



THE new Midfield Terminal at Pittsburgh International Airport opened this fall, replacing the main terminal there which had been in use since 1952. Before that, the region's air hub was Allegheny County Airport in West Mifflin (view of terminal and runway on opposite page). Still in operation today serving corporate and private planes, it is the country's second busiest corporate airport. The terminal is also an amazingly intact example of Art Deco architecture.

By the 1920s, it was apparent that Pittsburgh's existing airfields were inadequate and a new airport was needed. A site was chosen eight miles south of Pittsburgh, a mile from Bettis Airport, the primary field at the time. When Allegheny County Airport opened on September 11, 1931 with the country's first hard-surfaced runways, its 534,000 square yards of asphalt was considered the largest single paved area in the world. There were three runways, 48 hangars, and 421 employees. The administration building contained a control tower along with ticket offices, mail and baggage rooms, and hospital and radio rooms. The Pittsburgh Institute of Aeronautics, founded at Bettis, moved to the county airport in 1946 and has become a major aviation technician training center.

The county airport has escaped major renovations, so that it retains much of its 1930s feel. Both the inside and outside white brick walls remain uncovered, and original touches abound such as the terrazzo floors and wooden seats. Parts of Bettis Airport also survive and recollections of its operations will be featured in a future issue of *Pittsburgh History*.

— Text by Brian Butko, modern photo by Chuck Biddle, aerial view courtesy Pittsburgh Institute of Aeronautics

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