



# Fall 2015 Newsletter

*Dedicated to educating the public and preserving the rural heritage of Illinois.*

**When you think of a family business in rural Illinois**, the family farm comes to mind with mothers and fathers hoping their sons and daughters will run the farm for generations to come. The agricultural service industry has also used the family business model, and the Illinois Rural Heritage Museum would like to salute these important businesses by telling their stories.

**Riechmann Bros LLC.**, a family owned John Deere dealer is serving the agricultural industry and has been for 93 years. The Illinois Rural Heritage Museum would like to salute this business and tell their story.

A celebration was held in 2012 marking 90 years of continuous operation-making it the oldest uninterrupted John Deere dealer in the State of Illinois which is a reason to celebrate and so they did. The anniversary party with food, entertainment, and display of old and new equipment and a big portion of Southern Illinois people in attendance made it quite a celebration indeed!

Riechmann Bros, which is in the fourth generation of family working at the business, is still under the leadership of Bill, 78 and Loyd, 73, who even though they are past retirement age have no plans to retire.

The business was founded by brothers, Hugo and Walter Riechmann in 1922 when they purchased the business of C. H. Erke. Hugo had worked for Mr. Erke as a salesman. Hugo's sons, Bill and Loyd joined the operation at a very young age and upon the sudden death of their father, Bill, age 21 and Loyd, age 15 was put in charge of sales. Walter never married so he did not have offspring to join the business.

In the early years, Massey-Harris as well as John Deere equipment was sold at the business. They did sell one of the first Massey-Harris four-wheel drive tractors before the contract was discontinued in the mid-1930s.

For a short time in the 1930s, Riechmann Bros ventured into the automobile and service business purchasing the Brammeier Automobile business selling Dodge and Plymouth cars and trucks. This was discontinued when the sale of



**Bill and Loyd Riechmann at the Okawville dealership!**

vehicles declined and farm equipment increased so that they could focus their business on agricultural interest.

They also sold horses and mules in the early years and then when the farmer was buying his first tractor, they would take the animal as a trade in.

*Continue on reverse side*

## **Christmas Open House**

The Museum will be hosting the 3<sup>rd</sup> annual Old Fashion Christmas Open House on Sunday afternoon, December 6, 2015. Have your photo taken with Santa and Mrs. Claus, enjoy some refreshments, see the trains in action and tour the Museum winter wonderland!



**Our 8<sup>th</sup> annual tractor drive and banquet will be June 4, 2016.** You will not want to miss this event. Nadine, the sassy Church Lady from "LARRY'S COUNTRY DINER" hit TV Show on RFD-TV will be our entertainment for the evening. As a church going lady she has quick advice and a sassy way of getting her point across to middle America. Every week she brings hilarious updates on the Church sign or other church related topics. Watch RFD-TV (231 on Dish) on Thursday night, 7:00 pm and hear her funny comments. Next June, come to our banquet and see her in person. Details as to time and ticket cost will follow in the next newsletter.



**Continued:**

The dealership demonstrated the use of the first combine in the county in 1926 at a farm in Addieville. Friends and neighbors came from miles around to see this piece of equipment work.

Loyd decided in the early 60s to go to school to be an auctioneer to supplement the income. He went to Mason City, Iowa for two weeks to learn the trade. Over the years, Loyd has auctioned a lot of acres of land and tons of household and farm items. However, the multi-farmer absolute auction that is held twice a year at the Okawville Park was not started until 1986. These auctions have proven to be a big hit with buyers coming from Alabama, Iowa and other states. Loyd, Loyd's son Mike, and Bill's son Keith are the three Riechmann's that are auctioneers.

An interesting fact that Loyd mentioned was that when having an antique tractor auction, buyers are usually only interested in the tractor that they can remember their dad farming with. So as the next generation comes along, the antique tractor collection will be newer tractors. That is why we need the earlier tractors displayed in Museums so we don't lose that part of history.

Eventually the dealership business expanded to Centralia and Breese, IL giving them more territory so they could serve more farmers. As the farms get bigger, they are doing business with fewer farmers. A lot of the small farms are being rented or sold to the larger farmers.

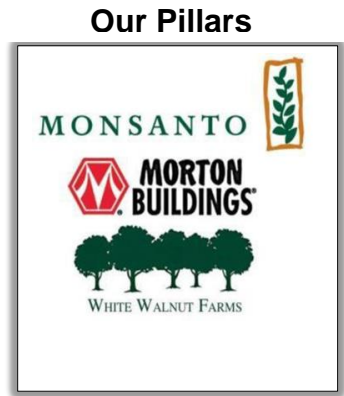
The 400 to 500 acre farmers work off the farm to supplement their income. They buy the smaller equipment, which is under 125 hp and does not cost as much so that equipment is easier to sell versus a \$300,000 piece.

Today, the technology, size and price of equipment have bought a lot of change. Tractors and combines are now equipped with automatic steering which reduces driver fatigue and saves fuel because you are not overlapping trips across the field. Yield mapping measures the productivity of a field as the grain is harvested which allows for selective application of fertilizer where it is needed and will be the most effective, plus save the farmer money.

The size of tractors and combines has become so big that the machine sheds cannot accommodate the equipment. So a farmer has to build more storage space costing more money to be able to keep his machinery under a roof. The biggest John Deere tractor now is 620 hp and a combine head is 45 foot wide. This size equipment comes with a price. Tractors can cost over \$325,000 and combines with heads over \$500,000. With all this modern technology, a farmer cannot repair their own equipment. The John Deere mechanic plugs his laptop computer to the equipment to tell him what parts need replaced.

Over the years, Riechmann Bros have seen some bad times, but Bill and Loyd said they never once thought about calling it quits. 2022 will mark 100 years of serving Southern Illinois and more than likely the celebration will be bigger than the 90 year party.

We would like to thank Riechmann Bros for loaning the Museum several unique pieces of equipment to be put on display for the public to see and for serving the agricultural industry.



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**2014**

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Knight Hawk Coal, LLC

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William K. Crawford

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**We would like to thank all of our supporters who have so graciously donated money or loaned items to be put on display to help the Illinois Rural Heritage Museum become a one of a kind Museum for visitors to see their heritage and past.**

**The Museum was a recipient of a \$25,000 Community Facility Grant in 2012** "In accordance with Federal Law and U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) policy, The Illinois Rural Heritage Museum is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, religion, sex, and familial status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) To file a complaint of discrimination, write to: USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, S.W., Washington, D.C. 20250-9410. Or call 800-795-3272 (voice) or (202)720-6382 (TDD)