

Jamaica has always had a vibrant civil aviation industry with the first flight reported in the island on December 21, 1911. This occurred eight years after the world recorded its first powered flight by the Wright Brothers. Nineteen years later, on December 3, 1930, the first commercial flight, Pan American, consolidated Commodore, a twin- engine flying boat, landed in the Kingston Harbour.

1934 was also historic for the nation's aviation industry when Dr. Albert Forsythe and Charles C. Anderson (the godfathers of African American aviation) arrived in Jamaica from Cuba. This was the first time a land plane was arriving in the island by air.

Jamaica's Rich Aviation History

- December 21, 1911 – First reported flight in Jamaica by Jessee Seligman (8 years after the world recorded its first flight by the Wright brothers.)
- December 3, 1930 – First commercial flight, Pan American Consolidated Commodore, twin- engine flying boat landed in Kingston Harbour from Miami bringing mail, not passengers to the island.
- November 21, 1931- Famous US aviator, Col. Charles Lindberg brought the inaugural Pan American Sikorsky S-4 Clipper to Jamaica.
- June 1930- Caribbean Airways registered as a company.
- December 10, 1930 - Caribbean Airways, first local airline, carried Jamaica's first airmail.
- 1934 – Another historic period for the nation's aviation industry when Sir Albert Forsythe and Charles C. Anderson (the godfathers of African American aviation) arrived in Jamaica from Cuba. This was the first time a plane was arriving in the island.
- 1947 – Establishment of the Civil Aviation Department (CAD)
- 1948- Establishment of the Kingston Area Control Centre (Kin ACC) now the Kingston Air Traffic Control Centre (KATCC). Also in the same year the Palisadoes Airport (now Norman Manley International) and the Montego Bay Airport (now Sangster International) were established.
- 1949- Hiring of local and international Air Traffic Controllers
- 1952- Establishment of Wings Jamaica Ltd., Jamaica's first Pilot Training organization by Carl and Earsley Barnett
- January 31, 1960 – The BOAC Comet 4 jet arrived in Montego Bay
- May 1, 1966 – Inaugural flight of Air Jamaica
- 1967 – Work on Tinson Pen Aerodrome completed
- April 1, 1969 – The new Air Jamaica began operations
- 1970 – Training of Air Traffic Controllers locally
- May 16, 1972 – Official opening of the Norman Manley International Airport by Premier Norman Manley
- 1974 – Renaming of the Airports
- 1990 – Reopening of the Training Institute
- 1996 - Jamaica Civil Aviation Authority was established
- September, 1997 – Jamaica received Category 1 Status. Status was renewed in 2005 and remains to present

Interesting Facts

- Ten (10) possibilities were examined before the Palisadoes site was considered for Jamaica's first airport
- Sites considered were Bumper Hall, The War Department lands at Up Park Camp and Harbour Head, a site on Deanery Road, the Norman Range lands, Mona, the Greenwich reclamation area, May Pen, Kingston Pen Lands and Kingston Race Course

Airlines which operated out of Palisadoes:

- Pan American
- KLM.
- Cubana
- Avianca
- BWIA
- BOAC
- Jamaica Air Transport Ltd.
- British Caribbean Airways
- Caribbean International Airways

Jets:

- The Constellation
- BOAC double-decker StratoCruiser – New York to Montego Bay
- The Britannia 312 turboprop or “ Whispering Giant” – London-New York-Jamaica
- VC-10
- Boeing 707
- DC 8