

## HEINLEIN GENEALOGY

## BELL FARM

## Remembering The Local Milk Man and Dairys

April 20, 1942

April 20, 2020

Following an auction sale of prize dairy herds, bulldozers began leveling an 1100-acre tract of the old Bell farm in Moon Township for a \$3,000,000 defense airport.

by Earl Edwards Moon Township Historical Society

Bell Farm once sat on both Moon and Findlay Townships. The farm was established in the early 1920s by banker and coal businessman, John A. Bell Sr. from Carnegie, PA.

Moon Township was primarily a farm country at this time and Bell decided to purchase a number of small farms combining them into one large 1,190 acre farm establishing a modern dairy and stock farm. Bell constructed over 20 buildings including a horse barn, cattle barns, pump house, creamery, office, garages, and residences for both married and single employees. The farm employed a total of

35 full-time employees and an additional 35 to 40 men were hired each summer. The large farm included a reservoir capable of holding 12,000 gallons of water, a creamery serving more than

200 milking cows, and several large barns. In 1927 Bell became ill and suffered serious financial problems so it was no longer possible for him to keep Bell Farm. The farm was sold to E. E. Reick, Pittsburgh Dairy owner and his partner, C.L. Nettrour. The farm existed until the 1940s when it was purchased by the U.S. Government to become the home of a new military airport.

In 1941 the U.S. Government decided to build a new military airport in the Pittsburgh area to provide refueling of long distance military flights and better defense for the then Pittsburgh steelmaking center. The high elevation and rolling hills of Bell Farm and its surrounding properties provided 1,600 acres of easy to develop land making it the perfect place for the project.

Construction of the new facility began in April 1942 costing a total of \$5.3 million. In 1945 the facility was no longer needed exclusively for military purposes and the U.S. Government gave up all but 105 acres that they kept for use as an air reserve training center.

The old Allegheny County Airport was becoming inadequate and county officials saw the old military airport as a good opportunity for expansion to serve the local need for public air transportation. The Allegheny County Department of Aviation formed in November 1945 and soon developed plans to take over Moon Township's airfield. Ground was broken for the new Greater Pittsburgh International Airport public terminal on July 18, 1946. The terminal cost a total of \$33 million and was completed on May 31, 1952. Additions were added to the terminal and airport as airline usage increased through the years. Moon Township quickly changed from a rural area to an active suburban municipality.

On October 1, 1992, the new midfield terminal opened and all operations transferred over from the old terminal moving the airport business location to Findlay Township. Today, the airport is known as Pittsburgh International and is operated by the Allegheny County Airport Authority as a shared civil-military international airport. The old airport terminal was demolished and land was made available for an airport business park. Construction of the first commercial building in the business park began in 1999. Today, the airport office and business parks feature several office buildings and corporate headquarters.

