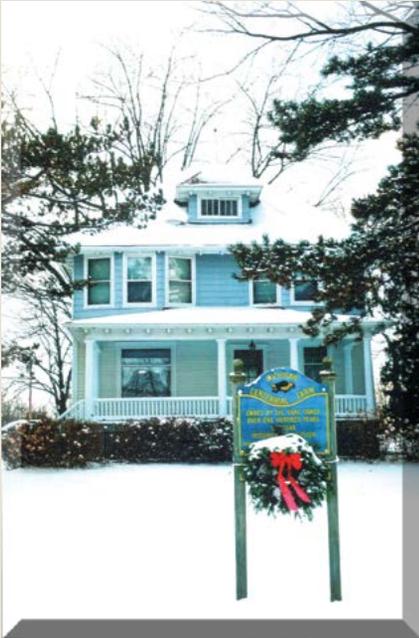


CENTENNIAL FARMS SPOTLIGHT

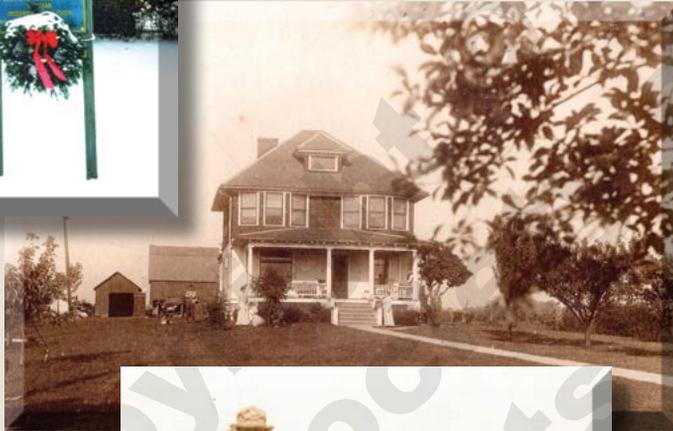
LOUIS ST. BERNARD FARM

ST. CLAIR, MICHIGAN

ESTABLISHED JULY 1, 1814



Left: A recent photo of the farmhouse constructed in 1914 by Lee and Edna Potter. Below: The farmhouse the year it was built.



Right: 1915 family photo of Lee, Edna, and Bradford. Below: Bradford Potter with a Morgan filly circa 1975.



In 1814, Louis St. Bernard laid claim to 139 acres of property located on the banks of the St. Clair River. The property has survived over the years under the ownership of multiple generations to become Michigan's newest Bicentennial Farm.

Joan Potter Kindsvater and her husband—the sixth generation of descendants of Louis St. Bernard—are the current owners and continue to run the farm, only on a smaller scale. Originally established to lumber timber for Michigan's growing ship building industry, the farm has ranged in size from 139 acres to the present 12-acre plot that grows vegetables and nursery stock.

Joan reflects upon the family ties with the land by saying, "When I walk along our new bike path in St. Clair Township on the river road, I often think of the changes over the 200 years since my great-great-great-grandfather owned this mile of riverfront. M29 is now a paved, heavily traveled highway with a 50-mile-an-hour speed limit. It all began as an Indian path. Then it became a gravel road and an interurban train route and was paved in the 1920s. Today, our farm is a small piece of the original property, surrounded by large homes, a condo development, a church, a golf course, and some cottages."

"Through the generations," Joan continued, "this farm has been a home to many people. The history and heritage of the land and these people are appreciated and documented. Family stories are told and preserved. More than simply passing land down through the generations, we were taught that the real inheritance is one of work experience and knowledge of those who lived here before us."

The stories of this farm are as rich and deep as the history of this state. The lumber taken from this farm by Louis St. Bernard was used in the construction of the Great Lakes ship "Grand Turk," which his son Alex later commanded. Louis also contracted with Father Gabriel Richard to furnish logs for the rebuilding of St. Anne's Church and other buildings destroyed by the Great Fire of 1805 in Detroit.

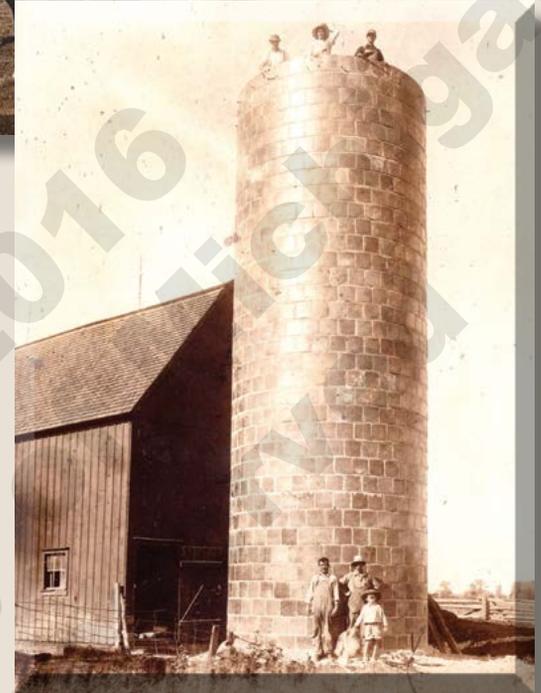
In 1835, Louis divided the farm into smaller sections and gave the property to each of his children. Almost all of his children turned to the St. Clair River for their livelihoods, but the farm was always their home port.

Over the years, the farm that was divided was gradually purchased and brought together by one family member, Lee Potter, and his wife, Edna. During that time, they raised all manner of livestock and, in 1914, built the present farmhouse and developed a dairy herd. Lee and Edna's son Bradford operated a poultry business on the farm for many years. His interest in raising registered Morgan horses led him to form the St. Clair Riding Club, which he owned and operated until his death in 1977. Around that same time, the farm's acreage began to dwindle, and little by little, parcels were sold off until it reached its present size of 12 acres.

Joan is proud of the heritage of the farm and the memories of family past. Today, there are more than 50 mature oak trees on the property that symbolize the deep roots the family has with this land. She counted that time as an honor and privilege and looks forward to future generations of her family becoming involved with the property.



Top: Edna Potter, date unknown. Right: A 1915 photo of the construction of the farm's silo. Edna Potter is at the top in the center. At the bottom is Lee Potter on the left and a bird man. The child is Bradford Potter.



Left: Repair and restoration of the livestock barn. Bottom: Roof repair of farm buildings.



This Centennial Farm designation is sponsored by

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