

McCracken Centennial Farm To Disappear In Urbanization



TELLS STORY — This plaque gives the history of the McCracken farm at 12 Mile and Halstead Rds., Farmington.

Land may stand the test of time, but it cannot stand the test of the bulldozer.

An example is Howard McCracken's Centennial Farm at 12 Mile and Drake Rds., Farmington.

Today, the farm still stands as it has for 100 years, planted to crops and an apple orchard, as one of the last four working farms in Farmington.

By this time next year, it will have been bulldozed into a subdivision development of 20th century ranch homes and multiples.

Howard McCracken won't remember it this way.

HE WAS BORN on this land in 1906 and still vividly remembers those slower, more placid days.

"There were nothing but farms here in those days," recalls McCracken. "You knew every neighbor who went by the house by the color of his horse. 'Back then,' he continues, 'we went to the old Methodist church on Shawasssee in town with a team of horses and a surrey.'"

McCracken met his wife, Helen, at a young peoples' meeting in this church. She was also farm-bred on land which is now the Hillcrest subdivision in Farmington.

TRACING the lineage of his land, McCracken explains, "My great-great grandfather Levi Pettibone bought 80 acres here in 1853 from Edward Erwin for \$2,000."

"The deed to the land was put in my great grandmother Jane McCracken's name because Levi was a no-good character," he adds.

The 80 McCracken acres are part of a 320-acre plot which developers are petitioning the township for permission to make into a multiple-facility project.

Included in this plot is also the Centennial Farm down the road belonging to Paul Button.

"Men like Paul and I," says McCracken, "can hardly pay the taxes on land like this anymore. And birds are just eating us up. I paid \$2,000 for bird damage alone on my corn last year."

LEVI may not have been so illustrious but McCracken's other forebears were.

His father, Harry, was superintendent of Farmington schools and served in the Legislature in 1905 and 1907 and retired as township clerk when he was 50 years old.

While serving in the Legislature, Harry McCracken was called to vote upon a bill setting the speed limit at 20 miles an hour for the then-new automobile.

Harry had to be taken for a ride to find out just how fast 20 miles an hour was. He bought a Model T as his first car in 1911.

But his son Howard wasn't driven to school and there weren't any school buses.

HOWARD attended school in the West Farmington School, a one-room building built by his grandfather, William, at 12 Mile and Halstead Rds.

He went to high school in Pontiac and got there by walking down to Orchard Lake Rd. to catch the interurban. In those days, Orchard Lake Rd. ended

at 12 Mile going north. People traveling south took Powers Rd. through. Powers was built up because people used to haul milk to the cheese factory which was located on it.

MCCRACKEN is reticent about it, but it is evident that he does have some sorrow that the 100-year ownership of his farm will be broken and that his family—sons Charles and Howard Jr., and daughter Patricia—will not carry on the McCracken farm.

"I have many regrets for the old days," he comments. "Time was when you went into Farmington, you knew everybody you met. And people had time to talk to you. That's not so anymore—everything is changing."

About the change the sale of his land has made in his own life, McCracken won't say much.

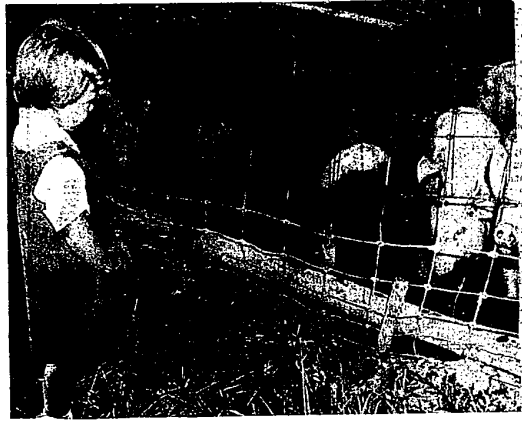
"I'm not saying what I'm going to do. Maybe I'll move farther out in the country. After all, I'm still a farmer."



AUDIENCE — Howard McCracken, Jr., explains farm chores to Robin Waldie and Juliann Roush.



HERITAGE — Howard McCracken and his son, Howard, Jr., use a cradle (harvester) brought to their Centennial Farm in Farmington by the men who farmed their land in 1824.



OINK OINK — Juliann Roush is an interested visitor to the pig pen on the McCracken farm in Farmington.

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Canterbury Commons

By JOANNE TAKAI, 626-1788

Many plans are being made now for events to be held in November and December in our area. Copy down these dates now and you won't miss out when the time comes.

A ward party is being planned by the Bond PTA for Nov. 20. Plans are now in full swing with Barbara Moehman acting as chairman. Volunteers for helping, please call Barb at 626-1201.

The Canterbury Commons Association is planning a pancake brunch similar to that of last year. This year's date is Sunday, Dec. 8.

By the way, speaking of the Canterbury Association, whatever happened to the address and phone directory that we scurried around to have published? Many questions have been asked of me about it. Will the person responsible please let us know what's happening?

LUCKY, LUCKY Myrna and Bob Hopkins, of Midland Dr. who had seats for Sunday's World Series game right behind Vice President Humphrey. Many of Detroit's own first families were seated close by, so all the excitement of secret service and autograph seekers helped to take away some of that blue Tiger day.

John Leahy thinks Mrs. Robert Hopkins is A-1, too. She managed to get a Series pennant for him. But as usual, with us gals, she was too busy

admiring Dizzy Dean's boots and 10-gallon hat to get an autograph. He was so excited he even forgot to go to school on Monday—had to see the Tigers play that good comeback game.

CUB PACK 48 held its first pack meeting of the fall in Bond School. The pack charter was presented to David Coffin, principal of Bond School. A new den leader, Coach Barbara Keller, was introduced. Barb will be taking over from the present coach, Garret Mitchell, in a couple of months.

The couples' Bowling League is really going great guns now. More 200-games are bowled every week. This past Sunday, both Ted Klotz and Phil Applebaum had over 200-206 with 201 and Phil with 206. Two of the women made a big splash, too. Janet Russell made the 6-7-10 split and Dottie Sahl made the 5-7-10 split. Congratulations to both of you.

TWO BIRTHDAY PARTIES were held in the Moehman home on Tuesday, Oct. 8. Phillip, who was five on September 20, had six friends to help him celebrate. They were Carol Oswald, Karen Nau, Jeff O'Boye, Chuckle Thomas, Doug Therasse and Becky Plerdon. Brother Steve, who was three on Oct. 8, celebrated with David Oswald, David Nau, Amy Turnock and Sharon Wightman. Happy birthday boys!

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