

history of the Olmsted Air Force Base

He wasn't kidding.

In 1957, ground was broken for a modern runway capable of

handling all types of large jet aircraft, with the exception of the supersonic passenger plane Concorde. This runway was completed in 1958 and is still in use at the Harrisburg International Airport.

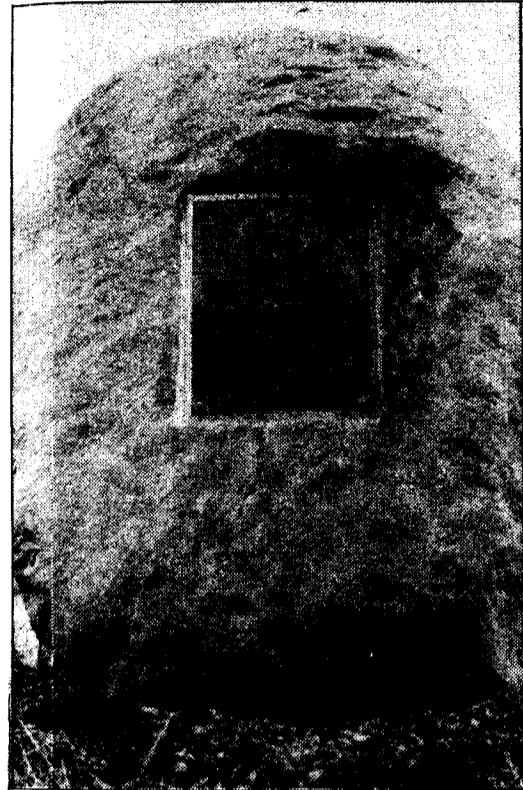
The 600 acres of Olmsted were given over to the state while the Air Force was phasing out the base. The Harrisburg Area Chamber of Commerce wanted to bring in a university, and more businesses to the area. Then Governor William Scranton offered some of the land to Penn State and a total of 177.5 acres were formally transferred to the University. On August 28, 1966, the Air Force held its last retreat at their Headquarters Building, now the Olmsted Building, and then gave Penn State the keys. They left only the few dozen airmen to complete the phase-out.

The proposed expansion of the campus, with the addition of three new buildings and renovations to existing structures are further steps in the process that took farmland, built on it to useful purpose and now, in a sense, has returned the land to growing. The farmer/professors plant their seeds in what fertile ground is available and pray for rain.



Photo courtesy of Harold Hickernell

First Lt., Robert Olmsted, worked at the Middletown Air Depot prior to his death in a balloon crash on September 23, 1923. The depot was later renamed Olmsted Air Force Base in his honor.



Commemorative plaque in front of the Olmsted Building is placed in a rock that was shipped from a farm in Vermont where the Air Force Lt. grew up.



Photo courtesy of Harold Hickernell

overhauled at the

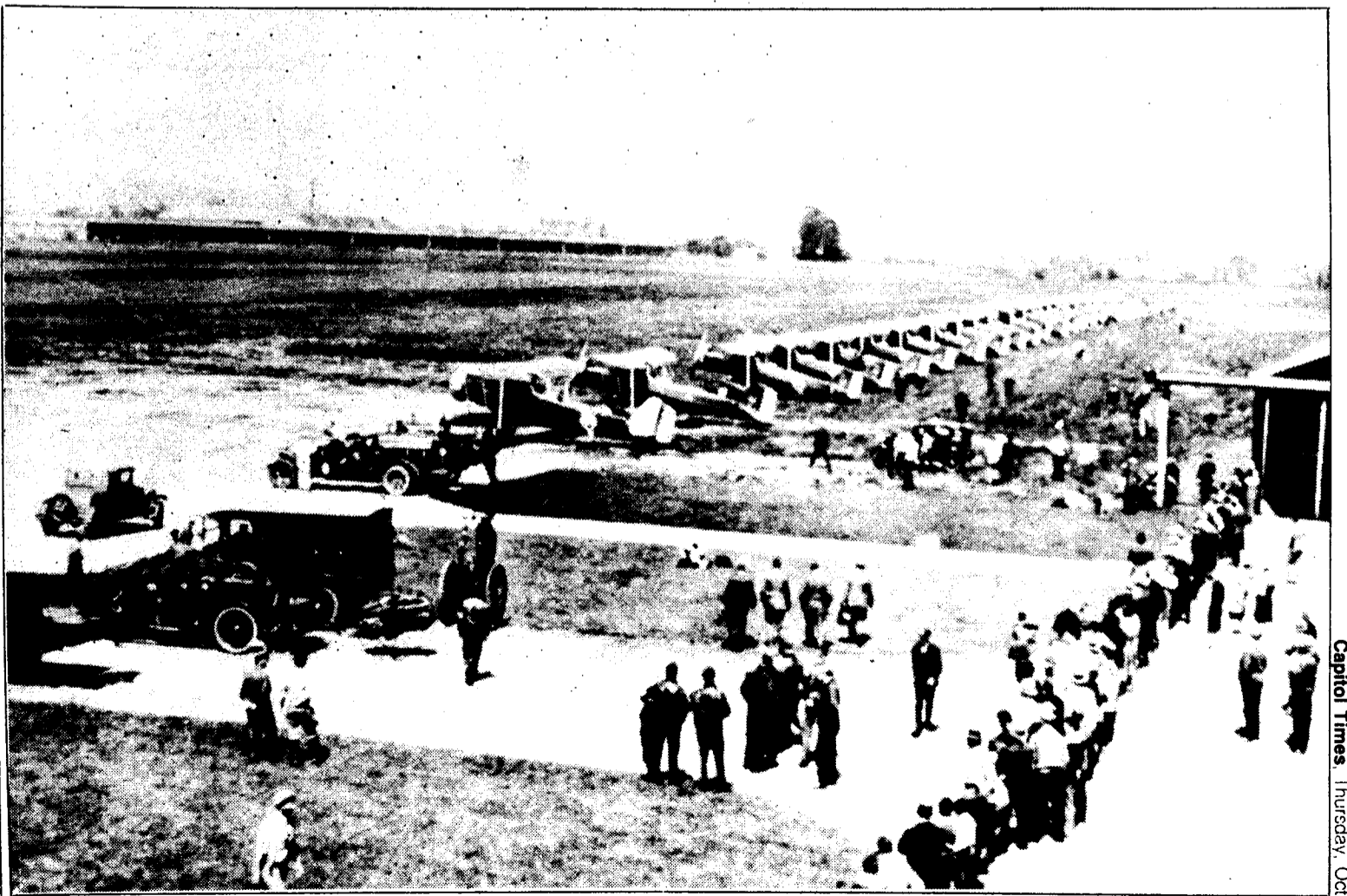


Photo courtesy of Harold Hickernell

Aircrafts of post-WWI era lined up for maneuvers at the Middletown Air Depot in the late 1920's and early 1930's