

Vale Wood Farm Builds On Generations Of Customer Service

Dairy Offers Milk Delivery Route, Wide Product Line

DEANN CARDARELLA
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Lancaster Farming

LORETTO (Cambria Co.) — When they made their way from Switzerland to America in 1816, John and Joseph Itel had no idea the land they would nurture in their life time would nurture generations of Itels.

Shortly after the newly arrived immigrants set foot on American soil, they learned of a small town in western Pennsylvania and made their way toward Loretto, a place they believed they would call home.

The original land was acquired through a land grant that at the time was intended to lure settlers into this part of Pennsylvania. Now almost two centuries later, the original five acres has grown into nearly 500 acres with the original plot at the heart of the farm.

Over the years, the family became known as Itle, a slight variation on the original Itel name.

This family of farmers has toughed out many trying times in America's history including the Great Depression and the Civil War. John's son Francis, a Civil War veteran, in time found himself at the helm of the family business.

Francis, a second generation American Itle, eventually passed the farm onto his son Charles. Charles increased the acreage and began to sell milk to residents in the nearby town of Cresson. In 1933, he named the business Vale Wood Farms describing the farm's location "in the valley by the woods."

Today, Vale Wood Farms employs 30 full-time and 15 part-time employees. The cattle count has grown to 200 milking head of registered Holstein dairy cows.

With the processing plant in eye shot of the grazing dairy herd, the Itle family provides residents, restaurants, and schools with a dairy product they boasts comes straight from the cow and to consumer, right off their farm.

Bill Itle has been president of the company since 1985. The company is owned by Bill, his six brothers, and one sister. Preceding the current generation, their father Russell and Uncle Gerald had a family partnership.

"We have 30 full-time employees," Bill said. "And of those thirty, ten are family members."

Bill said he is the third generation of Itles who have been in the dairy business.

The land has been farmed under six generations of Itles.

Bill said the original land grant enticed his forefathers into making Loretto their home.

"That is how they got people to settle up on this mountain," he said. Close to 200 years later, the Itle family farm continues to thrive.

When asked why that is, Bill attributes it to the diversity of his workers.

"It is the fact we have the ability to help out in different areas," he said. "We don't specifically have to train new people in different areas. We

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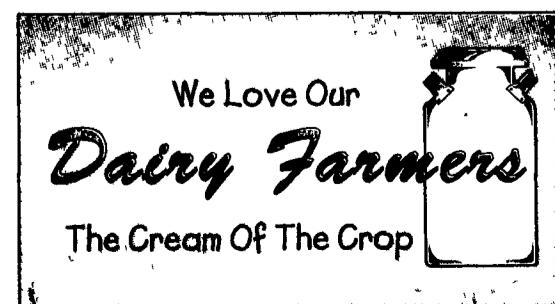
Carissa Itle Westrick explains a home delivery truck to a group of school children.



George Soisson, a 35-year employee at Vale Wood Farms, operates the butter printer.



Vale Wood Farms offers a wide range of products.



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