

AIRPORT OF THE MONTH – REDWOOD FALLS

Hangar Project Represents Big City Commitment - By Tom Foster



Spending \$1.4 million dollars for hangar space was a big commitment for the city. By demonstrating an immediate and compelling need Redwood Falls was able to leverage 90% funding from the FAA and 5% from the Minnesota Department of Transportation. (Photo Courtesy Silas Parmar Bolton & Menk)

Internet shopping is the way to go in the 21st Century. Point, click and buy means you never have to leave home to spend your money.

The ancestor of “online” stores may have started in 1884 when the railroad station agent in North Redwood Falls found he was stuck with a shipment of watches the local jeweler claimed to have never ordered.

Seeing an opportunity, the agent used the U.S. Mail to offer them for sale then shipped them the same way. The “North” city and Redwood Falls merged in 1996, Richard Warren Sears was the 22-year-old agent’s name and he later partnered with a watch repairman named Roebuck to form a mail order company. The Sears and Roebuck catalog did the same thing for shoppers that the internet does today, buy stuff in the living room. The difference was you found what you wanted in the book, sent in a form with a check then goods were sent to your home.

Jack E. Robinson came to Redwood Falls in 1931. Sorry, it wasn’t the baseball player. This guy was a flight instructor. He rented some land and started an airport. After World War II, the city purchased the facility and the Redwood Falls Municipal Airport opened in 1948. Eventually, the airport evolved into a perfect general aviation facility, including a 4,000-foot-long primary runway with pavement, lights and

instrument approaches. The secondary runway serves the taildragger crowd with 2,000 feet of turf. It became a very popular place to base an aircraft, but by 2015 the demand for hangar space far out stripped the supply. There was a long waiting list, including some important businesses that were forced to keep their aircraft at other airports. Clearly, something needed to be done.

Hangar configurations have almost infinite options, but after evaluating several alternatives the city arrived at one that would meet the need. As finally constructed, the hangar consists of a multi-bay building with two, 65-foot square units, one 55 by 42-foot unit, and four, 45 by 42-foot units.

All hangars have concrete floors, LED lighting and power bifold doors. The project was so well conceived, planned and executed that it received the 2019 project of the year award from the Minnesota Council of Airports (MCOA).

Spending \$1.4 million dollars for hangar space was a big commitment for the city. By demonstrating an immediate and compelling need Redwood Falls was able to leverage 90% funding from the FAA and 5% from the Minnesota Department of Transportation. All of the airport’s 25 based aircraft now have a roof over their heads and the “expatriates” have returned home.

In Redwood Falls, businesses know how to use aviation to support their work and the government knows how to support aviation.

Not only does Redwood Falls have a great airport, the city also has an exemplary system of parks including the “Yellowstone” of Minnesota. Officially, Alexander Ramsey Park, it’s 256 acres include everything for outdoor fun from playgrounds to walking trails. There’s lots of water and this is the largest municipal park in the state. If you think south-west Minnesota is all corn and soybeans, you’re in for a big surprise. Ramsay Park is rather spectacular.

Two excellent golf courses are available too just in case you want to ruin your hiking experience, and there’s some first-class dining to satisfy your appetite.

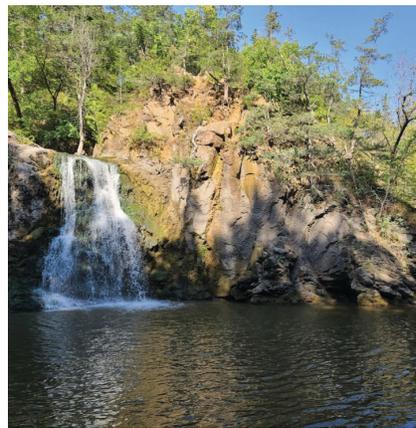
A fly-in visit is easy. The airport has courtesy cars and fuel (both avgas and jet) is available 24/7. You can camp on the airport or use one of the nice hotels if sleeping with your airplane doesn’t seem that desirable. A fly-in breakfast is hosted by the Rotarians every June.

Redwood Falls is a town you could easily fall in love with. If you’re an entrepreneur who uses aircraft, planning is underway for the Reflection’s Ridge Business Park that’s less than a mile south of the airport with 100 acres of available commercial space. If you want to live there, the city is also developing 200 acres of residential lots in the Reflection Prairie Addition.

Sadly (or happily for the owner) the new hangar is 100% occupied, but more space is in the works along with a bunch of other improvements. Stay tuned!



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