



At 14-years of age Wayne Gabel delivers milk to the receiving station in Honey Brook. The milk was loaded on freight cars and taken to Philadelphia. "We got more money that way than sending our milk to the creamery," Gabel said.

100-Year-Old Reflects On A Century Of Farming

LOU ANN GOOD

Lancaster Farming Staff
CAMBRIDGE (Chester Co.) —
At 100 years of age, Wayne Gabel is the oldest member of the Honey Brook Township Grange.

"Not only am I the oldest member, I'm the only charter member left," said the jovial centenarian.

Gabel isn't one merely to have his name listed on the membership. He still holds the office of chaplain.

Those who pass his home near the Lancaster and Chester counties line often see Gabel working in his large garden or mowing the grass on his or his neighboring son's property.

For the last 25 years, Gabel makes his 7 a.m. morning walk to

check the rain gauge mounted on a tripod in his backyard. Gabel is one of those people who keeps records for the National Weather Service. He records each day's temperature and sends a copy to Harrisburg and to the corporate headquarters in North Carolina. Sometimes, the Weather Service calls him for details on the weather in his area, which is then related on the news reports.

Despite his age, Gabel is not a tottering old man. Rather than sit and relax, he'd just as soon stand and talk with visitors or perch on the arm of the armchair "because it's not so hard to get up again."

Gabel has outlived two wives and said, "If I wouldn't be so old, I'd look for another one."

He was married to the first one for 50 years. After her death, he remarried and lived 21 years with his second wife until she died two years ago.

Two years ago, Gabel passed the eye test and physical and had his driver's license renewed.

"It's good until I'm 102," he said.

But last year, Gabel sold his car because he thought the car insurance was too high.

Gabel is a talking historian who remembers paying \$7,500 for the 70-acre farm he purchased in 1928. He added another 50 acres for \$100 per acre and started with 5 or 6 cows.

The cows were milked by hand until 1935, when he bought a two-unit milker.

As a member of DHIA, Gabel recalls having one of the top cows in 1952, which milked 9,970



Although 100 years old, Gabel is often on his hands and knees working in his large garden. He sells produce to local markets and freezes some for his own use.

half pint of cream. The milk route was lots of work, and Gabel said that they didn't keep it up much more than a year.

For a number of years, the Gabels loaded their milk cans on their wagon and took the milk to the Emery Creamery, just west of Cambridge. Here they emptied the milk cans. On the opposite side of the road was a cistern into which the skim milk was piped under the road. The empty cans were then filled with skim milk at the cistern to take along home for the hogs.

Gabel said that later he delivered the milk to the receiving station in Honey Brook, where freight cars took the milk to Philadelphia.

He was graduated from Twin Valley in 1914, the only male student in a class of five.

Gabel recalls the days before rural delivery. He'd walk to the post office two mornings a week to pick up the mail.

"The store opened at 9 a.m., and the boys and men would gather to hear the news," he said.

In 1966, Gabel sold his farm and moved to the house he built on his farm.

He sells produce from his garden to local markets. He also freezes his own corn and beans. He enjoys making wooden wind vanes, but doesn't have a big enough market to use up his stockpile of them.

For 24 years, Gabel was a school board member. He's also been a Fire Company member. He has been a member of Honey Brook United Methodist Church for 70 years. For 50 years, he's been a mason of the Howell Lodge.

Although Gabel said that all his friends his age have died off, he still receives more mail than any other person on the route, according to the local mail carrier. This week the local post office celebrated its 100 year anniversary and commemorated it by delivring Gabel's mail in a horse and carriage.

Gabel's advice for long life is "Don't drink and don't smoke and stay home with your woman."

He said that about 25 years ago he had pain in his head. His doctor told him to keep away from fat.

"I've been keeping away from fat and feeling good ever since," he said.

A typical breakfast is oatmeal. Lunch is mostly potatoes with skins on, and supper is a whole wheat sandwich with chopped turkey or maybe some cheese and ham.

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pounds.

Corn was his biggest crop. He cut the shocks by counting six rows and seven steps to form the corn shocks.

"My daddy was sort of slow to get on machinery, but I remember the first manure spreader we got. We ordered it through the Sears Roebuck catalog," Gabel said.

Other machinery was added bit by bit. He said, "A friend bought his hay loader to our place. We tried it and bought it."

"My first corn fodder shredder ran on five horsepower. I thought that was great."

His father started a milk route in which he would park his milk wagon at set locations and housewives would come with their containers and fill them for six cents a quart for whole milk, three cents for skim milk, and six cents for a

"We got more for our milk there than at the Creamery," he said.

He remembers working the land with a hand plow. It was exciting for Gabel because he found many arrowheads while plowing. He now has an extensive collection of arrowheads.

Gabel's dad bought his first Model T in 1916.

"The Model T got through mud, unlike the Overlander and other early cars. We'd fly past them sitting in the mud," he recalled of the era before a driver's license was a government requirement.

Early drivers carried a tire pump and patches with them. "We got flat tires often. Tires are much better now than back then," he said.

Grover Cleveland was president when Gabel was born on Sept. 2, 1896. Since then, Gabel has lived through the terms of 15 presidents.



Neighbor Henry Zimmerman admires the weather vanes that Gabel makes from wood.



About a year ago, Gabel invested in a riding mower instead of using a walk-behind mower. Now he mows both his and his son's bordering property.

HOMESTEAD NOTES

