

## Written Profile

**Farm:** Berger-Smith Farmstead

**Location:** Rural Badger, South Dakota

**Date of Origination:** 1883

**Industry Sector(s):** Corn and Soybeans



"Farmers have to be stewards of the land," shares Michele Smith of the Berger-Smith Farmstead. "Because you have this stake in ownership, you treat it like a child." Built upon a tradition of good farming practices, the Berger-Smith Farmstead represents the rich history of American agriculture. It is a pleasure to share the fascinating story of the farmstead as we celebrate their contribution to **Agriculture's Lasting Heritage**.

On September 29, 1883, German immigrant Heinrich Berger filed for homestead claim on land described as, "a house and 11 acres of broken land" in what is now Kingsbury County, South Dakota. The listed value of the land was \$83. On May 16, 1887, the land was deeded to Heinrich and his wife Anna. Along with their son August and twins Henry and Louisa, the Bergers began a life of farming in South Dakota. They occupied a 12 ft. by 16 ft. shanty with a loft, while planting trees, clearing land, and building the foundation for an agricultural legacy. In 1898, Heinrich was tragically killed after being struck by lightning, yet the foundation for a long lasting family farm had been established.



Thea, Henry, Lizzie and young Esther Berger in front of the farm house.

Heinrich and Anna's son Henry was married in 1903 to his bride Thea. Their eldest daughter Esther married Ed Smith in 1927, and briefly moved off the farm, yet returned within one year at the request of her father. Interestingly, two of Esther's sisters married two of Ed's brothers. "The bond between the Berger and Smith families is etched forever in history and remains as strong today as it was then," shares Michele Smith, wife of Esther's grandson Ronald Smith. Esther passed away in 2004, just shy of her 100th birthday. She left a legacy of 191 grandchildren, great-grandchildren, and great-great grandchildren.

Today the bulk of the original 160 acres belongs to the heirs of Esther and Ed Smith: Charles Smith, Marvin Smith and Joy Tormanen. Ronald and Michele Smith own the home site, and Ronald's mother Charlotte Smith, wife of the late Don Smith, owns a portion of the land as well. The farm has withstood the test of time, staying in operation through the depression, farm crisis, and loss of family members. Thanks to the perseverance of families associated with the land, the Berger-Smith Farmstead can boast a 129 year history on South Dakota soil.



The Berger-Smith farm house today.

When asked about the future of agriculture, Michele explains, "It is definitely here to stay!" From her perspective, the land serves as a place to keep the family connected. There is value in being able to come together and say, "This is where it started, and this is why it is still here."

The Berger-Smith Farmstead was officially accepted and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2005. We are proud to share their story, and congratulate the Berger and Smith families on their contribution to **Agriculture's Lasting Heritage**.

[www.bergersmithfarmstead.com](http://www.bergersmithfarmstead.com)