



Original Heaton Homestead

Photo taken from the Clearwater Remembers Book

Heaton farmer-settlers yield Clearwater legacy

Pioneers Tertius and Fatima Heaton and their seven children headed west in their covered wagon from Waterbury, Vermont, settling briefly in Wisconsin in 1857. In 1859, they moved on a bit, making their home in what would become Lynden Township, Clearwater, Minnesota.

Tertius and Fatima married in 1843. Their children were Phedora, born in 1844; John, 1845; Mary, who died at two months, 1847; Harry, 1849; Homer, 1851; Merry, 1853; and Jim, 1855.

The Heatons owned various pieces of land, through the years, according to their great-grandson Lyle Heaton, a lifelong Clearwater resident. In addition to farming, Tertius served on The Commons, which later became the Lynden Township Board.

Tertius's son, Homer, purchased property in the area in 1898, and that site has been designated a Century Farm. Homer devoted his life to farming, according to a booklet prepared for a Century Farm celebration held in 1998. "He was a successful farmer by farming 175 acres, which he improved and developed, including erecting the house and all the buildings himself." Homer married Ida Slattery in April 1880, and the couple had seven children who survived.

Homer and Ida's son, James P. Heaton, born in January 1887, married Mildred M. Watts in November 1922. The couple had five children, and purchased the homestead in 1932. James died of a heart attack in October 1939.

James and Mildred's son, Lyle, and his wife, Marlys, purchased the homestead in 1952. Lyle, his brother, Curtis, and sisters Alice, Marion and Joyce and families hosted a Century Farm celebration in August, 1998, with many friends and relatives attending. "We had the yard full," Lyle said. "They came with campers and everything" to share "family history tidbits" during a program staged on a wagon. Celebration visitors also toured the original home on the property, to view the early furnishings and mementos. That house was torn down a year or two later.

Fourth generation, Lyle, pursues diverse occupations

Lyle, born June 10, 1928, attended school through eighth grade. But “times were tough,” he said, so he stayed home and farmed after that. “We milked eight cows and had 200 laying hens, and raised hogs.” He sold Foxbilt Feeds and operated a portable feed grinder and a corn sheller, to supplement the farm income.

But he recalls a big adventure with two friends, at the age of 16. “We caught a freight train while it was stopped to take on water,” somewhere near Sartell. “We rode a boxcar until they kicked us off in western Minnesota. But we jumped back on and went to Valley City.” The boys worked in harvest fields for a couple of months, he said, then hitchhiked back home. “All the money we earned went to our mothers to pay for whatever was needed” for the farm and family.

At 18, Lyle began hauling cans of milk and cream for the Clearwater Creamery. “I started driving for Joe Paumen, picking up cream from farmers. Then, in the early ‘50s, I bought the truck from the creamery.” At that time, he was living on the farm with his mother and two of his sisters. “There was a draft going on, but I was farming and helping to support the family” so wasn’t drafted for a while.

Lyle married Marlys Pramann in June 1952, and the couple had four children: Dawn; twins Kevin and Keith; and Denise. Marlys was teaching school in Elk River when they first married, he said, and later drove school bus. She died in September 1983. Each of their three children later purchased a portion of the original homestead. Kevin died May 23, 2012, of renal cancer.

In 1954, when the Army drafted Lyle, he sold the milk truck. Serving until 1956, he was first stationed in North Carolina. His company was about to go overseas when he was, instead, recruited as a company carpenter at Manhattan Air Force Base in Coney Island, New York. He was based there the remainder of his time in service.

After his military interval, Lyle returned home to farm and to sell feed and chickens. In the fall of 1969, he built the home where he currently lives, on the homestead.

Ventures, businesses diversify through the years

Lyle’s next business venture was in 1969, buying grain elevators in Annandale, which he operated until selling them to Centra-Sota in 1976.

His community connections included serving on the Township Board for a term in the 1980s and serving as president of the Clearwater Lions during its 25-year anniversary. Lyle was a charter member of the Clearwater Lions Club.

Another travel adventure, more far-reaching than his early train trip to North Dakota, marked Lyle’s final years before retirement, when Voigt bus company asked him to drive a tour bus to Denver. A year or so later, he also began to drive buses for the St. Paul Farmers Union, and drove for both firms for roughly 25 years, until 2003. These trips included six to Alaska; several to Canada, including Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island; to Florida and California, to Disneyland and Disney World; and other places. On one trip to New York City, he said, he had 48 people, and guided many of them around town on the subways. These bus trips took him an average of 75,000 to 100,000 miles a year, he said, with “never an accident.”

Since retiring in 2003, Lyle said, he likes to leave Minnesota when the weather gets cold. He has bought and fixed up park models and sold them, in Mesa, Arizona; as well as wintering three years in McAllen, Texas, and six years in Fort Meyers, Florida.

Possessions share historic glimpses

Brief mention is made in the Heaton's Century Farm celebration booklet, of items brought to Minnesota by Tertius and Fatima: "Two items they brought with them are a musket and a clock that has all wooden cog wheels.

Lyle also said that, during the centennial celebration, "we rigged up a pumpjack with an engine and showed (those attending) how we got water" in the early days.

And, when asked, Lyle was willing to talk about another possession of historical interest. Here's his story: "I got a still from Joe Pudelko on March 3, 1993. Joe said if I wanted it, I could have it, so I went over to his place and brought it home. I've stored it ever since."



Photo courtesy of Stearns History Museum

The still became an item of interest, he said, when author Elaine Davis of St. Cloud heard about it. Davis, originally from Albany, Minnesota, has written a book, *Minnesota 13*, about Central Minnesota's Prohibition-era activities.

"She had put a book together and I got a copy from (daughter) Dawn." Elaine's item in the St. Cloud paper asked for information on stills, Lyle said, "so I called her and said I had some stuff that came from the Holdingford area. She came over, real excited, about me having all that stuff: a stove, boiler, cooling can, two testers to check alcohol content, the old table, a little brown jug, and a 55-gallon wood stave barrel and paddle to use in the fermenting process."

In August 2014, Davis returned with two other women, to see the still and talk about it. They "took a lot of pictures of the stuff and of me," Lyle said. "They said they were from Hollywood and planning to make a movie about making moonshine."

The rest of that story is yet to be told.

– *Written by Virginia Lee for the Clearwater Area Historical Society 2015*