

HEINLEIN GENEALOGY

BELL FARM AND GREATER PITTSBURGH AIRPORT

History Early years



On May 31, 1952, the new Greater Pittsburgh Airport was dedicated, and more than 100,000 people traveled to Moon Township during the holiday weekend to tour the 1600-acre air terminal. The facility was built at a cost of \$33,000,000 (\$295 million today).

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 (\$47.9 million and \$111 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.

In 1944, Allegheny County officials proposed to expand the military airport with the addition of a commercial passenger terminal to relieve the [Allegheny County Airport](#), which was built in 1926 and was becoming too small. Ground was broken on the new passenger terminal on 18 July 1946. The new terminal would eventually cost \$33 million (\$337 million present day dollars) and was built entirely by Pittsburgh-area companies. The new airport, christened as Greater Pittsburgh Airport (renamed Greater Pittsburgh International Airport in 1972 upon the opening of the International Arrivals Building) opened on 31 May 1952. The first flight was on 3 June 1952. In its first full year of operation in 1953, more than 1.4 million passengers used the terminal. "Greater Pitt" was then considered modern and spacious. The [airport terminal](#) was the largest in the United States, second only to Idlewild Airport's (now JFK Airport) in New York when it was completed five years later.^{[25][26]} The airport's capacity is one of its most valuable assets.