

CFR 0887

Charles E. Rhoads

Union

APPLICATION FOR CENTURY FARM HONORS

Deadline for filing application - May 1, 1990

(please type or print)

telephone: 503 534 5452

Your name (Mr., Mrs., Ms., Miss) Charles E. Rhoads

Your Address 62916 Dry Creek Lane Summerville 97876
street, route or box city ZIP code

Location of farm 1 mile west of Dry Creek School

To qualify as a Century Farm, a farm must have no fewer than 10 acres with a gross income from farm use of not less than \$500 per year for three out of the five years immediately preceding application for Century Farm honors.

Does your farm meet this qualification? Yes

Name of family member who was founder or original owner of farm: John L. McKinnis

Founder gained ownership of farm in (year) 1885
(ATTACH VERIFYING DOCUMENTATION, see rule 9).

Founder came to Oregon from Ill.

Who farms the land today? Charles E Rhoads

Relationship to original owner Great Grandson

Are any of the original buildings still in use? Yes

If yes, which ones? Pd. To For original House - (Storage)

If you know crops or livestock raised on farm one hundred years ago, please list: Livestock - Grains - Lumber

What do you raise on the farm today? Cross Seed - Wheat

How many generations live on the farm today? 1

Please list names: Charles E Rhoads

Do you declare that the statements made above are accurate and correct to the best of your knowledge? Yes

Charles E Rhoads
(signature of owner)

Please return forms to:

Century Farm Program
Oregon Historical Society
1230 S. W. Park Avenue
Portland, OR 97205

STATEMENT FORM

I, Charles E. Rhoads, hereby affirm
(print name)

and declare that the farm which I own at 62916 Dry Creek Lane
(full address)

Summerville, Ore, in Union County,

shall have been owned by my family as specified in Rule 2 of the

RULES FOR 1990 CENTURY FARM PROGRAM for at least one hundred years by

no later than December 31, 1990.

Charles E Rhoads
Charles E Rhoads
Signature

----- Acknowledgement (for use of Notary Public) -----

STATE OF OREGON

County of Union

BE IT REMEMBERED, That on this 21st day of May,

19 90, before me, the undersigned, a Notary Public in and for

said County and State, personally appeared the within named

Charles E. Rhoads

known to me to be the identical individual described in and who

executed the within instrument and acknowledged to me that he

executed the same freely and voluntarily.

In Testimony Whereof, I have hereunto
set my hand and affixed my official
seal the day and year last above written.

Barbara J. Crouch
Notary Public for Oregon
Commission Expires 1-5-93

Charles E Rhoads
62916 Dry Creek Lane
Summersville, Oregon
97876



Century Farm Program
Oregon Historical Society
1230 S.W. Park Avenue
Portland, Oregon
97205

RECEIVED
MAY 23 1990
OREGON HISTORICAL SOCIETY

S L Mc Ginnie
on acct with District No 17

Dr Cr

1885	July 30	Dr by tax levied May 16 - 1885	540	
1886	Jan 11	By cash Paint		540
	" 13	" Oil &c		<u>1645</u>
	" ..	Dr to Cash per J T Woodell	<u>1645</u>	
	June 22 1886	Dr to tax levied June 10 th 1886	450	
	Aug 7	Cr by Cash		450

J R Saramore
on acct with District No 17

Dr Cr

1885	July 30	Dr by tax levied May 16 - 1885	1460	
	Dec 24	Cr " Note		<u>1460</u>

Mrs C Johnston
on acct with District No 17

Dr Cr

1885	July 30	Dr by tax levied May 16 1885	400	
	Dec 30	Cr " 800 feet saw timber		<u>400</u>

Meeting of The Board of Directors

The board of Directors of District No 17 of Union County Oregon meet at the Clerk's office on The 28 day of May 1885. as per Notice from Clerk to equalize and correct the assessment roll of all the real and personal property of District No 17 Union County Oregon.

after examination and equalization the total amount of taxable property within the District was found to be 32,000.00 and striking the dividen the per cent was found to be 25 Mills on the Dollar to make the \$800⁰⁰ tax voted May 16th 1885. Therefore the board of Directors issued the Clerk a warrant to collect the tax of 25 Mills on the Dollar. as the assessment roll was corrected and approved and make due return of your doing within sixty days from the date of his warrant which is dated May 30th 1885.

Various plans for building a Schoolhouse were discussed but no definite conclusion was arrived at. On motion the board adjourned to meet from time to time as the occasion required

Signed

E. W. Fisher
Chairman
J. T. Woodell
Clerk
of District No 17
Union County Oregon

Rick Read - John L. McKinnis Century Farm - article for Feb 8 issue

From: "David Yerges" <kdyerges@eoni.com>
To: "Rick Read" <rickr@ohs.org>
Date: 02/08/2001 6:40 PM
Subject: John L. McKinnis Century Farm - article for Feb 8 issue

John L. McKinnis Century Farm

By Trish Yerges

"John L. McKinnis gave each of his sons 160 acres of land," explained Mrs. Charles (Doris) Rhoads, who lives on the century farm two miles northwest of Summerville on Dry Creek Road. "The original quarter section of land was purchased by John in 1885, and since then we've been the third family to reside on it," she said. The property has passed hands from pioneer miller, John L. McKinnis, to his son, Clement, to his daughter, Fern Westenskow, and finally to her nephew, who is a grandson of Clement, the present owner, Charles Rhoads. Charles initiated the application for a century farm certificate and received it at the 1990 Union County Fair. It represents the life's stories of several families who contributed to their enduring McKinnis Century Farm. John L. McKinnis, the eldest of nine children, was born July 5, 1843 in Jackson County, Ohio, to Craner (1817-1897) and Catherine (Truseler) McKinnis.

When John was two years of age, his parents moved to Ottumwa, Iowa. Later he moved with his family to their new farm at White Breast River near Knoxville, Iowa, where he reached manhood and completed a common-school education. On May 10, 1864, John, age 20, bid farewell to his parents and joined up as a driver with the 40 wagon "Oliver" train destined for Oregon. He drove one of Oliver's wagons led by teams of oxen and filled with supplies for the settlers. Among those known to be traveling in the train were Hiram "Wesley" Oliver and his parents, the John Van Blokland family and others. The journey was marked by some trouble with the Indians on the Upper Platt River, when the train was attacked and the Indians confiscated a significant number of their stock. Despite this loss, the train made its eventual arrival to this valley on October 10, 1864.

Soon after his arrival in the valley, he engaged in a succession of occupations including saw milling, freighting, teaching, farming and politics. One of his first occupations was as an employee for "Wesley" Oliver, who founded a saw mill north of Summerville in 1865. While working there, John became acquainted with the cook, Miss Rachel Catherine Harris. She must have "reached his heart through his stomach" as the saying goes, because on March 3, 1867 they were married. They made their first home in the old Shaw home in Summerville, close to the school where he taught. A year later they homesteaded three miles north of Imbler near Willow Creek, and he took up teaching at the Indian Creek school, a distance of five miles as the crow flies.

His wife, Rachel, was the daughter of Joseph and Mary Ann (Sturgill) Harris, after whom Mount Harris was named. The Harris family of twelve members left Sullivan County, Missouri in the spring of 1865, and were guided to the Grande Ronde Valley by Captain Joe Knight. Included among the Harris party were Joseph and Mary Ann Harris; their daughter, Priscilla (Knight) with her husband, Andrew Knight, and their two children, a girl and a newborn named Bill; a second daughter, Rebecca (Morelock) and her husband, Ned Morelock (Rebecca was pregnant during the journey with her first child, Martha); a third daughter, Rachel "Catherine", later Mrs. John L. McKinnis; and two other Harris daughters and one son.

During his marriage to Rachel, John McKinnis taught classes at Summerville, Indian Creek and Willow Creek,

and in 1870, he was elected as County School Superintendent, a post to which he did not file for reelection. After his teaching career waned, he continued to farm and acquire more land. He also had a great interest in saw milling. Around 1881, he and P.L. Courtney set up a saw mill northwest of Jones Butte in Indian Valley near where the Gordon Creek school later stood. After the first year, John bought Courtney out and moved the mill twice until in 1884, it was established at the site of the present day McKinnis Century Farm on Dry Creek Road. Just a few years later in 1885, John McKinnis was contracted and paid \$42.25 to do the planing for the lumber used in building the new Dry Creek Schoolhouse. He had purchased the planer in 1883, and later sold it and the saw mill in 1897 to a man in Flora, Oregon.

John's interest in flour milling developed through the 1890s. In 1892, John became instrumental in the development of the Farmer's Alliance Flour Mill in La Grande. He operated the plant and in time purchased the mill with Mr. J.E. Reynolds. He sold out his interest in this mill in 1900 to Kiddle Bros. In 1895-96, he and three other partners incorporated the Elgin Milling Company, of which he held a majority of stock. Several years later this mill too, was sold to the Kiddle Bros. Then in 1903, John and J.L. Hindman built a flour mill in Imbler. In 1908 they sold it to Kiddle Bros., and it later burned down.

Although milling was perhaps what he was best known for, he did have a brief experience with politics when the People's party nominated him for County Judge at their convention held March 15, 1894, a race he lost to I.N. Sanders, a Republican.

John's career as a farmer was a prosperous one. At his home farm he built a home with twelve rooms and eventually acquired a debt-free title to 2,000 acres of farm land in Union County. In addition to the home farm, he owned other farms in Imbler and the farm that later became the McKinnis Century Farm on Dry Creek Road. John grew wheat, barley and oats for crops, and also bred stock and Percheron horses, using thorough bred sires exclusively. John's wife, Rachel, died on July 30, 1914, and he died on February 14, 1925. A large memorial monument marks their graves at the Summerville Cemetery.

During John and Rachel's married life, they had eleven children: Clement L., Beatrice (Hug), Herschel, Ina (Bingaman), Frank, Anna (Davidhizer), Rosa (Bade), Thomas (Rosa's twin), James, Charles and Stella (Lee). They lost one child in infancy, and Charles died in 1902 at age 21, when a horse kicked him in the head. Wanting to share his prosperity with his sons, John gave each one a farm of 160 acres as a gift. His eldest child, Clement Lycurgus McKinnis (1868-1953) became the recipient of the 160 acre farm on Dry Creek Road. The history of this property traces back to its original homesteader, Michael Flick, who was granted his Homestead Certificate No. 440, signed by President R. Hayes, on March 30, 1880. In 1885 when John McKinnis purchased the farm from Flick, only 100 acres of the farm were dry enough to raise grain crops; the remaining 60 acres were "brush and swamp", said Doris. "In the brushy area, there is a Flick infant buried there," Doris noted. It wasn't until Clement took over ownership of this property in 1895 that he began do some tiling so that he could use more of the land for cultivation. After draining the swampy acreage, he continued to use the land for growing grain, namely wheat. Meanwhile, Clement had an additional 160 acres of timber and carried on a saw milling business on Ruckle Road north of Summerville. The milling business was his primary source of livelihood for his family while the quarter section near Summerville became the McKinnis' residence and a small farming operation.

Clement was married to Nettie May English on February 21, 1897 in Searsboro, Iowa, just two years after receiving the Dry Creek farm land from his father. He had taken a railroad train back to Iowa to marry her and bring her back with him to the little home he had prepared for her. This home was one level with two rooms, and it still stands on the property as evidence of their life. Clement and Nettie brought with them by train certain species of her favorite trees from Iowa including a plum tree and a Seek-No-Further apple tree, both of which are still alive on the century farm.

"In 1903, Clement built a new two story, eight room house from plans that Nettie sent for from back East," Doris said. The floor plan for the ground level included a kitchen, a parlor, a living room and two bedrooms;

upstairs the plans called for a double bedroom, an L shaped sewing room and two other bedrooms. The home was built from the lumber of Clement's saw mill on Ruckle Road. The home was enjoyed by Clement, Nettie and their two girls, Fern (Westenskow) and Ona (Rhoads-Paddock).

In addition to the house, Clement built a barn using square nails. In it he kept his horses and cows. "This barn was torn down in 1995," said Doris. He also built a hog house, "but never used it for that purpose," explained Doris. "Instead my husband, Charles, moved it forward on skids toward the road and used it as a garage," she added. To supplement his limited farming income, Clement engaged in some logging for himself on Ruckle Road as well as for other people. "Clement farmed until he was into his 70s. Then he leased the land to Henry Fries," said Doris. Clement died in January of 1953 at the age of 85 years. His wife, Nettie, remained on the farm for the remainder of that winter and afterward moved into La Grande. The property was then willed to Clement and Nettie's firstborn, Mrs. Wallace (Fern) Westenskow of Imbler. Wallace farmed the land, but he and Fern did not move into the Clement McKinnis home. Except for a few renters, the house remained frequently vacant during the years that Wallace farmed the land and Nettie lived in La Grande. However, when Wallace died in 1961, Fern moved into the McKinnis home, where she lived for the next 25 years until her own death in 1982. After Henry Fries quit leasing the land, Fern leased it to Dale Carlson and then George Royes Sr. Since the Rhoads acquired the farm, the land has been leased to George Royes Jr. and presently to Sam Royes.

"After Fern died, the family found her will in the desk," Doris recalled. Childless, Fern had willed 80 acres of the century farm to her nephew, Charles Rhoads. His brother, Stanley and his half-sister, Marjorie Paddock, received the rest. Charles has fond memories of the place he has always considered, "home". "I was born and raised here," said Charles. His parents, Charles Sr. and Ona (McKinnis) Rhoads, had established a homestead just east of Summerville at Sanderson Springs, and three months before his birth, his father Charles Sr. died. His widowed mother took Stanley back to the Dry Creek McKinnis home to live with her parents and on May 2, 1926 she gave birth to Charles Jr. there. She remained single while she raised both of her boys, and then she remarried Mr. Paddock and had another child, Marjorie.

Charles Rhoads married Miss Doris Odell of La Grande at the First Christian Church in La Grande on October 17, 1948, and over the next forty years, they lived several places including La Grande, Summerville, John Day and Milton Freewater, where Charles and Doris had lived for twenty years before his retirement. Charles worked for 15 years with the State Department of Forestry and later for 12 years in the maintenance department at Whitman College in Walla Walla, Washington. After his retirement, he "came home" to the McKinnis century farm in 1988. One of the contributions he made to the home place was the addition of numerous trees including the poplars, firs, 6 kinds of apple trees, 6 different kinds of maples, 3 walnuts, 2 Asian pear trees, 1 Italian prune and 1 peach-plum tree. "It looks real pretty here in the spring," Doris said.

Charles, who has been convalescing since August of 2000 at the Hermiston Care and Retirement Center, will note his 50th year of membership with the Masonic Lodge this coming March. He is also associated with the fraternal orders of Eastern Star, Royal Order of Scotland, the Scottish Rite, Shriners and the DeMolay. Charles and Doris have five children: Alan (1949), of Corvallis, Oregon; Leigh (1951), of Walla Walla, Wash.; Charles A. (1952), of Boardman, Oregon; Mary Ann (1954) Rhoads, of Union, Oregon; and Kathy Williams (1955) of Irrigon, Oregon. They have all shown a personal interest in the century farm, "so it has been deeded equally among them," said Doris. In this way, the McKinnis farm will be sure to remain in the family for yet another generation.

Caption- Mck8 John L. McKinnis, First farm owner

Caption- Mck9 Rachel Harris McKinnis

Caption- Mck2 Clement and Nettie McKinnis, 1952

Caption- McK4 Fern Westenskow

Caption- McK6 Charles Rhoads, present owner

Caption- McK7 Doris Rhoads

MORE PICTURES TO FOLLOW

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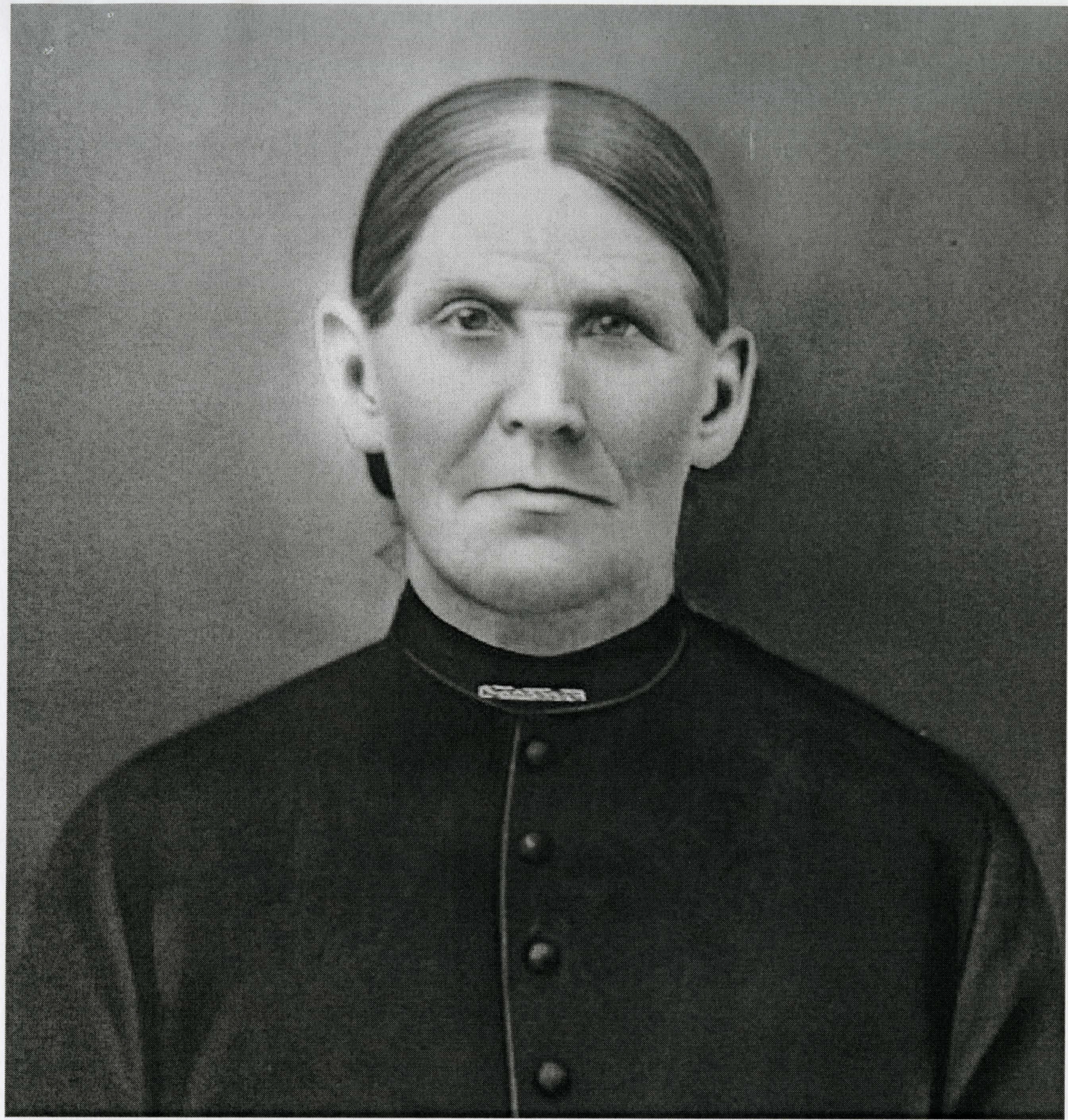
Caption- McK6 Charles Rhoads, present owner

Caption- McK7 Doris Rhoads

MORE PICTURES TO FOLLOW

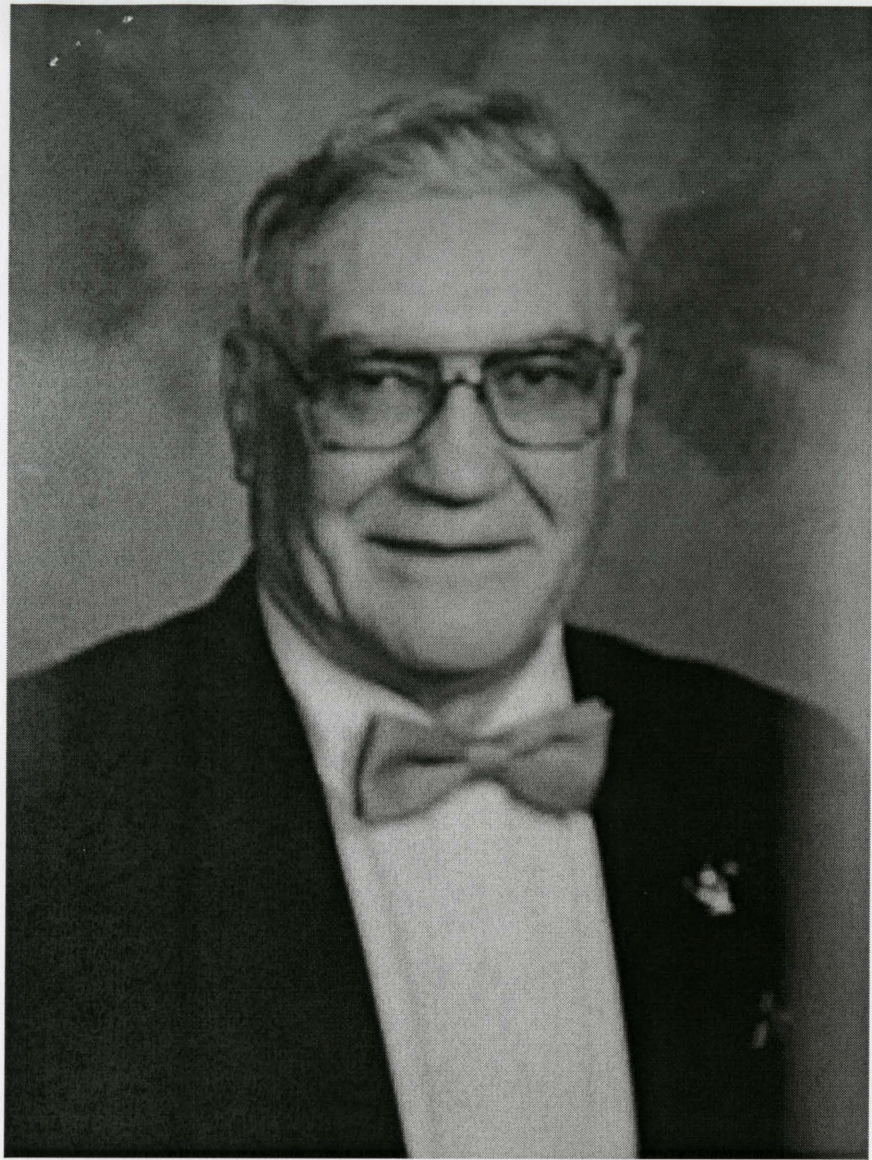


John L. McKinnis
Century Farm











Rick Read - FMore pics for McKinnis article

From: "David Yerges" <kdyerges@eoni.com>
To: "Rick Read" <rickr@ohs.org>
Date: 02/08/2001 6:41 PM
Subject: FMore pics for McKinnis article

Caption- McK18 Original house built 1895 or 1896 as it is today

Caption- McK10 House built 1903 by Clement as it was in 1913

Caption- McK17 House built 1913 as it looks today







Rick Read - J.L. McKinnis Century Farm - Century Old, Maybe Not Registered

From: "David Yerges" <kdryerges@eoni.com>
To: "Rick Read" <rickr@ohs.org>
Date: 02/22/2001 9:55 AM
Subject: J.L. McKinnis Century Farm - Century Old, Maybe Not Registered

1993

J.L. McKinnis Century Farm

By Trish Yerges

Among the century farm families in this valley, the descendants of John L. McKinnis hold title to more than one honored century farm. Properties held by the descendants of John McKinnis' children, Clement, Frank, James, and Ina Bingaman all date over one century. The John L. McKinnis farm and residence on Courtney Lane, by Willow Creek east of Summerville, represents the nucleus of those century old properties and the focus of this article. The history of the "home place" traces back to March 3, 1868 when John L. McKinnis purchased the farm from Ruben Pate. Since then, this farm has been handed down through four subsequent generations, Frank, John Henry, Dean and Elva, and Ross Bingaman.

John L. McKinnis was born July 5, 1843 in Jackson County, Ohio, the eldest of nine children born to Craner (1817-1897) and Catherine (Truseler) McKinnis. As a young boy, he relocated with his parents to a farm at White Breast River near Knoxville, Iowa, where he completed his education. At twenty years of age, the adventuresome John L. McKinnis came to Oregon as a wagon driver on the H. "Wesley" Oliver train. When he arrived in the Grande Ronde Valley on October 10, 1864, he took up residency with Wesley Oliver and worked at the Oliver saw mill near Summerville. At the saw mill he met his future wife, Rachel Catherine Harris, who worked there as a cook.

On March 3, 1867, John and Rachel were married and made their first home in the old Shaw place in Summerville, near the school where John began teaching. Exactly one year later, on March 3, 1868, John and Rachel purchased a farm from Rueben Pate on a quarter section three miles north of Imbler near Willow Creek. The property was endowed with a creek and two strong springs about 100 yards apart from one another, enough water for the needs of the family and the livestock. These generous amenities were among the reasons he chose to purchase this property. There was apparently a home on the property, when Pate sold it to the McKinnis couple, that was all ready to occupy. Consequently, their large family lived in this home until the 1890s when John built a new home. For this construction project, he used his own lumber, without knots, from the sawmill he owned and operated west of Summerville.

The McKinnis home was a grand, two story structure with twelve rooms and 12 foot ceilings. The ground level of the floor plan allowed for a kitchen, dining room, a nursery room, a bedroom, and a parlor. Solid teakwood sliding doors could be closed to partition the parlor into two rooms, a small one and a larger one with a bay window. Both rooms had plaster ceilings ornately finished with a swirled design and with carved wood trim. Hanging in both rooms were beautiful chandeliers, which cast a warm glow upon the red embossed wall paper. The parlor floors were made of pine and covered with large, beautiful, area rugs. The floors of the dining room were laid with linoleum. Most of the doors, except the sliding doors of the parlor, had hand ringers on them. Leading upstairs was a banistered staircase of hardwood with a maple stain. The upstairs had four spacious rooms, three of which were used as bedrooms, and the fourth was used by John L. McKinnis as his office. The office had its own stove, a bay window and one other amenity. "It was the only bedroom in the house with a clothes closet," remembered John's granddaughter, Catherine McKinnis Willet, of La Grande. In John's office stood a narrow desk about seven feet tall, where he did his business accounting. This desk is now in the possession of his great-granddaughter, Elva J. McKinnis Hoffman, of La Grande. Also on the second floor just above the kitchen were two other bedrooms initially designed to lodge the hired hands and later used as bedrooms for John's sons. These rooms allowed access only to the kitchen downstairs and not to the other four bedrooms on the second floor.

In addition to the house, John McKinnis built two barns, a root cellar dug into the hillside, a few other

outbuildings, a cistern on the hill and a spring house. In the underground level of the spring house, he laid a gravel floor and dug a drain, which he lined with stainless steel. From the drain, icy cold artisan water flowed and was carried in buckets into the house for cooking and washing. The spring also fed into and created a small lily pond in the backyard. The other spring, 100 yards away, ran continuously into a drinking trough for the livestock.

By 1902, John expanded his farm to include 920 acres of agricultural land and 800 acres of timberland. He planted an orchard on the hill about a quarter mile behind the house with fruit trees of various kinds including peaches, pears, plums, prunes and apples. He also planted watermelons and corn there. Toward the end of his life in 1925, he reportedly had debt-free title to 2,000 acres of farm land in Union County, part of which included small farms near Imbler and Summerville. Over the years, John raised wheat as a commercial crop, and barley and oats for his livestock. Crops, cattle and raising pure bred Percherons were the mainstay of his farming operation. Of course, history relates how John made a name for himself in fields other than those that grew crops, namely as an educator, school superintendent and an ambitious industrialist. Despite all his accomplishments, he was still only "grandpa" to Catherine, who used to visit him regularly after he was widowed. She was nine years old then, and remembers their conversations as he sat in his Morris chair. "Whenever he spoke to me, it was in an instructive way. He was always a teacher first. He was gentle, well read, and a pretty shrewd businessman," Catherine said.

Catherine, who was named after her grandmother and John's wife, Rachel Catherine McKinnis, was three years old when her grandmother died on July 30, 1914. "I don't remember my grandmother, and I vaguely remember her funeral. I heard, though, that she had asthma very badly. After she died, my grandfather grew very lonesome. In time his health declined, and he hired a nurse to take care of him," added Catherine. This nurse, remembered only as "Mattie" provided home healthcare and housekeeping services for John. "She always wore a white uniform and she kept meticulous care of my grandfather," Catherine remembered. John grew fond of Mattie and they were married. When he died on February 14, 1925, he wanted to be sure she was taken care of so he left her one of the farms in the valley. From the "home place" she moved to the farm he left to her, and John's son, Frank, took possession of the large home.

During John and Rachel's married life, they had eleven children: Clement L., Beatrice (Hug), Herschel, Ina (Bingaman), Frank, Anna (Davidhizer), Rosa (Bade), Thomas (Rosa's twin), James, Charles and Stella (Lee). They lost one child in infancy, and Charles died in 1902 at age 21, when a horse kicked him in the head. Each of the sons received a 160 acre gift of land, but Frank's portion was the original homestead property, so he always lived there helping his father on the farm. Around 1896 when Frank married Anna McKenzie, from the Toronto Canada area, they moved into a small house built by John L., which stood a short distance from the large home.

"We called it the 'little house'," said Catherine, who was born there on April 2, 1912. "It had a porch that wrapped clear around the other side of the house. It had a fair sized kitchen, a dining room, a living room, a bedroom near the living room and two bedrooms off the kitchen. My parents slept in one of the rooms and my sisters slept in the others," recalled Catherine. Over the years, the little house became filled with seven children: James, LaVina, Cecil, John, Frances, Catherine and Keith. "There weren't enough bedrooms for us all, so in good weather, my brothers slept in a tent outside, and in bad weather, they slept on the closed-in porch of the house. We lived there (29 years) until my grandfather died in 1925, and then we moved into the big house. I was in high school then," said Catherine.

In 1925, Frank took ownership of the John L. McKinnis farm. His farm operation included a commercial wheat crop mostly with a small crop of oats for his horses. Beside horses, he had about ten milking cows, some hogs and some chickens. "We girls never did any of the milking. We had enough boys to do that. Then we sold the cow's cream each week to the creamery in Imbler," said Catherine. Catherine's memories of her childhood there included an episode when she broke her arm. The nearest doctor was in La Grande, a good trip for a doctor's call. So her mother called the doctor and said, "Catherine broke her arm, so come for breakfast and bring your wife." Catherine said that when she was 1.5 years old, her father poured a cement walk leading to the front porch steps of the little house. While the cement was still wet, she stepped into it with both feet. "My footprints are in the cement down from the porch steps. I imagine they're still there," she reminisced. Her parents, Frank and Anna, lived a busy farmer's lifestyle, and although Frank stood six foot tall and appeared strong, he had chronic asthma that plagued him all his life. "He had to carry adrenaline in needles with him all of the time around the farm. He inherited asthma from his mother," Catherine explained. In 1932 Frank retired from farming and moved to Tracy, California, believing that the climate there would be kinder to him. "It

wasn't and he died two years later in 1934. He was 59 years old. He loved life, but wasn't able to enjoy it," said Catherine. Her youngest brother, Keith, accompanied their father's body back to Summerville for burial. Anna returned to Imbler to reside until her death in 1965. Catherine's memories of her mother included one about her hair. Anna had very long hair when she was first married, but then she cut it short, and from the long strands of cut hair, she made braided hair pieces or "switches" as they were called. Then she adorned herself with the switches when she wanted to look especially nice.

About 1932, Frank's son, John Henry McKinnis took over the farm operation. John married Velma Irene Conklin on May 24, 1927, and they had two children, Elva Jeanne, of La Grande and Dean (deceased) of Imbler. Of their life on the farm, Elva said, "We had a happy life. My folks were an ordinary farm couple. We lived like any other farm family of the 1940s. We tried to maintain what we had. My dad grew seed peas, hay and wheat. We had about 15 milk cows, hogs, chickens and had a small herd of beef cows." Elva attended a nearby one room school called Willow Creek for grades 1 through 5, and then she attended Imbler Public School, graduating from Imbler High School in 1945. Later that fall she was married. Dean was five years younger than her, and he helped his father on the farm. Together, John and Dean put in an irrigation system on the farm. They also put a pump in the spring house.

The most significant change to the John L. McKinnis homestead made by his grandson, John Henry McKinnis, was the remodeling of the grand home.

During the 1950s, John Henry with the help of his cousin, Ivan Bingaman, removed the entire second story of six bedrooms. When asked why, Catherine explained, "He said that the roof leaked and that there was structural damage in the roof. He also said that the house was too big for his needs." Of the change, Catherine said, "When they changed the house, it just wasn't the house I remembered anymore." So she rolled her wheelchair to her bed vanity and took out a photo of the house that she remembered with all its grandeur. "This is the house I remember," she said.

When John Henry died on December 19, 1975, his son, Dean farmed the land. In 1977, John Henry's wife, Velma, moved to Burns where Elva was living. Velma bought her own home, but with declining health, she stayed for a few months with Elva and then at a nursing home where she died in 1981. At her death, the farm was given to Elva and Dean in partnership. In 1982, they leased the farm out to their nephew, Ross Bingaman, and the once grand home of John L. McKinnis became a rental property for the first time. "No family has lived in it since," said Elva.

The adjacent property on which the "little house" was built was purchased by John L. McKinnis in 1871 and inherited by his son, James McKinnis. It eventually became the possession of descendant Howard Bingaman, who applied for and received a century farm certificate for it on November 7, 1993 at the Union County Museum in Union, Oregon. The home has been remodeled many times since Frank McKinnis and his family lived there at the turn of the century, and today Howard Bingaman's grandson, Shawn McKinnis and his wife, Molly, live in the "little house".

On December 10, 1996, co-owner of the "home place", Dean McKinnis died. His surviving sister, Elva and his wife, Laura, sold the 212 acre John L. McKinnis farm to Ross and Carrie Bingaman in 1997. After Ross and Carrie Bingaman purchased the property, they "cleaned up, torn down and fixed up" around the place. As far as the farming operation goes, Carrie said, "We grow grass seed, peppermint, wheat, barley and have pasture." Ross, who has farmed this land for over 15 years, represents another link in a long chain of McKinnis owners. The Bingaman's have three children, one of whom will become the custodian of this century old piece of family heritage.