

## Bell Acres History...

### Watch Tax

Once considered luxury items, watches were taxed, based on whether the time piece was gold, silver or “common”. Despite watches becoming more affordable and widely available, the ‘watch tax’ remained, even though the cost of collecting the tax far exceeded the amount of revenue collected. Counties collected the tax on behalf of the State Revenue Department and if returns were to be believed, there were municipalities and even entire counties where not one person owned a time piece!

The September 9, 1874 issue of the **Pittsburgh Daily Commercial** reported the annual tax on silver watches as being 50 cents, second rate gold watches 75 cents, and best gold watches \$1. Out of Allegheny County’s population of 262,000 persons, only 1,045 watches were reported.



#### Municipality

Franklin Township [Franklin Park]

Leet Township [included the future Leetsdale & Edgeworth]

Marshall Township

McCandless Township

Sewickley Borough

Sewickley Township [Bell Acres]

#### Silver

5

9

1

0

11

3

#### Gold

4

79

0

0

66

2

Pennsylvania’s ridiculed and largely ignored 18<sup>th</sup> century watch tax was repealed during the winter of 1886.