

**By Tammye McDuff**

The city of Downey has long been known as the birthplace of the **Space Shuttle** and Apollo. Anyone who has lived in the City for any length of time has probably worked for one of the National Air Defense companies that have occupied the now defunct buildings on Lakewood Boulevard.

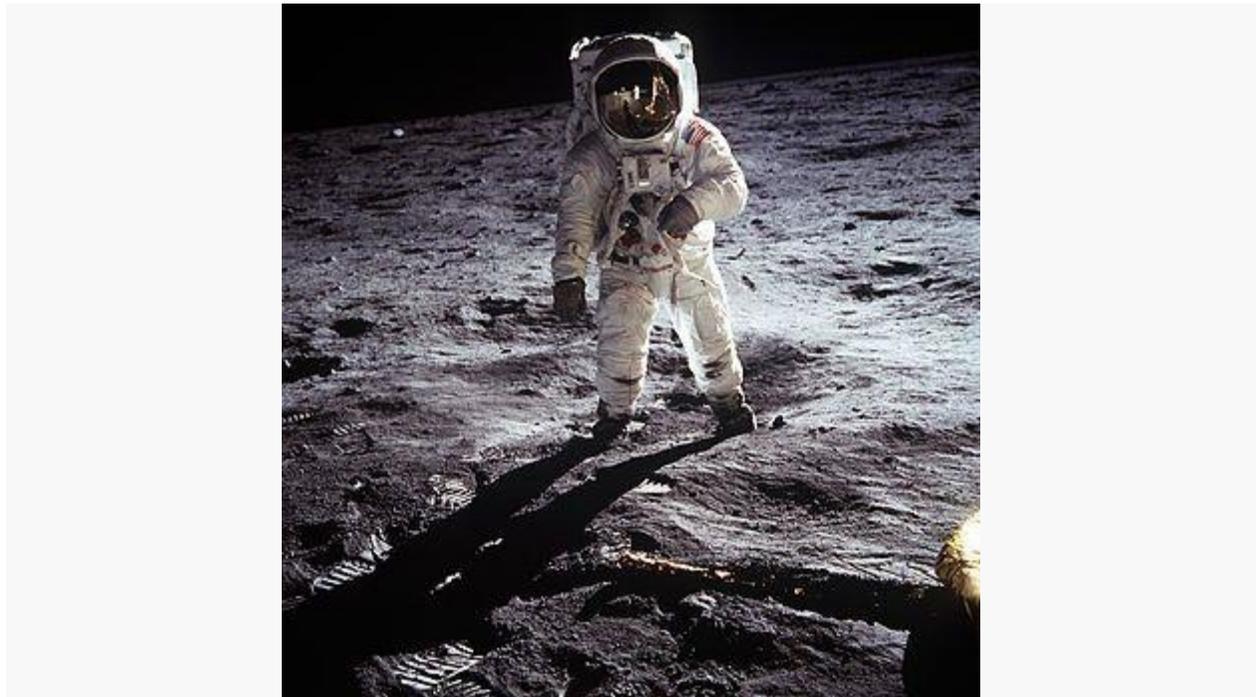
The current building is occupied by **Downey Studios** and the Aerospace Legacy Foundation also known as the ALF.

The site saw its first building in 1929. The EMSCO building was built by E.M. Smith and, according to ALF archives, Smith himself organized and financed the EMSCO Aircraft Corporation at the Downey site to manufacture land and sea aircraft.

One of EMSCO's first creations was a tri-motored eight place monoplane called the Challenger. EMSCO began to pioneer new air routes and set flying records with the first non-stop flight from Downey to Mexico City.

Security National Aircraft Corporation leased the former EMSCO plant after **Champion Aircraft** faltered because of poor economic conditions. Through a period of growth in aviation the site became **Vultee Aircraft**; North American Aviation; Rockwell International which was purchased by **Boeing Company**.

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Buzz Aldrin walks on the moon, July 20, 1969 (Photo credit: Wikipedia)

he facilities were the birthplace of the **Apollo Space Program** and the Space Shuttle. For more than 70 years, Downey's Rockwell **NASA** plant produced and tested the century greatest aviation, missile and space endeavors.

In an effort to preserve this great piece of aeronautic history, the Aerospace Legacy Foundation was created. Founded in 1994, the original organization was to provide community education and outreach.

When the Rockwell / Boeing NASA site closed, ALF joined with NASA and the City of Downey, to assure a significant portion of the site remain and stand as a testament to the contributions of thousands of men and women who launched the **United States** into the stars.

In 1998, ALF joined in a round table with the Downey Historical Society, City Council, General Services Administration, NASA and Boeing to discuss the future of the original buildings and its' preservation.

Upon closure of the Boeing site, ALF was given permission to go through the buildings and collect as much data and historical relics as possible. Tours were given in order raise funding in order to save these pieces of American culture.

ALF is now in need of supporters, volunteers and funding. The current owners of the building, Industrial Realty Group, LLC is in agreement to create an Aerospace Museum in conjunction with the newly proposed Downey Promenade.

According to Alberta Development Partners, the Downey Promenade will be incorporate shops, restaurants, and entertainment facilities to create the reinvention of the 'Cradle of the Cosmic Age' into a community gathering place and visitor destination.

There have been numerous rumors surrounding ALF and the reconstruction of the historical site. Larry Latimer, ALF Vice President stated "To get something on the record, ALF is not against developing the site. We never have been. We think the space center is awesome and we were instrumental in lobbying to get that built. Now with the present opportunity to develop the property, we want to see that ALF continues to keep a space here. We would like to develop a visitor's center and archive, where the public can come in and learn about this place."