

1922 - 1940

“The deadliest weapon in the world is a Marine and his rifle!”
- General John J. Pershing

CHAPTER | THREE

RECRUITING. RETRAINING. REARMING.



After World War I, temporary facilities were removed as the flow of recruits decreased. Longer training cycles were restored, with the average recruit from 1922 to 1928 spending about 12 weeks on the depot. In Washington, DC, there was pressure to absorb the Marine Corps into the Army. To secure the Corps, Commandant of the Marine Corps John A. Lejeune reemphasized the primary role of Marines as a mobile amphibious landing force.

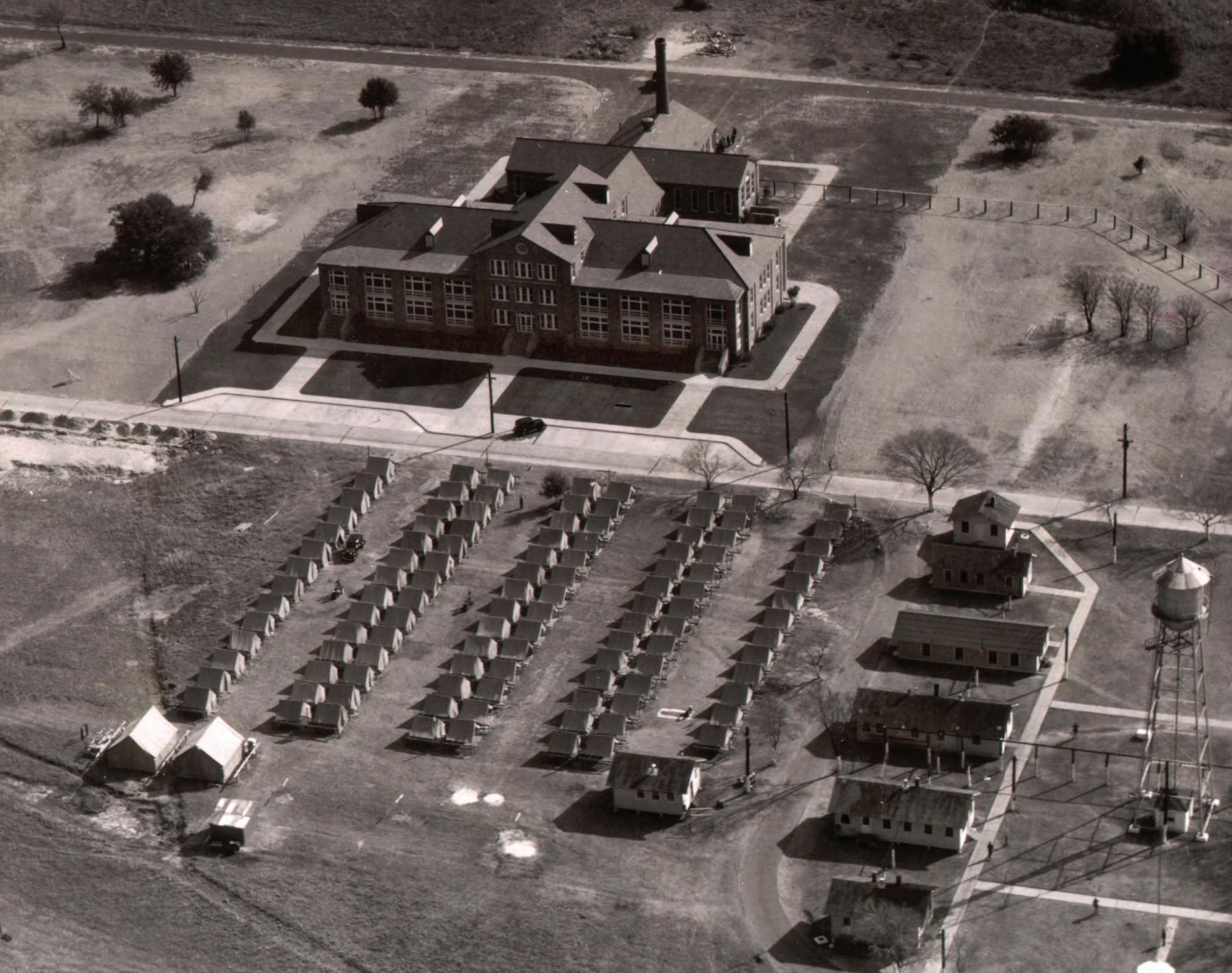
Throughout the 1920s, graduates of Parris Island took part in many small actions in Central and South America, which came to be known as the “Banana Wars.” Marines were also deployed to the Pacific, giving rise to the famed China Marines.

Recruiting efforts also transitioned from eager war volunteers to average working men struggling through the U.S. Great Depression. Postwar recruiting campaigns resorted to emphasizing the ‘opportunity to serve in exotic locations,’ referencing the Marines involvement in the Banana Wars.

During this time, recruit training varied in length, from as long as 12 weeks to as short as 24 days. From 1922 to 1928, the longer period prevailed, dividing training into three phases of four weeks each. In 1929, with the stock market crash, Parris Island began to feel the Nation’s state of depression, only cycling about 300 recruits each month with no company or battalion organization in use. Instructor staff was scarce, and thus was created the recruit ‘lance corporal.’ These men wore chevrons on one sleeve and had authority only over recruits junior to them.



Weapons and Field Training Battalion headquarters building pictured right, 1940.



With World War I now over and a decreasing influx of new recruits, depot personnel began to improve upon badly needed infrastructure and organization. In 1928, Archer's Creek Bridge and Horse Island gate were opened, allowing free flow of automobile, horse and carriage traffic to the Port Royal and Beaufort area.

Also during this period, several of the wooden barracks had been renovated or replaced completely with brick barracks due to significant weathering and hurricane damage. (Damaged causeway due to hurricane pictured here.)

In 1933, a section of the depot's ground was prepared for the construction of an airfield, later to be known as Page Field. A golf course and the liberty theatre were also added to combat the island's isolation and offer constructive leisure time activities to personnel.



PARRIS ISLAND - MCRD

1927

A one-lane causeway linking Parris Island to the mainland opens.

1929

In October, the nation plummets into the "Great Depression." Reductions in the defense budget lead to fears Parris Island will be closed.

1934

1 December, the installation is renamed Recruit Depot Detachment, Marine Barracks, Parris Island.

1939

3 September, war is officially declared in Europe. The U. S. prepares for eventual involvement.



Barracks interior, East Wing complex 1930s.

1940

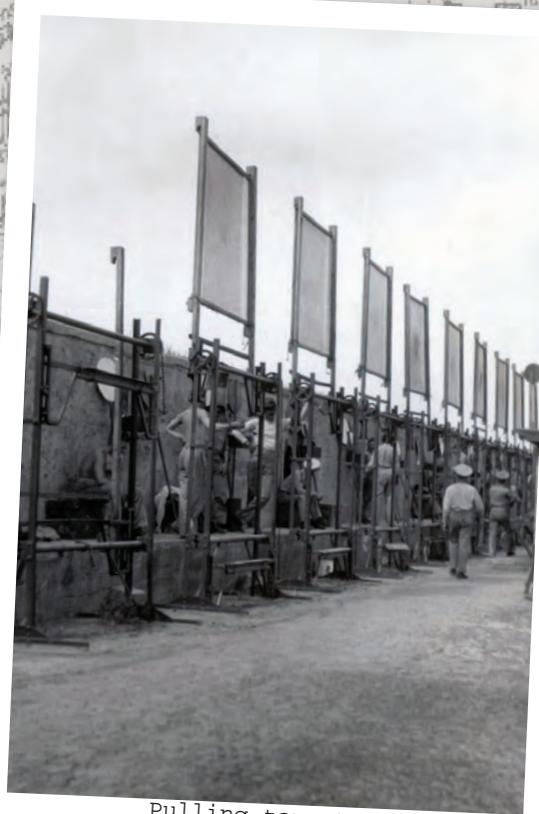
11 August, hurricane-force winds of 104 miles per hour strike Parris Island. The hurricane destroys buildings and docks, cutting all electric power and erasing entire sections of the causeway.



Hurricane damage

1940

13 August, the post is re-designated "Recruit Depot, Marine Barracks, Parris Island."



Pulling targets



Hurricane damage 1940

MAIN STATION -1.
(INC. HOSPITAL-AREA)

PLATOON BARRACKS	BARRACKS	BARRACKS
P-100	J-12	PLATOON BARRACKS

OFFICE OF THE POST CHAPLAIN,
MARINE BARRACKS, PARRIS ISLAND, S.C.

28 July 1936

My dear Mrs. Connor:

I take pleasure in reporting to you the presence of Private Fred W. Connor, Jr., USMC, at this station and welcome him into the U. S. Marine Corps. He will be under training here for approximately ten weeks and will then be available for transfer.

You are to be congratulated on being able to contribute to the personnel of the Marine Corps. I am sure you will be proud to do your utmost to support this man in his newly chosen career. Write him strong, encouraging letters, and make him feel that he is doing something worthwhile; stimulate him to make the best use of his opportunities in the course of his money and leisure time, and to give his best to his country as a member of its proudest military organization, one that has always performed and is now performing a noble and useful service for our nation and for the world.

In the training of recruits the Marine Corps makes use of every facility essential to the building of well-balanced men. This includes physical training and drill, instruction in the essentials of Marine Corps life and its varied duties and in the establishment of regular habits of life. The health of the men is safeguarded and daily inspected. They are fed with the best food; ample provisions are made for amusements and recreation, and for regular religious counsel and worship. All of this is included in the official schedule and becomes a part of their training, with the purpose of developing well-rounded, strong, patriotic, useful men.

A comfortable Post Inn provides accommodations where the men may receive their relatives and friends in their leisure hours. The Military Police at the bridge entrance to the station will give proper direction to all visitors desiring to visit their relatives or friends and assist them as far as possible in locating the person desired. Visitors on week days will find recruits occupied with their training from 7:00 A.M. to 4:30 P.M. and they cannot be excused except in emergencies. The most convenient time for visiting recruits is at the week-end between 12:00 noon Saturday and 6:30 P.M. Sunday, preferably after the sixth week.

The undersigned, as Post Chaplain, conducts or supervises the religious services of the station. He is assisted by the Rev. Father A. F. Kemler, civilian priest, who conducts Catholic mass every Sunday, and by the Rev. C. B. Burns, resident civilian pastor furnished by the Southern Methodist Episcopal Church. Any service that can be rendered you or yours will be gladly performed.

May He bless you and your work

In His service,

J. B. Earnest

J. B. Earnest,
Lieut.-Comdr., (Ch.C.), U.S. Navy,
Post Chaplain.



Squad room in new barracks, 9 May 1940.



Marine recruits using the rifle range at 200 yards, circa 1925.



Farming On Parris Island

In 1923, Lieutenant Colonel Presley M. Rixley, commander of the Naval Prison existing at Parris Island at the time, decided that prisoners should be responsible for farming aboard the island. Starting with only a 10-acre plot, food was grown to harvest and ultimately supplemented the shopping boats from Savannah, which carried much of the island's food supply of fresh meats, water and vegetables. Within a year, the farm had grown to 100 acres and more than 170 hogs had been butchered for food. By 1925, the farm had 500 acres under cultivation to include 160 acres of corn, 46 cows, 25 calves, 300 hogs, 2,100 chickens and 300 laying hens for eggs. (Marine hog farmer pictured right, circa 1930.) The farm was fully outfitted with stables, pens, shops, offices, a milk house, a mess hall and enlisted quarters.

The naval prison housed roughly 550 young prisoners who were serving a minimum sentence of six months for being absent without leave or some form of embezzlement. This provided a steady supply of new workers to operate the growing farm. By 1946, the Post Farm was making about \$15,000 per month in trade revenue. Islanders of that period could purchase fresh eggs for 55 cents per dozen and milk at 20 cents per quart at the local retail store.

In 1949, the post farm retail store closed permanently and within a year, the farm was deactivated. An auction was immediately held in which 300 people were able to bid on the 75 cows, 200 hogs, 4,000 chickens and the numerous pieces of farm equipment no longer needed. The farm's 350 acres were later developed into parts of the Wake Village personnel housing and several Weapons and Field Training Battalion rifle ranges.



Post Farm clerk, circa 1930.



Recruits peeling potatoes, circa 1930.

