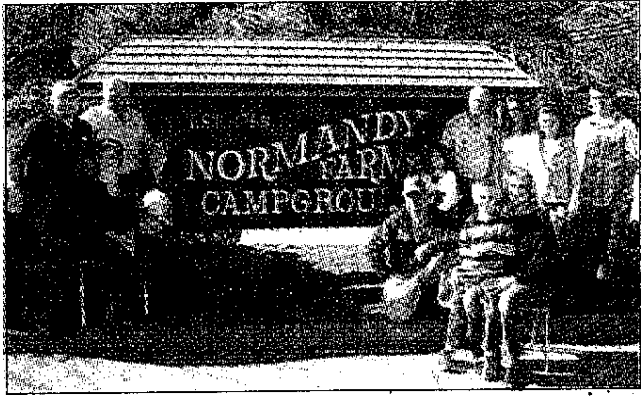


NINTH GENERATION



DANIELS FAMILY MEMBERS who are celebrating the 250th anniversary of Normandy Farm are members of the seventh, eighth and ninth generations to work the land as a means of preserving it. The days of dairy, chicken and sheep farming have given way to a Christmas Tree Farm and the nationally recognized Normandy Farms Campground.

Daniels family celebrates 250 years on land

Farm is now a popular campground

BY JACK AUTHELET

The 2009 celebration of Founders Day in Foxborough will be very special for members of the Daniels family. They will be celebrating their founder, Francis Daniels, because they still occupy the land on West Street which he purchased June 4, 1759, just 250 years ago today.

Not a single day has passed since that time without a family member present on the land, and it continues nine generations strong with a determination that it will never end.

Actually, Francis had come here several years earlier while still using his French name of Francois Guideau given to him at birth June 22, 1723. French nationals were not necessarily welcome in the Colony, but he had been brought here in chains as a prize of war and had to pay off the cost of his passage to regain his life. He came to the farm of William Hewes in Wrentham - later to become Foxborough - where he would earn wages as well as room and board.

Francis was fortunate that he had been brought to the Colonies, for where else could he have regained control of his destiny and realize what many would call the American



■ SPECIAL SECTION INSIDE:

Learn the story of a young French Army officer who purchased 53 acres of land on West Street in 1759 and named it Normandy Farm.

Dream even though it was set in motion long before there was a United States of America?

The date of his marriage to Keziah Rockwood, who lived in what would become Franklin, is not known, but by 1858 their first child was born. The following year, the family became landowners, purchasing 53 acres of land from William Hewes.

Francis and his family were totally dependent upon the bounty of the land for their existence, and immediately set about planting crops for their own consumption as well as for sale. They also kept a herd of dairy cows, the milk, cream and butter also helping to sustain the family as a cash crop.

He was also conscious of the broader community around him, and signed the petition which led to the creation of a new town called Foxborough in 1778.

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Daniels family celebrates 250 years on farm

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He further served on the committee to establish school districts which led to the building of the Quaker Hill School.

The family of Francis Daniels grew, as did his farm, and the land would pass generation to generation.

They cut their own lumber, harvested their own ice, provided sand for area foundries, and would come to own more than 250 acres of land. It was incumbent upon each generation that someone would work the land that they might remain there throughout their lifetimes.

Never were any two days alike with raising large families, working a large farm and tending animals but they labored on during peace and war, worldwide epidemics and the Great Depression. Enormous hen houses would rise on the property as later family members marketed chickens and eggs. Sheep would be added to the mix as they continued to work the land of their ancestors.

The line of succession would continue a predictable path until the untimely death of fifth-generation member Francis N. Daniels in 1948, the result of an accident on the farm. The pattern of ownership would change as the land would pass to his three children, Evelyn Daniels Grigsby, Norman and Douglas Daniels.

Evelyn did not become active on the farm, rather working for many years at the Northampton State Hospital and later as a longtime employee of Bayden Library.

Douglas took title to the family homestead and all of the acreage behind it. His property would also extend to a large triangle of land across the road that included the large barn as well as some pasture land.

Doug's mother Marion, the widow of Francis Daniels, still occupied the house which was maintained for her while Doug had interests in California. He would return to Foxborough following her death and the land is now devoted to agricultural use, the growing of Christmas trees by Doug's son Scott and his wife Corrinne. They raised three daughters - Chelsey, Leah and Shawna - on the farm and Cor-



THREE GENERATIONS of Daniels family members are represented here by fourth-generation members Albert Daniels (seated left) and his wife Eliza (seated right), fifth-generation members (standing) Marlon Daniels Warren, Laura, Francis N. and Bertha Daniels, and sixth-generation members Evelyn Daniels Grigsby (being held by Albert) and Norman Daniels (center, being held by his mother Elva, wife of Francis), who changed the focus at Normandy from farming to camping.

rinne is developing the Normandy Farm that for the Founders Day Parade on June 13.

Beyond the barn stood the long row of hen houses, the silos that held food for the cattle and sheep, the fields, hills and woodland. This property would go to Norman. He and his wife Jeannette would build a home at the top of the hill.

Norman had been a long-distance trucker for many years, but continued chicken, egg and sheep production with the help of family members. But change was inevitable for small family farms in New England trying to survive. The concern ran deeper than just the economic return on the effort put into farming. The stark reality was that one had to work the land in order to remain it.

Norman and his family were campers who loved the outdoors. A college paper prepared by their son Albert - known as Dan most of his life - laid out a busi-

ness plan for starting a campground, and they already owned more than sufficient land. Capital investment would be minimal compared to other ideas that might have shown promise and a decision was made.

Normandy Farms Campground welcomed its first families in 1971 when camping fees were \$3.50 per night. There would be no turning back as the family was driven not only to make its business venture successful, but to preserve the land and its heritage.

More campsites would be added, an office, recreation hall and swimming pools. And still it grew to welcome not only campers but recreational vehicles.

This family campground and RV Park would receive Five Star ratings for Excellence from Woodalls each year for more than 20 years. Three times it would be voted RV Park of the Year and in 2003 was featured on the Travel Channel that high-

lighted the world's seven best camping and RV areas. Among the world's best seven were three from the United States, one of which was located in Foxboro, Massachusetts, a place called Normandy Farms Campground.

Operation of the campground and RV Park is now in the hands of the three children of Norman and Jeannette, Dan as president and general operations manager, Janice as vice president and office manager and Bob as treasurer and maintenance manager.

Dan's wife Doris is recreation director and their three children, Marcia, Kristin and Mark, who comprise the eighth generation along with Bob's son Shaun, have also stepped into a role in the family legacy.

Marcia's two children, Jill and Cassidy, grandchildren of Dan and Doris, make up the ninth generation of family members working the land that Francis Daniels called Normandy, a link to the region in France

'It's all about remaining on the land and working together as a family to preserve the land on which we have lived for nine generations...'

Dan Daniels, Normandy Farms

where he had been born so many years ago.

It is a time of celebration, and for the occasion, Normandy Farms will return to its roots providing its weekend campers sheep shearing and wool weaving demonstrations, an opportunity to view barn babies and enjoy pony rides. Arts, crafts, fishing and a video of Normandy Farms through the Years will be intermingled with introductions, presentations and music.

It also is a time of reflection and Scott Daniels is privileged to be working the land of his ancestors. "I think of what they went through, just to build a stone wall while I use a tractor" as he reflects on the rigors of farm life over the years. "I look around at this old house and I am fortunate to be the one who lives here," but it is not without its challenges. His working the land of his ancestors is a "labor of love" but he is thankful to still be there on the farm working the land as many had done before him.

Dan Daniels marvels at the wonder of it all, what his ancestors accomplished and what has now been built up around them as they continue working the land in an effort to preserve it. The campground and RV Park is successful beyond their wildest dreams, "but it is just the means to an end," he said.

"It's all about remaining on the land and working together as a family to preserve the land on which we have lived for nine generations..."

The time for celebration had come, one that few families ever reach, that of remaining on the land of their ancestors for 250 years. Dan hopes the anniversary celebration "will find family members even more deeply committed to continuing the legacy of Normandy Farm."