

Haskins Farm Bears a Sweet History in Bainbridge

BY JENNY MAY

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Though a gravel driveway is now the entrance to the Haskins Farm, a stone wagon step sitting just a few feet in front of the nearly 200-year-old white wooden farmhouse makes it easy to envision the horsedrawn carriages that once dropped family and friends off there, gentlemen likely assisting ladies in long dresses with petticoats.

With a house constructed in 1843 at a cost of \$300 and a barrel of whiskey, the farm at 17199 Haskins Road in Chagrin Falls has remained a symbol of strength and work ethic for six generations, with its owners continuing to produce some of the area's finest maple syrup.

The Haskins Farm, now owned by Curtis Cook, whose third great-grandfather established it in 1818, recently received sesquicentennial status this year from the Ohio Department of Agriculture.

Sesquicentennial farms are those with same-family ownership for between 150 and 199 years. In 2018, Haskins Farm will be designated bicentennial, meaning it will have had same-family ownership for 200 or more years.

Cook, who is the owner of an engineering and construction company in Pittsburgh, Pa., grew up in South Russell Village. He and wife, Deborah, have three children — Kirsten, 20, Bryce, 18, and Kaitlyn, 16.

Cook splits his time during the year between his Pittsburgh home and the farm, spending much of the time on the farm producing maple syrup. He and Deborah plan to move there permanently when Kaitlyn is finished with high school.

"We're really proud of that deep-rooted history and the work ethic of the family," Cook says. "I intend to keep it in the family."

A Rich History

The story of Haskins Farm begins with William Haskins, who was the first of the family to come to America from England, arriving at the Massachusetts Bay Colony in May of 1633, according to family records.

He was the third great-grandfather of Philip Haskins Sr., who lived in Taunton, Mass., and later moved to North Adams, Mass. Philip Sr. had eight children, the fifth being Curtis' third great-grandfather, Philip



An aerial photo taken in 1958, just before the fifth generation (Robert Haskins) started operating the farm, shows only one silo at that time. The tile silo shown was built in the early 1940s by Curtis Cook's grandfather (fourth generation).

Farm Facts

OWNER: Curtis and Deborah Cook

ESTABLISHED: 1818

LOCATION: Bainbridge Township

ACRES: 67.42

STAPLE: Maple Syrup



An aerial photo taken in the early 1980s shows the addition of a milk house, corn cribs, and many sheds and pole buildings that were necessary as Robert Haskins expanded his dairy herd. A second silo was erected in the late 1970s. Barns previously used for equipment storage were turned into hay storage and calf and heifer housing.

Rounseville Haskins, born in 1783.

Philip married Lovisa McFarland in 1811. The couple and their three children, Henry, Albert and Tryphosa, accompanied the McFarland family to Ohio, where they purchased land in the township in 1818 for \$2.50 an acre.

They settled a mile from Bainbridge Center, with Philip buying a farm of his own east of the McFarland tract, in February 1819.

Cook believes the location of the first log cabin was somewhere in the vicinity Northbrook and Kings Orchard roads, which are now part of the Tanglewood development.

After living in the cabin for about five years, records show Philip contracted with a builder from Portage County to construct a frame house. The cost to build the house was \$114.

The contract is listed in Philip's account book, which is in the family and rarely handled as it is quite fragile.

The first house was replaced in 1843 by

the present 2,000-square-foot house, which records show was constructed for \$300 and a barrel of whiskey.

It has housed fifth and sixth generations of Haskins and is now rented to a family friend who also leases most of the farmland to produce corn, soybeans, wheat and hay.

The Haskins property, much of which sits at the corner of Washington and Haskins roads, was originally 163 acres. In 2010, the family sold 60 acres.

"I remember as a kid, there was a barn right on Haskins Road, north of the house, and my grandfather kept sheep there," Cook said. "Even when I was a kid, these side roads (including Haskins Road) were gravel."

Many interesting facts about the farm



JENNY MAY/KMG

Curtis Cook stands in front of the farm's original main barn, which was re-sided in 2012 and a tile silo built in the early 1940s. The concrete stave silo in the photo replaced the wood silo in the 1990s.

and its ancestors have been passed down through the generations by records and word of mouth.

For example, records show Philip was appointed an "overseer for the poor" of the township and put in required time helping to maintain Chillicothe Road.

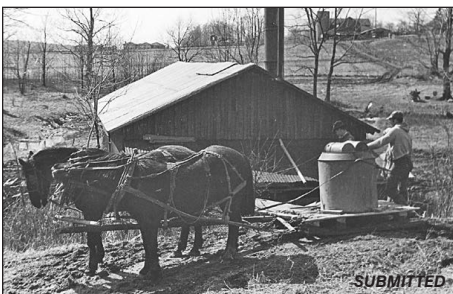
His payment of \$4.88 for six and a half days of work is recorded in his account book.

It is also known that Lovisa was the first person in the township to make cheese. The old cheese house still stands on the Haskins property and is now used for storage.

Philip died in 1846 and Lovisa in 1869. Both were buried on the farm. Later, their remains were moved to Restland Cemetery in Bainbridge Township.

An interesting story about Philip's gravestone is that after his remains were moved, it was moved to McFarland property, which is now the Chagrin Athletic Club.

Somehow, the stone then found its way



SUBMITTED

A photo taken in the late 1960s shows Robert Haskins dumping a load of sap into the sugar house storage tanks. The sugar house was built in 1939 by Cook's grandfather Leslie Haskins (fourth generation) and it is still used today.

to Chagrin Village Hall, where it was being used as a step. After its location was discovered, it was returned to the family and it, again, sits on Haskins Farm.

Following Philip and Lovisa, the farm was owned by Philip's fourth son, Commodore Perry Haskins, who was married to Cynthia Worrallo of Chester Township.

Records show Commodore Perry Haskins was active in church and community affairs. During the Civil War, he was in charge of collecting bounties from men who bought their way out of service in the

Union Army. He died in 1889 and Cynthia in 1907.

They had five children, one of whom was Clarence Perry — Cook's great-grandfather, born in 1865. He married Flora Bonney in 1890 and took over the farm after his father's death. Clarence and Flora had five children.

As a young boy, Clarence kept several diaries, which are still in the family.

They tell of the weather, crop records and some of the antics he pulled, including spying on his sisters and their boyfriends. Flora, who died in 1925, is known for being the first woman in Geauga County to vote after suffrage was adopted.

Clarence was one of the founders of the Bainbridge Telephone Company in 1897. The first phone line was built to connect his house to the sugar houses on the farm. Clarence operated the farm with his sons until his death in 1940. The land was then split with son Albert taking the west side and son Leslie taking the east.

Albert and his son raised potatoes, fruit and livestock. Leslie had dairy and sheep. They each had a sugar house and sold maple syrup. After Albert's death in 1964, his heirs sold their portion for \$1,000 an acre, which is now part of Tanglewood.

Curtis' mother, Marjorie Haskins Cook, has kept a written account of her memories of growing up on the farm.

"We girls could hear through our bedroom windows, some choice words as the boys did their chores at the barn across the road," she recalled. "Uncle Albert used to make hickory whistles for us. The boys

shared a pony, Trixie, with us..."

The Farm Today

The original main barn that was built in the early 1800s remains on the property, now sided a light grey. Part of this barn includes one that was originally built on the west side of the farm. That barn was moved to the current property and attached to the original barn to make one larger barn.

Growing up, Cook and his two sisters, Janice Cook-Swanson and Jennifer Cook-Forbush, both of Columbus, spent much time on the farm. The three were active in the local 4H clubs.

Approximately 40 acres of the Haskins Farm is still used for maple syrup production. The sugar house currently used was built in 1939.

Cook, who sells his syrup to private customers, won "Best Maple Syrup Producer" in this year's Geauga County Maple Festival. It is one of several awards won by the Haskins family over the years.

"I learned from my uncle," Cook said. "I enjoyed helping with it as a kid. My uncle and grandfather used to keep a team of horses to help gather sap."

Walking through the acres of woods that contain about 1,500 taps, he knocks on some of the trees.

"There's trees back here that my grandfather has tapped," Cook said. "We don't make a lot of syrup as compared to larger producers in Geauga County. What we do make is high quality syrup using techniques passed down through generations of our family."

Cook-Swanson has fond childhood memories of harvesting and preparing vegetables from the garden with her Aunt Jan.

"We froze almost everything," she said. Growing up on a farm fosters a unique work ethic and appreciation for basic staples, Cook believes.

"My aunt and uncle are two of my greatest mentors," he said. "Just being a kid, I followed my uncle around and helped. I learned a lot just doing that. The work ethic and persistence I learned as a child has been the key to my success in business."

Keeping the farm in the family is important to all of the Haskins.

"I have a sincere appreciation for the history and genealogy of it all," Cook-Swanson says. "There's such a pride in the family heritage and this farm. How many families can say six generations have farmed the land?"