

Written Profile

Farm: Jones Homestead
Location: Wild Rose, Wisconsin
Date of Origination: 1862
Industry Sector(s): Dairy, Potatoes



"It has been a wonderful life which I have enjoyed being a part of," shares John Jones of the Jones Homestead. Celebrating 150 years of family farming on the same land, the Jones family has a rich story to tell. Join us as we explore their contribution to **Agriculture's Lasting Heritage**.

The foundation of the family farming tradition was laid in 1849 when James D. Jones emigrated from Cardiganshire, Wales to Waukesha, Wisconsin. He married Jane Roberts 1855 and together they purchased 160 acres of farmland in the town of Rose in 1862. James D. and Jane raised six boys as they ran the farm. Son James Messiach and his wife Alice later purchased the farm in 1908. Upon the passing of J. Messiach in 1937, the farm was willed to his two sons, James O. and Matt. Because Matt was working off the farm, the brothers decided to have James O. purchase Matt's share of the farm. But during the Great Depression this was no easy task. In an effort to keep the farm in its entirety, James O. took out a mortgage from the Federal Land Bank in 1939, causing a rift in the family. James O. married Margaret Enid and raised seven children on the farm. After the passing of James O. in 1973, sons John and Bob farmed together as Jones Farms Inc. Through John and Bob's leadership, the farm grew to include over 1,200 acres.

Today John is the sole owner of the Jones Homestead and rents much of the land to a variety of local neighboring farmers. He has seen much change in his time working the land. "I think this farm can attest to the tremendous change in agriculture since the 1940's when I came into my farming years," John shares. "We were the first milking parlor in Waushara County." John recalls harvesting potatoes with a pitchfork and the transformation to complete automated harvesting in recent years. "It was a lot of very hard work but I enjoyed that also," he continues. John makes an interesting point, noting that he appreciated the investment of hard work and hopes that the next generation enjoys the investment of using new technology.

What was the greatest challenge faced by the Jones family? John acknowledges that, "farming is always a challenge," but comments that making sure that the land is transferred from generation to generation is the most difficult. They almost lost the farm when James O. and Matt had to deal with a split inheritance, and John now recognizes the importance of a clear transition plan.

The Jones Homestead recently held a sesquicentennial celebration to honor the heritage embraced by their family over the last 150 years. The farm is rich with family stories and reminders of significant points in the farm's history. According to an article in the *Resorter* newspaper, "John recently found a brick in the barn with the year '1939' on it along with the names of the painters that fixed up the building at that time." A single brick from the past marking one of the most challenging economic periods in American history now serves as a reminder of the strong foundation laid by this family farm. It is with great honor that we recognize the Jones Homestead and celebrate 150 years of continuous contribution to **Agriculture's Lasting Heritage**.