Written Profile

Farm: Ankley Family Farm
Location: Imlay City, Michigan
Date of Origination: 1902
Industry Sector(s): Dairy, Cash Crops, Hay

AGRICULTURE'S LASTING HERITAGE

"Families depend on the success of the farm and communities depend on the success of local family farms," shares William Ankley of Ankley Family Farm. Farmers "care about their land, neighbors, communities and the consumers that buy their products." With strong family roots, a love of the land, and an innovative spirit, the Ankley family members have made significant contributions to the industry. Join us as we discover their story and celebrate their commitment to *Agriculture's Lasting Heritage*.

The history of this family is marked by hard work and conscious decisions made to keep the land in operation. In December of 1902 Phillip Ankley bought the 160 acre farm from John and Lizzie Powell. Phillip Ankley and his wife Mary had 9 children, two of which split the farm into 80 acre parcels in 1924. Shortly thereafter, son Willard Ankley purchased his brother's share of land, reuniting the original farm. The farm was passed down through generations of Ankley farmers, and is currently operated by William and Virginia Ankley. The farm now milks 75-80 cows. In addition to the original 160 acres, the family now farms an additional 520 acres including alfalfa, corn, sweet corn, soybeans and wheat.

Ankley Family Farm, 2010

The original house that came with the land when Phillip Ankley made his purchase in 1902 still stands, marking over a century of continuous farm management by the Ankley family. The first building added by the Ankleys, a granary, can be found on the historic land as well. Sustainability has always been a guiding principle in farm management for this family, as evident in the structures on the farm which were built using resources harvested on the property. In 1941 the family constructed a new barn. The carpenter who raised the building was paid 35 cents an hour and his helper 25 cents.

Over time there has been significant change in technology used to operate the farm. "The cows were milked by lantern until 1945, when electricity reached the property," explains William Ankley. In a recent celebration of the farm's innovative spirit, the farm was featured in a local newspaper because of their implementation of solar energy. Ankley received a USDA Rural Energy for America Program (REAP) grant and installed 32 solar panels on his barn in 2011. "Hopefully this summer I won't have any electric bills," Ankley shared in an article published in *The County Press*. Ankley Family Farm also plans to diversify in the near future by adding a creamery and agritourism component.

A commitment to sustainable practices over time has enabled the Ankleys to continue farming for over a century. "Farmers make their living off of the land, and without caring carefully for the land, the farm will not be able to sustain itself for very long," William Ankley explains. Ankley Family Farm uses practices such as cover cropping and crop rotation to decrease fertilizer input. They also use biodiesel to power farm machinery.

When asked about challenges faced on the farm, Ankley acknowledges that the challenges they face are similar to those faced by other century farms. Low prices, droughts, excessive rainfall, diseases, loss of family members, depressions and wars have required the family to become experts in overcoming adversity. The Ankleys are appreciative of the efforts made by Farm Bureau to protect the farm from harmful legislation while serving as a voice on a local and national level.

"Agriculture is definitely a family-oriented business," William Ankley concludes. "When family members are committed to continuing the tradition of making a living from farming, a family farm can stay in business for hundreds of years. Our farm has been fortunate to have children that have stepped up to the challenge of continuing the tradition." We are proud to recognize the efforts of Ankley Family Farm, and congratulate the Ankley family on their contribution to *Agriculture's Lasting Heritage*.