

# Century Notes

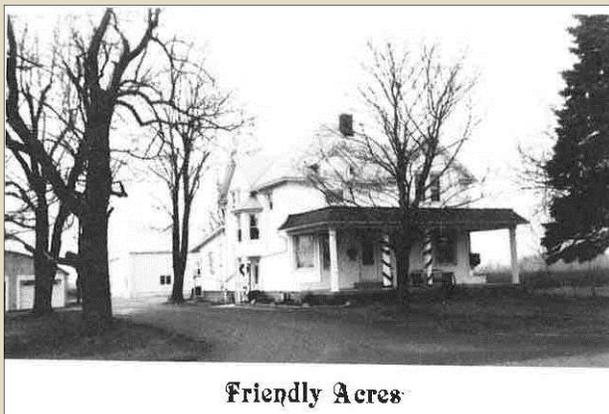


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A Semi-Annual Newsletter About Ohio's Bicentennial and Century Farms Published by the Ohio Department of Agriculture

## Blake's History Lesson

In April, the Ohio Department of Agriculture received an Ohio Century Farm registration from Diane Simon for her family's Friendly Acres farm in Liberty Township, Hardin County. Diane included a cover letter, in which she gives credit for the registration to her grandson, Blake Willeke, age 16. She states that Blake has always been interested in family, and was anxious for Diane to submit the information.



Friendly Acres

And Blake has some interesting history to his family and farm.

Founder J. R. Spar, Diane's grandfather, started a hybrid seed business in addition to his crop and livestock operation. Although a fire destroyed the seed house and 7,500 bushels of seed corn in 1943, the family rebuilt and continued with their seed operation. See more of *Blake's History* on page 4.

## Of Interest...



The Eschmeyer family (page 3) are members of Ohio Proud, a marketing program that identifies and promotes agriculture products that are made in Ohio and grown in Ohio. Visit [www.ohioproud.org](http://www.ohioproud.org) to learn more.

Please keep in touch, and let us know of any news you would like to share in the next newsletter (Jan./Feb. 2015). Visit **ODA's blog** ([www.agri.ohio.gov/blog/](http://www.agri.ohio.gov/blog/)) for family histories of Bicentennial & Century Farms.

## What's Happening?

**Heritage Ohio**, the statewide preservation and Main Street partner of the National Trust for Historic Preservation, recently announced a call for nominations for its Annual Awards. A new award category is Historic Farmstead of the Year, which best embodies the partnership of current agricultural practices with historic buildings. Nominees will be judged on the basis of maintained integrity of farm buildings for continued use, or the completed rehabilitation of a farmstead for either agricultural use, or for a new sympathetic use. Nominations due **May 23**. See more online at [www.heritageohio.org/programs/annual-awards/](http://www.heritageohio.org/programs/annual-awards/).

The **Hancock Historical Museum** is highlighting the county's ag heritage with several projects:

- June 20: **Barn Quilt Trail** bus tour; more than 60 barn quilts featured. Reservations required.
- August: **the Hancock County Fair**; oral histories of some Century Farm owners & retired farmers will be featured. This was a joint collaboration between the museum and the Univ. of Findlay, partially funded by a grant through the Ohio Humanities Council.
- Sept. 20, 10 a.m.-4 p.m.: **The 2nd Historic Barn Tour**; Self-guided tour of 6 historic barns, including the **Mark Metzger Ohio Century Farm**. Activities at each location. Tickets required.

**More information is available at [www.hancockhistoricalmuseum.org](http://www.hancockhistoricalmuseum.org) or 419-423-4433.**

John R. Kasich, Governor  
Mary Taylor, Lt. Governor  
David T. Daniels, Director



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# A Message from Director David Daniels

**G**reetings from the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

It was a long, cold winter, but we have finally turned the corner to warmer temperatures. The full impact of the extreme weather conditions we experienced is not yet fully known, but Ohio farmers are resilient and well versed in dealing with anything that nature dishes out. I look forward to a good growing season this year, and all the benefits that it will bring to everyone.

Summer means another bountiful crop of county and independent fairs on the horizon. I am happy to say that my schedule includes visiting our new Bicentennial Farm families at their local fairs again this year. The stories they relate about their farms are fascinating, and I enjoy getting to know each and every family.

See you at the fair!

David T. Daniels, Director  
Ohio Department of Agriculture



*Director David Daniels (center) met the Bick (left) and Shay (right) families at last year's Brown County Fair on Sept. 26. Director Daniels shared the families' histories, and thanked them for their contributions to Ohio agriculture. Each family received a certificate signed by the Governor. Read more about the Shay and Bick families on page 3. (Brown County Fair photos courtesy of Carol Shay.)*

*Last year was the inaugural year to recognize Ohio Bicentennial Farms. The Ohio Department of Agriculture will continue meeting newly-designated Ohio Bicentennial Farm families at their local fairs this year.*

# Honoring Our Agriculture Heritage

## Levo Family - Clinton County

Going into retirement, John and Kathy Levo gave some thought on what to grow on their 127-acre farm in Green Township. Wanting to put more of their land into production, they studied their options and decided to grow blueberries. Since making that decision, they have developed a patch of 20 blueberry varieties, with more than 300 bushes planted. Their efforts have paid off, and they are on the leading edge of production in the area. Last year was their first large crop, with more than 100 quarts sold. Corn and soybeans are also grown.

The farm has remained in John's family since 1902. John and Kathy represent the fourth generation of family ownership. Their son David is an architect in New York City, and daughter Jennifer, a graphic designer, lives in Portland, Oregon.



## Eschmeyer Family - Shelby County

William and Sophia Huelsmeyer arrived in the U.S. from Germany in 1873. After working their way westward to Cincinnati, William heard that several neighboring families from Germany had settled in New Knoxville. Finding the area to his liking, William purchased farmland and moved his family there in 1890. Two original buildings from 1860 still exist, including the house which is used by current owners, Jeff and Deb Eschmeyer. Jeff and Deb represent the fifth generation of family ownership. Their Harvest Sun Farm is 22 acres, used to grow certified organic vegetables and flowers, about 35 crops with a mix of cover crops. They market their crops through their Community Supported Agriculture program, which was the first CSA in the area. They are also members of Ohio Proud, and stay involved with several farm organizations. *(Photo left: Jeff and Deb Eschmeyer)*

## Shay Family - Brown County

Carol and Mike Shay gave the thumbs-up for the Bicentennial Farm ceremony at the Brown County Fair in September. In addition to receiving a Bicentennial Farm certificate from the Governor, State Representative Doug Green (*left*) recognized the family and their achievements during the event.

The Shay farm dates back to 1801, when Aaron Leonard purchased 100 acres in what is now Clark Township. Carol moved into the family home when she was six, and then moved back to the farm with her husband Mike in 1978. Carol and Mike are the seventh generation of family ownership of the Flooded Flatlands Farm.



## Bick Family - Brown County

Mary and Joe Bick received congratulations from State Representative Doug Green (*left*) during the Bicentennial Farm ceremony at the Brown County Fair. The Martin-Bick Farm started in 1798, when founder Alexander Martin moved from Virginia to Ohio. Construction of their home, Stonehurst, started in 1812 with stones gathered from a nearby creek and fields. The home was completed in 1816, and is on the National Register of Historic Places. Alexander Martin is the great-great-great grandfather of owner Mary Martin Bick. Today the farm is 100 acres, used to pasture cows and to produce soybeans, wheat and hay.



