

Written Profile

Farm: Voss Family Farm
Location: Walworth, Wisconsin
Date of Origination: 1891
Industry Sector(s): Dairy, Corn, Beans



A quest for gold, a search for Germans and a wild ride in an out-of-control grain wagon are just a few excerpts from the Voss Family Farm story. Join us as we explore their journey and celebrate their contribution to **Agriculture's Lasting Heritage**.

"The Voss family farm may be the oldest family farm in Walworth Township," shares Robert Voss, but the journey began far before the historical land was purchased in 1891. In August of 1873, Robert's grandfather John W. Voss came to the United States as a German immigrant. He was sponsored by the Douglas family to work in their feed mill, but soon caught gold fever and headed west to California. "We never heard if he found any," Robert comments. But John did find his way back to the Mid-West. On his way back from California he purchased 160 acres of Nebraska farmland for \$37.50 an acre. "So maybe he found some gold," Robert adds. By 1880 John was back in Wisconsin and married to Mary Bennewies. In 1891 they purchased an 80 acre farm. Over the years they have sold and purchased land, but the family farm foundation has remained solid. Today the farm is owned by Robert and Diane Voss, and managed by their son Milton.

The farm is rich with history and stories around every bend. Robert recalls a time when he was about eight years old: "My father had me drive his team of horses home. They were hitched to the grain wagon. A car came by spooking the horses. They took off for home on a dead run. I was so scared that I laid down in the wagon. When reaching the driveway, the wagon was on two wheels and I thought we were tipping over. [I was] lucky the wagon righted itself and the horses stopped right in front of the barn door!" Robert also remembers the more wide-spread challenges that affected farm life growing up. The droughts of 1934, 1988 and 2012 were particularly challenging. The implementation of dairy cattle Tuberculosis testing also posed a challenge, forcing his Uncle Bert to lose his whole herd and his father to lose half of his herd.

Robert also recalls the impact of World War I and II on American agriculture: "During World War II our neighbors raised hemp. German prisoners were brought in to do the harvesting. Once during harvest I snuck through the corn fields to see what a German looked like. I'm 100% German!"

The stories are rich and so is the love for the land displayed by the Voss family. "The farm is a great place to raise your family," shares Robert. "The children have jobs to do on the farm and learn responsibility, accountability, respect and honesty." He knows the value of being a part of the agriculture industry, and he knows the urgency with which we must maintain sustainable operations. "The Good Lord does not make land anymore. Once you put cement on the land, no more crops," he concludes. We extend our appreciation to the Voss family, for their long-lasting commitment to **Agriculture's Lasting Heritage**.