Dakota County's Finest Farm
1932 - 1962

by the Farmington Area Historical Society

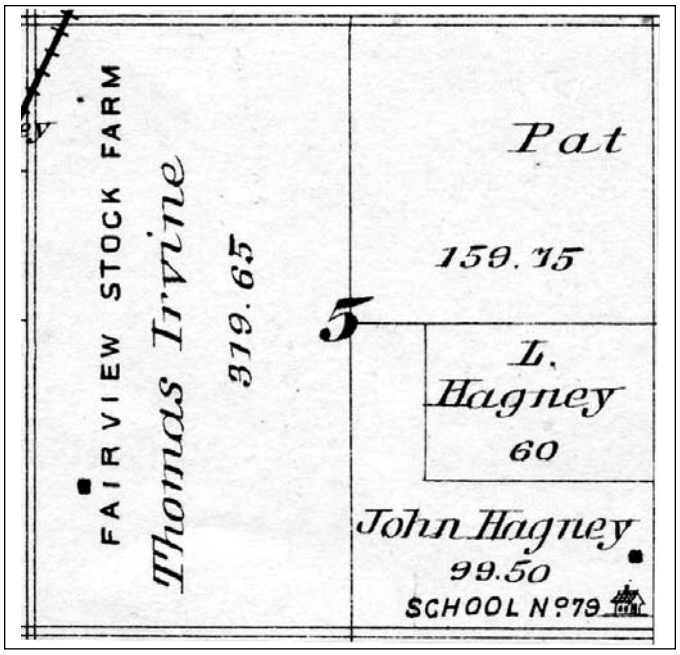
The Forerunners
Fairview, Westwood, and Webb-Shaw Farms

Ever since the arrival of the first settlers in the early 1850s, the family farm system of agriculture has been at the center of Dakota County's economic, social, and domestic foundation. Of the hundreds of farms remaining in Dakota County, many have passed from generation to generation, commemorating the pride families have taken in the accomplishments of their farming ancestors. The county has numerous Century Farms, farms that have been in a single family and continuously operated for more than a hundred years, developing and adapting to new methods and strategies of modern agribusiness.

Three exceptions to this farming tradition made their mark on Dakota County in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Fairview Farm and the Westwood Farm in Empire, and the Webb-Shaw Experimental Farm in Eureka, specialized in improving and promoting specific animal breeds and scientific agricultural methods and techniques.

Fairview

In 1887, St. Paul businessman Thomas Marrett established Fairview Farm, a 320-acre farm in section 5 of Empire Township. Marrett bred carriage horses in addition to Shorthorn and Jersey dairy cattle.[1] Thomas Irvine, president of the Coast Lumber Company, acquired Fairview and transformed it into a nationally known breeding farm. Within a decade the farm was featured in a *Northwest Magazine* article entitled "Minnesota's Celebrated Fairview Farm."[2] The farm was known for its Holstein-Friesian and Jersey dairy cattle and their record setting milk production. It was also recognized for its fine imported French Percheron, carriage, roadster, and trotting horses. Francois was the head of the



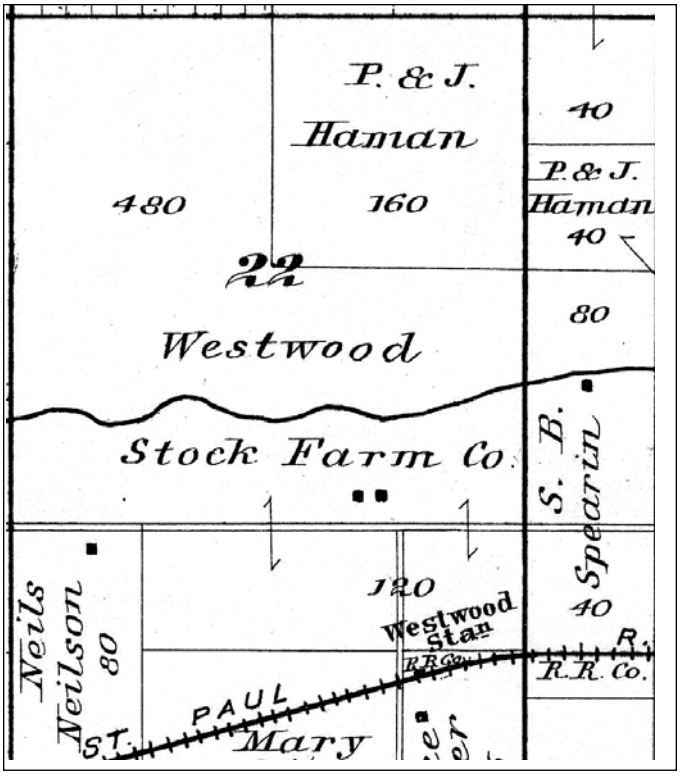
Thomas Irvine's Fairview Farm appeared on the 1896 plat of Empire township.

Fairview Percheron herd. He was a grandson of the great Brilliant, an imported French Percheron, the "most famous of all living draft horses" and considered the best sire the breed had ever produced.[3]

At the 1897 state fair the farm won 18 prizes for their horses and cattle, which included best bull of all ages won by Count Aaggie Clothilde, a Holstein-Friesian whom Irvine purchased in 1892.[4] Irvine continued to live in St. Paul, and found "much gratification in visiting Fairview, the home of so many superb specimens of the chosen breeds." The farm was sold in 1913 and the stock was auctioned off in 1928.

Westwood

In 1889 William J. and Frederick D. Underwood, railroad officials with the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul, and the Soo Line, respectively, bought 320



Westwood in Empire Township had fresh water and irrigation since the Vermillion River ran through the farm, and its own railroad spur and station. The spur, shown on the 1896 plat map, provided access to the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul railway and the Twin City markets.

acres in section 22 of Empire Township. Colonel John West of the West Hotel in Minneapolis bought 160 adjoining acres and the three men incorporated the farms using a combination of their names, "Westwood," in 1892. The nature of the corporation was to raise and improve livestock and to cultivate and improve farm, garden, and horticultural lands.[5] The farm advertised its prize-winning trotting horses, registered Jersey cattle and Poland China swine.[6] The farm supplied the West Hotel with milk and cream, vegetables, and sausage and bacon through the end of the 19th century. A treadmill that was operated in part by the Jersey herd sire, which kept him in good shape, cooled the milk.[7] The farm struggled after the First World War and during the Great Depression and was sold in 1954. Many of the farm buildings, old and decayed, were burned for fire practice in the 1960s.

Farmer Farm

Edward Webb, publisher of *The Farmer* magazine, bought 240 acres of depleted farmland in Eureka Township in 1902. Shortly thereafter he purchased a neighboring farm which was in a similar condition. Webb wanted to restore the tired, weed-infested farms to their original, productive condition and believed they would make a good "research" farm. The Webb-Shaw Experimental Farmer Farm was created.[8] The results of old and new agricultural techniques practiced on the farm were published for the benefit of the magazine's numerous subscribers. The first experiment was to rid the farm of its well-rooted perennial and persistent annual weeds. Thomas Shaw, editor of the magazine wrote, "We are going to warn those weeds to get out of there. Beyond all question they will not go without a stubborn fight, for they have a squatter's right to stay. But if they don't go, fellow farmers, there's going to be a fight to the finish, one way or another."[9] The battle was a draw as some weed varieties were eradicated with crop rotation and mechanical methods while others persisted and were painstakingly removed by hand. The farm also compared the production of soil treated aggressively with manure to soil left untreated.[10] The Farmer Farm was noted for its fine herd of purebred Shorthorn cattle and Berkshire hogs, "the crowning feature of the farm."[11] Silos were introduced to the farm in 1906 and were considered the most satisfactory and economic method of keeping corn fodder for winter use, a fact which was disseminated to *The Farmer* readers. Although the 800-acre Farmer Farm would last less than 20 years, it helped pave the way for the new methods of "scientific agriculture" in the early 20th century.

Brandtjen Farm

In the tradition of these three superlative farms, the Brandtjen Stock Farm, established in 1932, was dedicated to the breeding and development of Guernsey cattle, American Saddlebred horses, and Percheron draft horses. Created by Henry Brandtjen for the pleasure of his family, the farm not only became nationally known, but internationally known as well. It continued to set the standard, using the most advanced scientific agriculture methods and raising experimental crops before others in the county.

Brandtjen used his association with the University of Minnesota to select the farm's livestock managers, educated and enterprising at a time when few farmers and farm laborers were college-educated. The farm was a showplace that provided learning opportunities for students active in 4-H and the Future Farmers of America programs. The farm hosted college students majoring in dairy science and allowed youths interested in cattle judging to learn the ropes and practice their judging skills using the farm's champion Guernseys. The farm's dairy products were of the highest quality and it provided employment for scores of people. During its peak 30 years, from 1932 to 1962, the Brandtjen farm was, in fact, Dakota County's finest farm.

The Family

The story of the Brandtjen Stock Farm is the story of Henry A. Brandtjen, Sr. Born in St. Paul in 1890, he attended the Minneapolis School of Mechanical Arts and the University of Minnesota. Enlisting in the Army in 1917, he saw active duty in France during the First World War as a member of the American Expeditionary Force. Upon returning from the war, he became involved in the family business. His father, John Brandtjen, was born in Hanover, Germany and immigrated to the United States at an early age. Settling in Wisconsin, he subsequently moved to Minnesota as a young man and established a printing equipment company in St. Paul. He engaged two brothers, Abel and Eneval Kluge, to install and service printing presses. The sticky gum used to feed paper through the presses attracted paper lint, necessitating frequent replacement. Henry, Sr., who owned an automotive sales and service company at the time, was familiar with the vacuum process. The Kluge brothers designed the mechanical aspect of a new press and Henry developed the vacuum technology, paving the way for the world's first successful automatic printing press feeder. The result was the creation of Brandtjen and Kluge in 1919 which manufactured and sold the feeders.[12] It would become recognized worldwide as an innovator in the printing industry for the remainder of the 20th century.

Lieutenant Henry Brandtjen saw action at the front lines in France during the First World War. Upon returning, he became involved in his father's new enterprise, Brandtjen and Kluge

Gladys Roussopoulos and Henry Brandtjen had common interests as both their families were involved in the printing trade. After Gladys and Henry were married in 1919 they made their home in St. Paul.

Henry married Gladys Roussopoulos in 1919. Her father, Demetrius, operated the Northwestern Stamp Works in St. Paul. They had two sons, John, born in 1927, and Henry A., Jr., born in 1928. They made their home at 1936 Summit Avenue.[13]

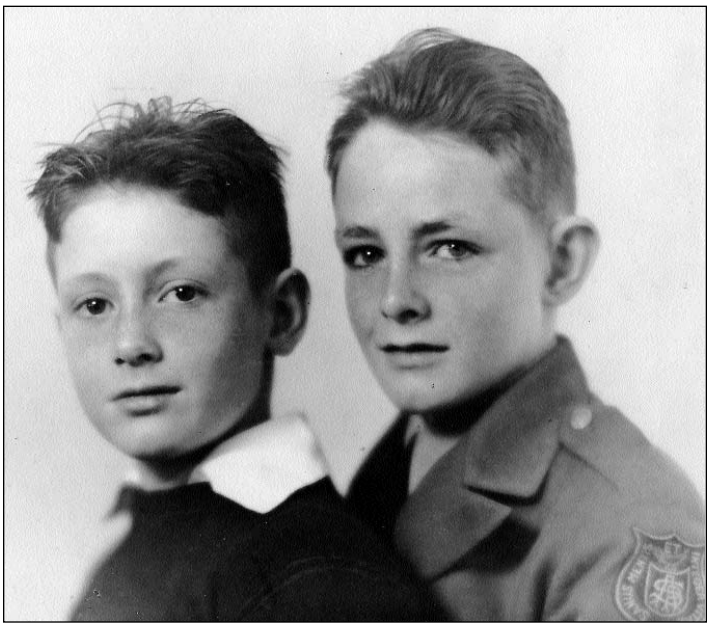
The safety of their children, Henry, Jr., left, and John, shown here on the steps of their Summit Ave. home, was paramount to Gladys and Henry.

The farm provided security for the children from the criminal element of the Capitol City during its 1930s gangster era. "Hitler" the goat and the last of the English Bull Terriers also lived a long and happy life together in the country.

The Farm

By 1932, St. Paul had witnessed some of the most notorious crimes in its history. That summer, Haskell Bohn, son of Gerhard Bohn, a wealthy refrigerator manufacturer, was kidnapped. The Bohn family lived at 1405 Summit Avenue, five blocks from the Brandtjen family. After being held blindfolded and bound for a week, Bohn was released in Golden Valley.[14] The kidnappers were never apprehended. Affluent residents in the city became concerned for the safety of their families and for good reason. In the next few years, Leon Gleckman, William Hamm, Jr., and Edward Bremer were kidnapped and their ransoms totaled hundreds of thousands of dollars.

It is probable that the Brandtjen and Bohn families were acquainted with one another. As a form of protection, Henry purchased several English bull terriers from a breeder in Pennsylvania. When the dogs arrived, he claimed them at the Railway Express station in St. Paul. The station agent was glad to see the fierce dogs go. The bull terriers did their job well. One of the terriers attacked a stray dog that came into the Brandtjen yard and fought with it until it died, although the terrier also died. Henry unsuccessfully attempted to stop the fight by spraying the dogs with a jet of hot water from a hose attached to the boiler in the basement.[15]



Henry, Jr., poses with John, in his St. Paul Academy uniform, in this formal portrait, c. 1935

A family story recounts that Gladys asked Henry to look for lakeshore property to purchase outside of St. Paul as a safe haven for the children. Having the children occasionally out of the city was a means of protection. When Henry returned from the real estate trip, he presented Gladys with a deed to a dairy farm. Henry chose to purchase the Bernard and Bernadine Bjornstad farm in Lakeville in September 1932.[16] The well-kept, modern 200-acre dairy farm had plenty of potential. Northern

Brandtjen Stock Farm News

Henry Ott, the milk driver of the Brandtjen Farm, returned last Saturday from the St. Luke's hospital where he was taken last Wednesday. When he skidded off the pavement that day he was slightly injured.

Mr. and Mrs. H. A. Brandtjen and sons John and Junior spent Saturday at their farm.

Karl Larson returned home Wednesday from St. Luke's hospital.

Henry Ott, Arthur Hubbard and Al Tersteeg attended the dance in Farmington Friday evening.

Melvin Cox spent Sunday evening with his family in Farmington.

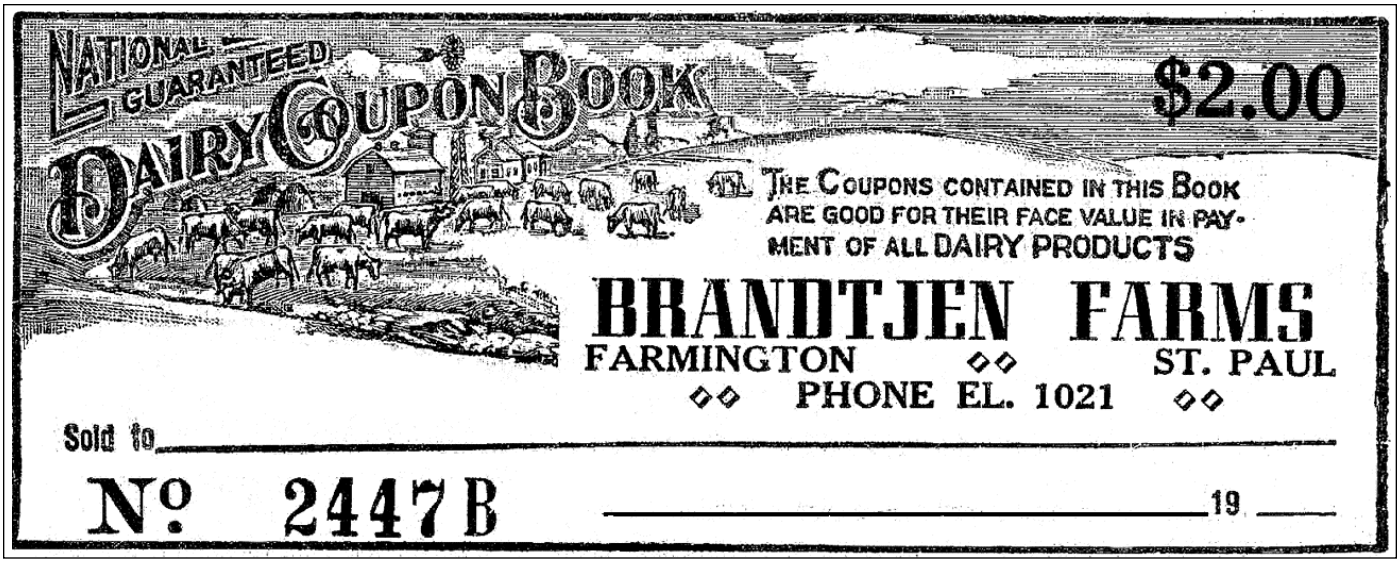
Miss Maggie Quigley attended the card party at Geraghty's hall Tuesday evening.

Mrs. And. Henry had as visitors to her ladies aid, Mrs. Ernest Olson and son, Mrs. Herbert Pritchard and daughter of Northfield, Mrs. Clifford Henry of Dundas and Mr. and Mrs. Lawrence Elstad and Mrs. Dewey Pederson and baby and Albert Fanno from Eureka.

Last Saturday evening a large crowd of neighbors gathered at the home of Mr. and Mrs. Elmer Anderson to help Mrs. Anderson celebrate her birthday anniversary. The evening was spent in various kinds of games. A delicious lunch was served at midnight. They departed for their homes wishing Mrs Anderson a happy birthday.

The farm had its own news column in the Dakota County Tribune, January 26, 1934.

The farm's high quality dairy products were delivered daily to customers in St. Paul by these delivery trucks. Courtesy of Gertrude Schwinghamer.



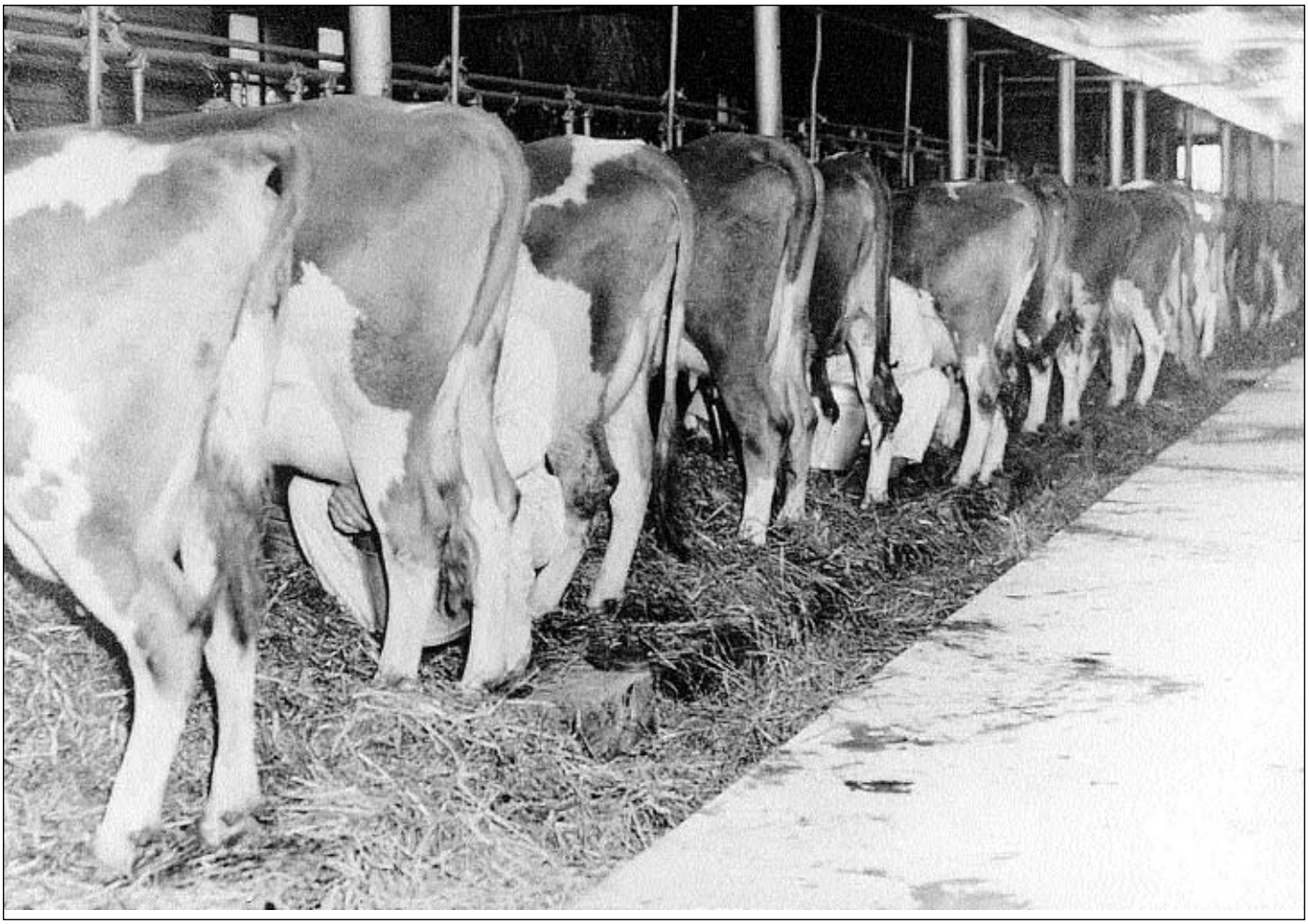
Customers were provided with coupon books as an incentive to save money on their purchase of Brandtjen dairy products.

States Power strung an electrical connection to the farm in early 1932, five years before Rural Electrification, at a cost of $1,583.17 Within a few years the common farm in Lakeville would be modified, enlarged, and improved. Brandtjen would employ educated and talented individuals, and the farm would produce some of the finest livestock and agricultural products in the nation.

The Brandtjen family retained their residence on Summit Avenue, where Henry was close to work at Brandtjen and Kluge and the children were enrolled at the St. Paul Academy, but they frequently came to the farm on weekends. Clifford Hubbard was hired to manage the farm shortly after it was established.[18] Eighteen months later, the farm was making a name for itself. The noteworthy farm and its owners merited a column in the Dakota County Tribune early in 1934, which even went so far as to let the community know the family was down from town.[19]

In April 1934, the farm set an egg production record when its 375 laying hens produced 41,423 eggs in five months.[20] One metropolitan newspaper reporter suggested in 1935 the success was due to the radio. "When I pulled into the yard I heard three radios going - one in the house, one in the barn where fifty-five milch cows were stanchioned, and another in the poultry house where 2,600 chickens are growing to maturity, laying eggs or joining in the chorus."[21]

The farm sold eggs, dressed chickens, and unpasteurized milk and cream to some of their neighbors in St. Paul. The farm had two delivery trucks and Maynard Storlie and Melvin Qvale had charge of the routes.[22] The dairymen milked up to 50 cows by hand three times per day. Even though machine milking was becoming popular, milking by hand was far gentler on the cow. The farm first employed milking machines during the Second World War due

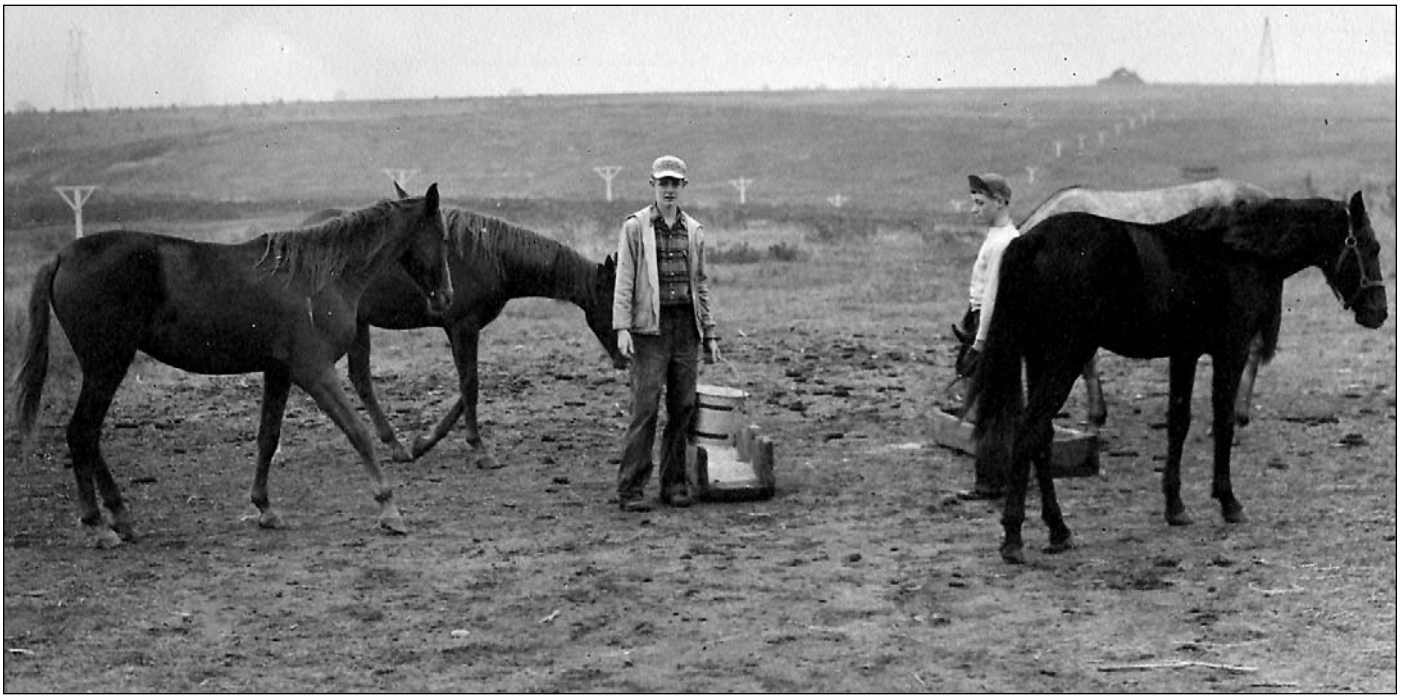


Dairymen milked the Guernseys by hand three times a day in their white coveralls.

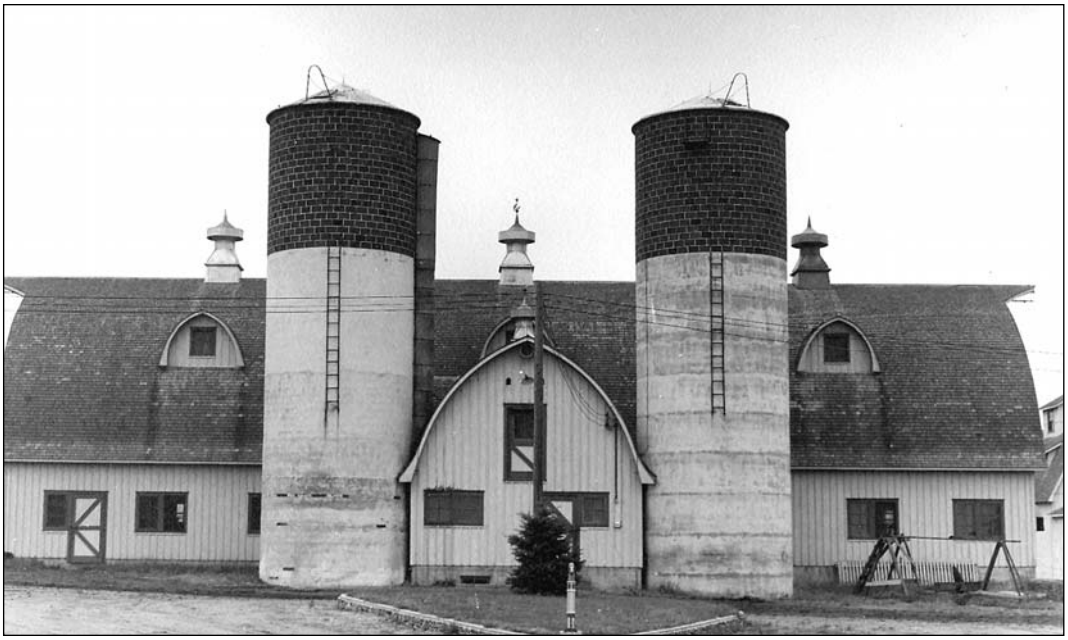
to a shortage of farm labor and did not return to hand-milking.[23] The dairy products were bottled at the farm's own creamery. The farm's dairy barn and creamery were especially clean and the dairymen wore crisp, white coveralls. For this reason, the farm's product quality exceeded that of pasteurized milk and cream. Local pediatricians recommended feeding the milk to infants when mother's milk was unavailable or the child was allergic to it. More than once, acquaintances of Henry, Jr., told him that growing up with Brandtjen's dairy products changed their lives.[24]

From the beginning the family was engaged in farm work one degree or another. The boys were not above participation in the work. Henry, Jr., remembered cultivating corn, helping make hay and putting it up in the barns, and threshing oats when he was only 11 or 12 years old.[25]

Taken from atop the silo, this view shows the rear of the large chicken coop and some of the farms chickens wandering in the spacious yard in the center left. The five homes for the laborers are seen at the top center of the photograph. The mess hall and creamery are directly below.



John, center and Henry, Jr., right, took good care of their horses. The boys were no strangers to farm work. The electric line was strung to the farm in 1932, well before rural electrification.



The exposed tile extensions of dairy barn's silos were an unusual and recognizable feature of the farm.

Expansion

The farm became larger as Brandtjen purchased two adjoining farms in 1935, one from Margaret Gibbons, and the other from Elizabeth McCarthy, bringing the farm's acreage to 540. Brandtjen contracted with J.C. Stempfley to add 15 feet to the silos on the dairy barn. Stempfley also built a new cement block silo.[26] Every August, before it had dried, corn was harvested, chopped in a silage cutter and blown into the silos.[27] The extra 15 feet on each silo as well as the additional cement block silo greatly increased the capacity for silage for the livestock.

In 1935 Henry Lundgren became the new farm manager and he and his wife, Esther, and three children moved from their farm in Castle Rock.[28] Henry Brandtjen turned to the University of Minnesota to acquire a manager for the Guernsey herd. Bert Schwinghamer, a graduate of the University of Minnesota School of Agriculture, was hired as the Superintendent of Cattle in 1935.[29] Schwinghamer was a native of Albany, Minnesota, where his ancestors had settled in the 1850s. He would oversee the development of the herd until 1952.

The main house was expanded in 1937 and a corncrib and a shed for storing straw were constructed to store the products of the growing farm operation.[30] The shed held 10,000 bales of hay and/or straw.[31] In 1938, Brandtjen purchased the nearby 160-acre John Moran farm and the 160-acre Catherine Quigley farm making a total of 840 acres.[32] That same year Henry Brandtjen and Dr. E.W. Berg traveled to Mexico, Missouri, to procure five American

Henry Lundgren was the farm manager from 1935 to 1939. His wife, Esther, was in charge of household duties and saw to the needs of the single hired men, their meals, laundry, and housekeeping. Courtesy of Farm Security Administration.

The main house was enlarged in 1937. The Quigley farm is visible in the upper right.

This barn was brought to the property from a neighboring farm purchased by the family. The two wings were added in 1938 when the saddlebred herd reached 12. It was eventually turned into the Percheron barn.

Saddlebred horses, to make a total of 12 Saddlebred horses at the farm. Missouri produced some of the finest Saddlebred horses in the world.

To accommodate the new horses, Brandtjen built a double-wing addition to the horse barn in the spring of 1938, increasing the capacity of the barn to 10 box stalls and 17 individual stalls.[33] In order to allow the spirited horses to exercise in the winter, a modern exercise arena and stable was constructed in 1939 and the original horse barn was used for the Percheron draft horses. The arena/stable was the largest building on the farm and contained 12 well-constructed box stalls, a feed room, tack room, showroom, and a sales room. The interior was paneled with California redwood shipped in railcars to Rosemount.[34] Brandtjen commented in the *Dakota County Tribune* that the "high spirited saddle-bred horses must have exercise every day or they will worry themselves to death, so we built this indoor trotting track."[35] The *Tribune* described the building as "built more like a hotel than a stable." The Farmington High School track team also used the indoor trotting track during the late winter months to get a jump on the track and field season.

During the 1930s the 14th Field Artillery stationed at Fort Snelling trained their horses by hitching them to the artillery, walking them to the farm, where they spent the night on the Moran farm, and walking them back the following day. The trip conditioned the horses to traveling long distances.[36]

As the Brandtjens added acreage to the farm, some of the houses on the procured farms were moved to the west of the main house. In addition, the old district 41 schoolhouse was moved to the farm in 1938 and remodeled for Bert Schwinghamer, who married Gertrude Koorn in October of that year.[37] With the necessary physical enhancements to the farm made by 1940, most of the subsequent improvements pertained to the development of livestock and crops.

The saddlebred horses got a new home in 1939 when this stable and exercise arena was constructed. Paneled with California redwood, the arena served as a show area for customers interested in purchasing a Brandtjen saddlebred or Percheron.

Henry A. Brandtjen, Sr., President of the Brandtjen and Kluge Company.

In 1950, the Brandtjen patriarch, John, died at the age of 88. Henry, Sr., became president of Brandtjen and Kluge. By this time, the farm was internationally known. The farm hosted many prominent people, including the Hari Krishna Mahtab, minister of industry and commerce in India. He visited the farm to observe American dairy methods. He compared the 30-pound daily milk production of Brandtjen's Guernseys to the average in India, only eight pounds a day. After his three-hour visit, he traveled to the Blue Gentian Farm in Eagan township to see the South Asia Library at the estate of Charles Leslie Ames, head of West Publishing.[38] The minister made an interesting proposition. He explained that as the Indian society aged so had its agricultural practices. He offered Henry, Jr., as much land and machinery as he wished to establish a model farm in India to develop and demonstrate modern farming methods.[39] Although it was intriguing, Henry opted to remain in Minnesota.

The Golden Breed

Bernard Bjornstad had a herd of Guernsey cattle when he sold the farm to Brandtjen.[40] It was not long before that herd was enhanced and developed into one of the most acclaimed Guernsey herds in the nation.

The Guernsey cow is compact in comparison to Holsteins, the predominant dairy cow in the United States. Being an "intermediate size" cow, the Guernsey produces its high quality milk while consuming 20 to 30 percent less feed per pound of milk than larger dairy breeds. Guernsey milk is high in butterfat and protein, with a high concentration of beta-carotene, making it an excellent food source for growing children. The rich milk and cream is the ingredient of choice for candy and ice cream producers. The Guernsey has a gentle disposition, calves easily, and is an excellent grazer. It is one of the most profitable dairy breeds.

After only three years of operation, the future of the Brandtjen herd became evident. At the 1935 Dakota County Fair, the farm won every prize available in the Guernsey category.[41]

Utilizing the University of Minnesota's dairy cat-

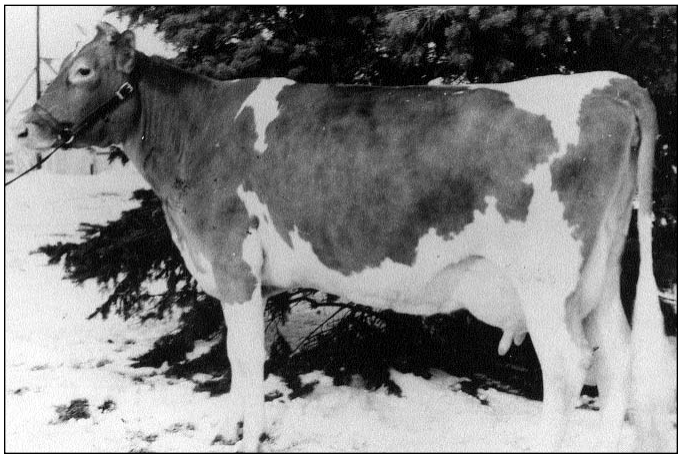
Henry, Jr., introduces a Guernsey calf to young John Schwinghamer.

tle feeding program, Bert Schwinghamer was successfully able to manage the herd, increasing milk production sufficiently to have Bernsdale Beauty, listed on the Advanced Register (AR) of the American Guernsey Cattle Club in 1937. Bernsdale Beauty was the first Guernsey in Dakota County to be placed on the AR. She was also the first of Brandtjen's 92 Guernseys that Schwinghamer hoped to place on the Register that year.[42] The AR was reserved for cows and bulls that had achieved a certain level of performance, largely for milk production and or butterfat. By advertising livestock registered on the AR, a farm let the public know that theirs was a superior herd.[43]

Brandtjen's Beacon was purchased from the Beacon Hill Farm in Rhode Island, and became the award winning herd sire for Brandtjen Stock Farm in the early 1940s. One of his young sons was fortunate enough to be purchased by an ice cream company's dairy in Miami, Florida, where he was going to be the herd's new sire. Schwinghamer stated that the demand for young bulls and heifers was very good in 1943 and that many "are being sold by mail and shipped by rail."[44]

In 1944, Brandtjen purchased Green Meads Wil-Dean from Green Meads Farm in Richmond, Massachusetts, to become the herd sire.[45] His dam was Green Meads Lady Wilda, who set production records as a two-year-old, and his sire was Langwater County Squire, classified as the highest production transmitting sire of the breed at that time. However, Horse Shoe Conrad's Asterbilt would beat his predecessors when he became senior herd sire. Asterbilt, born in 1946, was the offspring of Riegeldale Emory's Conrad and Beacon Hill Aster.[46] Asterbilt's paternal grandfather was sold to the Hill Girt Farm in 1946 for an astounding $30,000.[47]

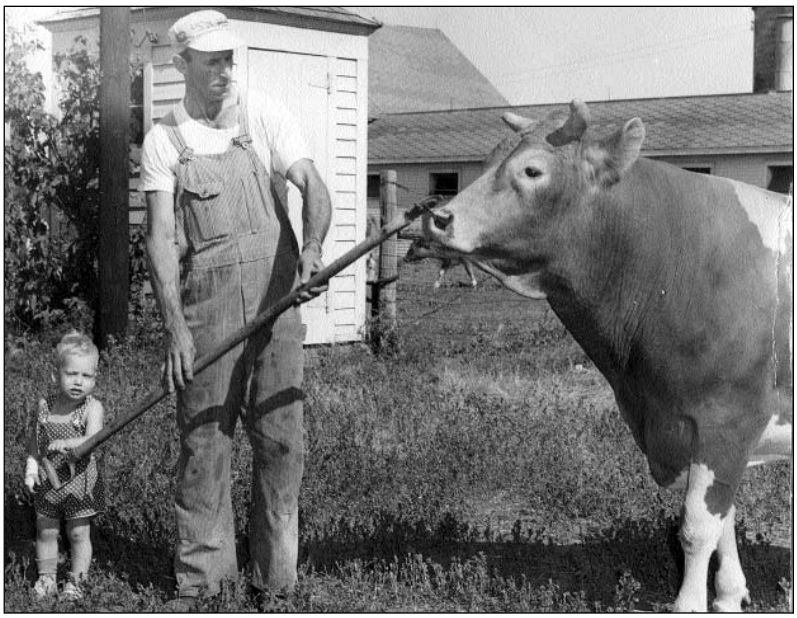
The East Central Guernsey Breeders Association, of which Schwinghamer was a director, held their annual Guernsey Parish Show at the Brandtjen Stock Farm in July 1949.[48] Not surprisingly, Asterbilt won senior and grand champion Guernsey sire awards. A feature of the show was the first official Dairy Judging contest for 4-H judges.



Roseway Valpolly was the Minnesota State Champion in 1944 and was shown extensively by Bert and Gertrude Schwinghamer. Courtesy of Gertrude Schwinghamer.

Dwight Malcolm of South St. Paul won the contest. Continuing their association with 4-H, the farm presented a trophy to Delmer Petersen of Eureka's Chub Lake Beavers for showing the grand champion Guernsey at the county fair.[49]

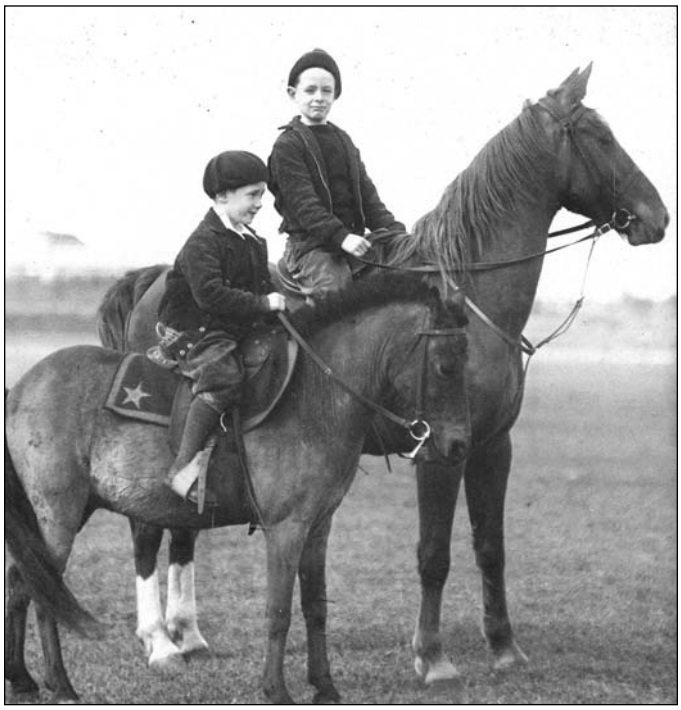
In 1952, five of Brandtjens' Guernseys were named Minnesota production leaders for the previous year. Brandtjen's Nicety, Brandtjen's Importance, Brandtjen's Mary, Brandtjen's Odella, and Brandtjen's Orpha had the highest records in their classes.[50] Dairy farmers from throughout the United States purchased their breeding stock from the farm.



Bert Schwinghamer, assisted by his son John, poses Horse Shoe Conrad's Asterbilt for a photographer. Asterbilt was featured on advertisements and promotional material for the Minnesota State Fair. Courtesy of Gertrude Schwinghamer.

A Spirited Breed

In the late 1930s Brandtjen began procuring American Saddlebred horses, a very spirited variety bred especially for show riding. The breed traces its history in the United States to thoroughbreds imported from England in 1706. John and Henry, Jr., had mastered riding skills and graduated from ponies to the Saddlebreds at a young age. At the 1938 state fair horse show, John won first prize and Henry, Jr., won second in the riding category for boys under 16. John was 11 and Henry was 9.[51]



Henry, Jr., and John were excellent riders having perfected their skills at an early age. They later competed against and won over much older riders.

John rode Merry Whirl, a five-gaited roan mare, whose sire was May Field King and whose dam was Della Blake. Henry rode Chief Dream, a three-gaited chestnut mare, whose sire was Chief of Chiefs and whose dam was Maud. The boys won many prizes over the next several years for their riding skills.

As the Brandtjens bred the horses, their progeny were named for the "Brandtjen" and "Sons" farm, resulting in "Brason." The first foals to be registered with the American Saddlebred Association were Brason's Chief, Brason's Esquire and Brason's Squire in May 1939.[52] Edgemorr's Beau Genius was the stallion that stood at stud at the farm. When the stable for the Saddlebreds was erected in 1939, the *Dakota County Tribune* described John Brandtjen as the stable's showman at the young age of 12.[53]

One feature of the 1940 Dakota County Fair was a "pleasure horse show," in which the farm entered three of its three-gaited horses. After the show, the Brandtjens entertained the show's exhibitors and wives, as well as the fair board members and their wives, at their home.[54]

In 1944, Brandtjen hired Branch K. Bruce to train the horses.[55] Bruce, an African-American from Columbia, Missouri, worked at the farm for the next 15 years.

John and Merry Whirl.

Henry, Jr., and Chief Dream.

Henry, Sr., and his sons observed as the boys waited to participated in a riding competition.

Saddlebred horses were not only shown for their riding prowess. They also displayed their carriage skills.

The Horses of Perche

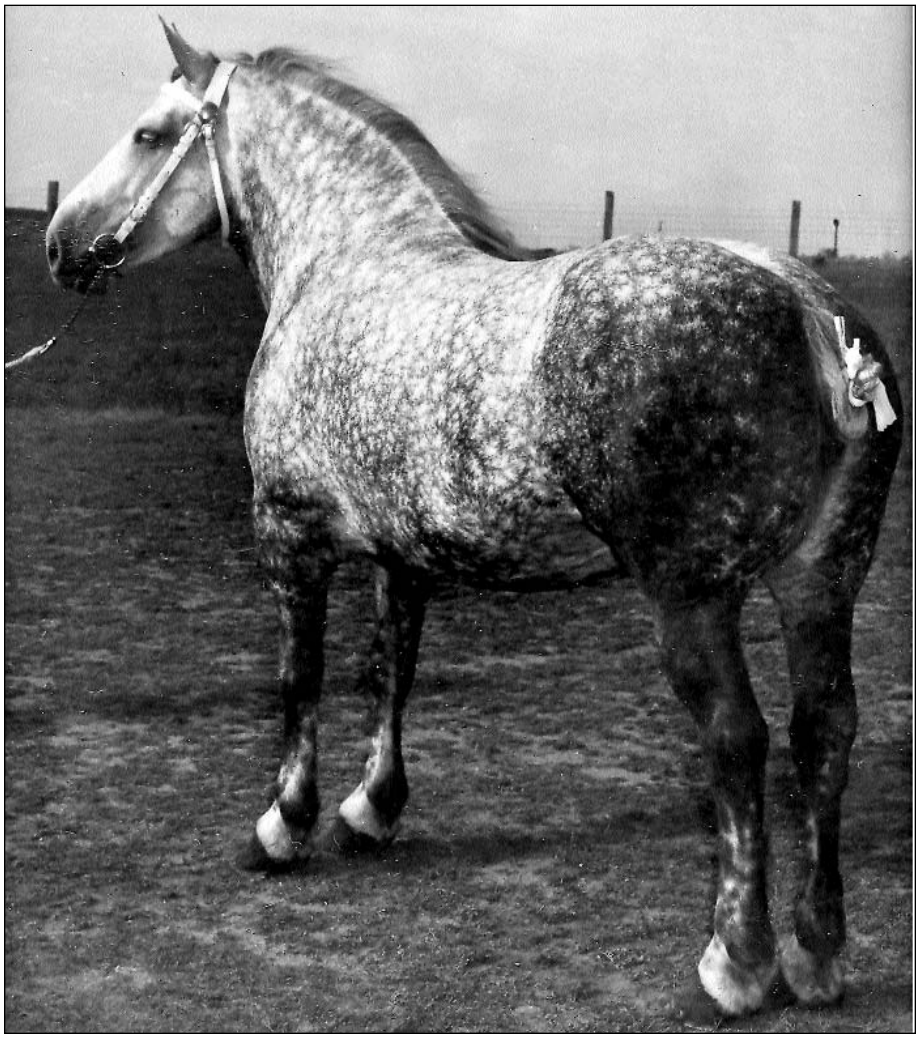
For most farms at the time, Percherons were primarily a draft animal, pulling and hauling farm machinery. While this was also the case at the Brandtjen farm, they took the breeding and care of the Percherons a little farther.

The magnificent Percheron was developed in France in the small province of Perche. It traces its heritage back to the Arabian horse and was modified into three types, the light horse, the draft horse, and the intermediate or post horse. Used as a war-horse or a farm horse, the Percheron is known as a powerful but gentle and docile animal. "A boy in his teens can handle a big team effectively," promoted the Percheron Society of America.[56] Selective breeding created a larger and larger horse due to the popular demand for them. There were more Percherons in the United States than any other draft horse breed.

As early as 1935 the farm was winning prizes for their young Percherons at the county fair where they took second place for a stallion under one year old.[57] By 1940 the farm was showing their horses in the National Percheron Show at the Minnesota State Fair Grounds, where Brandtjens came in third.[58] In 1943 Brandtjen acquired the Dean Curtis Percheron herd from Ames, Iowa. The 12 purebred mares and one stallion increased the Brandtjen herd to 41, an unusual number of draft horses to feed and bed daily for a farm in Dakota County at the time.[59] By 1944 Brandtjen farms had achieved a national reputation when it was ranked seventh in the United States in a list of independent Percheron breeders. Henry Brandtjen had purchased an additional 16 mares and one stallion in 1943.[60] The stallion receiving a great deal of attention at the time was Corregidor, who was compared to Calypso, the great stallion who had been stud at the Lakewood Farms in Rock Rapids, Iowa in the early 20th century. Calypso was considered "one of the most perfect types in the breed in America." His excellence as a sire made the reputation for Lakewood Farms.[61]

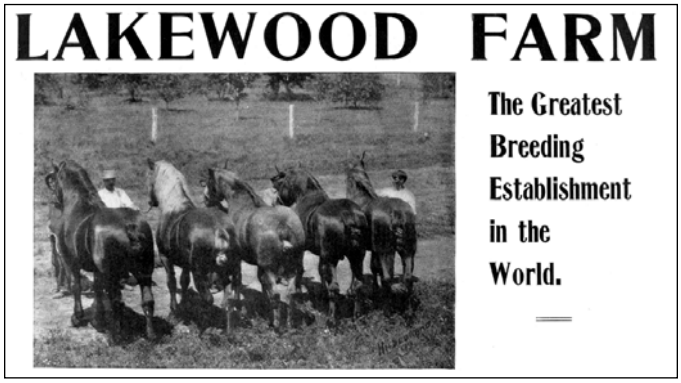
In 1946, Henry Brandtjen purchased a herd of Percheron draft horses from the Dyer farm in Iowa. Kenneth Dyer was hired to condition and train the horses, whose average weight was 2,000 pounds and who stood between 15 and 19 hands high.[62]

Among the horses acquired by the farm were Top Sergeant, Lakewood Dragonette, and Lakewood Joy. Top Sergeant, born in 1944, was the product of the M.H. Woody Farm in Greentown, Indiana. He was sired by Topper and his dam was La Belle. Lakewood Dragonette was the product of the Dyer farm. Sired by Lakewood Dragon, who became as stud at Brandtjen's, her dam was Lakewood La June.[63] In 1946, Brandtjen's Lakewood Dragonette was named Grand Champion Percheron mare at the Illinois State Fair, beating competition from the largest breeders in the nation.[64] She then won both the senior and grand champion prizes at the 1946 American Royal show in Kansas City, Missouri, one of the top shows in the nation.[65] Top Sergeant, a four-year-old stallion, made a sweep at the 1948 International Livestock Show in Chicago. He won first prize for a four-year-old, senior champion stallion, international grand champion stallion, and international grand champion American bred stallion.[66] Lakewood Joy won reserve grand champion mare at the same show. In so doing, the Brandtjen Farms broke all records for Minnesota winnings in the 48-year history of the International Livestock Show.[67]



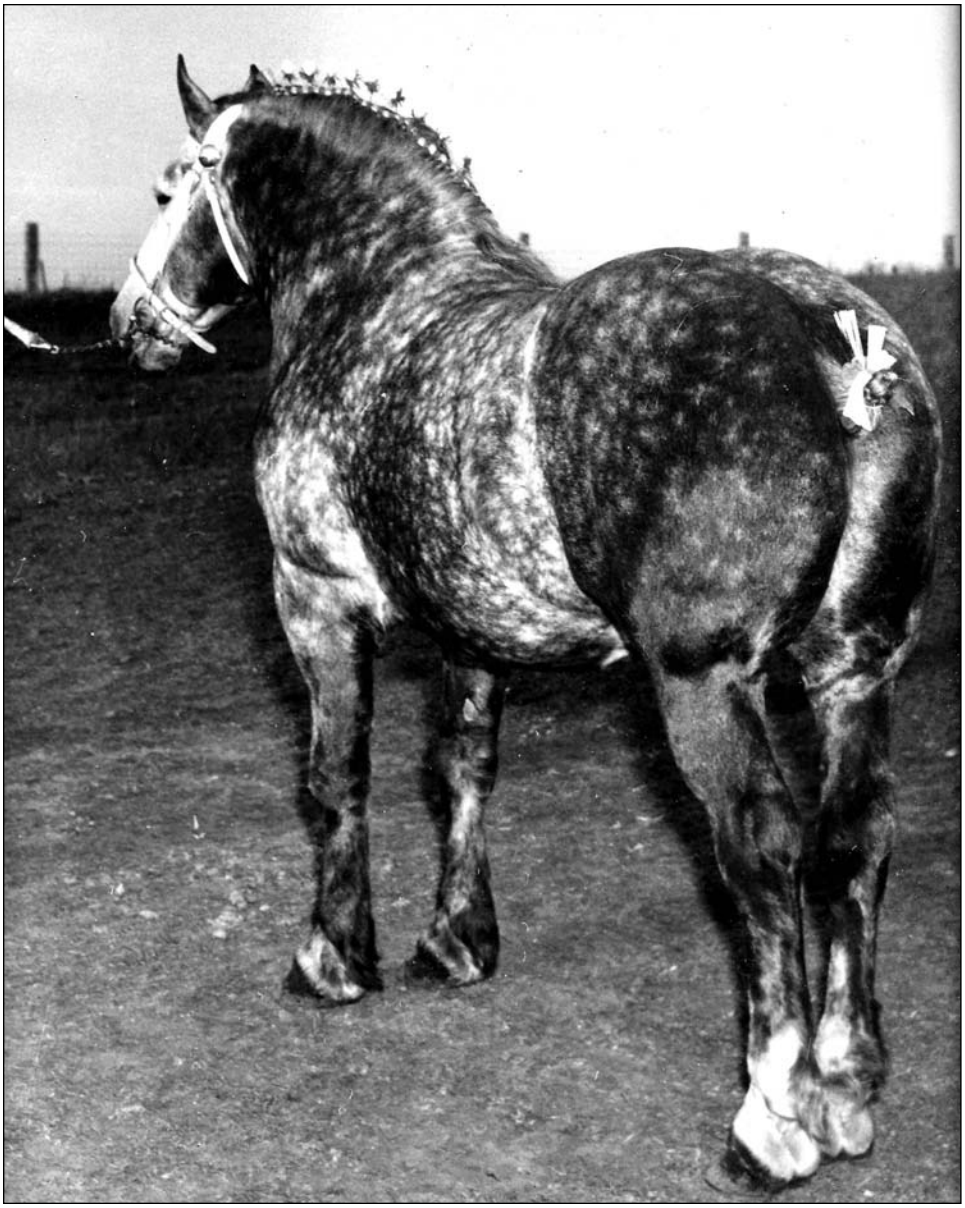
As a seven-year-old, Lakewood Dragonette was the Reserve Grand Champion Mare at the International Livestock Show at Chicago in 1949.

In order to continue the success of earlier years, the Brandtjens attempted to foresee the rulings of judges. At a time when the trend was to breed lighter-weight Percherons, the Brandtjens bred heavy draft horses, ones able to do a day's work. The judges chose Top Sergeant over a less heavy horse at the show in Chicago. The foundation herd had to be an outstanding one. After purchasing the Curtis and Dyer herds, any additions to the pedigree determined its future. In 1948, the Brandtjen herd consisted of 39 Percherons which produced about 10 foals per year, sired by Top Sergeant and Lakewood Dragon.[68]



Lakewood Farm was internationally known for its superior stock of champion Percherons. Breeders Gazette, 1909.

The Brandtjens' fame was enhanced when General Mills featured Henry, Jr., and Top Sergeant in a Wheaties advertisement in the summer of 1949. The advertisement stated that Henry "even ate his Wheaties in boxcars while traveling between shows."[69] The Percherons were sold in the 1950s.

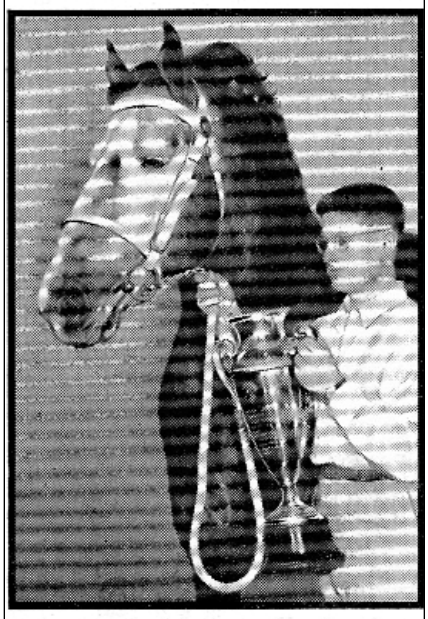


Top Sergeant took top honors in 1948 as the Grand Champion Stallion at the Minnesota State Fair, the American Royal Livestock Show, and the International Grand Champion Stallion at the International Livestock Show at Chicago.

Wins International Grand Championship

College Engineering Student Shows Prize Stallion

FARMINGTON, MINN.—Henry A. Brandtjen, Jr., showed his father's Percheron stallion, "Top Sergeant", at Chicago's 1948 International Livestock Show. Result? A Grand Championship —climax of four other Grand Champion awards won at Minnesota State Fair and American Royal Livestock Shows! This 20-year-old University of Minnesota engineering student makes good use of his spare time.



Brandtjen and "Top Sergeant"

HENRY covered a lot of ground between shows last year. Exhibited at nine major shows, including two in Canada. Even ate his Wheaties in boxcars while traveling between shows with horse! A husky 5 ft. 9 in., 175 lbs., Henry often eats these nourishing whole wheat flakes for between-meal snacks at shows. At home, eats Wheaties several times a week. Likes them most with raspberries or bananas, and lots of cream. Had your Wheaties today? Flakes of 100% whole wheat. Famous training dish!

* * *

Youngest of the three generation Brandtjen family, Henry says a big bowlful of Wheaties is "A good picker-upper". Likes flavor and convenience of Wheaties, too. "We've kept plenty in our house since I can remember," says farm champ.

• • •

Three generations of Brandtjens enjoy these tasty whole wheat flakes. All generations in your family getting their Wheaties?

Top Sergeant was featured in several magazines in this Wheaties advertisement. Courtesy of of the General Mills Archives.

The Farm at War

When Dakota County went to war in 1941, every household, urban and rural, was affected. The Brandtjen farm was no exception. Tire rationing and travel restrictions put an end to the milk and egg deliveries to St. Paul in 1942.[70] Gasoline rationing put the Percherons in front of farm equipment again. Every inch of ground was used for growing crops to win the war.

Early in the war, there were organizations throughout the United States that endeavored to find inland employment for the thousands of Japanese-Americans who were interned on the west coast. Gladys Brandtjen worked with an organization in St. Paul to bring Frank and Ann (Ishikawa) Kawakami to the farm from the Camp Tanforan Assembly Center at San Bruno, California. Frank was the son of Nampo Kawakami who came to the United States from Japan in 1903. Frank and Ann lived in Berkeley, California, before the war where Frank was a reporter for one of the Japanese-American newspapers in San Francisco.[71] Frank worked as a houseman and Ann as a cook. During their stay, they expanded their family with the birth of Nancy in November 1946.[72] They returned to the west coast after the war.[73]

Ann and Frank Kawakami spent the duration of the Second World War working for the Brandtjen family. Courtesy of Charles Diesen.

As the war dragged on, farm labor became increasingly scarce. In 1943 the Emergency Farm Help Program was established to relieve the labor shortage. War prisoners were used as farm labor to help bring in the harvest. German prisoners of war were housed at Faribault and bussed to a variety of locations to supplement local farm labor. Henry Brandtjen, Bert Schwinghamer, and Claude Dobmeier all spoke fluent German and could converse easily with their new laborers.[74]

The PoWs at the farm were from General Erwin Rommel's renowned Afrikacorps. The disciplined prisoners were allowed by Brandtjen to use farm machinery in harvesting the crops and ate their meals, prepared by the farm's cook, together with the hired farm workers. The PoWs also dug trenches to the five farm laborer houses west of the main house in preparation for plumbing. Until then, none of the five houses had running water.[75]

The Workers

The farm employed an average of 12 laborers, but during busy times of the year it would employ up to 18 men. Over its 30-year history, dozens of men and women worked on the farm, in the mess hall and in the main house. The following are just a few of the people who made the farm work.

Planting and harvest time during the Second World War was difficult on the farm. Good labor was in short supply. These seasonal field laborers shared their meals with the farm's full time dairy staff. Like all buildings on the farm, the mess hall's windows were required to have blackout shades in event of an enemy air raid.

Bert and Gertrude Schwinghamer lived and worked on the farm for 17 and 14 years respectively. Gert, a city girl from Minneapolis, got involved in all aspects of the farm's life, from bookkeeping to milking, from butchering chickens to cooking for the farm laborers, "anything to help my husband, otherwise I would never see him."[76] They traveled the country showing and acquiring Guernseys for the farm. Her favorite was Asterbilt, the well-known herd sire. In 1952 the Schwinghamers moved to Albany, Minnesota, where they farmed for the next 30 years. In an effort to entice them to stay, Henry Brandtjen, Sr., told Bert to name his salary but they wanted to have a farm of their own. Gertrude became a dairy cattle judge after encour-

Gertrude Koorn's life changed when she married Bert Schwinghamer in 1938. She quickly adapted to her new situation in life and worked along side her husband, sharing in his accomplishments. Courtesy of Gertrude Schwinghamer.

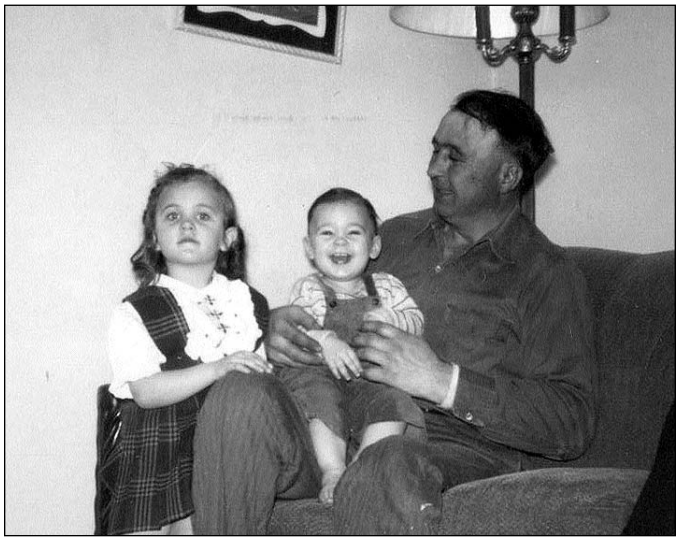
The Albert and Viola Diesen family performed an essential role on the farm. Albert milked 50 cows three times a day, and Viola prepared meals for the hired men. This photograph, taken in front of their home in the spring of 1944, shows Albert holding young Charles and Viola with Dallas. Courtesy of Charles Diesen.

Parties of all kinds were popular at the farm. This birthday party at the Schwinghamer residence included the Bruce and Dobmeier families and several guests. Courtesy of Mary Dobmeier.

aging Bert to judge. She then became the first woman inducted in the Minnesota Livestock Hall of Farm.[77] Bert died in 1997 and Gert in 2002.

Albert Diesen came from Sunfish Lake to work on the farm as a dairyman in 1941. He and his wife, Viola, came to the farm with their son Dallas. Charles was born in 1944 at Sanford hospital in Farmington. Viola cooked for the laborers. A bull gored Albert in September 1943 when he and another employee entered the bullpen. "An irate Guernsey decided to toss them out," wrote the *Dakota County Tribune*.[78] Gladys Brandtjen called Farmington and ordered an ambulance. When she called Henry in St. Paul, he ordered an ambulance from St. Paul. The two raced to the Brandtjen farm and Diesen was taken to St. Luke's hospital in St. Paul where he was treated for head, chest and leg injuries. According to his son, Charles, Albert didn't care to stay at the farm much longer and the family moved into Farmington in October 1945 where he worked at the Twin Cities Milk Producers plant and later as a plumber. They had one more son, Gene, in 1946.[79] Viola died in 1990 and Albert died in 2001.

Branch K. Bruce came to the farm from Columbia, Missouri, to serve as the saddlebred trainer in 1944 . He, his wife Earmel, and their children lived in the old Moran house across 170th Street. Two children, Mary and Bernadette, were



Claude Dobmeier with Mary and John at their home on the farm in 1950. A friend of the Schwinghamers in Albany, Dobmeier came in the 1930s to work on the farm. He was responsible for the fieldwork, a daunting task on the 840-acre farm. Courtesy of Mary Dobmeier.

born to them in 1948 and 1958.[80] Their oldest daughter, Earmel graduated from Farmington High School in 1957.[81] Bruce also had a medical emergency at the farm. While binding oats, his hand became caught in the machine. Using all his strength he jerked his hand free. He was first transported to Sanford Hospital and then to St. Luke's in St. Paul. His hand was so badly mangled it was amputated.[82] Henry Brandtjen, Sr., had two artificial hands made for him, one a utility hand, with a hook, and the other a "dress" hand, with black skin and hair.[83] Bruce worked on the farm through the 1950s, until the saddlebreds were sold. The family moved to St. Paul where Earmel died in 1967 and Branch died in 1983.

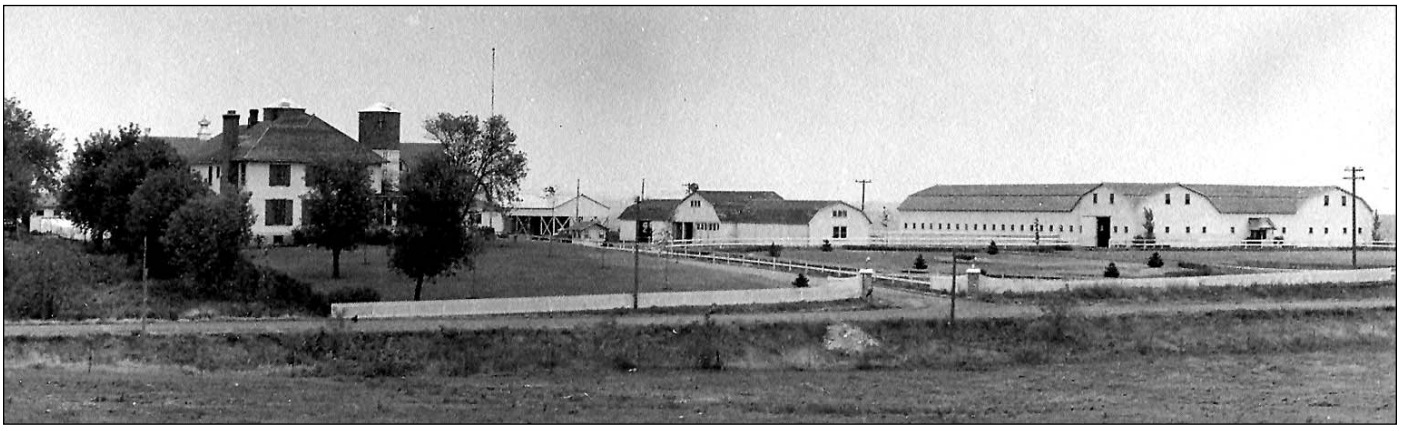
Claude Dobmeier, also a native of Albany, Minnesota, came to the farm in the 1930s. Among other things, he drove the Brandtjen boys to St. Paul Academy every day and eventually became the superintendent of farmlands. He met Helen Cunniff, who played piano in a local jazz band. They married in 1944. They had two children while they were at the farm, Mary in 1946 and John in 1949. During World War II, when the farm employed German PoWs, Dobmeier interacted extensively with them. Thirty years later, the daughter of one of the prisoners sought him out while she was traveling in the United States. She wanted to meet "the man who had shown kindness to her father all those years ago." The family moved to Rosemount in 1951 where Claude worked as a mechanic. Claude died in 1978 and Helen died in 1989.[84]

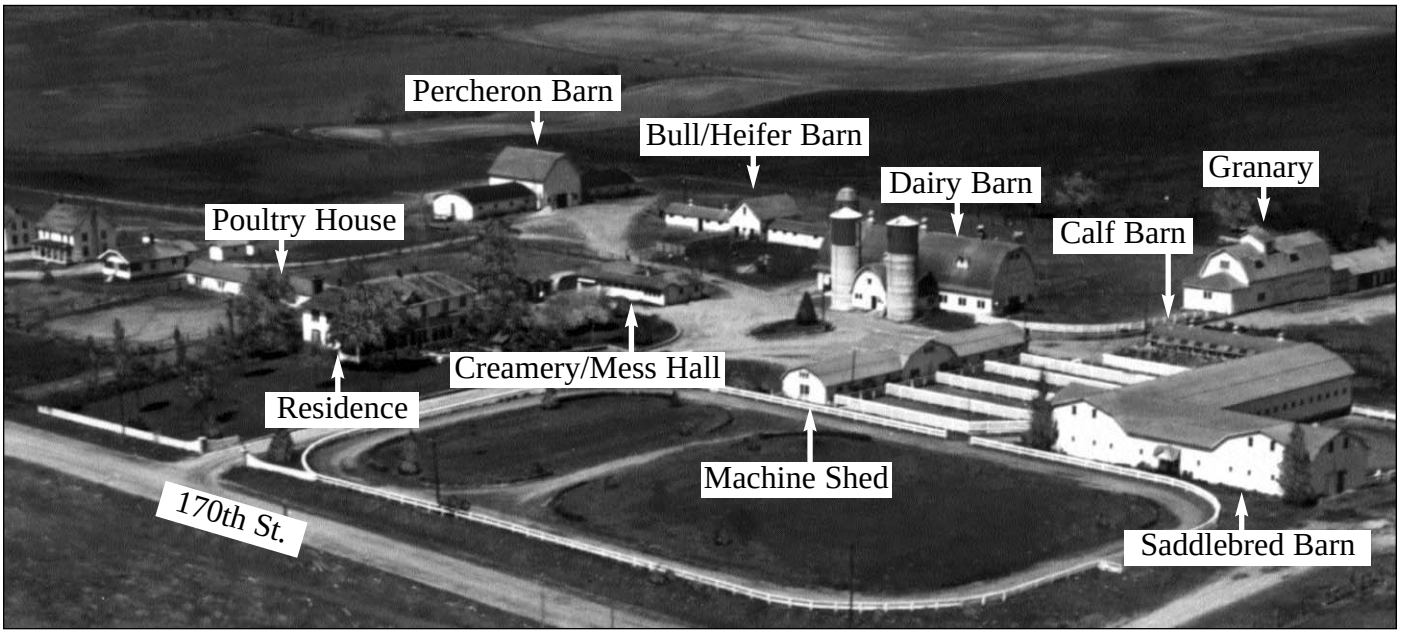
The Work is Done

In 1959 Henry, Sr., made the difficult decision to sell his beloved Guernseys. It was the largest dispersal of dairy cattle in the State of Minnesota since 1947. Of the 125 head for sale, 124 were directly descended from the herd sire, Horse Shoe Conrad's Asterbilt.[85] When the day came, May 16, 1959, he welcomed the crowd remarking that the herd was the result of 27 years of work. "You're going to judge now whether we've done a good job. This is a terribly hard thing for me to say, but the herd is for sale."[86]

He could not bear to watch. He saw the first cow sold, Brandtjen's R. Ultimate, and withdrew to the house. From there, he could still see the entire herd pass out of his ownership. It was no longer necessary to grow alfalfa for hay or grain for feed or straw, so 560 acres went into corn and 200 into soybeans.[87] Henry Brandtjen, Sr., died three years later at the age of 71. Gladys died at 84 in 1980. The farm has remained in the family, the land and house rented out.

The Brandtjen Stock Farm was many things to many people. For some, it was a place of employment, for others it was a "showplace" to see what could be accomplished with dedicated resources and the most modern farming techniques. Moreover, it was a classroom where knowledge acquired by years of work and carefully planned development was shared with students and other farmers. No other farm in Dakota County's history approached its many accomplishments.



Built for the pleasure of the Brandtjen family, the farm was never expected to be profitable. Those individuals and families who were employed there, and students and visitors who came to the farm to learn, benefited from the farm's accomplishments.

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