

## Airport History

### Initial Construction



*Above: Group photograph of the graduation day for the U.S. Marine Corps Women's Reserve Celestial Navigation Training Class at the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Edenton (MCAS Edenton) in Edenton, NC, on March 15, 1944.*

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**By Matthew M. Peek, Military Collection Archivist, State Archives of North Carolina**

Marine Corps Air Station Edenton (MCAS Edenton) was founded in World War II, operating as an outlier Marine Corps installation connected with operations at MCAS Cherry Point and Camp Lejeune, NC. The federal government ordered the construction of MCAS Edenton. With structural construction completed, the station was given the mission to engage in operational training for landplanes and reduced seaplane facilities.

The usual training devices and buildings for celestial navigation and other aviation navigation subjects were provided, as well as gasoline storage, a photographic laboratory, and other facilities. The first Marine Corps Women's Reserves reported on August 4, 1943, at MCAS Edenton; by September 6, 1943, there were 415 Women's Reservists there.

While the runways were being completed — with three of them being asphalt-covered and 6,000 feet long — Marine Fighter Squadrons 413 and 423 began conducting training at the base, until they completed the training syllabus and were deployed overseas. A number of other Marine Corps aviation units began training there shortly after. Training was undertaken by an Operational Training Squadron for officers and men who would fly twin-engine aircraft.

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## Early Years



*Above: (WWII 130.F1.1: Group photograph of the doctors and nurses assigned to the Medical Department at the U.S. Naval Air Station Edenton, NC, in 1945. Pictured are (no order): Miss Hensley; Miss Aulenbach; Miss Greenleaf; Dr. Hoyt, Senior Medical Officer; Dr. Hinton; Dr. Roesser; Dr. Simpson; and Mr. Dote.)*

By October 1944, MCAS Edenton had 26 Marine Corps officers overseeing 332 men, and 11 Women Marine Reserve Officers overseeing 212 women. In addition, there were 15 Navy officers, 6 WAVES (Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service), and 26 Navy and Marine women also stationed there. 22 Coast Guard enlisted men and one woman provided security with dogs for the base. There was a headquarters squadron for the men, and two Aviation Women's Reserve Squadrons for the women.

During the early days of the base, station employees ate in downtown Edenton, NC. The base cafeteria opened in November 1942, and was shortly followed by a mess hall and galley that



could feed 250 officers and 1,900 enlisted persons daily. By the spring of 1943, MCAS Edenton would include the guard section, traffic control, a brig, a fire department, a communications department, Navy disbursing and paymaster departments, a post office, public works, malaria control, ground maintenance, quartermaster department, supply department, and a medical department.

Safety and rescue of Marine Corps members was the task assigned to a crash boat facility completed at MCAS Edenton on May 15, 1943. Recreation was provided in part by athletic events, boating, and bowling. There were also parties and dancing at an old barn that was rebuilt for the MCAS Edenton personnel, and at various clubs. There were chaplains operating at the base.

## After the War & Final Years

# The EDEN SOUND

VOL. I. NO. 6. U. S. MARINE CORPS AIR STATION, EDENTON, N. C. 3 JUNE 1949.

### Capt. Barrier Sets New Gun Mark

On May 22, Headquarters, Marine Corps, Washington, D. C., walked off with team honors in two divisions of the third annual North Carolina State Championship pistol and revolver tournament at Durham.

A feature of the opening competition was the new world's record set by Captain Thurman Barrier, U. S. Marine Corps. He bettered his own listed world mark of 292 in the .45 calibre national match course. The Captain set the old record in 1941 at Miami, Fla.

The Marines won the center fire team title with a score of 1,144, while the North Carolina State Highway Patrol was second with 1,087.

### Scoop! Marine Supply

The big word arrived yesterday as far as M/Sgt. Kicinaki is concerned. The title "Mister" is effective as of 7 June. Some grin that fellow is carrying around with him these days. Lt. Foster has a similar grin due to the fact that he might collect a \$5.00 bet on the date of Ski's official departure.

Most of the personnel over here at Marine Supply enjoyed a most delightful week-end at Nags Head sitting by the fireside sipping Cider through a straw. You can really believe that fireside story 'cause it sho' was cold down there.

The new instructions on Household Effects have been promulgated allowing more latitude on Household Effects and provides for commercial storage for same, if available.

### Lt. Col. George W. Herring, USMC



### VMF-115 Leads In Bond Drive

By 1st Lt. "Pat" McCullough  
T/Sgt. F. J. O'Neil

The Spring of '59 should see about half of the present members of VMF-115 taking a landlord's avid interest in the bargain-basement of Fort Knox. Having a fat finger in Uncle's gold and Silver pie today, assures these foxy fellows of a slice of the good life when less cautious wastrels are thumbing want-ads at the turn of the decade. Even those of us to whom Street and Smith leave greater appeal than Dunn and Bradstreet can dimly perceive the economic beauty of buying fifty (count 'em!), fifty crisp, new frogskins at the bargain rate of a modest thirty-seven and one-half groan.

The 115's appear to be the most Midas-minded outfit on the station. 45.9% of their personnel are investing their hard-earned clam in Fort Knox acreage, peddled hot by lot through star-salesman Lieut. Register.

The eager efforts of Lieut. Roley of SMS-15 in hawking his long green wares have boosted that outfit into the number two slot with a 36.1 per cent participation.

Manager's names and latest standings in the "four-for-three" League are as follows:

115	45.9%	Lt. Register
SMS-15	36.1%	Lt. Roley
322	32.1%	Lt. Campbell
MCAS	31.1%	Capt. O'Brien
Hq. Sq-15	30.9%	Major Zuber
MCGIS-7	28.4%	Lt. Clark
533	19.5%	Lt. Dove

The average for all the "EF's"

*Above: (Photograph of a cover of an issue of The Eden Sound, the base newsletter of the U.S. Marine Corps Air Station Edenton, from June 3, 1949. Several issues of this newsletter from 1949 have recently been donated to the Military Collection at the State Archives of North Carolina [unprocessed collection, Military Collection, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, NC].)*

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Through the base's Public Relations department, a station newspaper entitled the Chowan Leatherneck was issued, growing from a three-sheet publication with a circulation of 650, to a seven-sheet publication and a circulation of 1,850. Between January and October 1944, 90,543 flight operations occurred; in March 1944, an outlying field was acquired at Emporia, Virginia to serve for a "bounce drill" — or training for pilots who would have to operate from aircraft carriers.

On February 24, 1943, the Director of the Planning Division in the Bureau of Aeronautics called for a temporary diversion in the use of MCAS Edenton from glider training to two-engine landplane operations, with Operation Squadron Eight to use thirty-six PV-1 Venturas and eighteen SNB-1s for the purpose. The change called for an addition to the gasoline storage supply and various other projects.

With the end of World War II, MCAS Edenton was placed in caretaker status on July 1, 1946, and was inactivated and disestablished on August 1, 1946. The facility was still operated after August 1946 as a MCAS through at least the late 1940s, operating under the control of MCAS Cherry Point and Camp Lejeune.

On August 2, 1955, it was reestablished as a naval auxiliary air station, only to be disestablished on December 31, 1958, and decommissioned on January 1, 1959. The Edenton base was redesigned as an outlying field for MCAS Cherry Point, NC, on January 9, 1959. Within three months, however, it was disestablished again on March 31, 1959.

Given the cost of modernization for the base estimated at about \$48 million, it was decided to close the facility. The closure led to the laying off of 1,294 military personnel and 138 civilian employees. The 3,283 acres of land on which it sat were declared surplus with the right of recapture by the military. It would later become the Northeastern Regional Airport in Edenton, NC.

*The airport is currently owned by the Town of Edenton.*

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## **Resources**

- All of the information for this historical note was taken from United States Navy and Marine Corps Bases, Domestic, edited by Paolo E. Coletta, Greenwood Press, 1985, pages 194-195.
- MCAS Edenton Women's Reserve Class Photograph 1944, WWII 97, WWII Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, NC
- NAS Edenton Doctors and Nurses Photograph, WWII 130, WWII Papers, Military Collection, State Archives of North Carolina, Raleigh, NC

Original Story: <https://medium.com/nc-stories-of-service/marine-corps-air-station-edenton-a-brief-history-93b01f29ef5#>