

## CENTENNIAL FARMS SPOTLIGHT

# NICHOLAS SCHWEITZER FARM

## SPARTA, MICHIGAN

### ESTABLISHED FEBRUARY 25, 1913

In 1913, Nicholas Schweitzer II and his wife, Mary, bought 25 acres of land in Alpine Township, Kent County. His son Joseph and Joseph's wife, Louise, moved to the farm the same year. Both generations helped produce corn, oats, wheat, hay, and potatoes. In addition, they had dairy cows, pigs, and chickens.

Their offspring were the primary source of labor, but the family also hired other people to tend the farm in exchange for room and board. In the early days, work on the farm was done by hand and with a team of horses.

The year 1925 saw the use of gas-powered milkers on the farm, which sped up the milking process, and the first tractor was purchased in 1940. World War II came, and two of Joseph's sons headed off to war. Another son, John, stayed behind to help with the farm.

When the boys returned in 1945 at the war's end, they insisted that Joseph update the house by installing indoor plumbing. John and brother Vincent continued to farm with their father, also buying property in the area, while eldest son George farmed elsewhere and eventually became Alpine Township supervisor.

John married in 1951 and started a family. He continued to work on the farm but lived off-site. Joseph passed away in 1962 (Louise left the farm to move to town to live with her daughters, passing away in 1983). Vincent and John added a new crop, strawberries, in 1962 and hired neighboring children to help harvest the berries. Within the next two years, John and his wife, Margaret, moved back to live on the family



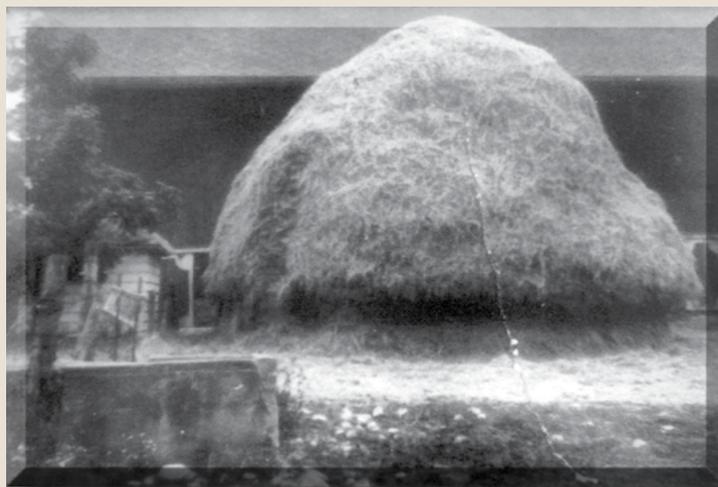
*Top: The farmhouse built in 1877. Above: The dairy barn built in the 1970s. Left: Joseph and Louise Schweitzer. Below: The garage.*



homestead—the third generation to do so.

In 1976, John's and Vincent's two sons also returned to the family farm, and John and Vincent decided to split their partnership—John took over the dairy portion and Vincent controlled the fruit. John's third son, Joe, became a partner in the farm in 1981, raising dairy cows as well as growing wheat, corn, and hay.

The family gave up dairy farming in 1991, and Joe started to farm both his land and the farmstead. He also had two sons, another Joe and Steve. Joe and young Joe started farming together in 2000 and are still actively farming today—growing wheat, corn, soybeans, apples, and hay.



Left: A straw stack circa 1940. Below: The farm as it appears today.



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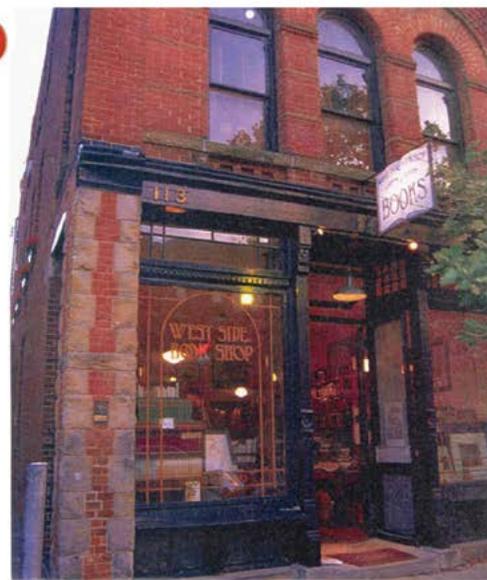
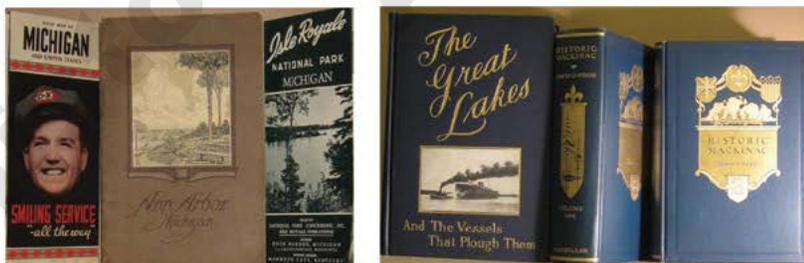
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