

# Charles farm symbol is ever-flowing well

**BY DICK ANGLESTEIN**  
MOUNTVILLE — Deep in the bedrock of the J. Clayton and Dorothy B. Charles farm along Habecker Church Rd. south of Mountville lies an unseen symbol of agricultural heritage that spans more than two centuries.

Daily it serves as a continuing symbol of the steadfastness and tenacity of a family that has held together an agricultural operation through six generations and across 209 years.

That symbol is a 30-foot-deep hand-dug well that has never failed to sustain the livestock, the land and its Charles stewards all those years.

"Last fall about this time, the well got to its lowest point — about seven inches of water," Clayton Charles explains.

"Usually there's three to four feet in it — plenty for us and the 80 or so cows.

"We extended the pipe just a bit. And then after the shortest day of the year, the well started to come back — just like the old saying goes."

Perhaps, the comeback of the well further symbolizes the convictions of those in agriculture who believe that despite setbacks of weather, disease or misfortune unseen forces will help guide them on the road back.

Certainly, it's the stuff that molds Century Farms and particularly the dean of this year's Lancaster County group that dates back in the Charles family to 1774 — a couple of years before the nation was born.

And just as the Charles farm

stands at the head of this year's Century Farms at age 209, it presents a unique appearance amongst the rolling farmland of Manor Township.

In an area of predominantly rich limestone soils that account for the unusual fertility of Lancaster County, the large house that even predates Charles occupancy is built of deep brown sandstone with some streaks of charcoal hues.

"We believe that the stone came off a small nearby quarry," Clayton explains.

"There's another neighboring house built of sandstone, but it's covered with stucco."

Up to five years ago, the Charles home was also stuccoed, but the family restored it to its original state, repointing the stone with a darker mortar and blending the home, barn and other buildings together with a deep, rich shade of brown.

Throughout the house are visual evidences of its stately age, pegged beams, arched basement area for summer storage, narrow steps to the second floor and fluted decorative scheme around doors and windows.

But most unique are the upstairs fireplaces which are hand-carved but are painted black with decorative veining to resemble marble.

Dorothy Charles is the historian of the family and traces some of the early history.

"The original Charles homestead was across the road," she explains.

"Jacob — Clayton's great, great,

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The J. Clayton and Dorothy B. Charles farm with large sandstone house.

## Fourth generation continues farming tradition

**BY KIMBERLY HERR**

STRASBURG — Nestled deep in a valley off Bunker Hill Road, the Krantz homestead is not visible from the road. Traveling down the long lane that eases over slight hills, a visitor spies the farm buildings one by one, first the barn, then the house and finally, the "summer house."

Nosy heifers peak through fence rails and two boisterous dogs — one a spry collie puppy and one an old black mixed breed that hobbles on arthritic legs — greet the visitor.

The thick, gnarled grapevines on the arbor boast more than one hundred years of age.

The atmosphere seems much the same as it must have been when John Krantz started farming in 1864. His father-in-law, Peter Herr, bought the farm for him.

What he began over 100 years ago is being continued, if slightly altered, by Paul and Emma Krantz and their family, recent recipients of one of the Century Farms awards for working farms who have remained in a family for at least 100 years.

Paul, born and raised on the Lancaster County farm, is the fourth generation Krantz on the farm, while his three children, two

of whom still reside on the farm, make the fifth generation.

And regardless of the initial appearance of their farm, the fourth and fifth generation Krantzes have seen some significant changes.

Paul and Emma bought the farm from Paul's father in 1968 when it housed a milking herd, but when their two oldest daughters left for college and art school, milking got

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Hand-carved fireplace with unique painting to resemble marble veining is shown by Mr. and Mrs. Charles.



Closeup of fireplace painting that resembles marble veining.



The solar panels on the front porch roof are an indication of some of the changes that have taken place over the years.