Western Airlines

Western Airlines began operations in 1926 as Western Air Express and was based at Los Angeles, California. The carrier grew to become a legacy United States airline with routes linking many larger cities in the western U. S., Alaska, and Hawaii as well as serving many smaller communities in Idaho, Montana, South Dakota, and Wyoming. Western was the first carrier to serve Albuquerque from 1929 through 1930 as a stop on a route between Los Angeles and Kansas City and again in 1931 through 1933 as a stop between Denver and El Paso. In 1945 the carrier had applied for a route between Salt Lake City and Albuquerque making multiple stops but this route was awarded to Monarch Air Lines which later became Frontier Airlines. In 1958 Western applied for routes from Albuquerque to Fort Worth and Dallas, Texas as well as to Las Vegas and Los Angeles which again were not granted. Western continued to apply for service to Albuquerque through the 1970's while airlines were still regulated by the Civil Aeronautics Board (C.A.B.) but it was not until the airline deregulation act of 1978 that the carrier was finally able to return to the city. After 47 years, service was resumed on October 25, 1981 with flights from Albuquerque to Houston, Las Vegas, and San Francisco using Boeing 727-200 aircraft. On May 1, 1982 Western significantly expanded its hubs at Los Angeles and Salt Lake City adding new flights from Albuquerque to both cities. Service was added later that year to El Paso and briefly to Phoenix while the initial flights to Houston, Las Vegas, and San Francisco were dropped. Boeing 737-200's were soon added to the Albuquerque schedule, replacing all the 727's by late 1985, and new generation 737-300's came online in early 1986. On Thanksgiving Day, 1984, Western operated a DC-10 widebody aircraft on its morning flight to Los Angeles.

Western Airlines Boeing 727-200.

Western Airlines Boeing 737-200.

Western Airlines Boeing 737-300 introduced in 1986.

Western Airlines route map from 1986.

Western Airlines merged into Delta Airlines on April 1, 1987 ending a 61-year career for the airline. Delta has retained the hubs at Salt Lake City and Los Angeles however flights from Albuquerque to L.A. were discontinued in 1990. Western had begun a Western Express feeder alliance operated by SkyWest Airlines in 1986 which went on to become a Delta Connection carrier after the merger. Delta Connection did eventually begin serving Albuquerque both from Salt Lake City and Los Angeles, the hubs that Western first began serving from Albuquerque.

Western reached a height of ten flights per day at Albuquerque on the March 1, 1983 schedule. A separate summary of the initial Western Airlines operation from 1929 through 1933 can be found under the link for "Western Air Express".