

Five generations of Hersheys have lived on family farm

BY SUZANNE KEENE

PARADISE — Vincent Hershey was 40 years old when he purchased the family farm from his father in 1974. Today, his son Dale, 31, has already purchased one-third of the farm's 87 acres, continuing a family tradition that goes back 124 years and five generations.

For that dedication to farming and the land, Vincent and Mary Hershey have received a Century Farm Award, a recognition the Hershey family is proud to receive.

"After all," Vincent says, "there aren't that many farms stay in the same family."

Vincent's great grandfather, Peter Hershey, purchased the farm, which at that time included 105 acres, for \$24,000 from George

Bieler, the Amish contractor who built the farm buildings. Vincent recalls that Bieler was told not to waste his time building because "they'd be burned to the ground," during the Civil War.

However, Bieler persevered and although Peter could hear the cannons booming during the battle of Gettysburg, the farm escaped the war unscathed.

Peter raised a few cows, steers and horses, and a half acre of tobacco that he and his friends consumed themselves. He remained on the farm until his death in 1922 and in 1923 his son Enos bought the farm in a public auction for \$11,500.

Vincent's father, David W. Hershey, bought the farm from Enos in 1939 for \$12,000. Vincent credits Enos with keeping the farm

in the family at that time.

"He was determined to have this farm in the Hershey name because it was his homeplace," Vincent relates.

Keeping the farm in the family is important to Vincent too. "I wouldn't take a million dollars for it," he says.

Vincent and his family raised cattle for 29 years, but sold them and went to crops in 1979. Now they raise mostly corn, with three acres of tobacco.

Vincent and his sons Dale and Dwight work together on the farm. The Hersheys also have three other sons — David, Don and Dan — and three grandchildren.

The farmhouse and the barn look much the same as they did when they were built. Two of the doors on the house are originals, bearing



The Hershey family farms 87 acres of corn and tobacco. From left in rear are Vincent and Mary Hershey, their son Dale and his wife, Terry. In front is their youngest son, Dwight.

wooden panels that slide up to cover the glass window panes in case of Indian attacks. The deep window sills and thick walls also attest to the home's age.

However, a stone vault in the basement and a bake oven have been removed. "It (the oven) wasn't valued and time took its toll," Vincent explains.

Vincent says he believes the

farm reached its peak around 1960, but Dale is enthusiastic about restoring it. "Dale wants to get it back to the way it was," he says.

He is glad that Dale is interested in continuing the family farm and wants Dale to get an earlier start than he did. "I was 40 years old before I got the farm," Vincent says. "I wanted him to get started before I got started."



Located in Paradise Township near Strasburg, the Hershey farm dates back to the Civil War era.

BY SUZANNE KEENE

MANHEIM — Daniel and Grace Rohrer and their family believe that farmland should be preserved for future generations. That they and their ancestors have lived on the same farm for six generations is a testimony to their conviction.

"We feel a very keen need to preserve this rich farmland," Daniel Rohrer says of his East Hempfield Township farm.

Daniel has joined the township planning commission "so we might be doing as much as we can to preserve the rich farmland in the county."

The Rohrer's have tried to instill their love and appreciation for the land in their six children. "We tried to make the children feel a part of it (the farm)," Grace says.

The Rohrers think it is a little unique for a farm to stay in the family for six generations and say that "it's a good feeling being part of that uniqueness."

Daniel's great-great grandfather, Abraham, purchased the 214-acre farm in 1862 for \$15,000

from Christian and Katrina Harnley. Abraham divided the farm among his three sons, giving 81 acres to his son, Amos. Enos Rohrer got 18 of those 81 acres, leaving Amos's son Daniel H. Rohrer a total of 63 acres. It is those 63 acres that make up the heart of Daniel and Grace Rohrer's current farm.

The Rohrer's son Dudley owns an adjoining farm and he and his father work together, raising wheat, barley, potatoes, corn and soybeans. They have 18 acres of orchard that yield a wide variety of fruits. All together, they farm about 275 acres, including 125 rented acres.

The family operates a farm market year round where they sell their produce and some of Grace's handiwork. She enjoys braiding rugs and making wreaths.

They also do cider pressing right on the farm; cider is one of their biggest commodities in addition to potatoes and apples. They also feed some steers over the winter.

The farm has always been a crop



The Rohrer family works together to keep their Century Farm in operation. From left are Grace and Daniel Rohrer with grandson Geoffrey. At right is their son Dudley and his wife, Beth.

and livestock farm, Grace said, and many of the physical characteristics of the buildings have stayed the same over the years.

"The house is very typical of this area," Grace said, explaining that it has eight square rooms, four upstairs and four downstairs. A summer kitchen that has been converted into a family room, is attached to the kitchen.

They have updated the summer kitchen fireplace which now houses a woodburning insert. The bake oven was removed, but the door was saved and inserted into the wall of the new fireplace.

The kitchen was remodeled for

the first time in 1976, but the original windows were retained. Most of the other buildings also remain much the same. "The outside structures are pretty much in the same shape as they were originally," Daniel says.

The horse power shed where the horses ran the pulley to run the thrashing machine and other farm equipment now houses the farm shop. The horse stable is now home for the farm market and the woodshed has become a garage.

By the care they have taken to maintain their property's historical value it is obvious that the Rohrers care about the land and preserving their farm for future generations of Rohrers.



The huge maple tree that stands in front of the Rohrer's brick farmhouse is as old and taller than the house.