

The ARTERS Family

Bob and Loretta Arters
Steve and Sue Arters
Medina County

Luther Clapp was a carpenter and farmer in Chesterfield, Massachusetts. He saw little opportunity to farm there because land was either too expensive or already owned. He had heard about new farmland being offered at inexpensive prices in the state of Ohio, so he bundled his family and belongings into a couple of wagons and made the trek to northeast Ohio.

Clapp found 200 acres of good farmland available in an area which would eventually become Medina County. He bought the land, and he built a house and barn with his own hands. The barn is all pinned and timber framed. The house was actually built in three sections and has 18 rooms and two fireplaces. Today, the farm, the house, and the barn are still in family hands with his great-grandson, Bob Arters, and Bob's wife, Loretta. Bob's son, Steve, and his wife, Sue, along with their sons, Tyler and Tate, still work that same 200 acres, plus 1,100 more in the area.

The Arters Farm is located just outside Spencer in an area being pressed by encroaching urbanization. Houses have sprung up like ragweed in what was once productive farmland all around the Clapp/Arters farmstead.

Bob's parents, Albert and Dorothy Clapp Arters, kept the farm going during the Great Depression. Albert worked in the oil fields during the 1920s, then moved to the farm as a tenant and part-time field hand. "Eventually, he married the farmer's daughter, my mother," Bob said. "My mother was a real go-getter. She spent much of her life caring for her brothers and sisters while also helping run the farm." Dorothy was 87 years old when she passed away in 1990. Her husband, Albert, had passed away many years earlier, but Dorothy remained actively involved with the farm as long as she could.

The family milked cows for many years, but in 1971, Bob and his son, Steve, sold the milking cows and concentrated on cash grain and cattle feeding. "I can't say I wasn't glad to see the cows go. We had milked by hand until after W.W. II, and it seemed I had spent my life milking cows on the farm," Bob said.

Bob and Steve farm more than 1,300 acres of corn, soybeans, wheat and hay and finish around 150 head of cattle per year. They raise about 200 acres of hay and 90 percent of the acreage is made into small square bales and sold to local horse farms. They handle 45,000 bales of hay per year.

"It's a lot of work, but we've found it to be a great market for our hay, and we have the labor. We use football players and they really get into the work," said Steve.

The MORFORD Family

John and Arlene Morford
Trumbull County

John Kinsman, recognized as the founder of the northern Trumbull County town named for him, sold a parcel of 104 acres of land for \$235 to a young immigrant named Peter Lossee. That parcel of land is believed to be the first recorded deed in the area and has remained within the Lossee family since 1812. Today, the descendants of Lossee, which include John and Arlene Morford, their daughter, Joyce Keir, and her husband, Jack, maintain the family's ownership of this farm.

Peter Morford, Lossee's grandson, took over the farm in 1903, and he worked the farm until he was killed in a dynamite explosion in 1917. He left a widow, Gynith, and four children, Robert, Frances, John, and Elizabeth. John, who was only nine years old when his father was killed, helped his mother and brother run the farm. John would do farm chores, attend school, then come back home and do more chores. Eventually, he was able to take over the farm in 1944, but not before he had to quit school to keep the farm going.

During those years, he also met Arlene Sisley. They wanted to get married, but keeping the farm going during the Great Depression left John with little money, so they courted for eight years before John was able to save enough money to marry Arlene.

John and Arlene literally built the farm back from scratch, because John's mother had to lease the farm out for financial reasons. As newlyweds, John and Arlene lived in one section of the house, while John's mother and sister lived in the other section. This arrangement provided the extra labor needed to help manage the farm, as well as milk the cows, sell eggs, and do anything else that they could to make a living from the farm.

They worked hard to build a top quality commercial dairy herd and milked cows on the farm until 1972, when John sold the cows and concentrated on cash grain farming.

The first tractor John bought for the farm was a Fordson, although for many years he farmed using horses. And there was one strict rule: no work was done on a Sunday. They worked hard the other six days of the week, but Sunday was a day of rest.

"I was born in this house, on this farm, in 1907, and I've lived here all my life," said John. "I've farmed this land since I was nine years old and to me, keeping the legacy of those who went before me alive is important."

The BENDER Family

Suits Us Farm
Robert Bender
Marion County

Justus Bender was a weaver in Bethlehem, Germany, in the early part of the 19th century. Although he made a good living as a weaver, the working conditions in Germany were getting worse. As many of his friends were immigrating to America, he decided to follow them. He changed his name to Justin when he entered the United States, secured a wagon, and began the long overland trek to Ohio. He purchased 47.5 acres of land in Waldo Township, near a town also called Bethlehem. His new farm was the first farm south of the line established between Indian land and settler land by the Treaty of Greenville.

His son, Phillip, eventually took over the farm and added more land in 1843, erecting a log house. Phillip's son, Phillip Jr., helped his father on the farm and became known as one of the top soil conservationists in the area. His son, George Edward, took over the farm and by the 1920s, had established his own reputation as a top farmer and livestock trader. He also ran the Waldo Elevator during the Great Depression. He was the first to bring electric to the farm and the first to switch from horses to tractors.

George and his wife, Nina, had five children. Both boys would distinguish themselves in agriculture and garner top honors in livestock shows, including the prestigious Cleveland Livestock Show where they had champion steers in 1926 and 1927.

One of the boys, Walter, took over the farm in the mid-1930s and followed his father's footsteps as a cattle buyer and trucker. He trucked cattle for 40 years, retiring in 1975. He also sold Grange Insurance, which the family has continued, making it the oldest continuous agency in the Grange Company, operating since 1936. Today, his son, Robert, and son-in-law, Ed Crawford, are agents.

In 1944, Walter married Lucille Slob and started raising their family on the farm. In 1975, Walter sold his cattle herd and, with his son, moved into the cash grain and hog operation.

Today, Robert and his children keep 10-20 sows and are developing a club pig herd. Robert took over the farm in 1997 when his father passed away. "We're keenly interested in preserving the integrity of the family farm in Ohio," said Robert. "However, as family farms are reduced in number, the components of the farm become lost. Farmers take on new names and ownership records are lost. Children are left without roots or ties to their family's land. Preserving the heritage is a debt owed to our original families.

The HOMAN Family

Dennis and Louise Homan
Mercer County

The Homan family farm legacy was started by Joseph Homan, who settled in the Mercer County area in 1888. When Joseph's two older brothers announced they were going to leave Herbern, Germany, for America, Joseph secretly made plans to join them. He literally jumped on the ship as it left port. He was hidden in a barrel, because he didn't have a passport. Joseph and his brothers entered America in 1855.

Joseph never forgot his roots in Germany. Whenever new German immigrants arrived in the area, Joseph opened his home to them and helped them get settled and find jobs.

Joseph, who helped build St. Rose Church in Mercer County, started the legacy of a long line of farmers. Every one of his 18 descendants born on the farm have either become full-time farmers or married full-time farmers, and they have all remained full-time farmers until they retired or died.

Dennis, Joseph's great-grandson, was born in 1932 in the house that Joseph had built. He worked on the farm all his life, quitting school at age 16 to become a full-time farmer. He started farming with horses and later with an International F-20. He also remembers when electricity was added to the farm. "I was five years old," Dennis said. "My mother and I, along with my siblings, came home, and my Dad had a radio sitting on the kitchen table playing music and the lights were on throughout the house. I can still picture that scene."

In 1956, he met and married Louise. Two years later they started Homan Equipment and began selling silos and feeding equipment. In 1987, they sold the business to their son, Roger, who manages the company and farms part-time.

The centerpiece of the farmstead is the huge barn built in 1873. It has been honored as an historic landmark and in 1993, the farmstead was honored as a Century Farm by the Mercer County Historical Society.

"I've lost track of how many farmers have visited this farm over the years, whether for the farm equipment business or for some other reason, but we've tried to be good farmers and good neighbors as best we can," said Dennis.

The SCHUMAKER Family

Jim and Wendy Shumaker
Coshocton County

Francis McGuire moved from Hampshire County, Virginia, in 1811 to acquire farmland in the new state of Ohio. He purchased 1,500 acres of farmland near Coshocton, Ohio. His daughter, Magdalena, married George Miller, a family friend, and the two of them bought some of the land. They had no idea that someday their great-great-great-great grandchildren would still be running the farm.

Today, James and Wendy Schumaker run this very diversified farm. James, whose grandmother received 80 acres as a wedding present along with a pair of driving horses, took over the farm operation when his dad, Robert, became ill.

In the early 1970s, James partnered with a friend, Wendell Waters, to run a hog operation called Washu Pork. After he sold his interest in the hog operation, he and Wendy started a year-round farm market in 1983, selling their own farm-raised produce. The market eventually grew to include a deli and bakery, plus a reputation for their own branded whole hog sausage. After running a seven-day-a-week, year-round market, the Schumaker's decided to semi-retire and spend more time on other projects. The farm market closed in 1998, and they now sell only farm-raised produce in season.

Those other projects include raising wild pheasants for a private shooting range, selling coal, running a haunted hayride in conjunction with the local fire department, raising 160 acres of corn and soybeans, and raising 40 acres of vegetables and produce that includes a pumpkin patch. They also do some entertainment farming which includes hayrides and hog roasts, along with hosting tours for school children.

James is also carrying on another family tradition by serving as a township trustee, a post he has held for 16 years. His grandfather, Lovell Householder, was also a long-time township trustee.

"We've stressed preserving the history of the farm because it's both interesting and important," said James. "If we don't preserve the history, the future generations will know nothing about the past. When I imagine what those early founders had to endure just to get this farm started, I think the least we owe them is to cherish and preserve their memory."

The STEWART Family

Dorothy Stewart
Jackson County

It was exactly 100 years ago this year that William Stewart and his wife, Della, came upon an 80-acre patch of land south of Jackson on horseback. This land would eventually become the Stewart Angus Farm. William and Della had traveled from Washington County, Pennsylvania, in search of new farmland.

Today, the legacy of William and Della is kept alive by their descendants, Dorothy Stewart, her sons, Tom and Tim, and Tim's son, Seth. Dorothy's husband, Dan, who passed away in 1994, was the son of William and Della.

Dan took over the farm in 1942 and was active in the local conservation service. The farm has the oldest continuous diversion ditch in the county. Dan was named Conservation Farmer of the Year in 1987 for the conservation work on the farm. Dorothy and Tom are continuing the legacy by installing a wetland pond on the farm.

The original log house, which William and Della built, still serves as the Stewart home today, although it has been remodeled and upgraded with modern conveniences.

The original smoke house still stands, although as a young boy, Dan almost burned it up. He was given the job of tending the smoky fire in the smokehouse one day. However, being a young lad, he found something else to occupy his time and neglected to watch the fire and keep it smoking instead of turning fiery. The flames nearly reached to the roof, but the building was saved when Dan's mother doused the fire.

Besides their conservation work, the Stewarts were also active in 4-H and the Grange. Dan started the Moonshine 4-H Club in 1927 with just four boys. The name evolved because they met at night. The girls met in the afternoon in a separate club, called the Sunshine 4-H Club. Dorothy has 43 years of service with the 4-H and serves as an advisor. Tom has been an advisor for 17 years, keeping the legacy going.

"I'm very much interested in preserving our farms," said Dorothy. "Where as a society would we be without farms? Farms are the backbone of our nation. History repeats itself and in preserving our heritage, we can learn from it."

The HARNESS Family

Robert Harness, Mary F. Bowman, Daniel R. Harness,
Ann Perdue and the Elizabeth J. Collins Estate
Ross County

In 1799, George and Rebecca Harness left Romney, Virginia, where they had both grown up and traveled by wagon and horseback to the new Northwest Territory. While they occupied the land, the deed wasn't signed until Ohio became a state in 1803. The land grant, signed by both Thomas Jefferson and James Madison, was for nearly 1,800 acres of land near the Scioto River in what would eventually become Ross County.

The Harness family worked hard to turn the open land into a farmstead. The family's connections back in Virginia helped. Those connections included George Washington who is believed to have visited the farm. The Harness family developed a strong reputation as breeders of fine horses and good cattle.

The most famous member of the Harness family was Daniel Harness, known as "Uncle Dan," who owned the famous thoroughbred racehorse, Imp, considered one of the two greatest racing mares in the country. She was the first mare to win the Suburban in 1899, and no mare has duplicated her record.

The family was also involved with Shorthorn cattle. Dorothy Harness, daughter of George, married George Renick, who, along with his brother, Felix, brought the first Shorthorn cattle into the Ohio territory. They also operated the first cattle drive to the eastern markets in Maryland from Ohio, traveling through the Appalachian Mountains.

The Harness farm has several Indian mounds scattered across it, and many have been excavated. The findings from the mounds have greatly increased the knowledge about the Indian tribes which lived in this area of Ohio. Some of the earthworks date as far back as 300 A.D. and were made by the Hopewell Indians.

The Harness Farm maintained its status as a farm which bred fine racing horses, with facilities that included a horse racing track, until the 1937 Great Scioto River Flood. "As I understand it, the devastation was just too great [to rebuild]," said Bob Harness. "Coupled with the Great Depression, the flood not only destroyed the barns and track, it also destroyed the desire to continue in horse racing."

After attending the Ohio State University and serving in the Army Corps, Bob returned to a farm which was still recovering from the previous decade's problems. "I vowed I would try as best as I could to rebuild the farm to be something the family could be proud of," said Bob. "That's what we've been doing for the past 50 some years."

The KEENER Family

Keener's Walnut Grove Farm
David and Karen Keener
Montgomery County

John Keener came to Montgomery County from Dauphin County, Pennsylvania, looking for farmland. He eventually traded a wagon and four horses for 160 acres of land on the west side of the county. The farm had a log cabin near a spring on the north side of the farm where John and his family lived while he built a new house from timber from the farm. Later in the century, his offspring would build a huge barn which would come to serve as a landmark for the area.

The house John built is now occupied by his great grandson David, and, David's wife, Karen. They are restoring the house using wood, beams, and bricks from the farm. Stones from an old original corn crib will be used in the fireplace, and beams from the original log cabin will also be used in the restoration.

David, who took over the farm after his father, Ephraim, passed away in 1994. David said his father was the transition generation who brought tractors to the farm and had electricity installed. Ephraim's father, Jacob, and his wife, Viola Jane, were well-known in the area for their philanthropy. They were affectionately known as "Uncle Jake and Aunt Ole" and many area residents were beneficiaries of their assistance.

David said one of the more interesting tales of the farm is that the first murder in the county allegedly occurred there. A hired hand, John Mahaffey, killed his wife then hid in the woods from a posse. Eventually he was found and tried for the murder, but he was able to keep the posse at bay for several weeks by hiding in the trees on the farm.

David and Karen, with their children and grandchildren, have an old-fashioned hog butchering day every fall. They buy several pigs from an area farmer and do their own butchering, cutting, and sausage making on the farm.

"We believe in preserving as much of the past as we can and believe deeply in the traditions of the past and keeping those alive for the current and future generations," said David.