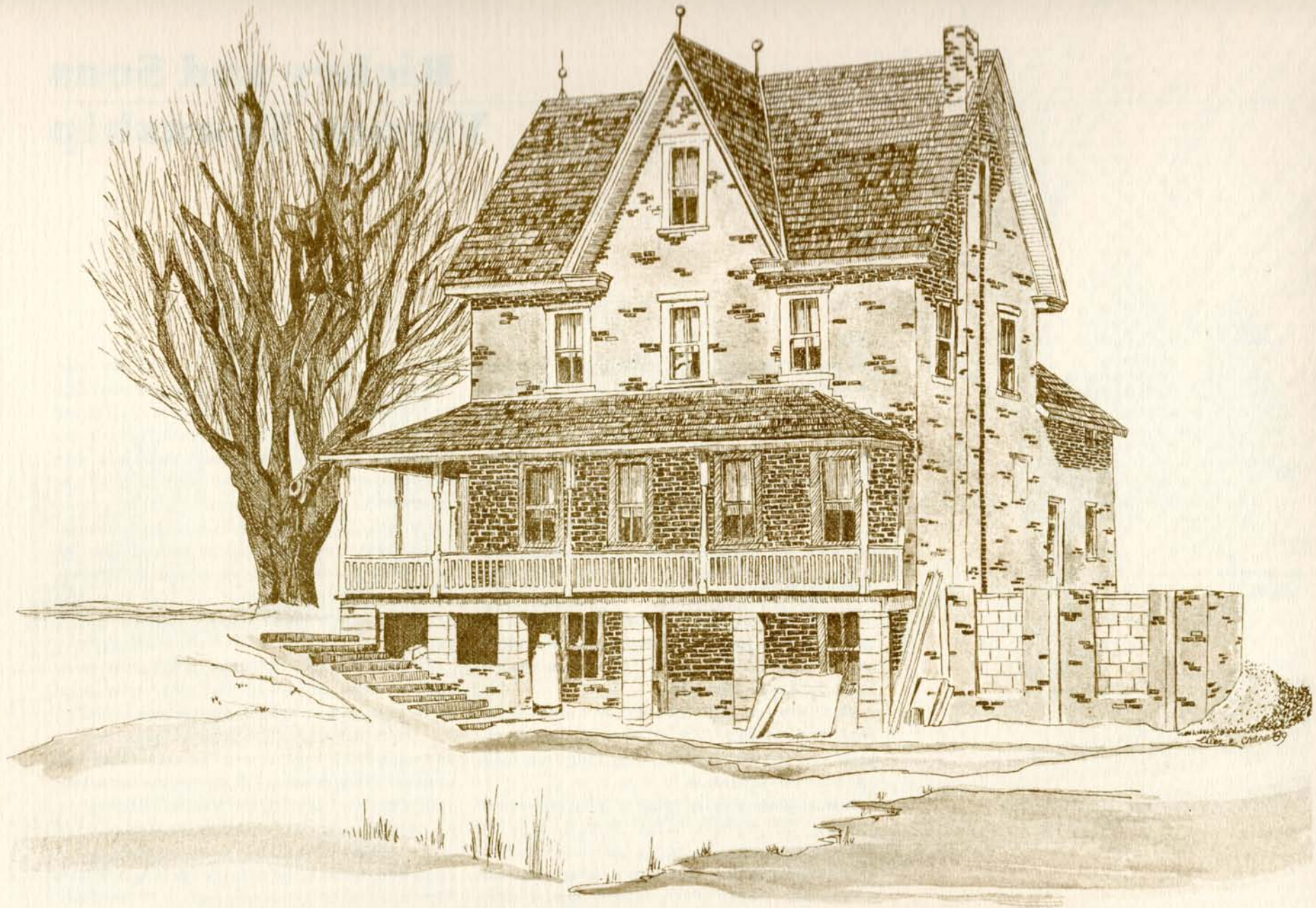


Century Farm Awards

New Jersey Agricultural Society

April 26, 1989



J & J Burcham Farm

Millville

The 35 acre J & J Burcham Farm in Millville, Cumberland County, began its 120 year history not as a farm but as a brick factory. Amaziah Burcham, grandfather of the farm's current owners, twins Janice and Jeanette Burcham, bought the farm in 1869 because of its rich clay deposits.

Amaziah, originally from New England, came to Millville after the Civil War and married Mary Clunn. Together they bought the farm in South Millville, which overlooks the Maurice River and Menantico Creek. Amaziah started the brick factory, and the farm was mainly for the work-horses, used to haul wood from the farmlands. Grain was raised to feed the horses, and other farm animals were raised to feed the farm workers.

The twins' father, Frank A. Burcham, was born in 1877, and he and his wife Maud operated the brick factory until 1941, when the war declared brickmaking a non-essential industry. All of the factory workers had to take defense-related jobs, and the factory remained closed after the war.

Janice and Jeanette were born in 1925. As they grew up, they had chores to do on the farm after school, such as feeding some 200 chickens, caring for their pony and the two work horses, and keeping the wood box and kerosene lamps filled.

Frank A. died in 1948, and the twins' uncle George, a dairy farmer in Philadelphia, came to the farm in 1951. Maud was very ill, and George had come to help out for a couple of weeks, but ended up staying and worked to make the farm the productive operation that it still is today.

All of the meadowland on the farm was becoming overgrown with small shrubs and trees.

George worked hard at clearing this area, filling muskrat holes and repairing the dikes. A friend of George's from Philadelphia had given his daughter a lamb, and when it grew into a sheep, George brought it to the farm in Millville, starting the sheep operation that still thrives here today.

Janice and Jeanette have not always lived and worked on the farm. Janice has been back on the farm since 1975, when she retired from the Navy Nurse Corps after 27 years of service. She joined the Navy in 1948, after completing her nurses training at Newark Memorial Hospital. Janice attended college while in the Navy, earning her bachelor's degree from the University of Oregon, and her master's degree from Columbia University.

Janice served in the Navy Nurse Corps during the Vietnam War, and from 1969 to 1971 was the chief nurse aboard the USS Sanctuary. She received the Vietnam Service Medal, Vietnam Campaign Medal, Vietnamese Armed Forces Medal First Class, National Defense Service Medal, Meritorious Commendation Ribbon and the Navy Commendation Medal for her service.

Jeanette also has an interesting background, beginning her career as a teacher in Washington State, then teaching for two years in Cairo, Egypt. Her time overseas included travel throughout the Middle East and Europe.

Jeanette returned to Millville in 1951 to care for her ailing mother. Maud Burcham died that year, leaving the farm to the twins.

After her mother's death, Jeanette went back to school, earning her master's degree at the University of Pennsylvania. She also studied transportation law at the Academy of Advanced

Traffic, and practiced transportation law in the federal courts before the Interstate Commerce Commission.

She also worked for a trucking firm for 33 years, in addition to working on the farm. Jeanette still returns to the classroom, working as a substitute teacher at Millville Senior High School.

Today the farm is operated solely by the twins, with the exception of someone to shear the sheep, and someone to help during hay-baling season. Janice and Jeanette grow pole lima beans, hay, tomatoes, and sweet corn, all of which is direct-marketed from their farm. In addition, they sell the eggs from their chickens, ducks and geese. After a certain age, the chickens are sold as stewers, and the ducks and geese are sold as well.

The twins also have six pigs at any given time, one of which they slaughter for themselves, and sell the others. At the present time they have 20 grown sheep and 19 lambs, and sell both the wool and the lambs. Most of the livestock is sold privately, but they also sell some at the Cowtown auction.

The twins are concerned with the encroaching development in the area. Right now the farm is quiet and surrounded by wetlands and the river, but traffic on the river causes havoc with their dikes, and increased use of Route 47 seems to bring more and more development to this southern end of New Jersey. However, the Burcham sisters seem committed to keeping the farm the thriving and productive entity that it is today.