

Remarks by Mike Hirschberg, AHS International
The Vertical Flight Heritage Sites Program
“Gardenville” - Cheektowaga, New York
Ceremony at the Niagara Aerospace Museum
June 24, 2015

Thank you Neil, and thank you to all of our speakers and guests – thank you all for coming today to help us honor this historic site.

The American Helicopter Society International is the world’s premier professional vertical flight technical society. We bring together industry, academia and governments to tackle the toughest challenges in vertical flight. AHS was founded in February 1943 -- just a few weeks after the first Bell Model 30 first began tethered flight testing.

For more than 70 years, AHS has been the primary forum for interchange of information on vertical flight technology. From advocating for vertical flight research and development, to developing our next generation of engineers and scientists, to initiatives to reduce accidents and community noise, AHS helps lead the way.

The AHS International Vertical Flight Heritage Sites Program is intended to recognize and help preserve sites of the most noteworthy and significant contributions made in both the theory and practice of helicopter and other vertical flight technology. AHS hopes to promote to the public the rich history of the worldwide vertical flight community through this program.

We started the Heritage Sites Program in 2013 with the recognition of the Franklin Institute in Philadelphia – the site of the 1937 Rotary Wing Aircraft Meeting – the world’s very first technical conference on rotorcraft.

Last year in Montreal, Quebec, we recognized the site of the development and production of the Pratt & Whitney Canada PT6 engine, one of the first helicopter turboshaft engines which is still in

production after a half-century. John was the Chair of the Board of AHS at that time and joined in that ceremony as well.

Last month, in conjunction with our 71st Annual Forum in Virginia Beach, we recognized the NASA Langley Research Center for its 95 years of groundbreaking research to advance the state of the art of rotorcraft, and indeed for providing some of the very foundations of our understanding of vertical flight.

This ceremony was originally planned to take place this past November. But the storm of the century had something to say about that. So, we had to wait until everything had thawed ... and that took a while.

Tomorrow morning, at 11 o'clock in Cheektowaga, we will install this bronze plaque at the exact place that those early pioneers called Gardenville – the birthplace of the Bell helicopter.

There, Larry Bell funded these pioneers to design, build and flight test a helicopter undisturbed by the company's busy production facilities that were in high gear supporting the War effort. Arthur Young the inventor, Bart Kelley the trained physicist, Floyd Carlson the skilled pilot, and a small Skunk Works of others – between 15 and 32 people total – developed and tested three machines that would be followed by more than 35,000 Bell helicopters over the next 7 decades.

Today is 70 years to the day of when Bell's Gardenville group moved back to the main plant here in Buffalo, their work done. In addition to this 70th anniversary, Bell is celebrating its 80th anniversary this year. It boggles the mind that a company that had only been in existence for 10 years developed a product that became the world's first commercial helicopter.

Now, allow me to read the citation for the award:

On this site, between June 1942 and June 1945, Arthur Young, Bartram Kelley, Floyd Carlson, and a small group of other Bell

Aircraft employees designed, built, and flew the first three Bell helicopters, designated the Model 30. This location, known to these aviation pioneers as “Gardenville,” was formerly the Union Garage. Subsequently, the company launched the Bell Model 47, which became the world’s first civil-certified helicopter. More than 6,000 Bell 47s were built and operated in civilian and military roles.

To the men and women of Bell Aircraft and Bell Helicopter, past and present, thank you for all you have done – and continue to do every day – to bring the incredible benefits of vertical flight to civil and military operators worldwide.

And now, it is my great honor to officially recognize the “Gardenville” site in Cheektowaga as an AHS International Vertical Flight Heritage Site.