

HISTORIC MARKER PROGRAM

Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission

Maynard Field

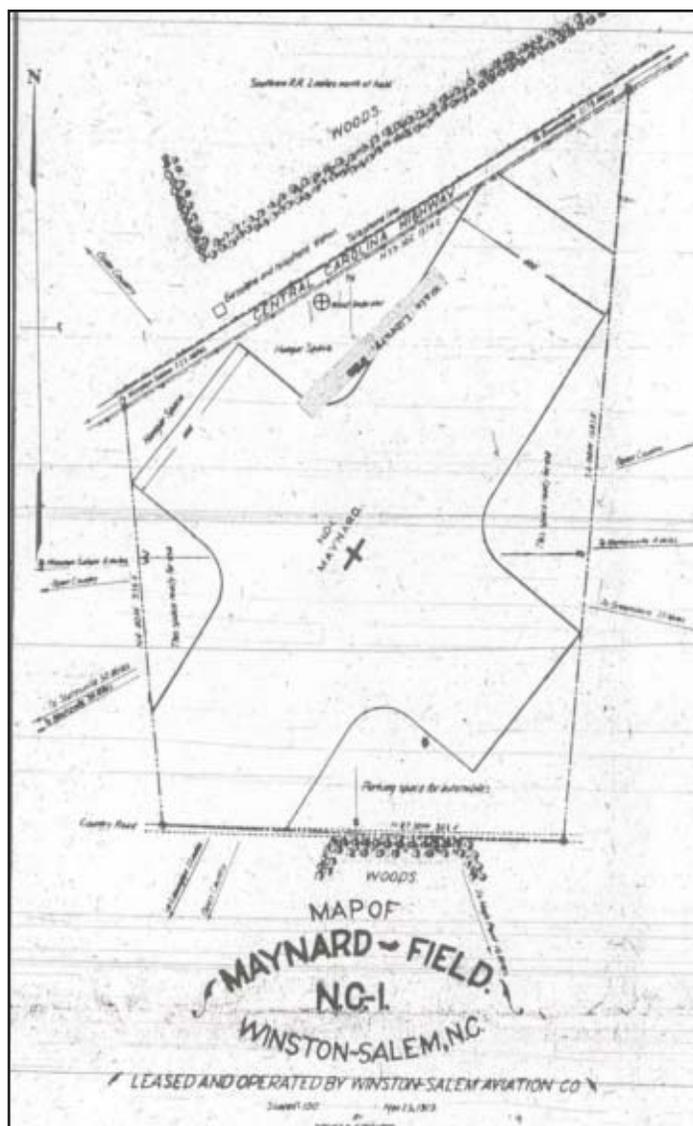
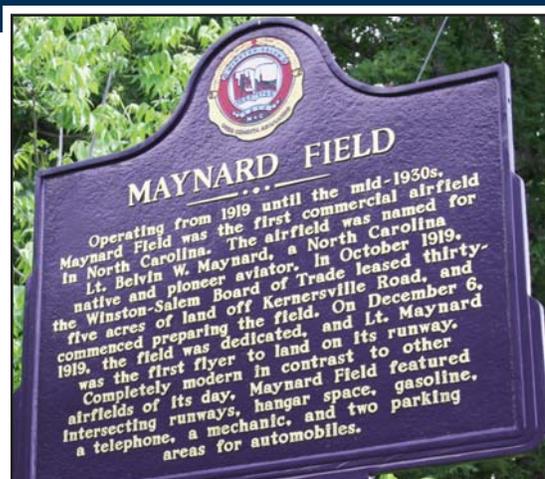


Belvin Maynard, the "Flying Parson," the man for whom Maynard Field was named
Courtesy of Forsyth County Public Library Photograph Collection

Maynard Field, opening in 1919 and continuing until the mid 1930s, was the first commercial airfield in North Carolina. The airfield was completely modern in contrast to other airfields of its day and boasted many amenities desired by pilots. The airfield was named for Lieutenant Belvin W. Maynard, a North Carolina native and pioneer aviator. Located off Kernersville Road, the field was dedicated on December 5, 1919, and Lt. Maynard was the first flyer to land on its runway.

Prior to the end of World War I, the Winston-Salem Board of Trade recognized that it would be quite profitable to attract aviation industry to the city. Therefore, for three months, beginning in January 1918, the Board investigated the possibility of locating an airplane company in Winston-Salem. Unfortunately, the city lacked a suitable flying field and the Board of Trade determined such an endeavor was not feasible at that time.

However, in September 1919, the Board learned that an air-mail route was going to be established between Washington, D.C. and Atlanta, and that a midway stopping point would be needed in North Carolina. The Board also heard that flyers were willing to pay \$10.00 a day for the ability to land on a suitable field. Immediately, the Board of Trade set out to establish a first-class landing field for the city, a field that would be the first of its kind. In 1919, there were no airports in North Carolina, and it is likely that most North Carolinians had never seen an airplane. "Airfields" of that time were nothing more than golf courses, country club lawns, corn and cotton fields, and other areas of land that had been cleared to allow a place for takeoffs and landings. Most of them were plagued with stumps, ruts, and mud and could only be accessed by flying in from one specific direction.



Map of Maynard Field, 1919

Courtesy of Forsyth County Public Library Photograph Collection

The Winston-Salem Board of Trade and its supporters moved quickly to create an airfield that would have not only paved runways, but directional markers, a hanger, telephone and gas services, and a paid mechanic, as well. They envisioned what would become North Carolina's first commercial airport.

In October 1919, the Board of Trade leased 35 acres off Kernersville Road from W.P. Stockton. The land was roughly seven miles from the center of Winston-Salem. Next, Articles of Incorporation for the Winston-Salem Aviation Company were drawn and immediately work began to prepare the site. Volunteers provided time, money, and equipment to ensure the field would be ready in time to secure Winston-Salem's position on the federal government's aero maps. By the end of November, the United States government had approved Winston-Salem's new airfield.

The Board of Trade decided to name the field in honor of Lieutenant Belvin W. Maynard, a North Carolina native, who had recently won the Transcontinental Air Race. Maynard was also a minister and a World War I test pilot.

The field was an airman's dream as it had been cleared and smoothed, the top surface was softened and compressed against the second layer, and a sandy soil, which prevented the accumulation of mud in bad weather, had been spread over the top. Maynard Field consisted of intersecting runways, which allowed fliers to take off and land from any direction. A flier could easily see the field from the sky as 15-foot-wide letters that spelled out "Maynard Field" had been erected for that purpose. Each end of the runway was marked North, South, East, or West, and a wind indicator had been placed on a 30-foot pole. Not only did Maynard Field offer aviators a safe and durable runway, but as envisioned, it also offered hangar space, gasoline, a telephone, a mechanic and two parking areas for automobiles. Maynard Field was a complete success.

Thanks to Maynard Field, Winston-Salem was placed on the aero maps and flyers made good use of it. A 1919 Winston-Salem Journal report stated that Winston-Salem would always be remembered for creating the first municipal airfield in the State, and for the prestige that came with that honor.

In 1927, Miller Municipal Air Field opened on the site of what is today Smith Reynolds Airport. By the mid 1930s, air traffic had switched to Miller Field and Maynard Field closed. However, its early presence reflected Winston-Salem's solid reputation as an industrial powerhouse.



WANT TO KNOW MORE?

<http://www.digitalforsyth.org/photos/stories/airports-of-winston-salem>

<http://www2.journalnow.com/news/2008/may/19/maynard-airstrip-honored-with-historic-marker-ar-118906/>



This information is also available
at the Forsyth County
Historic Resources Commission's web site:
<http://www.ForsythCountyHRC.org>