

Time Tracs

By Jim Ingram

The John P Kelly Farm

(Fifth in a special series on farms in Orion Township) This is part one of two installments

John P Kelly was born Aug 7 1830 in the town of Sparta in Livingston County New York

At less than one year of age he moved with his parents from New York and settled on land that is now part of the city of Pontiac

In November of 1857 he was married to Jane A Ballou of Pontiac Two children were born to them Lucien B and Florence M

In 1866 the Kelly family purchased a farm in the southwest corner of Orion Township In 1875 they purchased a farm of over 200 acres in Orion Township which ran from Square Lake east to the shore of Lake Orion

This farm would remain in the Kelly family for 90 years

Son Lucien B Kelly joined his father in running the farm He married Sylvia Nelson of Oakland on June 10 1891 They had one child Homer J Kelly

The Kelly family built a large farmhouse on the east shore of Square Lake in the early 1880s At that time Heights Road ran close to the shore of the lake and the farmhouse was on the east side of the road with the barns behind it

The farm was known as Lakeside Farm The house still exists on the west side of Heights Road at 1291 Heights Road Over the years the barns have been demolished

Mrs John P Kelly died in 1886 at the age of 50 years Her husband John P died in 1910 at the age of 80 years Both died at the family home on Square Lake and the funerals were conducted from the house

While continuing to run the family farm Lucien B Kelly became a transitional figure developing some of his farmland for summer resort purposes

In 1925 he sold 40 acres on Joslyn Road for development of the Indianwood Golf and Country Club

Earlier in 1915 he had subdivided 20 acres of the Kelly property on Lake Orion for summer cottages He constructed a causeway out to Kelly's Island This formed what today would be the south side of Dollar Bay at the end of Shady Oaks Drive

The Kelly property also included much of the north side of Dollar Bay along with Pine Tree Road today At the turn of the century this area was referred to as Locust Point

In 1930 Lucien B Kelly developed the east shore of Square Lake into a popular park Kelly's Park featuring a swimming beach with a bath house and snack bar picnic grounds ball fields and a campground

At the height of the season it would attract hundreds of people per day

Mr Kelly was also active in public affairs for many years holding various local offices including Justice of the Peace of Orion Township

Lucien B Kelly died at the Kelly Farmhouse on Feb 24 1939 at the age of 82 years He was preceded in death by his wife Sylvia Nelson Kelly in 1927