Industrial Airport, later Stinson field between April 1929 and December 1948. Information I obtained at the Wayne Historical Society indicates that Stinson was one of the first tenants at Detroit Wayne Industrial Airport.

While the airport was named Detroit Wayne Industrial Airport, the location was actually in the Township of Romulus, immediately south of Wayne, Michigan. Later the airport was renamed Stinson field. Today Romulus is an incorporated city, and in another part of the former township is the location of Detroit Metropolitan Airport.

Wayne is a small town, about 6 square miles. As a suburb of Detroit there was housing in place in the late 1920's, which is probably (I'm guessing) why the airport was actually in Romulus.

The north side of the airport bordered Van Born Road, the south side bordered Ecorse road, and the east side bordered the Pere Marquette Railroad. I'm not sure of the west border of the airport. The airport was along the Detroit to Chicago lighted airway. One source reported runways of "about 3,500 feet," another source reported runways "longer than 2,000 feet."

So it was surprise that my Stinson, and all Stinson's since 1929, were actually built in Romulus Township, Michigan, not Wayne, Michigan, as I had always thought.

I found a sectional chart of Detroit for 1948 on eBay. The link to an image of the chart which include Wayne and Romulus is next to the link for this article. Look on the chart about half between Wayne and Romulus and you find the airport labeled Stinson.

With the Stinson shutdown in August 1948, the airport was sold, and with the Stinson shutdown all of Stinson's facilities and unsold airplane had to be off the airport property before December 31, 1948. The unsold Stinson 108-3's still on Stinson field, about 325 airplanes, were flown to nearby Willow Run airport. Those unsold Stinson 108-3's where at Willow Run airport when Piper's purchase of Stinson was completed in December 1948.

Before leaving Wayne I drove to the former airport site. Today it is a business park with such companies as Ford and GM using a major portion of the old airport grounds.

I want to thank the Wayne Public Library and the Wayne Historical Society for the generous hlep and information they provided. In fact they both went out of their way to help me, a stranger who had never visited the city of Wayne before.

If you have any additional information I'd appreciate knowing more about the Detroit Wayne Industrial Airport.

Thank you for your time.

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