

UNL's Hog Farms Rooted Out by Urban Sprawl

WORLD-HERALD BUREAU.

Lincoln — Buren Thomas is going to be losing some neighbors next summer that he's rather enjoyed since moving into his suburban east Lincoln home 4½ years ago.

Back then, when Thomas decided to build his home at 2512 North Seventy-sixth Street, those were about the only neighbors he had.

The neighbors moved in during the 1940s, and, combined with the wide open spaces and unobstructed view of the neighborhood at the time, tended to remind the Northeast High School mathematics teacher of his boyhood home near Cowles, Neb.

"We'll be sorry to see them leave," he said.

Memoires of Home

And the fact that the neighbors were hogs didn't annoy Thomas or his family a bit — at least not most of the time.

"My wife (JoAnn) and I were raised on farms ourselves, so having a few pigs around didn't bother us at all," said Thomas. "The odor is kind of offensive at

times, but normally it isn't too bad.

"I don't think anybody likes to be completely surrounded by houses and fences. People like to have room to roam around. I'd rather have hogs in my backyard than people."

Evidently, so did others.

As hogs moved into the Rosemont residential development, some of the trademarks of education and recreation also appeared — most notably Kahoa Elementary School at 7700 Leighton Avenue and Mahoney Golf Course at 7900 Adams Street.

Suddenly it had become evident that something Thomas and many of his neighbors now fear may happen to them had occurred to the inhabitants of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln swine research center.

"We have housing developments all around us now and the pressures on our current research center are at a point where we just have to move out to continue the program we have at the present time," said Dr. Irv Omtvedt, chairman of

UNL's animal science department.

Moving to Mead

The result is a new swine research center currently under construction at the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources Field Laboratory near Mead. The final phases of the move of the 115-acre swine center at Seventy-fifth and Adams streets to Mead began in October 1973 and is scheduled for completion by next July.

Development of the Mead swine research center began in the late 1960s with the establishment of lots and construction of water and power systems after the agronomy department's Stewart Seed Laboratory was built on the University's East Campus in 1966, forcing removal of the swine nutrition program that spring, said Dr. Ernest Peo Jr., animal science professor.

By 1968, a headquarters building and a 30-sow farrowing and modified open-front



—University of Nebraska Photo
Lincoln's swine research center's days are numbered . . . Looking over UNL's swine breeding pens are P.J. Cunningham, swine geneticist (left), and Dwane Zimmerman, swine physiologist.

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finishing house had been built at Mead, he said.

Peo said the next major development didn't occur until 1971, when a feed mill was constructed at the field laboratory for the site's beef cattle.

No Expansion

Currently, only the pigs used in physiology and in a portion of the genetics research remain at the Lincoln swine center, Omtvedt said.

Omtvedt said the consolidation of the two swine research units will not result in an expansion of the current program. The pigs that will populate the Mead unit will produce about 550 litters annually, he said, about 10 per cent less than currently being farrowed at both units.

He said the new unit will be utilized by all phases of the university's swine program — nutrition, physiology, genetics and breeding — and will provide the animal scientists with their first confinement structures for research. Included in the \$1.1 million project, which is being financed by sales of university-owned land in the Lincoln area, will be:

—A 288-sow gestation unit, 96-stall farrowing house and 48-pen nursery house in a single 25,000 square foot centrally located confinement complex.

—A confined 10,000 square foot reproductive physiology research building located south of the main unit containing a board development area and gilt development areas, and a service laboratory for surgery and intensified research.

—Six modified open-front growing-finishing units that are planned for construction east of the main unit for feeding trials.

Final Step

Thus far, the N.U. Board of Regents has approved bids on the gestation unit, farrowing house and nursery complex, which should be completed by October, as well as the physiology building, which should be constructed by the end of the year, according to Robert Carpenter, physical plant architect who designed the center.

The move of the swine center to Mead represents the final

step of almost 15 years of relocating various research projects from the university's Havelock Farms in Lincoln, according to Dr. Warren Saks, field laboratory supervisor.

He said the moves began when the U.S. General Services Administration deeded 9,400 acres of the south portion of its Nebraska Army Ordnance Plant at the University for \$1 in 1962 for education and research uses as part of a 20-year grant.

Four major sales of Havelock Farms land totaling more than \$1.8 million have been made by the university since the move started, according to Ray Coffey, UNL business manager.

City Started Park

"Our goal in managing the land sales was simply to generate as much money as possible," he said.

In 1970 the Lincoln Parks and Recreation Department bought 234 acres west of Eighty-fourth and Adams Streets — land that previously was utilized for beef research and would become Mahoney Park — for \$321,744.

Next came three parcels totaling about 110 acres located west of Mahoney Park and 12 acres at Seventy-second and Q streets, all part of the agronomy farm, which sold for \$741,715 in September 1973. Most of that parcel was purchased by Golf Park Ltd., a partnership whose principle owner is John L. Hoppe of Lincoln.

Coffey said proceeds from both sales were earmarked for moving field and animal research activities, and were used primarily to pay \$164,000 toward financing the beef research unit and about \$750,000 for the feed mill at Mead.

The third sale included 30 acres southeast of Seventieth and Adams Streets, which contained part of the swine research center and 10 residential lots in the Rosemont development area which were purchased in March 1976 for \$365,580 by Hub Hall Real Estate of Lincoln and individual buyers.

The fourth parcel, consisting of 270 acres, was sold as farmland in September 1976 for \$400,400 to Leavitt Brothers, a Lincoln farming partnership.