

Time Tracs

by Jim Ingram

This is the third in a series on the Lessiter centennial farm by Jim Ingram, a local historian.

It was now time for Milton John Lessiter (son of Frank and Nora) to take over the farm. He is better known as John Lessiter.

The year was 1931 and John had just graduated from Michigan Agricultural College (now known as Michigan State University). In the midst of the Great Depression and with few jobs available, John returned to the family farm.

He married Donald Taylor of Lake Orion in 1938 and they had two children, Frank and Janet. They all lived on the Lessiter family farm.

In the early years of the Lessiter farm, the emphasis had been on breeding of beef cattle and Shropshire sheep. In the 1920s, the farm switched to a dairy operation in addition to the sheep.

John made another significant change in the farm operation in the late 1950s when he changed over to egg production. At one point the farm housed 2,500 hens.

John was following in his ancestor's footsteps when he became active in civic affairs. His uncle Floyd was Orion Township supervisor in 1918 and later appointed Oakland County Poor Commissioner.

His father Frank was township supervisor for 10 years in the 1920s. He was also on the board of education, was a justice of the peace and active in the Democratic party.

John was a long-time member of the Lake Orion Board of Education in the 1940s and 1950s. He was elected Orion Township supervisor in 1961 and would remain in office through 1972.

During that time he cut back on farming and eventually sold his egg business.

The Lessiters started selling off some of their

property in the 1920s. Between 1923 and 1926, they sold the acreage west of Baldwin that included the 125 acre Dennis Lake (later renamed Heather Lake) to Oscar Webber, then president of the J.L. Hudson Company department store, for his farm and country estate, Lakefield Farm.

John continued to sell portions of the farm, selling the last of the farm acreage to Stan Aldrich in 1988.

John's still alive. He recently moved from his home on old Baldwin Court to Wisconsin to be near his son Frank.

For more information on the Lessiter farm see "Centennial Farm" by Frank Lessiter (1997) and the oral history tape Jim Ingram did with John Lessiter (Aug. 5, 1994) at the Orion Township Library.



John Lessiter