

HEINLEIN GENEALOGY

BELL FARM AND GREATER PITTSBURGH AIRPORT

History of Pittsburgh International Airport

PIT is the second busiest passenger airport in Pennsylvania. It is a major hub for a number of airlines including US Airways, Delta Air Lines and Southwest Airlines.

Opened in 1952, the airport covers an area of approximately 12,900 acres. It was initially known as Greater Pittsburgh Airport and was renamed Pittsburgh International Airport in 1972.

The airport handled 8.3 million passengers and 141,630 aircraft in 2016.



Wartime Mobilization and Postwar Development

When the federal government was searching for a site for a military defense airport early during World War II, the Bell Farm property was chosen (MTBCBC 1988:28). "In 1941, the U.S. Government decided that a new military airport should be built in the Pittsburgh area, not only for stopover and refueling of long distance military flights, but to provide better defense of the then vital Pittsburgh steel-making center" (Jockers 2006:202). The property of the former Bell Farm and additional surrounding farms was chosen as the 1,600-acre site for the military airport because of its high elevation with a relatively unobstructed landscape, its potential for future expansion, and its proximity to Pittsburgh. Construction began in April 1942

After World War II, the government turned over the military airport (reserving 104 acres for the air force base) for conversion to a new civilian terminal. Construction on the 10-gate Greater Pittsburgh Airport (not extant) was begun in 1946 (Photograph 25) (Berton 2007:96). It opened in May 1952 and served more than a million passengers before the year's end (Jockers 2006:203). The facility underwent several expansion campaigns in the late 1960s and early 1970s and eventually became designated an international airport. In 1987, construction on a new and substantially larger Pittsburgh International Airport terminal began on adjacent property in Findlay Township. The new airport opened in 1992³, and the old facility was demolished in 1999. It was replaced by an airport-related business park, which opened in 2000