

1996 Ohio's Outstanding Century Farm Regional Winners represent a millennium of farm experience

This year's winners garner a special prize

Governor George V. Voinovich recently honored eight Ohio farm families that represent more than a millennium of experience in producing wholesome food for Ohioans and consumers around the world.

Started in 1993, Ohio's Outstanding Century Farm Awards Program (OOC-FAP) is co-sponsored by the Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA), *Ohio's Country Journal* and the Ohio Historical Society. Each year, eight regional winners are recognized at the Ohio State Fair. An overall winner is announced at the Farm Science Review in September.

During the awards ceremony, Governor George V. Voinovich surprised each of the families by presenting them with a miniature, three-dimensional scale model of the farm that has remained in their family for more than a century.

"I'm extremely proud today to be able to present these families with such a special acknowledgment of their accomplishments," Governor Voinovich said.

"These families, from the founding ancestors to the current managers, are models of stability and creativity and define the value of family farming. It is highly encouraging to know that more than 400 families have submitted applications for the awards since its inception in 1993."

"Thanks to the volunteer efforts of Colonel Charlie Gries, we have been able to supplement our awards program with these personalized replicas of each farm," Ohio Department of Agriculture (ODA) Director Fred L. Dailey said.

"Each model was created after Colonel Gries visited with the families and learned the story of their farms' histories. To make this even more of a family treasure, Colonel Gries used

actual material from the family's farm, adding a touch of sentimentality to each model."

The eight regional winners include:

William and Jean Bonnett Farm Lorain County

This family-run farm was founded by David Bonnett, Sr., who came from France to America to find religious freedom. He bought ten acres of land on Feb. 2, 1860 in Lorain County.

The farm was selected Conservation Farm of the Year for Lorain County in 1984.

William and Jean Bonnett have four sons, Mike, Matt, Mark and David. Mike manages the 35 cow dairy herd for the family operation.

Neff Farm Auglaize County

The Neff Farm dates back to 1850, when Lewis Zerkel sought out newly opened land in northwestern Ohio. The Neff Farm is one of the oldest continuing family farms in Auglaize

County.

Zerkel purchased 80 acres of land on March 30, 1850 for \$160.80 and began clearing the land for farming.

Today, the farm operation encompasses nearly 840 acres of corn, soybeans and wheat.

Riddle Family Farm Pickaway County

The Riddle Family Farm traces its roots back to Peter Young (Jung) who emigrated from Germany to the U.S. in the early part of the 19th century to escape the oppressive army draft laws.

In 1868, John Young and his wife, Lucinda Kauffelt, purchased a 340 acre farm from Lucinda's parents.

That farm, plus an additional 190 acres, is being farmed today by their descendants, Mary Riddle and members of her family.

The farm is now a cash grain and beef cattle operation.

Rohrer Farms, Inc. Wayne County

The Rohrer Family Farm was estab-

lished on Feb. 4, 1861 when Jonathon Smucker purchased 117 acres of land in Green Township, Wayne County.

His granddaughter, Emma, married David Rohrer and took over the farm operation when her father passed away in 1935. They added 220 acres of land and built several additional buildings and began raising potatoes. Since then, the family has added an additional 500 acres of farmland and also began building the family's dairy operation. The farm today includes a 200 cow dairy and an 1,100 acre cash grain operation which includes 200 acres of potatoes.

West View Farm Morgan County

West View Farm was established on May 24, 1878 by Boyd McCormick, who bought it for \$4,000. The present owner, Chester McCormick, is only the third generation to operate this family farm. He took over its operation in 1958.

He and wife Dorothea have two sons, Tom and Mike. Mike helps run the family's Simmental cow/calf and cash grain/hay operation.

Fred Habekost, Jr. Preble County

Fred Habekost, Jr. is only the third generation to operate the Habekost farm, which has been in his family since 1889.

His grandfather, Henry Habekost, bought 80 acres of farmland in what was then Montgomery County on Oct. 22, 1889. The barn was built four years earlier and is one of the largest in southwestern Ohio. It is still used today in the family's hog operation.

Fred and wife Donna and son Hank operate the 200 acre cash grain and hog operation today.

Kithcart Family Farm Jefferson County

Kithcart family ownership of 140

acres of land dates back to Oct. 19, 1808, when current owner Glenn Kithcart's great-great-great-grandfather, Ezekial Cole, purchased land in what would eventually become Jefferson County. Ezekial paid \$420.03 for the 140 acre homestead.

Today, the family raises cash grain and sells hay and manages a 60-head feeder cattle operation.

The farm received the Goodyear Soil Conservation award in 1981.

Rymers Family Farm Ottawa County

When Ezekial Rice entered Ohio in the early part of the 19th century, he bought 150 acres of farmland and established a farm ownership which has lasted more than 172 years and makes the Rymers Family Farm the oldest farm in Ottawa County.

Current owners and operators, Tom and wife Gretchen Rymers, represent the fifth generation of Rymers' family members to farm this land.

Today, Tom and Gretchen farm more than 200 acres of corn and soybeans, have a complete line of farm equipment which they have purchased on their

own, and have a 12,000 bushel grain storage setup on the farm.

The Craftsman

Colonel Charles E. (Charlie) Gries began building models as a young boy growing up on his family's farm in Iowa.

After graduating from college with a B.A. in History, Charlie began his military career. For the next 26 years Charlie flew planes as a test and fighter pilot for the U.S. Air Force.

During his Air Force career he received two Master's degrees, one in Counseling and Guidance and the other in Education. After retiring, he taught Management at Shenandoah University in Winchester, Virginia.

In 1992, Charlie expanded his model-building hobby into a museum and craft shop called Old Barns of America. In 1993, Old Barns of America relocated in Yuma, Arizona.



From left, Ohio State Fair Queen Patricia Fetters, Lieutenant Governor Nancy P. Hollister, First Lady Janet Voinovich, Governor George V. Voinovich, Donna and Fred Habekost, Ohio Department of Agriculture Director Fred L. Dailey, and on far right, Ohio Historic Preservation Officer Dr. Amos Loveday.

