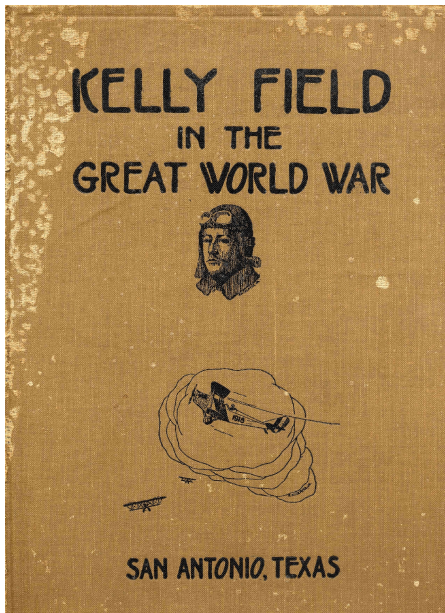


A Street Named McCurdy

We were pleased and excited to read the morning paper on September 1, 2004 announcing the names of new streets which will be located on the old Mueller Airport property. We learned that McCurdy Street was named after my father-in-law, John Anderson McCurdy. The 44 new streets were named after various Austinites for various reasons, including civic leaders, musicians, actors, and individuals who had contributed to aviation in Austin. John McCurdy was in the aviation category, along with folks like Cal Rodgers who landed the first airplane in Austin October 20th, 1911, Robert Mueller who had been instrumental in establishing our first real airport, and Claire Chennault who was the WWII leader of the famed Flying Tigers. John's contribution to aviation in WWI was leading the cross country flyers from Kelly Field in San Antonio to Penn Field in Austin in early 1918.

After the US entered WWI in April 1917 a universal draft was initiated. John registered June 5, 1917 in San Antonio, indicating that he was an "Electrical Mechanic". He enlisted July 18th and then applied for training as a pilot in the relatively new Air Service of the Army Signal Corps. Marian and I have speculated as to why he set his sights on flying airplanes, but then started thinking: He had been living in San Antonio for a little over a year –fresh from the romance of homesteading in New Mexico for a couple of years. He had experienced many new challenges and accomplishments there and most likely looked at the new aviation era as romantic and challenging. He probably saw planes flying in his part of town because Stinson field had been established there as a flying school in 1916. Land in San Antonio had been obtained for Kelly Field and in the Spring of 1917 it was designated as one of the flying fields of the country. It is not surprising then that he applied for pilot training.



Historic Book Published at the Close of WWI

During the summer of 1917 numerous hangers, shops, buildings and barracks were erected and the Flying Department became a reality at Kelly. John took basic training, including engine repair and navigation at the University of Texas School of Military Aeronautics in Austin on the University of Texas campus; then later in abandoned buildings at 19th and East Avenue.(now UT's Little Campus) Then he joined the 16th Flight Training Class of October 27, 1917 at Kelly. The training plane used was a Curtis JN-4, known as the "Jenny" and was the most popular training plane used by the Allies. (I was fortunate to see a restored "Jenny" at the Boeing Flight

University of Texas



**Curtis JN-4 Jenny
Boeing Flight Museum**

Museum in 1999) According to John's Pilot's Book, he took his first flight on November 19th and soloed on December 8th.

One of the civilian instructors at Kelly was Eddie Stinson, a well known aviation pioneer. His sister, Katherine, had become the fourth licensed female pilot in the US and toured the country as a stunt pilot, becoming one of the country's most famous female aviators. The family, mother Emma, sisters Marjorie and Katherine, and brothers Eddie and Jack established the Stinson Aviation Company in Hot Springs, Arkansas, but moved it to San Antonio in 1913 where the army granted permission to use the parade ground at Ft Sam Houston as a landing field. Marjorie and Eddie ran the flying school on the drill field from 1914 to 1915. In 1916 the family leased 500 acres of farmland from the city and established Stinson Field from where John probably saw the planes flying.. Once Kelly Field came into operation, the Stinson family trained the U.S. and Canadian pilots. John said Eddie Stinson was a great pilot and instructor – but he had a drinking problem and the students apparently had to sober him up on a regular basis.



Lt. John A. McCurdy and his "Jenny"

By the first of January 1918 John became an instructor for Cross County Flights. His job was to line up landing fields within a hundred mile radius of Kelly Field. The previous year the Austin Chamber of Commerce had secured 318 acres of land just south of St Edwards University which could be developed into a landing field. John contacted the Chamber and made a flight to Austin and landed on the 318 acre tract. His wind gauge was a handkerchief held by a man on the ground. He was pleased with the field except for its rocky condition and some remaining corn stalks and began bringing in formation flights of 12 to 20 planes several times a week. There were a few minor accidents from the flint rocks causing blown tires and fabric tears so the Chamber of Commerce organized over six hundred men and boys to come out on Four Sundays to pick up and haul away 317 truck

loads of the offending rocks.¹ The field was named after Eugene Penn, a soldier from Austin killed in a flight training exercise in Italy.

John made many flights to and from Penn Field and told his family some of his stories. If any of his pilots went down for any reason, he generally would have to find them and hopefully get them back in the air. Pilots were not given parachutes and were expected to land their planes if they experienced any trouble. "The airplanes were too expensive to abandon by bailing out" they were told. One afternoon he had landed to help one of his students get back in the air and by the time he started back to San Antonio, it was getting dark. With no lights and none of the instruments later available for flying at night, he basically used his compass to get back to Kelly. There were no landing field lights at Kelly and the only light was a flood light atop one of the hangers. John started buzzing the field in hopes of someone shining the light on the field so that he could see where to land. To his dismay the person behind the light kept shining the light on the plane and in his eyes. He kept buzzing the field to indicate he needed the light to help him land and finally the light shiner caught on and lit the ground so that he could land. He had made the first night landing at Kelly Field.

He continued to be in charge of Advanced Cross Country flying until March 21, 1918 when he and nine other officers from Kelly were ordered to Lonoke, Arkansas to open up Eberts, a new flying field. He was in charge of flight operations with orders to keep the planes in the air throughout the daylight hours. During his stay here, the influenza pandemic broke out and most of the men went down with it. The camp doctor, an alcoholic, panicked, locked up his medicines, and went A.W.O.L. The cabinets had to be broken open to get the medicines needed to treat the afflicted patients.

On December 20, 1918, thirty nine days after the Armistice, he received his honorable discharge.

After the war, he had tempting opportunities to keep on flying as a test pilot; but his realization that his father was not well and he might be called on to take on increasing family responsibilities sent him back to school. He wanted to be a medical doctor; but time was pressing, and he studied business administration and received his B.B.A. degree from the University in 1922. After graduation, he went to Sweetwater, a small town in West Texas, as secretary of the Board of City Development. In 1924, he married May Lea Guthrie and in 1926 they returned to The University of Texas at Austin where he served as Executive Secretary of the Ex-Students Association until retirement in 1956.

This past December Marian and I went to a Christmas Play at Penn Field. It was interesting to walk around all the buildings and development of the area and realize that some 88 years ago, her dad was landing and taking off from these grounds in a primitive old airplane called a "Jenny."

Thank you Austin, for honoring him with the naming of a street.

¹ *Wings Over Austin* by Walter E. Long, 1962

New streets, but full of history

Future neighborhood on Mueller land will honor Austin musicians, civic leaders, others

By R. Michelle Breyer
AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

The runways of Robert Mueller airport soon will be replaced by streets named for Kenneth Threadgill, Stevie Ray Vaughan, Barbara Jordan and other icons from Austin's history.

The new street names, A10.

After four months of researching and brainstorming, developers have come up with the names for 44 new streets in the project. The list includes men and women who founded companies, wrote books, fed

the hungry, fought injustice and made music. It reflects some of the city's shining moments as well as its struggles.

Alberto Garcia, the city's first Hispanic medical doctor, will get a street named after him. So will Henry "Doc" Reeves, the son of freed slaves, who was a trainer for the University of Texas Longhorns decades before the team had any black players.

The street naming is a

symbolic step in the transformation of the former airport into a community that one day could have 10,000 residents, as well as shops, businesses and a new children's hospital.

The City of Austin and master developer Catellus Development Corp. teamed with the Austin History Museum to come up with the names.

"We really tried to name

See **STREETS**, A10

A10

Austin American-Statesman **WORLD & NATION** Wednesday, September 1, 2004

STREETS: Names reflect Austin history, diversity

Continued from A1

these streets after people who really made a difference on the city," said Greg Weaver, the Catellus vice president who is heading up the Mueller project. "This is a community plan, and these names come straight from the community."

The team established some criteria: The names had to reflect the city's diverse culture and history. The people had to represent "famous firsts" for Austin. The names couldn't be too similar to other street names. And no street would be named for a living person.

Naming streets can get political, as the group learned after fielding several calls from people who wanted to lobby on behalf of friends or family members they thought were street-worthy. Those folks may get another chance when the project's parks and lakes are named.

The street name list spans Austin's history, from its days as capital of the Republic of Texas to its emergence as a high-tech center.

In addition to cultural icons such as Vaughan and Threadgill, the list includes Taniguchi Street, named after Isamu Taniguchi, who created the Japanese garden at Zilker Botanical Garden, and Margarita Street, named not after the popular drink but for Margarita Munoz Simon, the "Spanish radio queen" who had a 50-year broadcast career.

Others include:

■ Eberly Street, named after Angelina Eberly, who thwarted Sam Houston's attempt to move the Republic of Texas headquarters from Austin by firing a

New street names for Mueller project

With the help of the Austin History Center, the developers who are turning Mueller airport into a new community have come up with names for 44 new streets. Not changing: Airport Boulevard, Manor Road, Anchor Lane, East 51st Street and Berkman Drive.

Aldrich Street	McBee Street
Barbara Jordan Boulevard	McCloskey Street
Cal Rodgers Street	McCurdy Street
Camacho Street	Mendez Street
Carillo Street	Moreno Street
Cepeda Street	Mueller Boulevard
Chennault Street	Paggi Street
Doc Reeves Street	Philomena Street
Eberly Street	Pinckney Street
Emma Long Street	Ruiz Street
Fuentes Street	Sandusky Street
Garcia Street	Scales Street
Gochman Street	Scarborough Street
Hargis Street	Schutze Street
Hermelinda Street	Simond Avenue
Hernandez Street	Sorin Street
Herzog Street	Taniguchi Street
John Gaines Street	Threadgill Street
Kocurek Street	Tilley Street
Littlefield Street	Tom Miller Street
Margarita Street	Vaughan Street
Mattie Street	Zach Scott Street

On statesman.com: Stumped by Sorin? Pondering Philomena? Learn about the people behind the street names.

cannon alerting citizens to the late-night shenanigans.

■ John Gaines Street, which honors the second Austin police officer to be killed in the line of duty. Gaines was the city's only African American officer when he was shot to death in 1913.

■ Kocurek Street, which is named after Neal Kocurek, who died in March. Kocurek, who was president and chief executive officer of the St. David's Health Care System and Foundation, has been credited with playing a major role in shaping

the direction of Central Texas.

Catellus will try to match some of the names with particular parts of the development. For example, Tom Miller Street, named for the longtime mayor, will front some of Mueller's parks. The Austin Film Society will be on Tilley Street, named after brothers W. Hope and Paul Tilley, who became Austin's first filmmakers in the early years of the 20th century.

Philomena Street, which will wind by the new Children's Medical Center of Texas, honors

Sister Philomena Feltz, who ran the kitchen at the Seton Infirmary and helped run soup kitchens for Austin residents during the Great Depression.

It will take a decade to turn the old airport into a new neighborhood with 4,600 homes, apartment units and row houses, 2.6 million square feet of office space, 647,000 square feet of retail space, a 220,000-square-foot film production facility and 150 acres of open space.

Work has begun on several streets and underground utilities for the first phase of the project, which includes the new children's hospital.

A master agreement between Catellus and the city, laying out in detail the financial aspects, covenants, codes, restrictions and zoning, is scheduled to be completed by Sept. 30.

As soon as that agreement is signed, work will begin on single-family and row houses as well as regional retail slated for 34 acres on the northwest corner of the property fronting Interstate 35.

That retail development, which has gotten attention from those opposed to big-box development at Mueller, will serve as an economic engine for the project, said Catellus' Weaver.

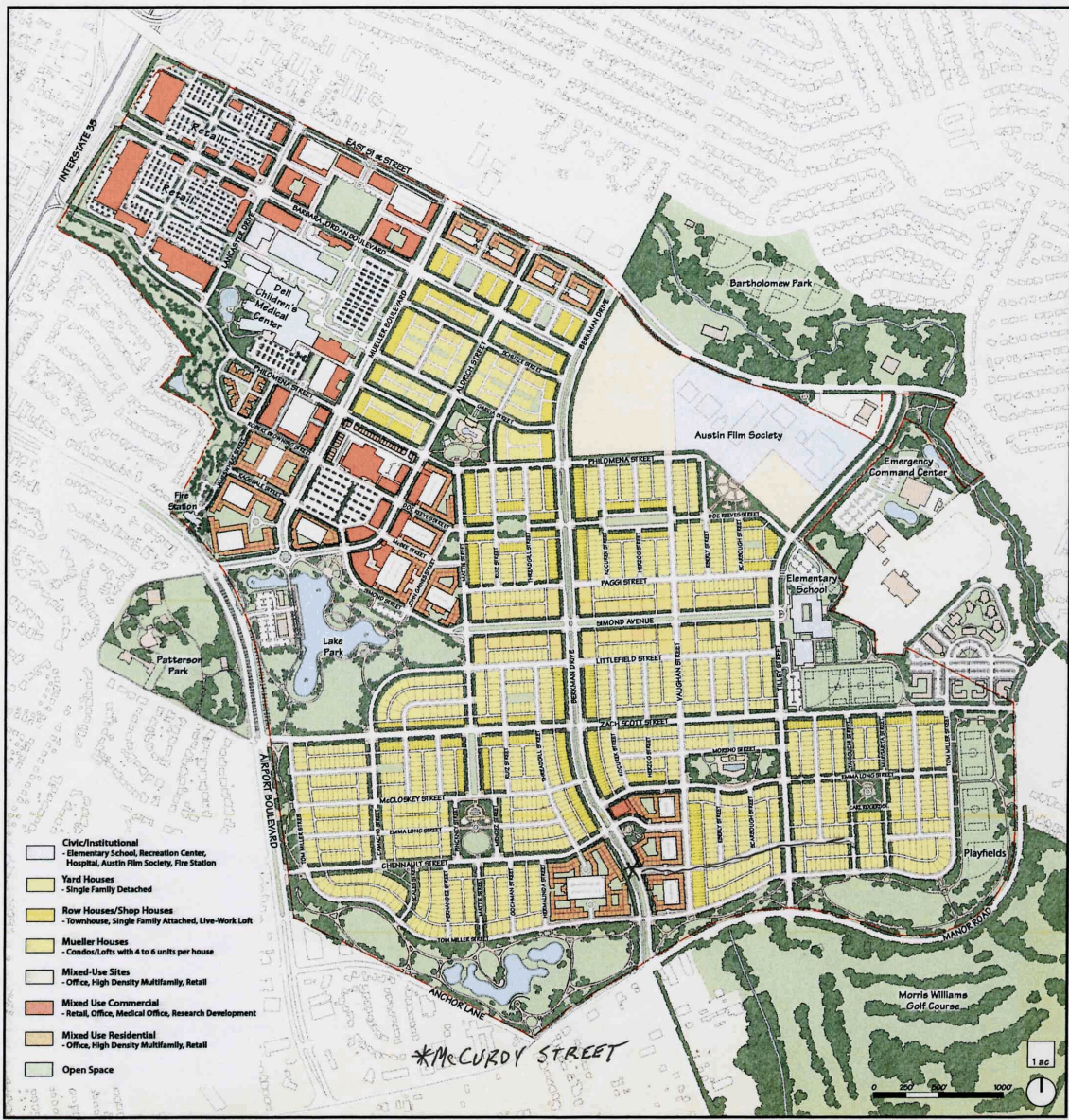
Weaver stressed that the retail development won't look like a traditional shopping center. The plan is to have the parking face inward, shielded from the street by other facilities, such as apartments, offices or possibly a hotel. Care also is being taken to ensure that the stores in that development don't compete with those in the project's town center, officials said.

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Location of McCurdy Street