

# University of Iowa graduate paints 300-foot airport mural

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## ENTERTAINMENT

### **Flights through Time: 300-foot airport mural highlights Iowa City's aviation history**

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Iowa City Press-Citizen



A colorful mural now immortalizes the oldest airport west of the Mississippi River.

The Iowa City Municipal Airport recently unveiled its 12-foot tall, 300-foot-long mural, designed and painted by a University of Iowa alum.

"Flights through Time" can be seen on the side of the aircraft hangar facing South Riverside Drive. It depicts Iowa City's 113 years of aviation history and airport contributions.

### **A project in hyperdrive**

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The mural took a little under a year to complete, which included raising the necessary funds and finding an artist. The Public Art Advisory Committee allotted \$8,000 from the city's art budget, with the airport raising the rest of the funds.

The Iowa City Airport Commission and the Iowa City Public Art Advisory Committee put out a call to artists last October, asking someone to design and paint a mural that can be seen from Riverside Drive, essentially becoming a "welcome sign" for Iowa City. The mural was created to connect the non-aviation community with the airport.

"We want to share what the airport does with the community and how the airport contributes to the Iowa City community," Iowa City Airport Manager Michael Tharp said.

More than 20 applicants applied and the commission landed on Des Moines painter Jenna Brownlee. Brownlee holds a BFA from the University of Iowa and returns at least once a year for a visit. She saw the mural as an opportunity to give back to the community and achieve a new milestone while doing so.

"To have the opportunity to give a piece of myself and contribute to the cultural landscape was something that I was excited to pursue," Brownlee said. "It had been a goal of mine to do a really large-sized mural."

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## **An ode to Iowa City's aviation past**

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The Iowa City Airport boasts a rich aviation history and generates more than \$20 million annually. The facility works closely with the University of Iowa as well.

Brownlee named the mural "Flights through Time," commemorating and celebrating the airport through a visual timeline starting in 1910. Captain Tom Baldwin visited Iowa City in "The Red Devil" during the first successful flight 113 years ago, landing at the Johnson County Fairgrounds, which eventually would become the home of the airport. He held a three-day flying demonstration. The mural also represents the various aircraft that have visited the facility over the years, including today's modern planes.

In 1920, the airport became the only stop during the first airmail flight between Chicago and Omaha – transporting 400 pounds of U.S. mail.

Iowa City began servicing commercial flights in 1927.

**[More: 'Crossover at Kinnick' immortalized with special Herky bobblehead](#)**

Brownlee used plenty of color in her mural, making sure drivers get a glimpse everytime they pass by.

“It is designed to be visible to the public from Riverside Drive,” Brownlee said. “The design of the simplicity and the vibrancy was intentional for a functional design so that people seeing it but still be able to capture the readability of it, but also take in the enthusiasm behind these aircrafts.”

Brownlee finished the mural in about three weeks, wrapping up shortly after Labor Day.

A special dedication ceremony is set for 12 p.m. Thursday, Oct. 26. Brownlee will be available for a meet-and-greet.

“I commend the airport for investing in their space through public art,” Brownlee said. “It feels like a responsibility, and I hope everyone loves it. My goal as an artist is to bring people joy through art, and I hope that is what [the mural] does.”

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