



Hopedell Farm in Valley Township, Chester County, has been in the Hope family since 1743.

Keeping The Hopedell Tradition Alive

BY MARJORIE KEEN
 Chester Co. Correspondent
 COATESVILLE — Twenty-eight Hope family members were present at the Pennsylvania State Farm Show last month for Hopedell Farm's bicentennial recognition. Hopes have occupied the Valley Township farm ever since Yorkshireman Thomas Hope was granted 320 acres in 1743.

According to the land patent granted by William Penn's sons John, Richard and Thomas in the 17th year of the reign of King George II, Hopedell Farm was originally part of Sadsbury Township.

Today's keepers of the family tradition are William and Ruth Hope Handy, retired banker and school teacher, respectively. According to Ruth, she and her twin sister, Jean, grew up as the ninth generation of Hopes to occupy Hopedell Farm. Their children and grandchildren traveled with them to Harrisburg for the bicentennial award.

Their late father, one of several Hopes named Thomas, operated a dairy until 1963. For the past quarter century, another dairy farmer has planted the fields in corn and hay. Either dairy heifers or beef cattle graze in the meadows. "Nothing worse for a farm than being idle," said Bill Handy.

Ruth remembered when her father shipped milk by train from Pomeroy to Philadelphia. "They milked at four and they were up there by 6:30. That's where all the affairs of the nation were taken care of as the farmers waited for the train," she laughs.

After the Philadelphia dairy changed hands, the Hopes took the



Ruth and Bill Handy sit under the sign that brought travelers to Hopedell Farm during the Great Depression.

milk to Christiana in a Ford pickup truck. "Jean and I used to ride among sometimes because we always got a lollipop or an ice cream cone," Ruth reminisced.

Ten quart cans of milk from the afternoon milking were stored overnight in Hopedell Farm's two-story springhouse. "It's been springing for over 200 years," Bill stated. Ruth helped carry water from springhouse to farm house before central plumbing was installed when she was five years old.

"Of course there was no bathroom, but that little storeroom had

a great, big copper bathtub in it with a wooden frame around it," Ruth related. "They used to have a cistern here. They collected rain water and heated that for the bathtub and brought it upstairs. They did the same for the washing machine."

The wood-shingled outhouse still stands, one of the buildings protected by Hopedell's designation as a national historic site.

Ruth pointed out the eighteenth century walls of the original four-room stone house. Four William Penn corner fireplaces provided winter heat for the first generations. A large addition in 1830-increased the house to its present bedroom size.

The addition's date was determined by oral tradition and confirmed by still-vivid wax fruit under a large glass globe in Hopedell's dining room. Ruth explained, "The year they built this side of the house it was popular for the ladies to make wax fruit arrangements instead of quilt. They'd become a little more well-to-do and had all the quilts they needed, so they did things that were a little on the luxurious side."

Hopedell's dining room table stretches to seat two dozen for Christmas dinner. Although Ruth



Ruth Hope Handy is in the ninth generation of Hopes who've made their home at Hopedell Farm.

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