

CUMBERLAND COUNTY CENTURY FARMS

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Obed Watershed Community Assn.

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The Tennessee Century Farms Program identifies, documents, and recognizes farms owned by the same family for at least 100 years. To date, nearly 900 farms representing every county have been certified. The Center for Historic Preservation at Middle Tennessee State University maintains the Century Farm database of information and photographs, most of which is based on applications supplied by the farm families.

B. A. T. Angus Farm

Andrew H. Turner

Located east of Crossville, the B. A. T. Angus Farm was established in 1898 by Isaac Beeson. On 700 acres, Isaac and his wife Alice Shipp Beeson, raised cattle, hogs, mules, horses, sheep, corn, hay, apples and potatoes. The couple had four children. In 1922, Alice became the owner of the farm. Her son Arthur R. Beeson became the third owner of the land in 1948. Under his ownership, cattle, hogs, corn, hay, timber and apples were primary crops. In 1958, the land was acquired by Bessie Beeson Center and Sylvia Beeson Turner, the daughters of the founder. However, by 1959, Chester A. Turner, grandson of the Beeson founders, was the owner. Chester and his wife Betty A. Turner had one son and raised cattle, corn, timber and hay on the farm.

Today, Andrew Turner owns the land founded and worked by his great grandparents. He farms 440 acres of the original tract of land and an additional 330 acres on which he raises cattle, corn, hay and timber.

Brady Farm

Maggie G. Brady

Thomas Majors established a farm of 600 acres in Grassy Cove in 1854. Here he and his wife Martha Brown worked the land and raised their daughter, Mary Frances Majors. She acquired the farm in 1862. Married to Samuel Houston Brady, the couple had nine children. Their son, Charles Smith Brady, Sr. became the next owner of the farm in 1910. Under his ownership, the farm raised corn, hay, cattle, hogs, sheep and chickens. Charles and his wife Mabel Grace Andrews had four children and their daughter Maggie Grace Brady became the owner of the farm in 2003. Today, Maggie Brady raises cattle, hay and pasture on the land. Two barns that are over 50 years old continue to support the farming operation.

Greenberry Wilson Farm

Harold L. Agee, Larry and Helen Warner, Violet Elcess

One of a number of settlers who received land grants, Greenberry Wilson, of Irish descent, came into the area in 1797, then began farming in 1808. Located 15 miles southeast of Crossville, Tennessee, the 150 acres produced cattle, sheep, corn, hay, chickens and geese. Greenberry and his wife Temperance had eight children and their son Charles Bradshaw Wilson (born in 1800), became the second owner of the land in 1830. Married twice, Charles fathered nine children, three with his first wife, Martha also called Patsy, and six with this second wife, Lourassey McKinney. It was to this second marriage that Charles Bradshaw Wilson, Jr. was born. As the next owner, he raised much the same livestock and crops as the previous generations. Charles, Jr. also married twice. His first wife was Nancy Swafford with whom he had three sons. Ellen Robinson was his second mate and mother of five children, among them Elijah Gore Wilson.

In 1908, his son Elijah Gore Wilson acquired the farm. Along with his wife, Mattie Matilda Manning, they had seven children. Today, the farm is owned by Lindell Agee, Larry Warner, Violet Elcess, Helen Warner, Ronnie Parham, Bobbie Parham and Carolyn Sweeney who are the great great grandchildren and the great great great grandchildren of the founder. Today, the farm holds the distinction of having the oldest home in Cumberland County that was constructed in 1797. It is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Hendrix Farm

Hattie Clarissa (Rickie) Hendrix Turner

In 1801, John Ford and his wife Elizabeth England founded the Hendrix Farm, located twelve miles south of Crossville. It is possibly the oldest farm in Cumberland County. A Revolutionary War veteran, Ford received a 1,000 acre land grant as a reward for his army service. Ford, with his family of seven, counted livestock, corn, wheat and oats as his agricultural products. He also operated the first store in the Grassy Cove community and established Cumberland County's first Methodist Church at Grassy Cove in 1803.

The second family owner of Hendrix Farm was Dr. John Ford, Jr., who married Nancy Loden. All five of their sons served in the Confederate army under the command of General Nathan B. Forrest. Dr. Ford practiced medicine but continued to operate the family store at Grassy Cove. In 1863, according to the family, a Union soldier killed Dr. Ford at his home.

The farm passed through the hands of three generations until Hattie Clarissa (Rickie) Hendrix Turner, the founders' great great great granddaughter, acquired 68 acres of the original farm in 1983. Today, Rickie Turner manages the farm's daily operations while her three boys work the property, which now totals 838 acres. The Turners specialize in beef cattle production.

James S. Kemmer Farm

James S. Kemmer

In 1906, John C. Kemmer established the James S. Kemmer Farm in Grassy Cove. On 28 acres, John and his wife, Salissa Kemmer, raised corn, hay and beef cattle. During the 1930s, the Kemmers acquired their first tractor for the farm. The family had previously used six teams of mules to do the farm chores, so the tractor changed life on the farm considerably. John and Salissa had five children and their son, James A. Kemmer, became the next owner of the land. He and his wife, Nannie Jane had nine children. Under his ownership, the farm raised the same livestock and crops as the previous owner, with the addition of sheep and hogs. According to the family, the "hog killing day" occurred on Thanksgiving Day because that was a day when the children could help. On this day, ten hogs or more would be dressed and hanged to cool. The ham and sides of the hog would be cured for many good meals during the winter and summer until the next hog killing.

George E. Kemmer, became the third owner of the farm, and James S. Kemmer, the great grandson of the founding couple, continues the agricultural tradition. James and his wife, Valerie H. Kemmer, raise cattle, corn, hay and sheep on the farm.

In 1937, the Grassy Cove community had a homecoming for former students and teachers of the Grassy Cove Academy at the Presbyterian church that was built on the site of the old academy. Since that first event, the "homecoming" has become an annual event every 2nd Sunday in October, still held at the Community Center which was formerly the church.

John C. Kemmer Farm

John C. Kemmer, IV

Located in Grassy Cove is the John C. Kemmer Farm, established in 1879 by Andrew R. Kemmer. From *Tales of the Civil War Era*, compiled by Mrs. Stella Mowbray Harvey (1963), comes a story about Andrew Kemmer, a veteran of the Civil War, who helped to make gunpowder for the Confederacy in a small cave in the community. During the Civil War, many farms in the area were looted by soldiers looking for supplies and food. Andrew devised and built a false wall on one side of his living room to create a vault where he could conceal and store corn to feed his family and livestock until the next crop was harvested. However, a neighbor named John Cox came begging for some food and when Kemmer opened a slit in the false wall, Cox saw where Kemmer hid his corn. The next day, about a dozen Union soldiers appeared at the Kemmer home, tore out the false wall, and took the corn. Kemmer believed that Cox was the informant.

Andrew and his wife, Elizabeth Crook Kemmer had eleven children and their son, John Crook Kemmer became the second owner of the land in 1893. Married to Salissa Kemmer, they raised corn, sheep, hogs and cattle (see also James S. Kemmer Farm, which originated with John C. and Salissa Kemmer).

Today, the great great grandson of the founder, John C. Kemmer, IV owns the land. He and his wife Sue and daughter Katie live on the farm and raise cattle and sheep.

Little Cove Farm

Hattie Clarissa (Rickie) Hendrix Turner

The family of Rickie Turner owns and operates a second Century Farm in the old Grassy Cove community. Little Cove Farm dates to 1866 when William and Catherine Brown Bristow acquired 528 acres of land. William was a tanner and during the Civil War he made shoes for Confederate soldiers. Catherine and the ten children also helped William manage a successful farm, producing livestock, corn, wheat and oats.

William and Catherine's youngest son, Mark Bristow, was the second family owner of Little Cove Farm. He and his wife Mary Ford had eight children and the family produced the same types of agricultural foodstuffs as the founders. Vera Bristow Hendrix, the granddaughter of the founders, and her husband Delmer Hendrix were the third generation owners of the farm. Both Vera and Delmer taught school for 37 years.

In 1983, Rickie Turner, the great granddaughter of the founders, inherited the entire original farm of 528 acre. Rickie and her sons, Richard, Andrew and Anthony, manage both the Hendrix and Little Cove farms as one agricultural unit.

Orme Farm

Charlie T. Orme

The Orme Farm dates to just after the Civil War when J. M. Miller acquired 176 acres southeast of Crossville in 1866. The farm produced cattle, sheep, hay and corn. J. M. and his wife Mary J. Miller had five children. Their son-in-law T.A. Orme, who married their daughter Eva Lista, acquired the farm in 1914. The couple raised six children. In 1943, their son, Fred Hobert Orme, became the third generation to own the farm. Under his ownership, the farm supported cattle, hogs, sheep, hay and corn. Fred and his wife Bessie Burgess Orme also had six children and their son, Charlie Orme acquired the property in 1971. Today, Charlie Orme, the great grandson of the founders, raises cattle and hay.

R. E. Kemmer Farm

Mary E. Kemmer Hamby

The R. E. Kemmer Farm history dates from the time when Andrew R. and Elizabeth Kemmer established a farm of 1137 acres in 1860 (see also Tommy and Rebecca Kemmer Farm). In 1906, their son, Robert E. Kemmer, Sr. acquired the farm on which he raised cattle, hogs, sheep, hay, corn, cherries, apples and vegetables. During the 1940s, a number of German and Italian Prisoners of Wars from the local Prisoner's of War camp near Crossville were employed to chop corn at the Kemmer Farm. According to the family, one of the German men remarked to R. E. that the corn was the "best [he] had seen since he left home."

In 1955, Robert E. Kemmer, Jr. became the third generation to own the land. He and his wife, Carrie Barnes Kemmer, had two children, Walter and Mary E. Kemmer. In 1985, Mary became the owner of the farm. Along with her husband, James V. Hamby, the farm supports hay, grapes and vegetables. In addition, they rent some of the pasture land to family members for raising cattle. A house, a barn, equipment shed and other outbuildings that date from the early years of the twentieth century continue in use today.

Tommy & Rebecca Kemmer Farm Tommy and Rebecca Kemmer

In 1860, Andrew R. Kemmer founded the Tommy & Rebecca Kemmer Farm. The history of the farm is similar to the John C. Kemmer Farm until 1906 when Andrew's son, Robert E. Kemmer, Sr. acquired the farm. Under his ownership, the farm raised cattle, hogs, hay and corn. Robert and his wife Eva Parham had nine children and their son, Robert E. Kemmer, Jr. became the third generation to own the farm in 1955. Robert, Jr. and his wife Carrie Barnes had two children and they supported the same livestock and crops as the previous owner. In May of 1985, the great great grandson of the founder, Tommy L. Kemmer and his wife Rebecca Gibson became the owners of the farm. Today, Robert Jr., Tommy, his wife and their two children manage the farm.

Wheeler Farm Robert Lavern Wheeler

In October of 1869, Charles J. Wheeler, Sr. and his wife Pamela established a 1,639 acre farm in the center of the Crab Orchard community. Running through the original tract was the Cumberland Turnpike, an important early East/West route for travelers. Nearby the farm was a lodging facility known as the "old Brick Inn" where weary travelers could stay overnight. Charles and Pamela had six children and raised cattle, grain and timber on the land. Their son, Charles J. Wheeler, II and his wife Lida, were the next owners of the farm. They had eight children and raised cattle, hay, grain and swine. In addition to managing the farm, C. J. Wheeler, II owned and operated a store called C. J. Wheeler General Merchandise in the community.

According to the family, during the Great Depression, much of the land was lost and the acreage shrunk to 165 acres. In 1938, Robert L. Wheeler, the grandson of the founder, acquired the farm. Over the next twenty years, Robert acquired an additional 170 acre tract making a total of 335 acres. He and his son continue the farming traditions by raising cattle, hay and vegetables.

The Obed Community Association has as its purpose community appreciation and volunteer involvement in ongoing appreciation for our natural and cultural heritage of the Obed River watershed within Cumberland County. Louise Gorenflo, OWCA community educator, produced this fact sheet. Those wanting to join this membership organization or more information may contact OWCA at 931/484-9033 or 185 Hood Drive, Crossville, TN 38555.