

HEINLEIN GENEALOGY

GREATER PITTSBURGH AIRPORT

Until the beginning of World War II, Moon Township was mostly a rural agricultural area. It was not considered a suburb of downtown Pittsburgh as it was too distant. It was served solely by Pittsburgh-based state and federal services and media. In the early 1920s, John A. Bell of Carnegie purchased a number of small farms in Moon and established a commercial dairy farm on his 1,900 acres (8 km²) of land. He was bought out by E.E. Rieck and his wife, and C.F. Nettrour, owners of the established Rieck's Dairy. They doubled the number of cattle at the farm.

Around 1940, the federal government, through the Works Progress Administration (WPA), determined that the Pittsburgh area needed a military airport to defend the industrial wealth of the area and to provide a training base and stop-over facility. The administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt was continuing to invest in infrastructure across the country in the waning years of the Great Depression, before the US entered World War II, which had started in 1939. The agricultural expanses of Moon Township were attractive to airport planners in the city. The Civil Aeronautics Administration proposed \$2.6 million to the county for a \$6 million field in August 1941 (\$45.7 million and \$106 million present day dollars).^[24] The county bought the Bell Farm, and federal agencies began construction of the runways on 20 April 1942, after the US had entered the war.



Greater Pittsburgh Airport circa 1977

As a commercial airport

In 1944, Allegheny County officials proposed to expand the military airport with the addition of a commercial passenger terminal. The new terminal would replace the Allegheny County Airport which opened in 1926 in West Mifflin. Ground was broken on the new airport on July 18, 1946. The new terminal building would eventually cost \$33 million to build and was built exclusively by Pittsburgh-area companies. The Greater Pittsburgh Airport opened on May 31, 1952. The first flight occurred on June 3, 1952. In its full year of operation in 1953, over 1.4 million passengers used the terminal. At that time, it was considered "modern" and spacious. In fact, the airport was one of the largest in the United States, second only to Idlewild Airport (now JFK Airport) in New York.

Yesterday's Airport of Tomorrow Display



Source: Sections of the history taken from the Yesterday's Airport of Tomorrow display located inside the Pittsburgh Airport.