

Family Farm Houses Historic Deere Plows

By Lydia Noyes, Contributing Editor

The oldest family farm in Iowa holds a piece of history—a pair of moldboard plows made by John Deere himself. The family's founding farmer, Heman Shaff, settled the property in 1837 after walking most of the way from Sodus, N.Y., behind a covered wagon. Though his goal was central Illinois, he pushed on to Iowa with the promise of more available farmland. Studies have verified that the property remains the oldest family-owned business in the state.



Photo courtesy of Shaff Family Farm

Shaff farm in Iowa has Deere plows dating as far back as 1839.

All 240 acres of the original farm were purchased for \$1.25 an

acre. Shaff built a 2-room log cabin on the property, bolstered by limestone that made the walls 3-ft. thick. As a defense against attacks, he built square shooting ports within the walls. This cabin still stands today. In fact, the current farmhouse was built around it. And nearby is the farm garage that stores the two John Deere plows constructed nearly 200 years ago.

Shaff purchased the first plow directly from Deere's Illinois shop in 1839. He traveled 60 miles to get it, paid \$24, and brought it to the farm, where it's remained for 180 years and counting. The plow was the first John Deere tool to make it to Iowa, possibly even the first to cross the Mississippi.

Deere's plows were nothing short of revolutionary for the era. At the time, westward expansion pushed demand for rugged farm tools, but the traditional cast iron farming implements came up short of

cutting through the region's tough prairie soils. Deere built a self-scouring steel plow and began selling them on demand. While he started with just three plows from 1838 to 1839, he increased production to 10 the year after when Shaff showed up at his doorstep to buy one.

The steel plow quickly became popular within the community. Family lore reveals that Shaff's eager neighbors even borrowed the plow at night, working their fields by lantern light. It was such a game-changer that Shaff returned the following year for a second one.

Now in its seventh generation on the property, the Shaff family is happy to protect these tools that transformed America, one field at a time.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Shaff Family Farm, Camanche, Iowa (Facebook: Shaff Family Farm).



Kuhlengel owns an immaculately restored Avery 14-28 along with an Avery Yellow Kid threshing machine and a Power Lift plow.

Avery 14-28 Is Restored To 'Like New' Condition

Although his occupation as a neurosurgeon and spinal cord injury specialist is a long way from agriculture, Keith Kuhlengel still maintains his childhood interest in old and large farm tractors, especially Rumely and Avery models. One of the prized tractors in his collection of four Averages is a 1922 model 14-28.

Kuhlengel bought the faded, nearly century-old tractor from a Texas collector and knew firsthand it could use a good "freshening up." He had a full body makeover and paint restoration done by J.C. Tractor Restoration and Repair of Indiana before bringing it to his Pennsylvania farm.

Kuhlengel grew up on an Illinois farm, learning to drive tractors at age 7, and has been interested in them ever since. He always liked the big old steam engines and acquired an Advance-Rumely Oil Pull in 1988, found just 4 miles from where he lives. Over time, he added four Avery models, including an 8-16, a 12-25, a 25-50, and the 14-28. The 25-50 was from a collector in Palm Beach, Fla., whose buildings and business were severely damaged by two hurricanes.

All of his Avery models worked hard on the mostly flat and rolling Illinois farmland, but they weren't too popular in hilly Pennsylv-

vania where Kuhlengel lives now. He says, "If they aren't sitting on level ground when used to power threshing machines or other belt-driven implements, the side torque could twist the frame just enough so the engine wouldn't move back and forth on the frame to shift gears." It's an unusual design that some collectors say hampered Avery's progress.

Kuhlengel's immaculately restored Avery tractor has two special Avery implements. He acquired a rare and original 1920 Avery Yellow Kid threshing machine from Kansas, where the dry air kept it in excellent condition. He also owns a 4-bottom Power Lift plow that he bought in South Dakota, where he says it probably saw extensive use behind an Avery 14-28 or other tractors.

Kuhlengel is President of the National Rumely Collectors Association, which takes him to events across the country. He also participates in the Rough and Tumble Engineers Historical Association Show in Kinzers, Penn. For several years, he's been the show announcer for the Pageant of Threshing.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Keith Kuhlengel, Lancaster, Penn. (krkuhlengel@gmail.com).



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