



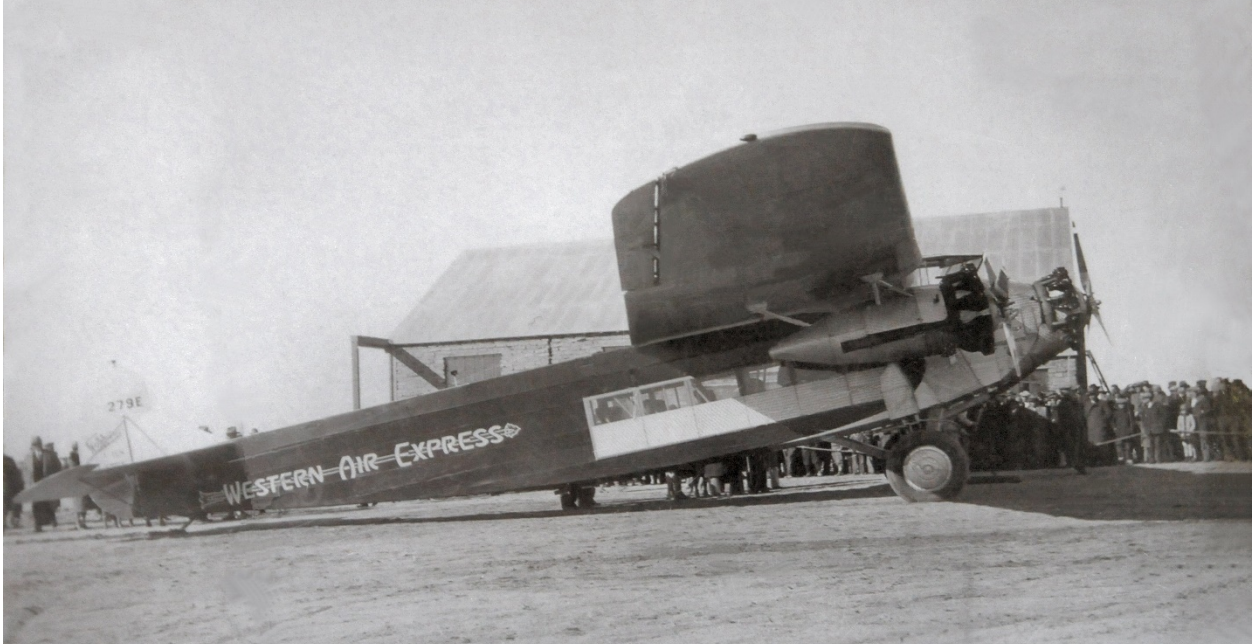
## Western Air Express “WAE”

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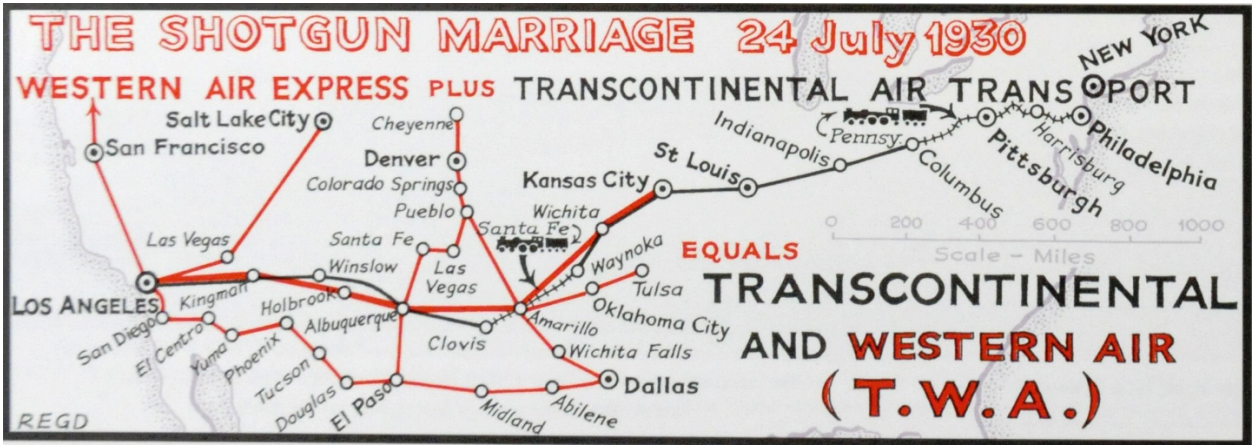
Western Air Express (WAE), based in Los Angeles, California, began operations on May 23, 1926 with an initial route from Los Angeles to Salt Lake City carrying U. S. Mail and occasional passengers. On May 15, 1929, the carrier began the first scheduled passenger airline service to New Mexico with a route from Los Angeles to Albuquerque that made stops at Kingman and Holbrook, Arizona. A Fokker F-10 tri-motor aircraft was used. Two weeks later on June 1, 1929, the route was extended eastward from Albuquerque to Kansas City with stops at Amarillo, Texas and Wichita, Kansas. The route was planned to continue onto New York but was stalled upon the coming of the great stock market crash in October, 1929. In order to obtain a lucrative and much needed federal mail contract, the Los Angeles to Kansas City route for WAE was merged with a similar route on Transcontinental Air Transport (TAT) in mid-1930. The new entity was called Transcontinental and Western Air, or “TWA”. WAE returned to Albuquerque on September 27, 1931 when the carriers’ route from Cheyenne, Wyoming to Pueblo, Colorado was merged with Mid-Continent Air Express, a carrier backed by WAE that operated southward from Pueblo to El Paso. This route from Cheyenne to El Paso began the first north-south mail service through New Mexico and included stops at Albuquerque, Santa Fe, and Las Vegas, New Mexico, as well as Trinidad, Pueblo, Colorado Springs, and Denver, Colorado. WAE continued operating the route until February, 1934 when an air mail scandal caused President Franklin D. Roosevelt to cancel all airline mail contracts and assign mail carriage to the U. S. Army Air Corps. The Army Air Corps was not prepared to carry out this operation as its pilots were not trained or experienced with the required flying at night and in harsh weather which ended up resulting in numerous crashes and loss of pilots. The mail contracts were then reassigned back to the airlines and the contract for the north-south route was awarded to Varney Speed Lines in mid-1934. Varney later changed to become Continental Air Lines in 1937. Although the airlines were also carrying a small number of passengers at this time, the revenue received from transporting the U. S. Mail was the primary focus to maintain their business.

WAE had operated many other aircraft types during its service within New Mexico including the Fokker F-7, F-14, F-32, F-Super Universal, Douglas M2, Lockheed 5A Vega, and Clark GA-43. Some of these aircraft were only used to transport mail, no passengers. The carrier also opened a ticket office in downtown Albuquerque at the Hotel Franciscan, a very elegant hotel in its day. The Western Air Express

name was changed to Western Air Lines in 1941 and the carrier nearly merged with Continental Airlines in 1978. After a nearly forty seven year absence, Western returned to Albuquerque in late 1981. A separate link on Western Airlines reviews this service.



Western Air Express Fokker F-10 Tri-motor at Albuquerque’s first airport in 1929.



A map of the routes of both Western Air Express (red) and Transcontinental Air Transport (black) at the time of their partial merger in 1930 creating TWA.