

Treasury Of Heritage: 211 Years At Clover Hill Farms



Shown are the barn with its JCW hex sign, the bicentennial Clover Hill Farms sign, and three generations of Walker landowners. From left, Mary E. Walker and the Pauls: David, Dorothy Jane (Walker), and her husband, Leon.



A very tiny milk house still exists from days of yore at Leon and Dorothy Jane Paul's 211-year-old farm near Garrett in Somerset County. David, center, and his family live on the second farm visible in the distance. He and his parents have a partnership and his children are the ninth Walker generation on the land.

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GARRETT (Somerset Co.) — Family ties to a portion of God's good earth, no matter how small the plot, often are a source of hope and pride for those who grow up in the place where they were born. Having strong roots, as most folks realize, solidifies us in our journey through the ups and downs of life.

Leon and Dorothy Jane (Walker) Paul have pride in roots that, as it is fostered in their children and grandchildren, probably surpasses that of families with a shorter record.

This one goes back at least 211 years, and possibly longer, when Jacob Walker, Dorothy Jane's great-great-great-great-grandfather, in 1785 purchased the 167 acres of the original farm, now dubbed Clover Hill Farms.

"The farm was never out of the 'Walker' name, until it was deeded to us in 1982," said Dorothy Jane, the direct Walker descendant, since her father, Walter T. Walker, died on December 26, 1985, and her only brother, George S. Walker, died at age eight.

Her active, 86-year-old mother, Mary (Stahl) Walker, not only retains a longtime membership in the Hillcrest Grange, but she delights in the latest Walker offshoots sprouting up in Leon and Dorothy Jane's grandkids who live nearby. These compose the ninth Walker generation to live there.

Progress at Clover Hill Farms is obvious in how Leon and David, their business partner and son, run things, maintaining what has evolved through the Walker progenitors, as a tradition, according to the mother and daughter.

"They were always willing to move ahead with progress," said Dorothy Jane. "My dad had the first pipeline (milking) system in the county."

For Leon, farming had been in his blood since his dad, Clarence E. Paul, ran a dairy operation about a mile distant from the Walker place.

After their wedding on June 21, 1963, Leon and Dorothy Jane, in 1967, put a house trailer beside the

enduring old 1838 farm house, and Leon began working with his father-in-law who was set on going into semi-retirement.

Eventually, a new house replaced the trailer to make room for the three Paul children — David W., Lisa J. and Amy Sue.

Married to Patricia, David's and her children are Justin, Melissa and Kristin. Lisa married Brad Brown. Their daughter is Megan. Amy, a recent Somerset County dairy princess, is unmarried, but attends school and has a job.

Although it was updated and overhauled, Leon stuck with the barn's overhead pipeline system to send the milk quickly into the frosty, stainless bulk tank in the milkhouse.

He also realized that the work load would be greatly eased by erecting good silos.

"We put silos up to make our work easier," he said. So in 1970, down came the old tile silo to make way for a more modern successor where corn silage could be stored.

Haylage got a silo in 1979 and then, last year, up went a big blue Harvestore, a depository for high moisture corn.

At about 65 head of Holsteins is where the partners keep the herd size, with some 80 head of replacement animals.

While the guys feed, Dorothy Jane, who clearly recalls that none but International Farmall tractors were allowed by her late father, does evening milking and helps, as well at the 5 a.m. hour.

"My dad was an International Farmall man," she said, laughing. "You didn't speak any other color but 'red.'"

Nodding toward Leon's favorite hobby — the 1949 shiney John Deere tractor first bought by his grandfather — she adds, "The first (green) John Deere tractor came on the farm in 1993."

What began more as a precautionary measure for safety is now the norm — keeping the cows inside instead of letting them graze, Leon said.

"There was a time when we had to move our cattle on the state road," he explained. "Now we have to let them loose and put them in a pen for exercise. There's

no grazing."

The land size, including the farm located just around the bend that David and his family live on, is 377 acres.

It happened when the execution of his late brother's will found Walter inheriting Dalton's 210 acres next door.

Alfalfa mixed hay is sown on 160 acres; corn on 130; oats on 50 acres, and 30 are reserved for needed barley.

It's a far cry from the days of raising potatoes, pigs and chickens. When most folks did their own butchering and a smokehouse and a summerhouse were standard outbuildings, as Mary well remembers. They also owned a steam engine, she said.

And threshing days, when men joined forces to help each other while the women joined forces to feed 'em.

Occasionally, as when "Aunt Nettie got the salt instead of the sugar," the hungry men were shocked to find the tasty looking food wasn't so good after all. The

joke was better.

Two hundred plus years of life lived in one place by the descendants of one family is a powerful legacy, with Walker stories to pass through succeeding generations.

Jacob Walker, for instance, was well intentioned as he and his horse flew down a bridle path, racing against others who, if they won, could choose the first plot in a planned town. About a year later, it was named Berlin.

The path, at one point, went on either side around a certain tree. Jacob, thinking that he understood his steed, leaned in the appropriate direction. The horse, however, suddenly and unexpectedly, swerved to the opposite side and Jacob collided with the massive trunk. Sustaining traumatic injuries, the patriarch died soon thereafter.

Jacob had also been a second Lieutenant in the Revolutionary War. His father, Francis Walker, in 1732, had sailed into Baltimore, according to records

Two generations later, in the

same general area, a second tragedy occurred.

This time George P.H. Walker, Jacob's grandson, died at the hand of a stranger, one who apparently, had needed work and was hired to help scythe down the grass.

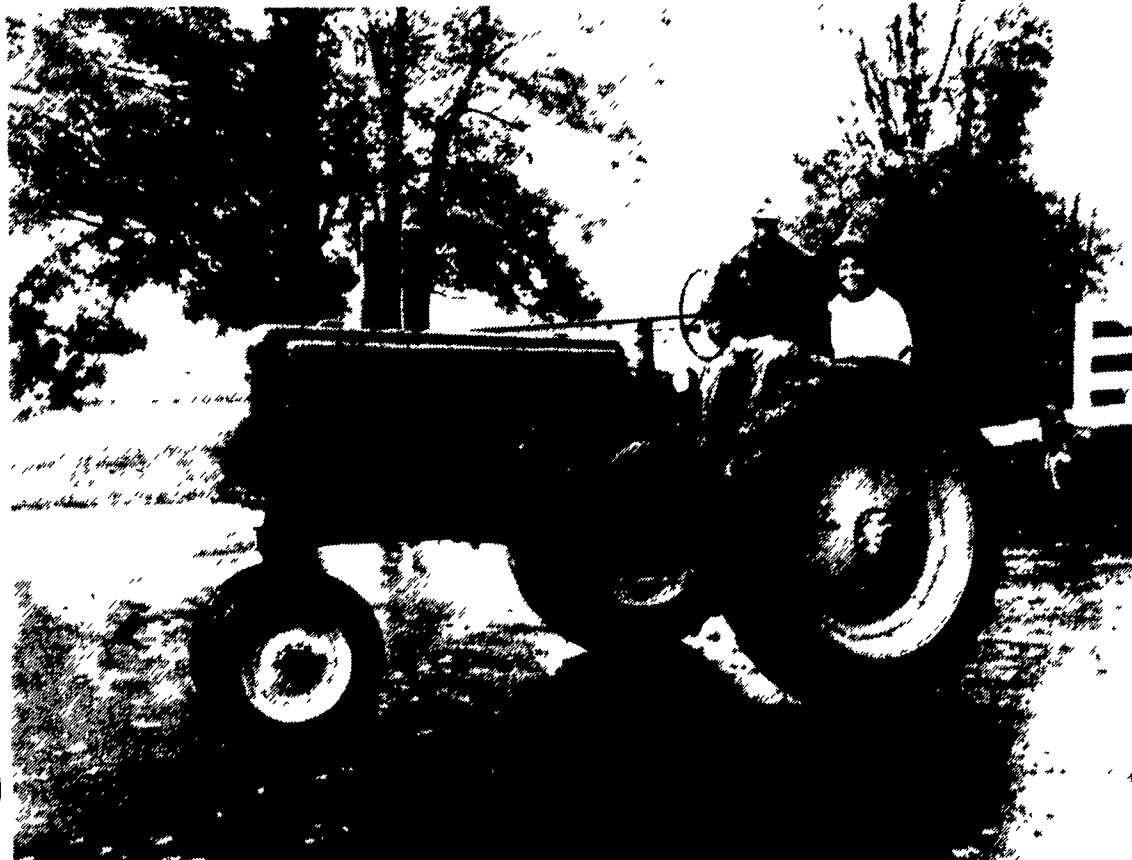
George, because a toothache was troubling him, didn't feel good that day. So when he saw the Irishman's sloppy work, he let fly with some sharp words for this Mr. Burns.

Unable to accept the deserved criticism, Burns made a remark about curing Walker's toothache and instantly turned on him, slashing him with the scythe.

In the excitement that followed, Burns escaped. Undetected, he later managed to return for his wife, but according to historical records, he was never apprehended. He did not, therefore, pay the penalty for his heinous deed.

Still another time, when the family returned home from the funeral of Freeman Walker's wife, they found that Freeman, himself,

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Leon and Dorothy Jane Paul pose on a 1949 John Deere tractor, owned first by Leon's grandfather. It never left the Paul family.

HOMESTEAD NOTES