

HEINLEIN GENEALOGY

BELL FARM



Historic Photograph of the Bell Farm (not extant) c. 1937

Moon Township exploded from quiet farmland to bustling suburb when the Bell Farm was bought and the Greater Pittsburgh Airport was built. Decades later, there aren't many working farms left.

Until the beginning of World War II, Moon Township was mostly a rural agricultural area. It was not considered a suburb of downtown Pittsburgh as it was too distant. It was served solely by Pittsburgh-based state and federal services and media. In the early 1920s, John A. Bell of *Carnegie* purchased a number of small farms in Moon and established a commercial dairy farm on his 1,900 acres (8 km²) of land. He was bought out by E.E. Rieck and his wife, and C.F. Nettrour, owners of the established Rieck's Dairy. They doubled the number of cattle at the farm.

Agriculture in Moon Township began its decline in the early twentieth century. Within a 20-year period, the number of farms in the township dropped from 135 to 87 (Jockers 2006:117). In some instances, this represented the conversion of the land to other (primarily residential) uses, but it also indicated a tendency toward the consolidation of smaller farms. The Bell Farm (not extant), which operated from the early 1920s to 1942, is an example of a large consolidated dairy farm that once covered 1,190 acres in Moon and Findlay townships with over 20 buildings including a horse barn, cattle barns, a pump house, a creamery, a church, and housing for the families of the farm's 35 full-time workers (Photograph 22) (MTBCBC 1988:26). In the summertime, the farm population usually increased by an additional 35 to 40 workers. The 335 dairy cows produced 1,800 gallons of milk daily

Agriculture had been the basis of Moon Township's economy since the initial settlement. The family farm was the pioneer's principle means of sustenance in a desolate wilderness.

By 1920, however, only eighty-seven farms remained in the township. As their numbers decreased many small unproductive farms were purchased and consolidated. This resulted in the development of the large farm co-operative. The largest and most successful was the Bell Farm. Designed as a self-sufficient dairy

farm community, it incorporated almost twelve hundred acres and was staffed by approximately thirty-five permanent resident employees.¹²¹ The John McCormick and James Scott Dairy Farm located on the old Benjamin McCormick land grant on Beaver Grade Road operated on a slightly lesser scale. The farm not only retailed milk on site but also had an established delivery route that provided all kinds of farm produce in season to customers over a wide rural area.