

Ephrata Farm Becomes Century Farm

BY LISA RISSER

EPHRATA — For one hundred and nine years, a Becker has toiled on the tidy 112-acre farm tucked just beyond the Reading Pike between a creek and another farm. The current owners, Harry and Ruth Becker, run a dairy operation with daughter Sylvia Trupe and

her son, Jeff, and son Harry Jr. and his wife, Sue.

Last week the Beckers became members in the state's Century Farm program, where families living on the same farm for 100 or more years are honored.

Becker, a trim man with salt-and-pepper hair, has spent consid-

erable time researching the farm's history. He has traced it to the 1870s, when it was owned and operated by John R. and Mary Keller. At that point it was a general farm, raising animals and crops, with a lovely field stone house and barn.

"My great-grandfather, Israel B.

Becker, bought the farm in 1878," Becker said. "At the time he owned and farmed the Becker Homestead Farm, which was sold to his ancestor in 1738 by Thomas and Richard Penn."

When Israel B. died, the farm went to his oldest son, Henry. Unfortunately Henry didn't keep it for long. "Henry was 29 years old at his death," Becker explained. "He was leading two mules to the watering trough, when one kicked him in the hip area, and he died four days later."

Israel's widow purchased the farm at a public sale only to sell it a few years later to another son, Levi, Becker's grandfather. From there, it was sold to Becker's father, from whom he purchased it in 1968.

The farm remained essentially the same from owner to owner until Harry and Ruth bought it. His grandfather had added tobacco to the wheat, corn, and soybeans being grown, but kept basically the same number of cows, chickens, steers, and pigs. Harry turned the farm into strictly a dairy operation. He also does custom crop spraying.

"I felt milk was a more worthwhile product," Becker explained. "It is more beneficial than tobacco. We did have some chickens for the first few years, but when the big poultry operations began, I got out of it. It wasn't profitable any more."

During the years that Becker's great-grandfather, Israel, owned (Turn to Page B25)



Harry has a working 1935 Case tractor that he stores in a horse-power shed.



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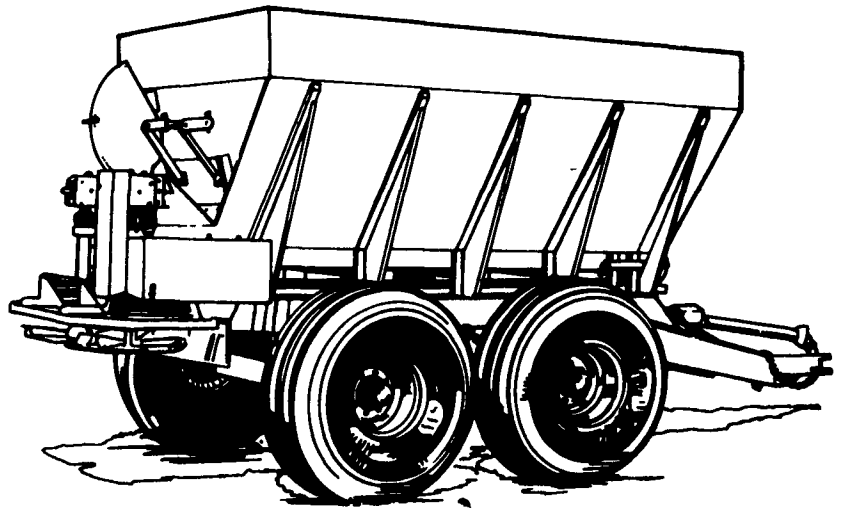
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