

TEB's history and its tenants

New York's unique bizav gateway spawns diverse FBOs, charter, catering and myriad aircraft services.



(Main photo) TEB from the northeast. Runway 1/19 is the longer of the airport's 2 runways, at 7000 x 150 ft. Rwy 6/24 is 6013 x 150 ft. Fewer than 100 aircraft are actually based at TEB, but operations average more than 400 per day. (Upper R) Former control tower. (Lower R) Teterboro in 1948.

By Ken Baylor
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TEB (Teterboro NJ) is one of the busiest corporate airports in the world. It's more than just a busy airport smack in the middle of a bustling metropolis with a lot of surrounding air traffic—it's a booming job engine that has over 1200 employees, houses 5 major FBOs, is an essential relief airport for the other major New York City area airports, and is a hub that connects business aircraft and their clientele to the rest of the world.

Some 8 miles (as the crow flies) from downtown Manhattan, there's little argument that it's the most convenient option when it comes to efficient business travel. There's also little argument that TEB is the busiest airport in the northeast US (some argue the busiest in the world) when it comes to corporate aviation.

However, it's not just the air traffic that makes this airport what it is today. The people who work behind the scenes on a daily basis are the true bread and butter of what this airport truly stands as—a massive economic epicenter and launchpad that is essential to general aviation's past, present and future.

History

Teterboro had existed as a manufacturing site for North American Aviation after Walter Teter acquired the property in 1917. According to Pat Reilly, founder of the New Jersey Aviation Hall of Fame, the airport received a high amount of public interest after WWI. This interest attracted the likes of Wittman-Lewis Aircraft Company and Anthony Fokker, the famous Dutch aircraft designer. Fokker later purchased the bankrupt Wittman-Lewis and orga-

nized the Atlantic Aircraft Corp (not to be confused with Atlantic Aviation) and improved the airfield.

Then, on Aug 13, 1920, Billy Diehl of North Bergen NJ was flying over TEB in his British Avro biplane and saw the field. "It looked like a nice place to land, so I landed," recalled Diehl. Thus, he became the first person ever to land an airplane at TEB.

From then on Teterboro started to make real history. Some of the most intriguing stories come from the airport's history in the 1920s and 30s.

Wright Aeronautical Corp—then based at TEB—manufactured its Wright Whirlwind engine for Charles Lindbergh's monoplane "Spirit of St Louis." Wright had even been photographed in front of the Wright hangar before taking off on his historic flight from Roosevelt Field on Long Island. Once his flight was successfully completed, his celebratory US tour kicked off from TEB.



Now wholly owned by Executive Air Support, Atlantic Aviation has been at TEB for 75 years and continues to operate under its own name.

Just 2 weeks later, on Jun 4, 1927, Clarence Chamberlin—a Teterboro resident—completed the first transatlantic passenger crossing to Germany. Later into the 1920s, Commander Richard Byrd continued to put Teterboro on the map by piloting TEB-made Fokker Trimotors to France, the South Pole and several other polar expeditions. Even Amelia Earhart made a few stops at TEB during her many attempts at flying around the world.

Although the airport experienced major pains during the Great Depression, a sort of rebirth occurred when 1937 rolled around and Vincent Bendix purchased 100 acres of land near the northwest end of the airfield as a site for the Eclipse-Pioneer Division of Bendix Aviation Corporation.

Once the US entered WWII, Teterboro joined numerous other airfields in the US as leased property temporarily handed over to the federal government to aid in the massive amounts of training that the Army Air Corps required to train fighter pilots. However, once the war subsided, Fred Wehran recognized the airport's great potential and enlisted the help of the Standard Oil Company to grow and develop the airport into a post-war aviation hub. During this time, Wehran and Standard Oil built a 3000-ft runway and a hangar, and even hired an air traffic controller.

Wehran's notion proved correct. Businesses started recognizing the value of basing aircraft at TEB with its access and proximity to New York City. To nourish this effort, more capital and personnel were needed to bring it to its full potential.

In 1949, Wehran sold the airport to the Port of New York Authority (now known as the Port Authority of New York & New Jersey) for a whopping \$3 million plus. Numerous other companies started to pop up in the area and TEB became well known throughout the aviation community.

The Port Authority later leased TEB to Pan American World Airways (which was later passed to Johnson Controls) for 30 years in 1970. On Dec 1, 2000, the Port Authority assumed full responsibility as the airport operator.

Community concerns

While the airport has been the subject and target of issues in the past (primarily noise complaints over the past 10 or more years), the Port Authority has played a prominent role in TEB's community and business support and success since it took the helm.

Pam Phillips, the Port Authority's manager of operations and security at TEB, explains the organization's role as follows:

"The Port Authority of NY & NJ, along with the airport's FBOs, businesses and other aviation partners, has worked hard to foster and maintain positive relationships with the surrounding communities.

"The most prominent example of this is the Teterboro Industry Working Group, initiated in Oct 2006. The group's mission is to address the interests of both the aviation community and airport neighbors to find practical and workable local solutions that address the unique nature of TEB. The group established the 'Pledge to the Community Program,' whose 5 core principles are:

- A voluntary ban of Stage 2, older model, noisier aircraft operations
- A voluntary curfew on non-essential night-time operations between 11 pm and 6 am
 - A commitment not to operate aircraft exceeding 100,000 lbs
 - A commitment to make TEB a model for the safest GA airport in the nation
- A pledge to enhance and refine the security procedures already in place at TEB and support the airport in its ultimate goal of becoming the industry's security model for general aviation airports

She continues, "Airport employees also volunteer in town cleanups, share airport information at community fairs and events, while the entire airport community sponsors a scholarship program for local towns. All of these efforts are well received and reflected in the positive relationships that exist today.

"The Port Authority's commercial airports [which include EWR, JFK and LGA] will handle nearly 110 million passengers this year, and together with TEB will total about 1.4 million movements, or more



One of the largest FBOs at TEB, Jet Aviation has been a mainstay at the airport since the 1980s.



Signature has been a tenant at TEB since 1997, when it took over a leasehold from another company.

than 3800 daily flights on average," says Phillips. "This generates very significant economic benefit to the region of about 500,000 jobs, paying more than \$20 billion in wages and generating more than \$60 billion in annual economic activity.

"According to the US Dept of Transportation, each business jet everywhere across the country equates to \$1 million in economic activity and 5 jobs in our industry."

Because TEB is located so close to New York City, the airport is also essential to air traffic management in the NYC area. Phillips explains, "Very simply, if all the general aviation traffic at Teterboro went to EWR, JFK and LGA for even a day, our big 3 airports could not function and gridlock would rule."

Other groups around TEB, like the Teterboro Users Group (TUG), exist to help users and constituents work in partnership with regulatory agencies to enhance safety and efficiency of operations.

"There was a time when departure delays began to grow," said TUG Pres David Belastock. "We put forth the effort to develop win-win solutions for TEB and its users."

Belastock and TUG continue to educate airport users and place a special emphasis on being good corporate citizens to foster a long-term partnership.

"Even though some folks have concerns about various subjects surrounding TEB, every time a plane flies over I smile and realize how great TEB is for business," concludes Belastock.

Tenant stories

Arguably, the most important asset of any airport is the folks that make day-to-day business run efficiently, safely and with a purpose. While each has their own personal story to tell, the message is the same—TEB is an essential piece of the GA pie and it's their goal to keep it that way.

Rudy's Inflight Catering has been operating in the TEB area for over 27 years. Joe and John Celentano recognized a need for outstanding corporate catering aboard private jets. From working in their parents' restaurant, they developed a leading company within a \$150-million catering industry.

"When we first started, packaging was archaic," explains Joe Celentano. "We'd line cardboard boxes in tin foil and serve boxed meals in them. As time went on and our business grew, we recognized the need to escalate service standards. Packaging improved and so did our processes."

Today, Rudy's can service up to 265 flights per day between TEB and neighboring airports in the New York City area. Requests ranging from linen service and kosher food to wine and beer selections are completely feasible with Rudy's expertise. Operating a hub-and-spoke company centralized in a 16,000 sq ft kitchen that services airports across the northeast, their business is keeping on its toes.

"At the end of the day, we're a service company that understands the delicate balance between doing great business and being a good neighbor," said Celentano. "Anything that creates jobs should be embraced—I think the majority of the community around TEB understands that."

Jet Aviation has been a mainstay at TEB since the 1980s. One of the largest FBOs on the field has a long history best explained by Paul Engl, Jet Aviation's Dir of Client Relations.

"I joined Executive Air Fleet Corp (EAF) at TEB in 1973 as a dispatcher," he says. "EAF, founded by Matthew Weisman, was one of the original top quality aircraft management and charter companies in the region. It rose to national and international prominence very quickly. In the mid-80s it was acquired by Jet Aviation, a Swiss-based aircraft management, charter and maintenance company founded by Carl Hirschmann.

"At the time of the acquisition, Aero Service, a colocated FBO, became available, which added substantial strength to Jet Aviation. During the early 90s Dassault Falcon Jet decided to close its neighboring FBO and maintenance facility. Jet Aviation purchased their facility. In Nov 2008, Jet Aviation, with its [by then] worldwide facilities, was purchased by General Dynamics."



Dassault Falcon's largest marketing and service hub is at TEB. Next year will mark 50 years of the company's presence at the airport.



A fixture on the TEB scene, Meridian—the longest continuously operating aviation services company in the New York metropolitan area—traces its origins back to General Aviation Company.

He continues, “A combination of proximity to NYC and a GA friendly atmosphere has given us the boost we intended when Jet Aviation planted roots here at TEB. Thanks to FAA’s wisdom and cooperation, departure delays have been minimized in recent years and security enforcement has grown stronger. This is all thanks to a progressive-thinking airport administration that remains cooperative with its base tenants.”

Ken Forester Sr started Mallard Aviation in 1946 after serving as a test pilot in WWII. Mallard opened the 1st executive aviation terminal at Teterboro in 1948 as the 1st tenant in newly constructed Hangar 3.

After leaving Mallard in 1951, Forester began General Aviation Company in 1958. That company evolved into what is known today as Meridian—a 4-division company that focuses on FBO, maintenance, management and charter operations. Meridian is the longest continuously operating aviation services company in the New York metropolitan area.

“In 1946, my father recognized the huge advantage of the newly paved runways and proximity to New York City that TEB offered,” says Meridian CEO Ken Forester Jr. “General Aviation started as a flight school, maintenance facility and line service operation. Since then, it has evolved with Teterboro Airport into a world-class FBO, jet maintenance, aircraft management and charter operation.”

Starting as a Million Air FBO in 1986, Meridian left the chain in 2006 and continues to run strong. Adding a 30,000 sq ft office and terminal building in 2006 was a huge step forward, as was the addition of a 40,000 sq ft hangar in 2007.

“A large part of a steadily growing

operation is our longevity that we built organically,” says Forester. “But our people are our biggest asset. Every year it gets a little better.”

Patrick Sniffen is Signature Flight Support’s vp of marketing. He explains why TEB is such an important asset to the GA community.

“Signature started its tenure at TEB in 1997 when we took over a leasehold from another company,” he recalls. “In 2000, all lease agreements were upgraded, and we’re proud to continue doing business here at TEB.”

“Often it’s easy to forget how important the airport is when seemingly everyone is complaining about noise, among other things. The reality is that TEB is critical to the air transportation system and the business community. It serves not only GA’s interest, but supports the economic engine that currently exists. One might characterize it as ‘too busy’—I think that’s a testament to how great business is around the area.”

Signature TEB General Mgr Jackie Vibbert is a 27-year employee. She is proud of the initiatives that her com-



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pany has taken in helping the surrounding community.

“Signature, one of BBA Aviation’s operating companies, has long been a contributor to the local community when it comes to charitable giving. For example, in 2011, through BBA’s Charitable Giving Program, Signature donated \$20,000 for the TEB Community Benefit Fund that awards high school students from surrounding communities scholarships based on their interest in aviation and the aerospace industry. We’re extremely proud of that initiative, and have the pleasure of making a similar donation this year to the Aviation Hall of Fame & Museum of New Jersey, which is located right here at TEB.”

Sniffen praises the Port Authority for its “sophisticated approach to support and infrastructure.” He adds, “Teterboro Airport is really the lynchpin to everything that happens in NYC.”

Weather service

Universal Weather and Aviation has had a presence in the New York metro area since 1970 and at TEB for almost 10 years. It currently has a meteorology and sales office at the airport. The met office provides weather briefings primarily for corporate helicopter operators based in the Northeast. At present it is the only major weather office supplying aviation forecasting to the area.

“TEB is the busiest business aviation airport in the Northeast,” states Teterboro Meteorology Office Mgr Mike Shustak. “Many of the business aviation operators we support are based in the region, so Universal felt it was important to have a physical presence at TEB, not just to provide





First Aviation sits on a 22-acre site in the southwest corner of the airport and boasts 120,000 sq ft of hangar capacity. The company has its own fuel farm with 150,000 gal of Jet A available.



weather briefings for helicopter operators but also so that our clients who operate business aircraft can stop by and meet face-to-face with Universal representatives."

The biggest advantage to having a presence at TEB, according to Shustak, is the fact that the runways are big enough to handle 737s (but don't due to weight restrictions). Also, it's the most convenient airport to New York City. Combining these 2 key items proves in his mind's eye that TEB is 100% dedicated to business aviation.

First Aviation was started in 1986 by Joe and Florence Ritorto. Locating their business in the old Beechcraft hangar in the northwest corner of the field, the business has grown from one small hangar housing dozens of piston aircraft and is now on a 22-acre facility in the southwest corner of the airport. The modern passenger terminal building touts 120,000 sq ft of hangar storage and houses a variety of large GA aircraft as tenants.

First Aviation Pres & CEO Bill Thomas explains that the company has its own fuel farm at TEB, "with 150,000 gal of Jet A available, so there's never an issue in bad weather or during traffic jams in getting fuel." He adds, "First also maintains a true 24/7 FAA Part 145 and EASA approved aircraft maintenance facility, an aircraft care and cleaning department, and has the only air start cart at TEB."

Thomas also praises the support that the local community gives to GA and TEB, recognizing it as an economic driver that contributes millions of dollars annually to the local economy. And, he concludes, "The Port Authority has done an outstanding job of including the com-

munity in noise reduction efforts and meets regularly with local community representatives."

Joe Fazio, regional manager for Atlantic Aviation, echoes these sentiments, as do most tenants at TEB. "The Port Authority is very engaged in the GA business and wants to promote the use of TEB," he says. "They're always willing to work with the FBOs on any issues relating to business opportunity and growth."

Atlantic has been a staple at TEB for the past 75 years. Now wholly owned by Executive Air Support and still operating as Atlantic Aviation, it continues to be a major player at the airport.

"The Port Authority has invested millions toward infrastructure at TEB," continues Fazio. "The runways and taxiways have been improved with regard to pavement and lighting. [The Port Authority has also] invested in the local community by soundproofing local schools and upgrading certain community buildings. The airport has also invested funds for the improvement and upgrades to the noise monitoring system around the community."

Fazio adds that Atlantic Aviation has been extremely active with the Teterboro Users Group since day one. "TUG has been very influential in communicating the reduction of noise to the local community and the elimination of Stage 2 aircraft," he says. "Atlantic and TUG have also supported the voluntary curfew in an effort to reduce the noise impact to the local community."

While FBOs are a major part of TEB's success, Dassault Falcon laid roots at TEB in the mid-1960s when the company first entered business within the US. Next year (2013) will

mark Dassault's 50th anniversary at Teterboro.

Dassault Falcon Senior Communications Mgr Andrew Ponzoni touts the company's TEB facility as not only its largest marketing and service hub, but home to Dassault's largest spare parts depot.

"A lot of our success stems from being so close to NYC," explains Ponzoni. "Our clients are able to accomplish one-stop shopping here in TEB. We have major facilities at TEB as well as our whole fleet of demonstration aircraft available."

Ponzoni goes on to explain that a lot of TEB's success also stems from improvements such as the arrestor beds installed on certain runways. He concludes by reinforcing the majority opinion that the key to TEB's future success is continuing to be a good neighbor and always being mindful of the surrounding community.

TEB and the future

"The numerous organizations that are pro-TEB have done an outstanding job of explaining the positive economic impact that the airport has on the surrounding community," says Millie Becker, chief development officer at FirstFlight.

"As long as we continue to tell our story from the point of view of the men and women behind the scenes that make daily business happen, it will ensure longevity. There's a certain energy here at TEB—it's very exciting."

TEB is an airport that has stuck through thick and thin throughout powered aviation's history and continues to play a vital role in today's good business practices. Next time you fly in and out of TEB, understand that you're not just flying into a busy airport with a lot of traffic—you're flying into a piece of history that is feeding and sustaining general aviation as we know it today. ✈️



Ken Baylor is lead dispatcher at The Flight Department USA, specializing in fractional ownership and charter aircraft consultation/operations. He has been working in corporate aviation for 10 years.