

Century

Same families worked these farms for 100 years or longer

By GUS AUGUST
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Six Linn County farms were added in 1985 to the more than 800 Century Farms in Oregon.

As the name suggests, the designation recognizes farms that have been worked by the same family for 100 years or more, explained Thomas Vaughan, executive director of the Oregon Historical Society.

The honors have been granted every five years since 1958, with the next presentations to be made in 1990, Vaughan said.

Linn's six new Century Farms cover the mid-valley from the north boundary of the county to south of Halsey.

A variety of crops and livestock is grown on the farms, from grass seed to row crops to cattle.

Most have long since lost their original buildings — to the elements, fire or demolition.

Possibly the largest original building left is the barn on the Robert and Phyllis Davidson farm, 28998 Highway 99E, two miles south of Shedd.

The barn was built with wooden pegs instead of nails, and its original hay fork still hangs in the loft, said Mrs. Davidson.

She said the barn has been in continuous use but has been changed from time to time.

"We took out some horse stalls, so now it's one big room, but it still houses horses," Mrs. Davidson said.

Thurston Davidson, Robert's grandfather, founded the farm in 1852, staking claim to a section or one square mile of land.

The farm now covers 210 acres, Mrs. Davidson said.

It abuts another Century Farm, settled by Henry Davidson, Thurston's father.

Jeffrey H. Davidson, 27930 Danner Road, Halsey, son of Robert and Phyllis, now works both farms.

Henry staked claim to the land due west of us, including Muddy Creek," Mrs. Davidson said. "Then while he was away, someone moved the claim stake away from the creek."

Phyllis Davidson said that she and Robert lived in the original house until



Phyllis Davidson
Farm covers 210 acres

1954, when it became beyond repair and was torn down. A new house was built in its place.

She said that mainly grass seed is grown on the farm now.

"Robert has lived on the farm all his life except for the time he spent in the Army in World War II," she said.

Mrs. Davidson was born in Harrisburg, but her parents moved to Halsey where they ran the Hill and Company hardware store.

She and Robert both attended school at Halsey. They were married in 1943.

According to Mrs. Davidson, they all enjoyed a peaceful and normal farm existence.

"I remember Claude and Lura (Robert's parents) saying they would milk cows until they were out of debt, which they did. Then they sold the cows," she added.

"However, we always had one or two cows to furnish milk for the household," Mrs. Davidson said.

Another new Century Farm in the area is run by Mr. and Mrs. Wayne I. Smith, 28003 Creek Bend Road, Halsey. The area is west of Halsey north of the James River Corp. paper mill.

"Although the date says that Thomas Fleming Smith founded the farm in 1875, it actually was in 1850," Mr. Smith said.

Part of the land was given to the Oregon Electric Railroad and the tracks run very near the house, Mr. Smith said.

She said the only original buildings on the farm are a smoke house and possibly a barn.

"I know the barn is at least 100 years old," Mrs. Smith said. Both buildings are now used for storage.

"The original house burned in about 1934. The only thing we saved was an old trunk," Mrs. Smith said. "The fire destroyed an old hand-made clock which we were very proud of."

They now grow ryegrass seed and wheat.

Mrs. Smith said the line of succession for the farm was from Thomas to Nat Smith, Wayne's father, to Wayne.

"Thomas Smith served in the Oregon Legislature and led wagon trains across the Oregon Trail," Mrs. Smith said.

The new Century Farm farthest north in Linn County is owned by Clare and Norma D. Henness, 39646 Gates School Road, Lyons.

"Although we have a Lyons address, the farm is just across the Santiam River from Gates, about seven miles from Lyons," Henness said.

The farm has had no original buildings since the house burned in 1943.

"I was born and have lived on the farm all my life," Henness said.

He has owned the Henness Logging Co. for the past 16 years and raises cattle and hay on his farm.

Thomas J. Henness, his great-grandfather, founded the farm in 1864 and gave part of the land to his son, L.T. Henness. Glenn Henness, Clare's father, inherited it from L.T., and now Clare is running the place.

The Century Farm closest to Albany is Hoefler Farms, owned by Dena and