

# The DeLongs of Bowers Talk About "The Way We've Always Done It"

BY LOU ANN GOOD

**BOWERS (Berks)** — James DeLong pushed back his cap and settled into a kitchen chair. "We only have red cows and red tractors on this farm. That's all we ever had and all we ever will," he said.

It was about 1924, he recalls, when his father boarded a train to Wisconsin to bring back the first set of red cows (Guernseys) for the DeLong homestead.

"Back then, there weren't many of them around this area," DeLong recalled. "In Wisconsin, my dad loaded 16 cows aboard. When the train stopped for refueling, he filled barrels with water for the cows' water trough. At night he slept on the hay."

Surprisingly, when the elder DeLong unloaded his cows at the local depot, the 16 head had increased to 18.

That's only one of the hundreds of tales that DeLong recounts about the past. He and his wife, Mabel, have a whole parcel of history wrapped up on their 360-acre homestead that has been in the family since 1730 when William Penn deeded the land to Pieter DeLong.

The present landholder, James, said, "I've still got the original deed that was recorded on cloth."

The cloth deed isn't the only heirloom treasured by the DeLongs. Their home is filled with relics from the past.

DeLong admonishes others, "Don't ever throw anything away."

Few, perhaps, would discard things if they had the treasures the DeLongs have inherited throughout their life. Not only do they have valuable antiques but they have the stories that accompany them.

For example, in one room of their sprawling 14-room house is a grandfather clock with the date 1797 inscribed on it.

"It has sat in that corner ever since the house was built in 1811," DeLong said, "and we haven't moved it. Every seven days we wind it and it keeps on running."

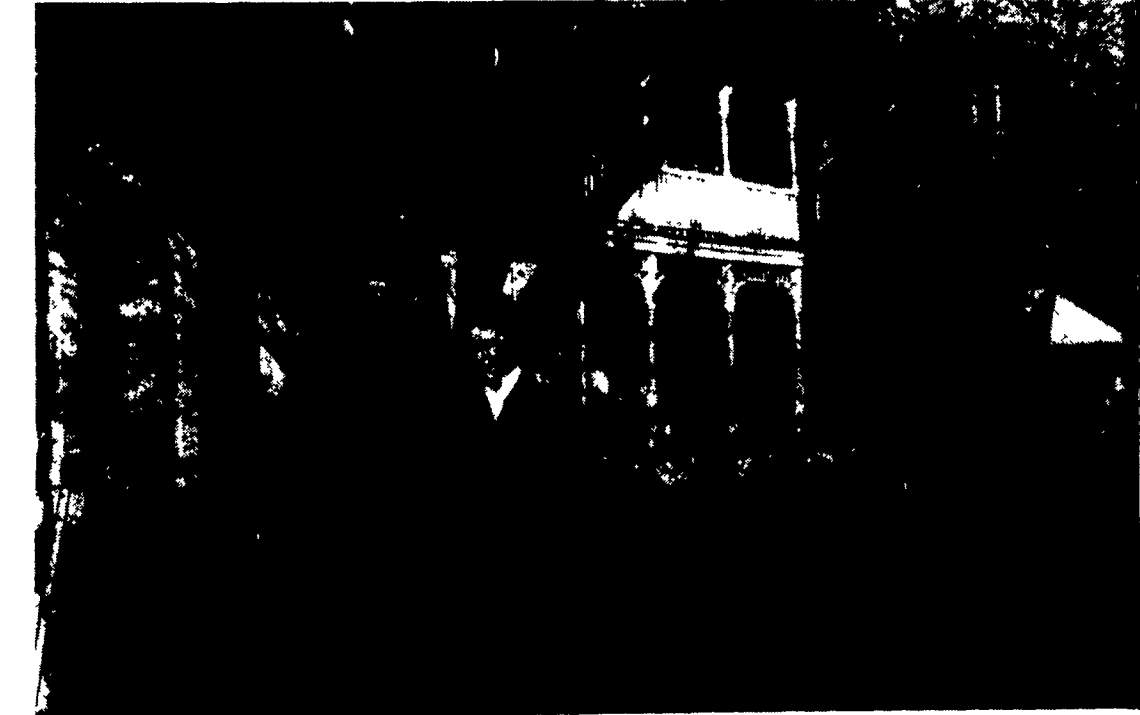
A 10-foot-high corner cupboard shows detailed workmanship from centuries past. Recently, the DeLongs moved it from an upstairs bedroom to the dining room.

The 1811 corner cupboard had been built in a bedroom "so the Indians couldn't see the fine things inside."

Still setting on the curved shelves are the "fine things" passed down through the generations: an impressive collection of Fostoria, pewter and silver dishes and goblets. "We haven't bought any of it; it's all been passed down to us," said Mrs. DeLong.

An early 1800s family Bible records the names of the DeLongs ancestry. Most were doctors, dentists, and teachers. DeLong likes to tell how his father studied to be a teacher but taught only one day because "he decided he liked farming best."

His love for farming and the



Mabel and James DeLong of Bowers stand in front of their home built in 1811. The previous buildings from 1730 were torn down before the present one was erected.

nostalgic aura that surrounds it has been passed on through the generations.

"I still remember plowing the fields with horses back around 1930," DeLong recalls. "Every day when the 12 o'clock train passed by, the horses refused to do anymore plowing and turned toward the house. They knew it was dinner time."

Back then the trains were so regular that folks set their clocks by the train pulling into the station. "We didn't need clocks," DeLong recalls. "We timed everything by the trains passing through. There were at least five or six that went through daily and they were always on time."

Now, much to DeLongs dismay, only one daily train travels the rails through his fields. "I'm a railroad fanatic and I miss hearing the train whistles," he said.

To satisfy his passion for trains, DeLong volunteers many hours to the nearby Hawk Mountain Railroad and toward helping his son, Daniel, with his toy train collection.

"I go up to Hawk Mountain to get away from the work," DeLong said as he glanced toward the barn that houses his 70 milking cows plus their young replacements.

"Those red cows," he muses, "they don't give as much milk as Holsteins, but they're the best. Why if you put a 50-cent piece in the bottom of a pail and milk a Holstein, you can see the 50-cent piece shining through the milk because it's so thin. You can't say that for Guernsey milk."



This elaborate corner cupboard holds Fostoria, pewter and silver passed down through the generations of DeLongs.

"James, stop poking fun," Mabel admonished her husband. "I don't like this business of putting others down."

Her husband grinned slyly. "It's true," he persisted.

He tells of past decades when the rich, yellow milk of Guernseys was in great demand. He's convinced that, taste-wise, his Guernsey milk is tops.

"Just the other week, more than 300 people toured our farm during Farm City week. We served milk and cookies. Boy, did they ever drink it. Why one girl drank five

glasses of it!" He stood up. His weathered hands fingered the detailed workmanship on the winding stairway of their home. "You don't see stuff like this today," he said.

His eyes shone with contentment as he glanced around the homestead that they have restored to preserve the past.

"Yep," he said, "it's the way we've always done it. My father always stuck to Guernseys. That's all we ever had in the barn and that's all we ever will."



Amy, 9, enjoys searching through the many treasures found at her grandparents' home, which has been in the family since 1730. Here, she holds a bookmarker dated 1892 found in the Family Bible with names and dates inscribed during the 1800s.



DeLong is proud of these milk tanks that have his grandfather's name inscribed on them. They now picture the DeLong homestead and the Hawk Mountain Railroad Station where DeLong spends much of his spare time.

# Homestead Notes