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AIAA DESIGNATES HOUSTON'S 1940 AIR TERMINAL AS HISTORIC SITE

Terminal Recognized as a Rare Example of Classic Art Deco Airport Architecture

April 20, 2009 – Reston, Va. – The American Institute of Aeronautics and Astronautics (AIAA) has designated the Houston Municipal Airport Terminal, also known as the 1940 Air Terminal, at the William B. Hobby Airport, Houston, Texas, as a Historic Aerospace Site. A historic marker was unveiled at noon on April 18, 2009 as part of the annual “Hobbyfest” program.

The terminal, designed by noted architect Joseph Finger and built by the Works Progress Administration, is a rare remaining example of classic art deco airport architecture, featuring the distinctive design elements of that age: step forms, sweeping curves, and intricate geometrical patterns and motifs. Opened on September 28, 1940, the terminal was Houston’s gateway to the world, and served the fleets of Braniff Airlines and Eastern Air Lines. The terminal remained the City of Houston’s primary air transport terminal until 1954, when the city’s government ordered the construction of the new Houston International Airport Terminal, later renamed in 1967 to the William P. Hobby Airport, after the 27th Gov. of Texas, William P. Hobby, Sr.

In 1978, Hobby Airport manager James Delong proposed demolishing the 1940 Air Terminal building to expand ramp space for Hobby Airport, but the efforts of aviation enthusiasts in the Houston area ultimately prevented the demolition. The City of Houston currently leases the terminal to the Houston Aeronautical Heritage Society, which has undertaken a massive restoration of the property. Today, the terminal houses the 1940 Air Terminal Museum.

AIAA established the Historic Aerospace Sites Program in January 2000 to promote the preservation of, and the dissemination of information about, significant accomplishments made in the aerospace profession. In addition the 1940 Air Terminal, other sites recognized by the AIAA History Technical Committee include Pratt and Whitney’s Rentschler Field, East Hartford, Conn.; the FAA’s William J. Hughes Technical Center, Atlantic City, N.J.; the Cape Canaveral Air Force Station; GE Re-Entry Systems, Philadelphia, Pa.; the original Bendix Aviation Company in Teterboro, N.J.; the Boeing Red Barn, Seattle, Wash.; Kitty Hawk, N.C.; the site of the first balloon launch in Annonay, France; and Tranquility Base on the moon. For more information about AIAA’s Historic Aerospace Sites Program, contact Emily Springer at 703.264.7533 or emilys@aiaa.org

AIAA advances the state of aerospace science, engineering, and technological leadership. Headquartered in suburban Washington, D.C., the Institute serves over 35,000 members in 65 regional sections and 79 countries. AIAA membership is drawn from all levels of industry, academia, private research organizations, and government. For more information, visit www.aiaa.org.

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