

## New Jersey's McKelveys find their way back home

BY JACK HUBLEY

**HOLTWOOD** — It was the middle of the 19th century when three young brothers by the name of McKelvey left their native Ireland to make a new life for themselves on American soil.

The trio chose a "matched set" of Anderson sisters for their wives, and brothers John and Charles selected southern Lancaster County's Martic Township as their home. Purchasing 192 acres of woodland in partnership, the McKelveys cleared much of the virgin forest and settled into a log cabin and a fieldstone house, the two dwellings already on the property.

Those early years on the McKelvey farm were far from luxurious, but John and his wife,

Mary Anderson, along with Charles and his wife, Lizzie Anderson, persevered, earning a modest living from their yearly crop of barley.

In 1911 John's son Joseph S. McKelvey assumed ownership of the farm, moving from his parent's log cabin home to the property's fieldstone home originally occupied by his uncle Charles.

Joseph continued to farm until his death in 1957, and in 1966, the late McKelvey's wife Anna transferred ownership to their son Joseph McKelvey, Jr.

Joseph, Jr. continued to farm steers, tobacco and corn, until 1979 when health problems prompted him to sell the farm to his second cousin Thomas McKelvey and his wife Elaine.

"In the beginning my cousin Joe had suggested a partnership, but because of his health, he finally decided to sell," says Tom, who eagerly gave up his New Jersey oil business for a more leisurely country lifestyle. "I've always loved the area, and when I first got married I wanted to come here," Tom recalls.

His wife Elaine, however, admits to some initial doubts regarding the move. She was particularly concerned about the relative isolation of farm life when compared to life in her home town of Camden, N.J.

"But now I love it here," she bubbles. "The slower pace of life is nice, and the people here are so polite and friendly."

But life can get a bit too "slow"



Elaine and Tom McKelvey pause with their daughter Joyce during an inspection of the original McKelvey log cabin located a few hundred feet from their home.

for comfort if a farmer can't make a living from his land, and Tom knew that he would have to develop a reliable source of income if country life were to be a reality. With Joe acting as his advisor, Tom entered the egg business in

1983, building an 81,000-bird layer house and entering into contract with Wenger Feeds.

Expansion followed in 1984, with a new 108,000-bird house bring the

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This fieldstone farmhouse near Holtwood has been home to generations of the McKelvey family since 1865. Owners Tom and Elaine McKelvey sold their New Jersey oil business to come "home" to Lancaster County in 1979.

## Mary Snyder unlocks door to Century Farm's history

BY JACK HUBLEY

**MOUNT JOY** — If Christian Snyder were alive today, he would no doubt shake his head in disbelief when his great grandson Glenn told him how much his farm's value has appreciated since 1868. On March 31, of that year it was Christian who paid \$16,315.44 for the 176-acre farm between Manheim and Mount Joy that would still be farmed by his descendants 116 years later.

The elder Snyder owned the farm for only four years, passing it on to his son John G. Snyder in 1872. One of John's six children, Levi E. Snyder, was next in line, purchasing the farm in 1908. After 37 years of ownership, Snyder sold

the farm to his son, Levi B. Snyder, in 1945.

Farm life was quite different during the middle of the century when young Glenn Snyder, the farm's current owner, farmed with his father, Levi. Along with dairy cattle, steers and chickens, the Snyders grew a variety of crops including wheat, barley, corn, tobacco, tomatoes and potatoes.

"We'd just go from one to the other--tomatoes, potatoes, tobacco--and I was really glad when fall came," recounts Snyder. "Dad had a tractor shortly after I was born, but he still liked working with horses," he says, recalling many days of field work spent behind a team.

Levi Snyder was also in the chicken business, gathering the eggs from his 300 hens that his wife would clean one at a time.

Glenn purchased the farm from his father in 1972, and has remained in the egg business, although his 40,000-bird layer house stands in sharp contrast to his father's old wooden chicken house behind the family's home.

The dairy cows have been gone since 1954, and hogs have replaced the steers that, up until three years ago, populated the barn.

With the help of his son Nate, Glenn finishes about 400 hogs a year, in addition to planting the farm's 93 acres in corn and barley.

One of three of the Snyder off-



Seated behind Brian and Christine are Nate and parents Mary and Glenn Snyder.

spring still living at home, Nate works part-time in Landisville, and hopes to continue the family's farming tradition in the poultry and pork businesses. And Nate's roll in the farm's operation has taken on added importance since his father lost his right arm in a PTO accident three years ago.

But a lifetime of farm work has given Snyder the determination to rise above his handicap. "It's a miracle the way I've come through it," he observes, admitting that some left-handed chores, such as writing, will still require a bit more practice.

And his wife, Mary, agrees, noting that her husband now, "writes like a doctor."

Nate's sister Kristine, age 18, and brother Brian, 12, round out the fifth Snyder generation still living at home. Two other daughters, Lou Ann Gehman, and Julia Zimmerman are married

and reside in Adamstown and Columbia, respectively.

A native of Elizabethtown, Mary was a stranger to farm life until marrying Glenn. Nevertheless, she recalls that farming, "was always something I wanted to do."

And one of her most rewarding projects in recent months has been trying to reconstruct the branches on the Snyder family tree. One mystery that continues to elude her concerns the inscription "1817" barely visible on the front door of the family's brick home. Though she suspects that this may be when the house was constructed, more detective work will be necessary to test her theory.

So as farm work begins to slow down with the approach of winter, Nature Glenn Farm's resident historian may uncover another chapter or two in the history of one of Lancaster County's Century Farms.



Located near Mount Joy, Nature Glenn Farm is currently home to the fourth and fifth generations of Snyders. The farm has been in the Snyder family since 1868.