

Written Profile

Farm: Cook Family Farm
Location: Marion Township, Iowa
Date of Origination: 1848
Industry Sector(s): Corn and Beans



Horsecart rides in the yard, courtesy of the neighbor.

"There is an intimate emotion that ties the farmer to his land," shares Jeanine (Cook) Matt of Cook Family Farm. "Our earth is precious. There will never be any more land. We need to care for it with gentleness and love." A love for the land has driven the Cook Family to foster the sustainable growth of their farm. We are excited to share their story of **Agriculture's Lasting Heritage**.

Jeanine recalls the novel-like details of her family's history. "In 1848 my great grandfather came from Bavaria, on the Rhine River, by boat landing in New Orleans. He came up the Mississippi to the land office in McGregor, Iowa and bought his first 40 acres for \$2.00 an acre. He continued to buy 40 acre increments until he had 200 acres." He later traveled up the Ohio River to New York in order to become a naturalized citizen. Shortly thereafter he sent for his future wife and traveled back to New Orleans to meet her upon her arrival.

The ambitious and well-traveled Cooks built a two-story log house and hand-dug a thirty-foot well. Cook began tilling the land with a pair of oxen as he provided for his family and others. When Indians from the Ho-Chunk tribe who spent the winter on the banks of the Turkey River were struggling to find food, Cook gave them a chicken each week to keep them from starving.

Today the 203 acre farm is owned by four of Cook's great grandchildren. The farm is surrounded on three sides by water, and an innovative spirit led recent generations to build a sophisticated campsite on the farm to engage visitors. It is not uncommon for the beautiful setting, managed trails and horse corral to draw 60 campers on a holiday weekend.

"We are very environmentally conscious," shares Jeanine. The family has planted trees, prairie grass and flowers to maintain soil stability. "It is a perfect habitat for deer, coyote, beaver and many other birds and animals," Jeanine shares as she paints a picture of an environment brimming with life. "This past weekend we counted 40 eagles in the Cottonwood grove," she proudly boasts.

The success of the family farm is due to the significant investment and sacrifices made by many over time. "The future of our farm is very good, but our ancestors went through very difficult times," Jeanine acknowledges. "My three brothers and I were richly blessed in the parents we had," she continues, as she describes how her father worked to keep the farm, even through the Great Depression.

"I love the farm, the history of how we came to be in this great country of America and the respect and devotion my ancestors had for our homeland," Jeanine concludes. We are humbled by the sacrifice farmers all across the nation continue to make to provide food and fiber for a growing world. We are honored to share the story of the Cook Family Farm, as we celebrate their contribution to **Agriculture's Lasting Heritage**.



(L) The family builds boxes to house bluebirds. Wildflower and grassland planted in background.

(C) Enjoying the river on the farm.



(R) Wildlife is plentiful on the farm. The family cared for an injured eagle for 3 weeks.

