

# ATLANTIC HERITAGE

Newsletter of the Atlantic County Historical Society

SPRING 2026

## NAVAL AIR STATION ATLANTIC CITY

By Michael Connor

What is now Atlantic City International Airport [ACY] and the Federal Aviation Administration Technical Center [FAATC] originated as a WPA project. The need for aviation training facilities during World War II led to the creation of Naval Air Station Atlantic City.

The Works Progress Administration [WPA] was formed during the Depression to provide paid employment and stimulate local economies. Its paid projects included many things from structures to works of art. In early 1941 the WPA allocated \$1.5 million to construct a municipal airport to service the Atlantic City area. That sum in 2026 dollars is in excess of \$33 million so this was no small amount.

A location was selected within a pine forest in Egg Harbor Township. The lands chosen adjoined a watershed and reservoir owned by the City of Atlantic City. Contemporary news accounts reported the intention to hire 1,187 men to cut and clear enough of the pine forest to construct three one mile concrete runways. The Pearl Harbor attack of December 7, 1941, hastened and changed these plans.

The Navy's Bureau of Aeronautics determined that this already planned project would be an ideal location to construct the training facility to be known as Naval Air Station Atlantic City. Of predominant concern to aviators is weather. For whatever complaints we may make about our local weather, the reality is that our location has less fog, snow and other conditions interfering with visibility than other nearby aviation facilities. Some of the other local qualities motivating the Army Air Corps to select Atlantic City as Camp Boardwalk were also important to the Navy's choice. Good railroad service and decent highways were near. Water supply and utilities could be easily procured. Multiple refineries were nearby in the Philadelphia area and North Jersey to provide fuel. A Paulsboro refinery ultimately provided most of what was needed.

Construction proceeded expeditiously. Ultimately thousands of workers were employed. Once sufficient land was cleared, buildings, hangers and runways were begun. Runway construction was staged to allow the use of partially completed runways while their construction continued.

While not complete, the facility opened ahead of schedule and was commissioned on April 24, 1943. It quickly became evident that notwithstanding the size of what was constructed, it was inadequate to need. By July, 1943, requests were submitted to construct more barracks, more taxiways and 50,000 additional square feet of apron. In September, 1943, approval for this was granted.

Delivery of aircraft to the station was a logistical challenge. While it is easy to simply fly an aircraft to an airport, it is not always possible to do so. A critical shortage of ferry pilots existed. Additional work was needed on some planes. Many aircraft were delivered to and stored at Bader Field pending transit to NASAC. Initial deliveries began in March of 1943. These were stored at Bader Field because of incomplete taxiways.

Many naval aircraft were built by the Grumman Corporation on Long Island. Some of these were delivered by Landing Ship Tank [LST] to Captain Starn's Pier in the Atlantic City inlet. Most naval aircraft have folding wings for carrier use. These were trucked by flat bed or towed to either Bader Field or the air station. Some aircraft in need of repair were returned to the manufacturer using these same LSTs.



*Continued on page 4*

# Events and Happenings

## Program Logistics

### RISLEY HOMESTEAD

8 Virginia Avenue  
(near 400 block of Shore Rd)  
Northfield, NJ



Saturdays & Sundays, 11am – 4pm

## Program Description

The [Risley Homestead](#) is one of two 18th century houses in Atlantic County individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places and was home to many generations of Risley oystermen. The ACHS received the Homestead and its furnishings by bequest from Virginia Risley Stout in 1989. The Homestead is open Saturday & Sunday for individual and small group guided tours. Contact ACHS for details about large groups.

## Yard Sale

Saturday, June 6<sup>th</sup> - 8:00am – 2:00pm  
(Rain date, June 13<sup>th</sup>)

and

Saturday, Sept. 19<sup>th</sup> - 8:00am – 2:00pm  
(Rain date, September 26<sup>th</sup>)

Many items for sale,  
including extra Library books.

Risley Homestead  
8 Virginia Avenue  
(near 400 block-Shore Rd)  
Northfield, NJ

March 16, 2026 6:30pm

ACHS 907 Shore Road, Somers Point

**Revolutionary Women: Women's Experience During the Revolutionary War. Presented by JuliaRose Violante**

A discussion of the wide-ranging hardships and tragedies women dealt with during the American War for Independence, as well as some of their invaluable contributions to the war effort, from Martha Washington down to the regular camp follower.

April 13, 2026 6:30pm

**SHORE FAST LINE**

ACHS 907 Shore Road, Somers Point

Presented by Bill Elwell, *Adjunct Professor of History at Monmouth University*

Explore the pivotal role railroads played in shaping the Jersey Shore into a sought-after destination for day trips and summer vacations.

April 26, 2026

**ACUA EARTH DAY**

6700 Delilah Rd., Egg Harbor Twp. 10:00am – 4:00pm

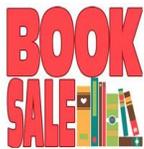
ACHS will have a table at the annual event. The Veterans History Project will be looking for veterans to interview. ACHS will be offering children's activities.

May 18, 2026 6:30pm

**ATLANTIC COUNTY MEN AT THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR BATTLE AT CHESTNUT NECK ON THE MULLICA**

ACHS 907 Shore Road, Somers Point

Presented by Norm Goos, *ACHS Librarian*



**ATLANTIC COUNTY HISTORICAL SOCIETY**

907 Shore Road  
Somers Point

Saturdays: JULY 18<sup>th</sup> & AUGUST 15<sup>th</sup>  
*Inside & outside ACHS.*



## Need to Contact Us?

Phone: (609) 927-5218 or

Email: [ACHSinfo@comcast.net](mailto:ACHSinfo@comcast.net)

Follow us on Instagram, Facebook or on our website [www.AtlanticCountyHistoricalSocietynj.org](http://www.AtlanticCountyHistoricalSocietynj.org)

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*The Atlantic County Historical Society has received special project grants from the Atlantic County Office of Cultural & Heritage Affairs.*

# Member News

## Welcome

### NEW MEMBERS

Torben Jenk, *Malvern, PA*  
Life Member  
Adrienne Larsen, *Northfield, NJ*



## Donations

### *FRIEND \$1 - \$49*

Betsy Naylor, Ed & Marie Borillo *IMO* Don Perry  
Fred & Elizabeth Winterbottom *IMO* Don Perry

### *PATRON \$50 - \$249*

Mike Connor, Tony Marino & Rosalia Valenti,  
Jim Foreman, Steve Jasiocki  
Charlene Canale *IMO* Joan Frankel & Don Perry

### *In Memory Of Don Perry*

Laura O'Brien, Barbara & Rich Dickson,  
Paul & Barbara Chan, Susan Wilson,  
Ellen Hyatt & Brian Lefke, Dale Lonkart

### *SPONSOR \$250 - \$1000*

Charles & Colleen Morgan

The Atlantic County Historical Society  
will be closed Friday & Saturday, April 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup>

**OUR REGULAR HOURS ARE:**  
**Thursday – Saturday: 10:00 – 3:30pm**

**THE MAGIC OF THE SEASON IS BEST  
ENJOYED WITH A PLATE OF FRESHLY  
BAKED HOLIDAY GOODIES!**

*Holiday Sweet Sale 2025*



***Thank you to all the volunteer bakers!!  
And thank you to all those who came out!***

## **NAVAL AIR STATION ATLANTIC CITY** *continued...*

Air operations were commenced prior to completion of permanent fueling facilities. An ingenious temporary solution was used. A trench providing vehicular access with an inclined roadway was dug. Fuel trucks and bowsers went down into the trench to be filled. Refinery delivery tankers were on a roadway at the top of the trench. A hose went from the tanker to the fuel truck. Gravity eliminated the need for any pumping. A variation on this concept is used today for gasoline delivery to gas stations with underground tanks. A hose goes from the tanker to the tank fill pipe. The filler cap on the tank truck top is opened to prevent vacuum and gravity fuel flow occurs. Mechanical pumping with spark risk is avoided.

In our ACHS archives we have an undated orientation letter welcoming new arrivals. It contains a wealth of information and is quoted below:

*U.S. Naval Air Station Atlantic City has been in commission since April 24th, 1943.*

*This station was constructed for the purpose of serving the Fleet Air Detachment stationed here and operating with carriers on the coast. Originally a pine forrest, NASAC has become one of the most advanced Naval all-weather stations on the east coast since its commissioning.*

*Cutting NASAC out of the pinewoods was accomplished by LCDR Bradford M. Bowker USNR, .... In approximately six months he had the area cleared, buildings erected and runways built. NASAC was then commissioned by its first commanding officer LCDR William J. Junkerman, USNR.*

*As the years progressed, many improvements were made to bring NASAC to its well developed stage of today. Paved roads and sidewalks were constructed more buildings built, and grass and hedges were planted to prevent erosion and add to its scenery. For the entertainment and recreation of station personnel, NASAC has a baseball field, golf driving range, Enlisted Men's Club, CPO Club, Officers Club, bowling alleys, gymnasium, library, hobby shop and movies.*

*To you who have just reported aboard for duty or who have come aboard for a shorter stay - a "hearty welcome aboard" and may your stay here be constructive and pleasant.*

*The Commanding Officer*

Personnel shortages led to the acceptance of women in previously male roles. On July 21, 1942, a branch of the Naval Reserves was created called Women Accepted in Volunteer Emergency Service. [WAVES] These welcome reinforcements began to appear in December of 1943. Construction of a barracks for them began in January, 1944. They were housed in local homes prior to completion of this barracks. April of 1944 saw its completion. In addition to customary clerical functions, these WAVES worked in the parachute loft, control tower, photo lab, dispensary and post office.



**"Crash Boats" such as this were stationed in Atlantic City Inlet for Search and Rescue**

To fulfill the mission of the air station, ancillary facilities were required. As navy pilots are trained to operate over water, equipment failure and pilot error did occur over the ocean. Search and rescue boats locally referred to as "crash boats" were stationed in the Atlantic City inlet. These went to the aid of downed pilots.

Training accidents were inevitable. The first fatality occurred in the beginning months of operation when a trainee was struck by the propeller of a taxiing plane. Technical Sergeant Michael Stowe of the New Jersey Air National Guard gained access to now declassified naval accident reports. His conclusion in a recorded interview was that there were at least fifty training fatalities.

*Continued on page 5*

## **NAVAL AIR STATION ATLANTIC CITY** *continued...*

Other ancillary facilities were required for gunnery, rocketry, and bomb training. A rocket range was established at Tuckahoe. Gunnery ranges were established along Great Bay. An air to ground range was located along the Great Egg Harbor River. A bombing range was established at Warren Grove. This range is in use until this day.

What was then known as Clark Field was created in Ocean City as an emergency landing strip. This is now the Ocean City Municipal Airport. Coyle Field on Route 72 began as a dirt strip to provide assistance for fighting forest fires. It was leased to NASAC and after the war returned to continued operation by the State of New Jersey for forest fire service. The airfield at Woodbine became an auxiliary field. (photo at right: NASAC auxiliary airfield being cleared.)



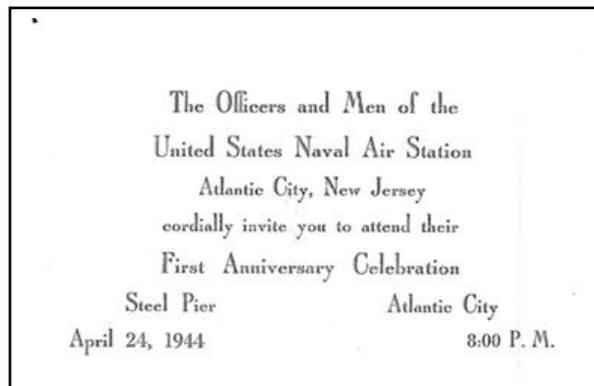
The concept of a Combat Information Center was introduced during World War II. For an aircraft carrier this involved direction of the fighter aircraft used to defend the vessel from enemy attack. Units of fighter direction teams were trained to detect the enemy and develop tactics for their interception. As both radio and radar were needed, the ability to use and maintain these electronics was needed.

In June of 1943 the Brigantine Hotel was leased to house a Fighter Director School. The hotel was renovated and equipment purchased. The staff from this facility was also used to maintain the electronics at the air station.

The original Boardwalk Flyer was created by the Reading Railway Lines. It provided high speed express service between Philadelphia and Atlantic City. A second Boardwalk Flyer appeared at NASAC. It was the station's weekly newspaper. In addition to war news and training schedules, it reported on base activities plus recreational and social activities. A naval term has been adopted by the publication business. This is a copy of their masthead:



The first anniversary of United States Naval Air Station Atlantic City was celebrated by an invitation only event at the Steel Pier. Below is a copy an invitation found in the ACHS archives:



The Thomas L. England General Hospital was comprised of many Atlantic City hotels which were converted to hospital facilities to treat the war wounded. These were served by NASAC. From May, 1944, large numbers of transport aircraft ferried the wounded to the air station for transport to the hospital and recuperation facilities in Atlantic City.

*Continued on page 6*

## NAVAL AIR STATION ATLANTIC CITY *continued...*

The devastating Hurricane of '44 [September 14, 1944] was unpredicted and came as a complete surprise to most. The air station had sufficient notice to conduct some protective actions on September 13th. Non-fighter aircraft were flown to western airports. Thirty eight aircraft were flown to Lakehurst NAS, 138 aircraft were secured in the two hangers and some 45 aircraft were securely tied down on the apron. They were faced to the east in the direction of the anticipated hurricane winds.

These preparations paid off. No fatalities or injuries occurred. No damage to aircraft was reported. Multiple trees were downed and some building damage was noted. Before the power went out winds of over 80 mph were recorded. The Brigantine Hotel facility suffered significant wind and flooding damage and needed extensive repairs. The bridge linking Atlantic City to Brigantine was washed away. The navy contributed to the cost of a replacement ferry.



1945  
Photo of  
Control  
Tower  
NAS AC

The conclusion of World War II led to a substantial reduction in force of all naval training facilities. While operations continued at NASAC both internal and external debate occurred over the fate of the facility. The City of Atlantic City which owned the airport lands wanted to resume construction of a commercial terminal and commence civilian operations at the airport. Its 1941 construction of a terminal ended with the outbreak of World War II and navy takeover. The Navy was highly resistant to joint use of the base with civilian aviation.

By June of 1957 the Navy had determined to cease operations at the facility and end them by July 1, 1958. A 1956 fatal collision of two commercial aircraft over the Grand Canyon altered the future. Most airspace at the time was uncontrolled. Congress in response to this disaster created the Airways Modernization Board. This progressed to the establishment of the Federal Aviation Administration.

Air traffic control was to be established for U.S. airspace. State Senator Frank S. Farley and others successfully lobbied the U.S. Secretaries of Transportation and Commerce to site their field-testing experimental center at the airport. The Federal Aviation Facility Experimental Center [NAFEC] was created. When the Navy ceased operations in July of 1958 the FAA took over the facility.

Concurrently, the New Jersey Air National Guard was looking for a new home for its 177th Fighter Wing. Known as the "Jersey Devils" this unit took over buildings and hangers vacated by the Navy. With changes and improvements, this continues to be their home today.

The uniformed services of the United States expanded their use of this facility when the U.S. Coast Guard established an air station. Operations began May 18, 1998. Their website says "U.S. Guard Air Station Atlantic City opened in 1998 and is the product of merging of Air Station Brooklyn, NY and Group/Air Station Cape May, NJ into one unit." This unit provides search and rescue, maritime law enforcement, marine environmental protection and port security. Its areas of operations include the coastlines of Connecticut, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia. As well the Chesapeake, Delaware and Hudson Rivers are covered.

Profitability for commercial airlines using ACY has always been a challenge. Three carriers currently serve the airport. As well, charter aircraft and other civil aviation can be found. This facility also provides a base for the Atlantic City Airshow.

The continued operations at the former Naval Air Station Atlantic City make a vital contribution to the area economy. An interesting future awaits.



Left: Patch Logo for NAS AC  
Middle: Patch Logo for 177<sup>th</sup> Fighter Wing, New Jersey National Guard (*Note: the Jersey Devil*).  
Right: Patch Logo for US Coast Guard Air Station, Atlantic City. (*Note the casino theme*).

## Then & Now!

By Lynn Wood

*Then & Now* is a regular feature in our Newsletter, featuring photos from the ACHS collection.

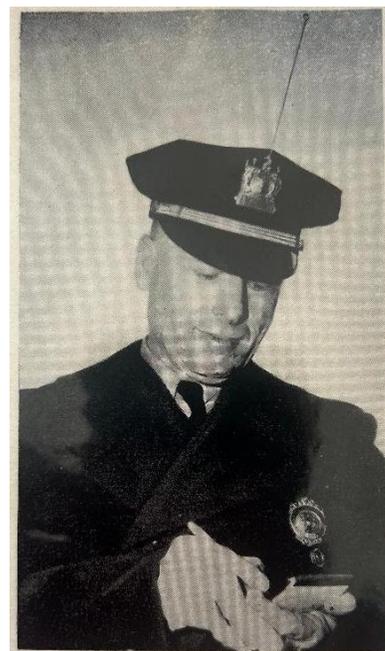


The top picture, taken around the turn of the century, shows the three wheeled mill and bulkhead that was located on the east end of the Egg Harbor City Lake. It was an under-shoot setup where the water went under the wheels through a raceway that is still visible today.

*Top photo courtesy:  
Egg Harbor City Roundhouse Museum.  
Bottom picture courtesy: Lynn Wood.*

## TOO LATE, MAX

*The antenna sticking up from the badge on his cap is the only indication that this Atlantic City, NJ policeman is in radio contact with headquarters. The four-tube, five-ounce receiver and its speaker are concealed inside the hat.*



The photo above and caption are self-explanatory and came to us from David Doss, of Michigan. David periodically sends us interesting photos and ephemera he finds at yard sales and other venues. He has done so for almost 10 years and Sid Parker, who always sends him a thank you email, says that David also makes similar gifts of relevant items to other historical societies around the country.

Many of our members are well past the age of consent and will readily recall the popular TV program, *Get Smart*, of the late 60's in which Maxwell Smart, a.k.a. Agent 66, communicated with "Chief" at headquarters by removing a shoe which was cleverly disguised as a mobile telephone. Max, and his female colleague, "99" (Agent 99) were employed by CONTROL, in the international world of intrigue against KAOS, their Soviet antagonists.

The photo, which appeared in *Popular Science* magazine in May 1954, apparently did not spark a communication trend in law enforcement, although it certainly was easier to use than removing a shoe or looking for a nearby telephone booth. *Would you believe that our attempt to identify that A.C. policeman was in vain? We missed it by THAT much?*

### Atlantic County Historical Society Governing Board

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**ATLANTIC COUNTY  
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*Where Atlantic County History Comes to Life*



**Our Mission:**

- To collect and preserve historical materials exemplifying the events, places, and lifestyles of the people of Atlantic County and southern New Jersey.
- To encourage the study of history and genealogy.
- To provide historical and genealogical information to our membership and the general public.