Scenes from the Kansas State Penitentiary, Lansing. Above, a sketch of the prison from its *Seventh Biennial Report* (1889-1890). Below, buildings at the prison coal mine.
obtain income from convict labor without becoming involved in procurement of raw materials or the marketing of finished products.  

Just outside the main wall, a smaller enclosure contained the shafts and surface machinery of the penitentiary coal mine. Guided by Warden Hopkins’s recommendation, the state had begun sinking a shaft in 1879 to gain access to the rich vein of coal that lay beneath the prison. Work progressed slowly but efficiently, and the 732-foot shaft was completed in 1882. By year’s end, coal valued at more than $40,000 had been lifted to the surface. The latter amount, added to income obtained from labor contracts, rendered the institution completely self-supporting for the first time. The mine employed more than 100 convicts in 1883, and had potential for extensive development.

Hopkins had adopted the Auburn system of prison management as a means of maintaining order and discipline at Lansing. This method, used widely throughout the East, was especially suited to an industrial prison. Convicts worked together during the day, took their meals in a congregate dining hall, and returned to solitary cells at night. The system’s traditional features included absolute silence, downcast eyes, striped uniforms, deprivation of personal possessions other than those issued by the prison, and lockstep marching. The lockstep was the trademark of American prisons during the 19th century. Inmates formed in single file, right hand on the shoulder of the man in front, left hand on the side; the convicts then stepped off in unison, raising the right foot high and shuffling with the left.  

Kansas law authorized use of the dark cell and the ball and chain to discipline unruly inmates, but in 1875 Hopkins boasted that “the ‘dark cell’ [had] not been resorted to in five years, or ‘ball and chain’ in three years, and flogging at no time.” The warden preferred humanitarian disciplinary methods, such as deducting time from sentences for good behavior, and he repeatedly proposed legislation to secure such incentives. Hopkins died of a “massive hemorrhage” at age 46, only months after leaving his post at Lansing. A eulogist, commenting on the former warden’s deeds, stated that Hopkins did not “expect to make angels of the convicts under his charge, and was determined not to make them brutes. . . . He quietly studied their dispositions

5. Ibid.
Hoch’s political allies, but also included Frank W. Blackmar, the reformer, and Rev. Charles M. Sheldon, noted Topeka minister and author. Gov. Charles N. Haskell of Oklahoma (no relative of the Kansas warden), complied with Hoch’s request for a joint inquiry, and promptly dispatched his own five-man committee.42

The Oklahoma committee understood Hoch’s need to clear his administration of wrong-doing, but had little sympathy for his desire to expedite things. The Kansans, on the other hand, clearly recognized an obligation to their governor. Tension between the two groups of investigators became apparent during the opening session of the joint committee on December 30, but the situation flared into open hostility when the Kansans used a temporary absence of the Oklahoma committee to pursue a unilateral investigation, and to destroy the infamous “cribs” before the Oklahomans could see them. The joint committee heard testimony from Warden Haskell and other Lansing officials, after which Kate Barnard and several Oklahoma ex-convicts gave lengthy testimony. When the investigation ended on January 9, two days before Hoch’s retirement, all that the two committees could agree on was that the Oklahoma convicts should be withdrawn from the Kansas prison.43

Governor Hoch had hoped for a report by the joint committee in which the Oklahomans concurred in exonerating his administration. He had to be satisfied with considerably less, however, for the joint committee filed no report. The Kansans forwarded the report of their unilateral investigation to Hoch well before the joint investigation had officially ended.

The document purported to exonerate Haskell and his staff, but Blackmar, author of the report, had done a remarkable job of fence-straddling. In his general statement, he actually outdid Kate Barnard in his vituperation. “What form of justice is it,” asked Blackmar, “that forces a part of the people who have gone wrong to support the other part? . . . The civilized world has outgrown the practices of chattel slavery and traffic in human beings for gain outside of the Penitentiary. Let Kansas stop it within the Penitentiary, for the sake of humanity.” A list of 18 recommendations for improvements seemed to sustain all of Kate Barnard’s charges, and those of Reynolds and Carl Arnold as


trepreneurs to operate. Neighboring Nebraska chose the latter alternative in 1877, and conditions soon developed that far surpassed the worst at Lansing. 47

Indiscriminate use of key positions at Lansing as patronage by a succession of Kansas governors during the 1880's and 1890's hindered their effort to reap a continuing political harvest from the institution's profitable industries, and accounts for the decline in administrative and disciplinary efficiency. The efforts of Governors Bailey and Hoch to maintain continuity in prison management after the turn of the century indicate that they realized the spoils system had been disastrous to the prison's business enterprises. Unfortunately, their concern seems to have extended to the business aspects of the operation only. Overcrowding and a cruel system of punishment were the real fruits of patronage and profiteering.

47. McKelvey, American Prisons, pp. 195-203.
Naval Air Stations in Kansas During World War II

R. Douglas Hurt

I. INTRODUCTION

EARLY in 1938 when war was almost certain in Europe, congress, concerned about the state of the nation’s defense, was stimulated to study the navy’s needs and authorized a special board to make recommendations concerning naval air stations. That body, known as the Hepburn board, recognized that great expansion of the navy would be necessary if the United States became involved in the war. Suggesting a policy of preparedness, the board recommended the enlargement of 11 existing naval stations and the establishment of 16 new ones. About that same time a navy board also recommended doubling the number of pilots.

As a result of the Hepburn and the naval boards’ recommendations, congress passed the Naval Reserve act of June 13, 1939, which authorized the training of 6,000 aviation reserve officers and the establishment of new training bases. In September of that year, congress, in a further attempt to bolster defense, authorized the navy to maintain 4,500 planes. That number was increased to 10,000 in June, 1940, after the fall of France and was quickly raised to 15,000 the following month—a 500 percent increase over the 1938 quota. In January, 1942, President Roosevelt issued an executive order directing the navy to acquire an air strength of 27,000 planes, but as late as June 30, 1941, the navy had only 2,172 aircraft. With the call for such tremendous expansion of the navy’s air force, its air stations were expected to be overcrowded in a short time since they were geared in size and number to peacetime needs. Although there were 31 naval airfields in the United States and overseas at the time of the Hepburn report, some of those fields were no more than isolated landing strips.

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(351)
which could not support maintenance and training facilities for a navy at war.²

On May 27, 1941, the President proclaimed a national emergency and by executive order called all naval reservists who were not on a deferred status to active duty. With the reserve activated and aircraft production on an enlarged scale, the naval aviation cadet training program also began to expand. As the cadet program grew and naval aviation shore establishments increased in number, Secretary of the Navy Frank Knox recommended the use of civilian airports whenever feasible to hasten training programs. By the end of fiscal year 1942, naval aviation training had been accelerated to the point where 2,500 cadets could begin instruction each month. In addition, 20 new air stations had been commissioned and two naval reserve aviation bases had been placed in full operation. Eight new air stations as well as nine reserve stations, including the Kansas bases at Olathe and Hutchinson, were scheduled for commissioning during the next fiscal year.³

The second World War did not introduce the navy to Kansas. A naval reserve air base was already in operation at Fairfax Field, the municipal airport at Kansas City. That base was commissioned on July 1, 1935, and at that time consisted of one naval officer and two marines; on July 12, one navy and one marine squadron were formed. Although both squadrons had regular training periods, only the aviators received instruction during the summer months, and the average monthly size of the pilot graduation classes was 36. Not until the winter of 1939 did the navy begin a year-round pilot training program there.⁴

II. Olathe Naval Air Station

The first aircraft used for pilot training at Fairfax Field were the Curtis Helldivers; however, these planes were soon replaced with NY-3 trainers. The facilities at Kansas City proved adequate for the naval reserve until 1941, when an increase in transport traffic and the erection of the North American Company’s B-25 bomber plant at the site crowded the reserve and made training hazardous. The navy began to look for another site on which to locate the Kansas City reserve and in January, 1942, purchased a


⁴. Flying Jayhawk, Olathe, October 9, 1942.
section of gently rolling land which included the Johnson county airport and was located about 20 miles southwest of Fairfax Field, between Olathe and Gardner. With the award of a cost-plus-fixed-fee contract to a private builder, construction began on January 5, 1942. Priority construction included a hangar, an assembly and repair shop, barracks, a mess hall, a ground-school building, and storage facilities for 200,000 gallons of gasoline. Three 5,000-foot runways were laid and property was acquired for five outlying or auxiliary airfields. Later, enough land was leased to provide 14 outlying fields. The navy purchased the airfield from Johnson county for $72,343.01 and spent an additional $12,234,527.41 on the original contract. Construction was completed in early March, 1944. The navy projected that the Olathe base would quarter 2,000 enlisted men and about 100 officers; however, by the end of the war the base could house about 6,400 sailors.\(^5\)

By July, 1942, construction had progressed sufficiently to enable the base to begin operation, and on July 6, 100 enlisted men and 72 cadets arrived from Fairfax Field. The base was officially commissioned on October 1, 1942, as the United States Naval Reserve Aviation Base, Olathe, Kansas, but its name was changed on January 1, 1943, to the United States Naval Air Station in order to give it comparable status with other air bases. The purpose of the Olathe air station was to provide primary flight training for naval cadets and quarters for traveling officials. The planes primarily used for aviator training were the Stearman N2S two-seater biplanes. The navy preferred to use them as trainers because their engines were simply mounted and could be changed entirely in two hours, facilitating maintenance in the field. Furthermore, the Stearmans were rugged and well suited to the handling given them by student pilots. Because navy policy required trainers to be painted yellow, the cadets nicknamed them the “yellow perils,” but they were not as dangerous as the nickname suggested since during the two years the air station served as a primary training facility (July, 1942-September, 1944), nearly 4,550 cadets were trained and only 25 fatal accidents

occurred. Cadet instruction peaked between the spring and fall of 1943, when 1,100 prospective pilots were in training at one time.\(^6\)

The function of the Olathe air station changed completely on September 10, 1944, when its primary mission became that of training transport pilots and providing support facilities for Naval Air Transport Squadron Three. That Squadron was part of the Naval Air Transport Service (NATS) which the navy had created in mid-December, 1941, to provide for the rapid transport of navy personnel and materials. NATS, one of the largest transport airlines in the nation, operated 28 regularly scheduled flights daily within the continental United States and also flew cargo, mail, men, and blood to the Atlantic and Pacific theaters. The primary duty of Squadron Three was to operate hospital flights in order to equalize the patient load at the various naval hospitals across the country. The planes used for that service were twin-engined R4D’s and four-engine R5D’s which were known commercially as DC3’s and DC4’s respectively.\(^7\)

On July 1, 1946, the navy designated 17 naval air and five naval reserve stations as sites for the training of navy reservists. That plan had an almost immediate impact on the Olathe air station because, after the autumn of 1946, it became primarily responsible for the training of reservists along with air control men and ground approach operators. The Olathe station remained in operation for an additional 23 years; not until October 29, 1969, did the navy announce the closure of the base as an economy measure.

III. HutchiSon NaVaL Air StaTiOn

The navy began the establishment of a second Kansas naval reserve air base early in 1942, in Hutchinson. On behalf of the secretary of the navy, in early March, 1942, the chief of the Bureau of Aeronautics ordered a site selection board to inspect several possible locations for a base near Hutchinson. On March 20 the president and the director of the Hutchinson Chamber of Commerce welcomed that board to the city and aided it in choosing a 2,565.1-acre tract of land lying approximately seven miles south of Hutchinson and one mile west of Yoder, as the

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\(^6\) Olathe Mirror, July 9 and October 8, 1942; Kansas City (Mo.) Star, October 1, 1942; “History of the U.S. Naval Air Station, Olathe,” pp. 1, 4-8, KSHS; Johnson County Democrat, January 29 and July 9, 1942, and September 14, 1944; Air Scoop, Commemorative, p. 2; Habit, Hutchinson, May 29, 1943.

\(^7\) Olathe Mirror, September 19, 1944; Johnson County Democrat, September 14 and December 7, 1944; “History of the U.S. Naval Air Station, Olathe,” pp. 1-2, 5-6, KSHS; “NATS.” Flying, Chicago, v. 35 (October, 1944), p. 104; Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1942, p. 18; Ernest J. King, U.S. Navy at War, 1941-1945, Official Reports to the Secretary of the Navy (Washington, United States Navy Department, 1946), p. 216; Flying Jayhawk, v. 2, no. 50.
tentative location for the base. Good drainage; access to railroad
and highway transportation, fuel, and public utilities; open
country; the availability of land for outlying fields; a favorable
climate for flying during most of the year; and a nearby liberty
port persuaded the navy to select that location. The Chamber of
Commerce also assured the navy that adequate housing was
available in Hutchinson, but this proved untrue and the navy had
to contend with a housing shortage throughout the life of the air
station.⁸

On June 21, 1942, the Chamber of Commerce informed the site
selection board that if the navy chose the Hutchinson locality for
an air base, the city would turn over the state fairgrounds (which
had bunking and messing facilities for 1,000 men) as well as the
municipal airport for training purposes while the main station
was being constructed. That offer proved to be the decisive factor
because it enabled the navy to begin pilot training almost imme-
diately and that was of crucial importance to the war effort. On
July 11, 1942, the navy announced its selection of the site south of
the city.⁹

The navy proceeded immediately to purchase the land, most of
which was owned by Amish farmers. Although the Amish were
conscientious objectors, they were “highly cooperative,” and the
navy saved demolition time and expense by allowing the farmers
to remove or salvage their buildings. Representatives of the
Interstate Commerce Commission and the Federal Land Bank
appraised the property and negotiated the final settlements with
the aid of a land acquisition expert on loan to the navy from the
Department of the Interior. In total, the navy purchased four
sections of land for $378,115.00. Title to the land formally passed
to the navy on October 29, 1942, when the U. S. district court in
Topeka ruled in favor of the navy in a friendly condemnation suit
which the attorney general of the United States had filed on
behalf of the navy. Between September 25 and November 10,
1942, the navy leased an additional 3,906 acres for use as auxil-
ary landing fields. That acreage included the Hutchinson munici-
pal airport which the city leased to the navy for $1.00 per
year; however, the total annual rental cost was $25,683.41 for the
outlying fields. All leases were made for the duration of the war
plus six months. Fifty-five separate leases were arranged which
could provide land for as many as 20 outlying fields, and all but a

⁸ “History of the United States Naval Air Station, Hutchinson, Kansas,” pp. 1, 1, 7-9,
KSHS.

single tract was acquired amicably. One farmer refused to lease his land and destroyed the government check. Therefore, the navy took his property through condemnation proceedings and deposited the lease money for him in a Topeka bank. The navy also paid a total of $12,306.80 to local farmers for crop liquidation and damages.10

With the use of the fairgrounds, the municipal airport, and the auxiliary strips while the station was under construction, pilot training began in October, 1942—about three months ahead of schedule. This is not to suggest that the development of the air base proceeded smoothly because often it did not. The navy had developed the original plans for the base in Washington and while officers at the site had the authority to make organizational and planning decisions, they seldom had the benefit of guidance from the Department of the Navy or the Bureau of Aeronautics. Generally, the navy sent its best organizational talent to the fleet or advanced bases, and a shortage of such expertise was evident across the United States during the construction of bases. The lack of organizational ability caused recruits at the base to serve for about three months in civilian clothes. However, they were given slips of paper to identify them as sailors. The pay system also fell several months in arrears, and the lack of training manuals and standardized navy forms which facilitated daily procedures created a nearly chaotic situation. Had speed not been essential in the development of the base perhaps the officers in charge of overseeing the operation would have looked with more favor upon the first arrival of supplies—a large express package containing bowling balls and pins. Nevertheless, the navy delegated the officers a great deal of authority and allowed contractors to deal directly with Washington when problems arose thereby avoiding the common delays that could occur when proceeding through the chain of command.11

On August 17, 1942, Commander W. C. King, United States Naval Reserve, arrived at Hutchinson and became the first commanding officer of the base. He was able to bring some order to the situation and on October 27, the base was officially commissioned as the United States Naval Reserve Aviation Base, Hutchinson, Kansas. However, the name was changed to the United States Naval Air Station on January 1, 1943. The base was not complete at the time of commissioning and major construction

Scenes at the Hutchinson Naval Air Station during World War II.
continued until February 1, 1943. Until that time, the navy’s administrative offices were located at the First National Bank and the post office. Full operation of the base began on February 15, 1943, although field work was not finished until late July. The total cost for that stage of development was $10,835,000.12

The first recruits arrived in September, 1942, and were quartered in civilian homes until they moved to the fairgrounds on October 1. When the navy stopped enlisting men for service at a specific base in mid-November, about 1,200 Kansas and Missouri men had enlisted for duty at Hutchinson. The aircraft industry at Wichita was a source of skilled personnel, and since the Boeing plant there manufactured the Stearman trainers, many employees capable of servicing that aircraft were recruited for duty at Hutchinson. By October 27, 104 men had graduated from basic training at the fairgrounds and were assigned to various positions. After 1942 the general high character of the men began to decline as recruits were brought in from outside the immediate region. This was particularly true when 275 sailors arrived from Dallas on February 15, 1943. Navy policy dictated that when a new station needed a complement of men, established bases would be asked to help meet that need. Such a practice was beneficial to the older stations because commanding officers rounded up the undesirables—a routine known as “cleaning out the brig”—and sent them off to their new home. As a result, many of the disciplinary problems at the new station came from malcontents and troublemakers who arrived from other bases; they kept the lines long at captain’s mast.13

Although the Hutchinson Naval Air Station was originally planned to quarter only male sailors, the navy informed officials at the station, when construction was approximately 85 percent complete, that members of the women’s reserve would be assigned to the base. Consequently, construction was delayed about one month and “considerable funds were expended” to make the necessary alterations in quarters for the WAVES. The alterations largely consisted of adding bath tubs, venetian blinds, shower curtains, and linoleum floors, all of which led some enlisted men to complain that the WAVES had better quarters than they. The first WAVES arrived in June, 1943. Theoretically, as each WAVE joined the complement at the station, she freed a man for service with the fleet or at an advanced base. Some departments at the station resented the WAVES at first, and some of the officers and

12. Ibid., pp. 4-6; Topeka Daily Capital, October 27, 1942.
enlisted men believed that women were unsuited for jobs related to aviation. The WAVES, however, quickly proved themselves efficient workers and “good sailors” and were soon in great demand throughout the various departments at the station. By October, 1944, 260 enlisted WAVES and 16 officers were aboard at Hutchinson.\(^\text{14}\)

The first civilian workers were hired in June, 1943, to provide manual labor, but not until mid-1944 did the navy make a determined effort to hire civilians in order to relieve additional sailors for the combat zones. By November 30, 1944, there were 290 civilians employed at the station. The employment of civilians created a morale problem when they worked along side of navy personnel because they were paid higher wages and were not subject to military regulations. Although service men and women were not subject to withholding tax and received extra allowances for quarters and rations when living off the base, navy personnel tended to overlook those benefits and saw instead only the monetary differences between comparable navy and civilian positions. The WAVES who worked with female civilians were also resentful that civilian stenographers were free to date officers and attend officers’ parties while they could not. Furthermore, civilians could quit their jobs at any time—a luxury not permitted the sailors. Some departments avoided hiring civil service women because they were frequently the wives of enlisted men and left their positions when their husbands were transferred. This action tended to create instability in the offices where they worked so the navy preferred to use sailors whenever possible.\(^\text{15}\)

A serious problem developed between the air station and the community in June, 1943, when laundry facilities in Hutchinson proved inadequate to handle the demands of the navy and the civilian population. The station’s own laundry had not yet been built, and laundries in the city refused to give the navy priority service. The mayor and the Chamber of Commerce tried to act as mediators between the navy and the laundry owners and after a series of meetings between both parties created an “Iron Your Own Shirt” campaign which asked for voluntary reduction of both navy and civilian demands on the laundries. Key to the campaign was the association of ironing one’s own shirt with patriotic duty. The plan did not receive the hearty support of the laundry owners, but civilian business was decreased to a suffi-

\(^{14}\) Ibid., pp. 41, 157-158, 240, 242, 246.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., pp. 162-165.
cient degree and allowed the needs of the navy to be met until the station laundry was completed.\textsuperscript{16}

The details of establishing and manning the Hutchinson Naval Air Station should not overshadow the intent of the station itself. Like Olathe, the major purpose of the station was to provide primary flight training for naval aviation cadets. That instruction began on October 1, 1942, and continued until March 15, 1944. During that time, only nine cadets and four instructors were killed in training accidents. Of the 3,396 cadets accepted for primary flight training, 2,555 earned their wings. Primary flight training peaked at Hutchinson in November, 1943, when 774 cadets were in training. By early 1944, however, the loss of the navy fighter planes was less than had been anticipated. With a surplus of pilots, the navy reduced primary training activities, and the mission of the Hutchinson station changed. In contrast to the Olathe air base, Hutchinson became an advanced operational training center for PB4Y \textit{Liberator} bomber pilots and crews.\textsuperscript{17}

Although the navy’s training program for crews to handle the multiengined bombers began on the west coast in late 1942, the demand for bomber pilots exceeded supply due to a shortage of facilities and training space. Therefore, the Naval Air Operational Training Command, which was responsible for PB4Y training, made an investigation of inland locations which could provide the needed space for intensive training. As a result, Hutchinson was designated as the new site for the \textit{Liberator} training program in mid-January, 1944. The transfer created the need for two large outlying fields. The municipal airport served as one after two runways were lengthened—one to 7,000 feet and another to 6,000 feet—and runway lights were installed to permit night flying. The Civil Aeronautics Authority financed these improvements as well as the purchase of additional land for the expansion. The second auxiliary field, acquired by condemnation proceedings, was located at the municipal airport in Newton. There, the navy spent $5,000,000 for the lengthening of runways and the construction of quarters and training and storage facilities. Three runways at the station were lengthened to 7,000 feet.\textsuperscript{18}

The first PB4Y arrived at Hutchinson on March 11, 1944, and 19 students and officers reported for duty on March 20. Addi-

\textsuperscript{16} Ibid., pp. 46, 120-121.

\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., p. 3; “Search,” \textit{Flying}, v. 35 (October, 1944), p. 112; The PB4Y was the navy’s largest land-based patrol bomber; it could carry a four-ton bomb load and was armed with .50 caliber machine guns.

\textsuperscript{18} “History of the United States Naval Air Station, Hutchinson,” pp. 56-57, 67-69, KSHS; “U.S. Naval Air Station, Hutchinson, Kansas, Quarterly Historical Report, 1 January-31 March, 1947,” p. 1, KSHS.
tional bombers, officers, and students arrived shortly thereafter, and training began on March 27. The navy’s original *Liberator* training plan at Hutchinson called for the use of 17 planes and the instruction of six new crews each week, but the demand for crews necessitated an increase in bombers to 87 by December. The first class of air crewmen graduated on April 27 and with a sense of drama departed for the west coast in a *Liberator* on the first leg of their flight to the Pacific theater. The Columbia Broadcasting System transmitted the sound of their departure to a nationwide radio audience. By the end of November, 250 patrol plane commanders and 500 copilots had graduated from PB4Y training, but the facilities at Hutchinson were still insufficient to accommodate the training of both flight and maintenance personnel. Therefore, rather than begin an extensive and costly expansion of the station, maintenance training was transferred in September, 1944, to the air station at Minneapolis, Minn., and an additional *Liberator* training program was established at Whiting Field at Pensacola, Fla.\(^{19}\)

The lack of spare parts hampered the first few months of flight training, and maintenance workers were forced to borrow parts from some aircraft in order to keep others flying. The lack of competent maintenance men also prevented maximum use of the planes and limited flying time. Although only 25 percent of the station’s complement transferred when the function of the station changed, the maintenance department was never fully staffed during the first six months of the *Liberator* program. Furthermore, inexperienced mechanics generally replaced trained men who were constantly being transferred to fleet assignments. The shortage of trained personnel was somewhat alleviated in mid-1944 when experienced pilots and mechanics began arriving from squadrons overseas in order to serve as instructors. As these men reported for duty, though, another discipline problem occurred; some of the men found adjustment to a peaceful environment difficult. They ignored uniform regulations, rules of military courtesy, regulations governing leave and liberty, and were prone to excessive drinking, which (because Kansas was a dry state) made them even more noticeable to the public.\(^{20}\)

When the war ended in August, 1945, there were 168 naval air stations and 325 outlying fields in operation across the United States. However, by June 30, 1946, less than 30 stations and only 98 outlying fields remained at full operational status. With the

war over, congress became intent on reducing federal expenditures; demobilization proceeded and more naval air stations were rapidly deactivated. Although rumors abounded during late 1945 and early 1946, the first indication that the navy was planning to deactivate the Hutchinson station came on May 3, 1946, when all leaves were cancelled and goods at ship’s service were marked down to cost in anticipation of orders to “roll-up” the station’s activities. Several days later (May 6) the navy informed Capt. L. L. Hunt, the commanding officer, that there would be no immediate change in the status of the station pending the final determination of the next year’s budget. But, as had been expected, congress reduced military appropriations and the navy announced on September 30 that the Hutchinson Naval Air Station would be closed immediately. On October 5 the Hutchinson and Newton municipal airports were returned to city control as the navy worked to meet the official closing date of December 1. A small force of navy and civilian personnel were to remain at the station in a caretaker capacity; the navy was to retain possession of the property but would open it to lease. Naturally, the city of Hutchinson regretted the closing of the station because of the negative effect it would have on the city’s economy, but only the Hutchinson Labor Review charged that Sens. Arthur Capper and Clyde Reed, both residents of eastern Kansas, used their influence to keep the Olathe station open at the expense of the Hutchinson base.21

In retrospect, the Hutchinson and Olathe Naval Air Stations provided a valuable contribution to the nation’s war effort. Strategically located near the geographical center of the United States, free from the threat of enemy attack, both stations provided needed primary and operational pilot training and transport services and thus played significant roles in the navy’s participation in the second World War.22

22. Annual Report of the Secretary of the Navy, 1947, p. 17; Air Scoop, Commemorative, p. 2; Topeka Daily Capital, May 29, 1970. The Federal Archives and Records Center in Kansas City, Mo., has approximately 75 cubic feet (75 boxes) of records from the Olathe Naval Air Station for the years 1954-1970. Over 80 percent of these documents are household effects shipment records. However, one undated file box contains information concerning missions, administrative histories, journals, property, construction, and general activities.