

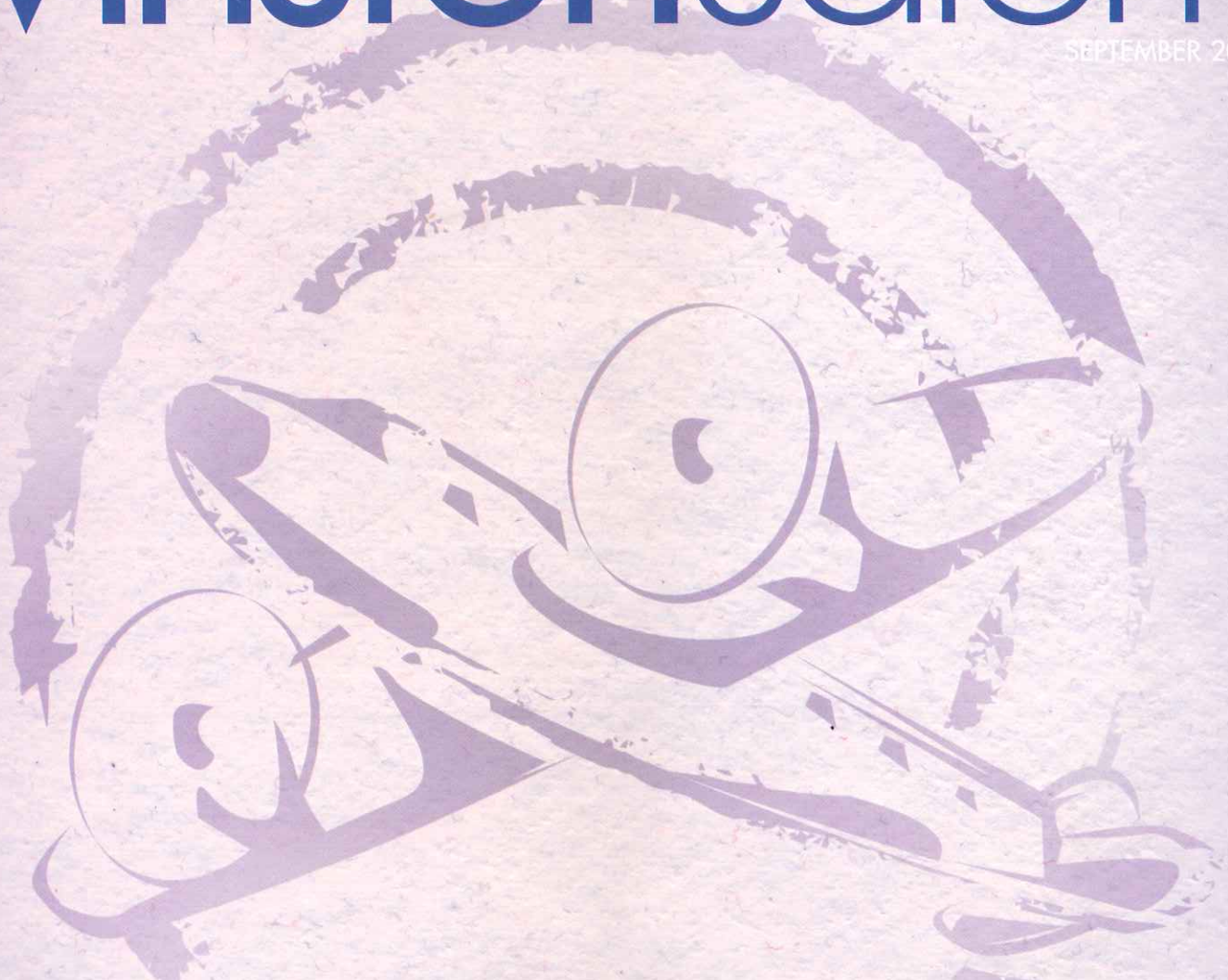
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SEPTEMBER 2008



★★★ TAKING FLIGHT ★★★ the history of smith reynolds airport

**CAMEL CITY CO.
TAKES AIRPORT**
Reynolds, McGinness and
Apple Plan Extensive
Miller Field



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connecting *flights*

Tracking the triumphant history of Smith Reynolds Airport

By Michael Breedlove

At 3801 N. Liberty St., just east of roaring Highway 52, a sleepy stretch of flat earth sits quietly in the shadow of the Winston-Salem skyline.

Though it's just a few miles from downtown, the area has a quaint, almost eerie stillness to it.

At the center of the estate sits a steadfast, three-story building that seems to keep watch over the surrounding terrain. It's hard to believe that this building, with its stucco-covered walls and nondescript features, was once hailed the most impressive structure of its kind in the country. It's even harder to believe that the surrounding area, seemingly lost in sedation, used to welcome thousands upon thousands of daily guests.

This, in a glimpse, is Smith Reynolds Airport — Winston-Salem's lone gateway to the sky. At one point, it was the busiest airport in the state. Now, the facility seems to survive largely on memory.

But to dismiss the airport as simply an artifact would be enormously invalid. The facility, in fact, remains a valuable asset to our community, just as it was when it opened some 80 years ago.

Smith Reynolds Airport, 1961

CAMEL CITY CO. TAKES AIRPORT

Reynolds, McGinness and Apple Plan Extensive Services at Miller Field.

Camel City Flying Service, just organized by William M. Reynolds, Lewin McGinness and H. S. Apple, all of this city, has taken a lease on Miller Municipal Airport and assumed active operation.

Improvements

The lessees announce immediate improvements will be made at the airport and a complete flying service will be offered. All of the men in the new organization have been identified with the field a long time.

Both open and closed ships are available to persons wishing long or short flights, it is announced. The operators will be available for cross-country trips or local sight-seeing hops.

The two hangars and the office building are to be renovated and repainted immediately, and the entire field is to be cleaned and improved. A ladies' rest room will be provided.

Speakers and Stands

Outstanding improvement will include installation of a system of loud-speakers and construction of a grandstand. The loud-speakers will

(PLEASE TURN TO PAGE 11)



COURTESY OF REYNOLDA HOUSE

LEFT: *Winston-Salem Journal* article announcing the opening of Camel City Flying Service. ABOVE: Mechanics at Miller Municipal Airport. TOP RIGHT: Aerial view showing the construction of the Z. Smith Reynolds Terminal. BOTTOM RIGHT: Charles Lindbergh (right) and his plane, "The Spirit of St. Louis," after arriving at Miller Municipal Airport.



COURTESY OF FORSYTH COUNTY PUBLIC LIBRARY PHOTOGRAPH COLLECTION



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All Systems Go

Smith Reynolds Airport wasn't the first airfield in Winston-Salem. In the 1920s, a stretch of farmland off Waughtown Street served as the city's primary landing strip. It was called Maynard Field, named for Belvin Maynard, a World War I flying ace with local ties.

"From everything I've heard, Maynard Field was basically a cow pasture," explains Richard Murdoch, archivist at Reynolda House. "City officials knew they needed a new airfield, they just needed some sort of push to make it happen."

That "push" came in the form of a young pilot named Charles Lindbergh. It was Lindbergh who, in 1927, flew his plane, "The Spirit of St. Louis," from New York to Paris nonstop. The flight was the world's first solo trans-Atlantic flight, and Lindbergh became a living legend.

Following the feat, Lindbergh planned an 88-city tour in which he'd fly into selected airports to promote aviation. Winston-Salem was on the list of stops. "That's when town officials took a close look at Maynard Field and thought, 'This isn't going to work,'" Murdoch says.

So officials began looking for a spot to place a new airfield, eventually settling on a portion of land off Walkertown Road (now North Liberty Street). At the

time, the area was home to the Forsyth County Farm, a lockup for local juvenile delinquents.

Crews quickly went to work, and the town became electrified at the thought of a new, state-of-the-art airport. Local businessman Clint Miller became so intrigued that he gave \$17,000 to help fund the facility. Because of this, officials decided to name the site after him.

On October 15, 1927, thousands of wide-eyed spectators gathered at the facility to see "The Spirit of St. Louis" arrive in Winston-Salem. Miller Municipal Airport was officially in business.

Around that time, Dick Reynolds — the oldest son of R.J. — was running a commercial airline service in the New York/New Jersey area. At the request of several local leaders, Reynolds began shifting some of his business to Miller Municipal Airport.

While Reynolds' company bolstered the airport's reputation, Miller Municipal still lacked one key amenity: commercial service from a national airline. The reasons were clear — Miller's landing strips were too short, the field lighting was too poor, and the passenger terminal was, well, nonexistent.

So, using funds from the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation, the Reynolds family would help finance the

WHO WAS Z. SMITH REYNOLDS?



In short, Zachary Smith Reynolds was the youngest son of tobacco tycoon R.J. Reynolds and Mary Katherine Smith. More than that, though, he was an accomplished aviator whose life was cut mysteriously and tragically short.

Born in 1911, Smith lost both of his parents before he was a teenager, and was brought up predominantly by his uncle, William N. Reynolds. While Smith's uncle looked after him, it was his older brother, Dick, who cultivated his love for flying. Dick owned an airfield in New York and would invite Smith to come work alongside him during the summer months. Little by little, Smith began learning the art of aviation.

"Before he was 20 years old, Smith had mastered navigation" says Richard Murdoch, archivist at the Reynolda House.

As an aviator, Smith made a transcontinental flight — or flight across the U.S. — in an unofficial record time. But it's his 1931 escapade from London to Hong Kong for which he's most famous. Smith made the flight in an S.56C amphibian biplane — "basically a flying boat," Murdoch says.

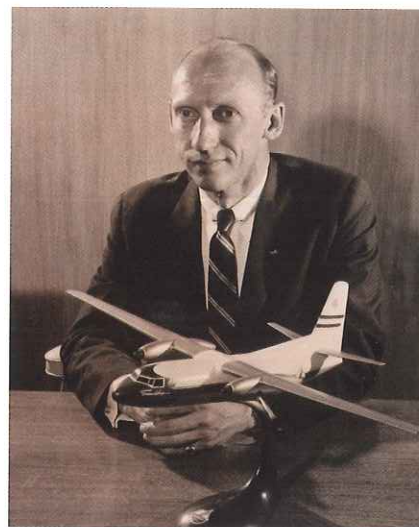
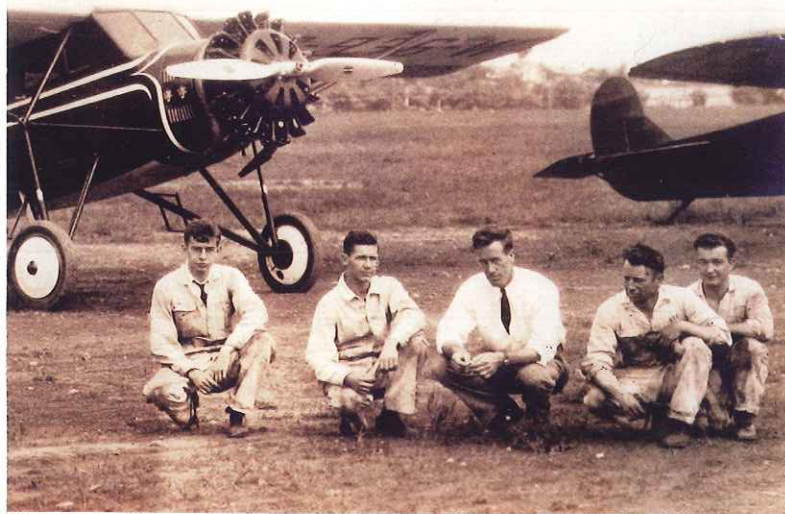
When he landed in Hong Kong, he found his new bride, Libby Holman, waiting for him. Holman was a 26-year-old Broadway star made famous by her torch-singing talents. The two had married after Smith divorced his first wife, Anne Cannon, with whom he had a daughter.

A few months after returning, Smith threw a rousing party at the Reynolda Estate. But the festivity, which was held July 5, 1932, would take a horrific turn. Early the next morning, Smith was found bleeding and unconscious on the second floor of the house. A gunshot wound had ended his life at the tender age of 20.

To this day, Smith's death remains cloaked in mystery. Holman was indicted for murder, along with Smith's best friend Albert Bailey "Ab" Walker, but neither were taken to trial.

After Smith's death, the Reynoldses established the Z. Smith Reynolds Foundation in his honor. The foundation, which aims to improve the lives of North Carolinians, still thrives today.

For more the foundation, go to www.zsr.org.



FAR LEFT: Mechanics at Miller Municipal Airport. LEFT: Thomas H. Davis, founder of Piedmont Aviation. BELOW: A Piedmont Airlines DC-3 airplane in flight.

necessary improvements at the facility. The touch-ups were completed on December 14, 1942, and the new Z. Smith Reynolds Terminal was dedicated.

The structure was stunning in every sense. It contained marble walls, large picturesque windows, and a one-of-a-kind chandelier in the lobby. It housed a baggage area, control room, lunch counter, and even an upscale lounge called The Sky Club. "Some called it the finest facility in the country," Murdoch says.

With the refinements in place, the airport inked a contract with Eastern Airlines, one of the country's largest commercial carriers. Winston-Salem had its airport, its terminal, and now its commercial service. While things were looking up, a young man by the name of Thomas Davis was about to take the airport to unimaginable heights.

Piedmont Takes Off

A day after dedicating the terminal, Dick Reynolds would leave Winston-Salem and join the Navy. His aviation company had already been passed on to close friend Lewis "Mac" McGinnis, who changed the name to Camel City Flying Service. McGinnis chose to focus the company's efforts on wholesale and maintenance services.

Before long, the newly renamed Smith Reynolds Airport (INT) was the largest repair facility between Washington, D.C., and Atlanta. While the maintenance business was booming, the sales division needed a boost.

In 1939, McGinnis hired a 21-year-old sparkplug of a salesman named Thomas Davis. Davis was a Winston-Salem native who had just returned home from the University of Arizona.

Almost instantly, sales at Camel City began to pick up, and it was Davis who was leading the charge. In a year's time, he was company vice president, treasurer, and chief stock holder. Shortly after, he was running the show. It was around this time that Davis decided to change Camel City Flying Service to Piedmont Aviation, the precursor to Piedmont Airlines.

During this time, the United States was entangled in the second World War. While Davis' asthma kept him out of action, he did his part to secure a victory. From 1942 to 1945, Smith Reynolds Airport became a train-



ing bed for U.S. pilots headed overseas. In all, the facility trained more than 1,000 troops.

When World War II ended, Davis found himself in a predicament. The airport staff had swelled because of the pilot training program. Now that the war had ended, how was he going to find jobs for everyone?

That's when he got an idea. He'd start a local airline service that would fly to small airports that the bigger airlines skipped over. He'd base the operations at INT, and would call it Piedmont Airlines.

On February 20, 1948, Davis stepped on a Piedmont Airlines plane in Wilmington and eventually stepped off in Cincinnati, Ohio. It was the first commercial flight the airline ever made, and Davis was the lone passenger.

From that first flight, Piedmont Airlines began to soar. The company grew from a few hundred workers to more than 20,000 in its prime.

Ronald Macklin was one of Davis' earliest employees, coming to work for Piedmont in 1953. He says the key to the airline's success was simple.

"We were successful because we acted like Southerners," explains Macklin, who served as the head of maintenance for many years. "We were nice, true to our word, and we appreciated every passenger that stepped on board."

Behind this homegrown hospitality, Piedmont became the sixth-largest airline in the United States. In 1984,



COURTESY OF SMITH REYNOLDS AIRPORT

MOMENTS IN TIME

it was named Airline of the Year by *Air Transport World* magazine. For Macklin, the honor was a direct reflection of the man in charge.

“There couldn’t have been a better man to lead us than Tom Davis,” Macklin says. “He didn’t micromanage us. If he gave us a job, he expected us to get it done, and we always did. It just worked.”

As Piedmont grew, Smith Reynolds Airport boomed. In 1961, it became the busiest airport in the state; a feat it would repeat four more times that decade. But while times appeared great, a critical decision would soon rob Smith Reynolds of its commercial service.

The Slow Descent

In the 1960s, the Civil Aeronautics Board came to the conclusion that only one airport in the Triad would receive service from national air carriers. This put Smith Reynolds head to head with Greensboro Regional Airport (now PTIA), which was located just 13 nautical miles away. After weighing the pros and cons of both facilities, the board selected Greensboro, largely because of its centralized location.

The blow to INT was immeasurable. While Piedmont would continue to fly out of the airport, the days of commercial service at the facility were numbered.

Following the deregulation of airlines in the 1970s, a new concept called the “hub and spoke” system was redefining commercial aviation. The plan involves a central airport (hub) through which other flights are routed (spokes). With passenger numbers dwindling at Smith Reynolds, Piedmont chose to make Charlotte-Douglas International Airport its hub. While Piedmont’s headquarters remained at INT, the airport’s passenger numbers would never again be substantial.

In the late 1980s, USAir Group Inc. would deal another blow to Smith Reynolds’ vitality. After making an

- 1927** Miller Municipal Airport officially opens as Colonel Charles Lindbergh lands at the facility.
- 1932** Reynolds Aviation becomes Camel City Flying Service.
- 1939** Tom Davis begins working for Camel City. He soon becomes chief executive, renaming it Piedmont Aviation.
- 1942** The Z. Smith Reynolds Terminal is dedicated. The airport is eventually renamed Z. Smith Reynolds Airport (INT).
- 1945** With World War II ending, INT closes its wartime pilot training program.
- 1948** Piedmont Airlines carries its first passenger. The company would go on to become a leader in the airline industry.
- 1961** Smith Reynolds becomes the busiest airport in the state, a feat it would repeat in '63, '64, '65, and '69.
- 1975** Piedmont announces plans to consolidate its efforts at Greensboro Regional Airport (PTIA).
- 1989** Piedmont Airlines completes its merger with USAir, causing operations at INT to slow down immensely.
- 1993** USAir closes its INT base. Eventually, the company would remove all of its operations from INT.
- 2000** The last scheduled airline flight departs from Smith Reynolds Airport.



President Truman arrives at Smith Reynolds Airport. RIGHT: Jackie Robinson and wife (center) with Sheriff Ernie Shore (far right).



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N O T A B L E G U E S T S

Charles Lindbergh, *pilot* • Wiley Post, *pilot* • Amelia Earhart, *pilot* •
 Harry Truman, *president* • Mary Pickford, *actress* •
 Ethel Waters, *jazz singer* • Jackie Robinson, *baseball player*

eye-popping offer, USAir would merge with Piedmont to form one of the largest airlines in the country.

While USAir assured the folks at INT that nothing would change, things quickly did. In 1991, the company closed its base at Smith Reynolds, eventually moving every existing USAir operation out of INT.

With USAir gone, commercial service would soon follow. In January of 2000, a US Airways Express jet departed from Smith Reynolds Airport. It remains the last scheduled airline flight in or out of the facility.

Holding Steady

With Piedmont gone and scheduled airline service a thing of the past, it's easy to cast an insignificant wave over Smith Reynolds Airport. But according to Chris Veal, deputy airport director, the facility continues to play a vital role in Winston-Salem's economic stability.

"I believe Smith Reynolds is not fully appreciated because it does not have airline service," Veal says. "But it's an important hub of corporate and private aviation."

So just how does the airport help our economy? For starters, it's important to note that the facility is self-sufficient, using little to no tax money to operate.

It helps generate revenue for the local economy through property taxes. This comes from aircraft docked in the hangars and tenants residing at the facility.

It also houses corporate jets for numerous area businesses, including BB&T, R.J. Reynolds, Richard Childress Racing, and Flow Motors.

Aside from that, INT is home to companies offering charter flight service. This allows groups, clubs, and anyone else inclined to fly directly out of Winston-Salem.

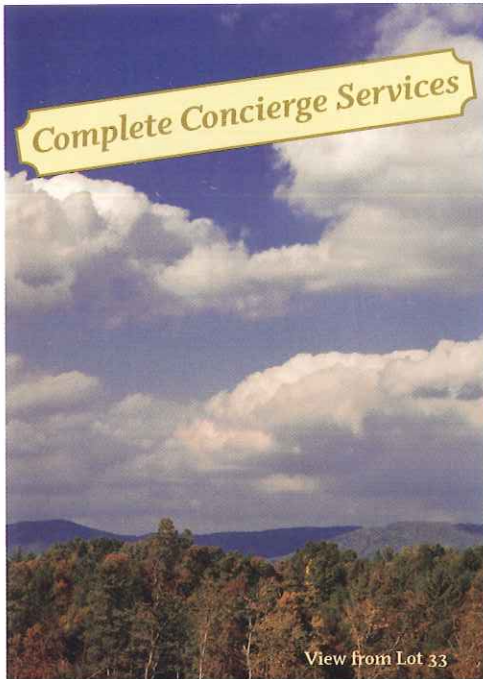
And finally, the airport continues to house a prestigious flight school that helps thousands of potential pilots experience the thrill of aviation.

So next time you find yourself on North Liberty Street, just east of roaring Highway 52, take a moment to drive past our venerable old airfield.

And as you look up at the terminal, with its stucco-covered walls and nondescript features, remember that it serves as a living, breathing gateway to the past behind us, the future ahead of us, and the skies above us.

For more on services offered at Smith Reynolds Airport, go to smithreynolds.org. To visit a historical tribute to Piedmont Airlines, go to jetpiedmont.com

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WINSTON-SALEM AIR SHOW PHOTO



2008 AIR SHOW SET FOR TAKEOFF

Mention the words "air show" and Steve Flippin's eyes grow nearly as big as the city of Winston-Salem itself.

The longtime Smith Reynolds Airport employee still holds fond memories of the air shows of yesteryear. He remembers perusing old DC-3s and Mohawks as they sat proudly on display. He remembers watching the famed Blue Angels as they ducked and rolled across the Twin City skyline. He remembers when it seemed that all of Winston-Salem would come out to celebrate a few days of flight.

So when the Airport Commission asked him to head up the 2008 air show, Flippin wholeheartedly agreed, vowing to return the event back to its former splendor.

Now, after a year's hiatus, the Winston-Salem Air Show will once again roar into Smith Reynolds Airport. Flippin says that this year's event will be one that's truly for everyone — "even if airplanes aren't really your thing."

The expanded list of non-aviation attractions includes an

ArtWalk, a Winston Cup Museum exhibit, and a car show featuring Lamborghinis, Maseratis, Bentleys, and more. There will also be a stage for live entertainment, a Harley-Davidson drag-racing display, and a large KIDS ZONE area complete with a rock-climbing wall, inflatables, and plenty of hands-on activities.

On the aviation side, the event will feature a variety of static displays that visitors can stroll through, including a T-1 Jayhawk, a B-25 Bomber, and an old Piedmont Airlines DC-3 aircraft.

And, like all good air shows, this year's event will feature a stunning array of aerial demonstrations — most notably, the world-renowned GEICO Skytypers.

"On the surface, the event is about airplanes," Flippin says. "But it's really more than that. It's about the city of Winston-Salem, its history, and the families that are here." **WS**

WHERE: Smith Reynolds Airport

WHEN: September 6-7

TIME: Gates open at 10 a.m. and close at 6 p.m.

COST: Adults: \$11 in advance, \$15 at the gate. Children under 12 are admitted free. Military and senior citizen discounts are available.

INFO: wsairshow.com