



Summer 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.

The first family business to be featured is Gus C. Unverfehrt Farm Supply from Centralia, IL. UFS is in its third generation of family leadership, and it has grown to 40 plus employees and around 20 part time employees in the summer. Customers of UFS are accustomed to meeting employees with the Unverfehrt name on projects of all types.

To be a successful service provider, one needs to thoroughly understand and have experience with the industry they are serving. Gus and wife Irene began to gain this experience in 1954 when they started farming and raising hogs and cattle near Centralia. During those years, a farmer would take their livestock to the National Stock Yards and other markets near East St. Louis. The lengthy trip was made over the highways of that time, long before the interstate highways system allowed farmers to make 3 to 4 trips per day. While Gus was in East St. Louis, he would pick up supplies at the big farm stores located near the stockyards. Some of his neighbors started asking him to pick up items for them, and that is how the idea of starting a farm-supply business came about. Gus and Irene took the big step in 1961, starting Gus C. Unverfehrt Farm Supply. It is difficult to know if they anticipated what would occur in their company.

In the 60s, most of the items were supplied to livestock farmers such as livestock feed, feeding equipment, silo unloaders, and dairy equipment. As livestock markets changed shape and moved to other regions, UFS changed also. Gus and his family members witnessed the advances in farm equipment, herbicides and seeds that allowed farmers to increase the size of their grain operations. With bigger grain operations, the need for on farm grain storage came about. So in the late 70s, UFS started branching out with equipment and services geared toward grain, and the business really took off.

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The Museum will be hosting the 5th annual Quilt Show and the 1st annual toy tractor and implement display August 6-23rd. This is in conjunction with the American Thresherman Show that will be held August 13-16th. Visit the Museum and marvel over the lost art of quilt making. A quilt will be in the frame and you can watch the work in progress. A demonstration of a quilt being pieced by machine will also be something that might interest the ladies. Both vintage and new, handmade and machine pieced quilts will be on display. For the men and children, we have the toy tractors in several scale sizes, coaster wagons, and pedal tractors. Check out the other exhibits at the Museum while you are there.



The IRHM would like to introduce our newest Director, Josh Maschhoff of Carlyle, IL. He is a part of the sixth generation of the Maschhoff's a crop and livestock operation in Clinton County, Illinois dating back to 1851. He currently serves as the Senior Project Manager for the Maschhoffs, the United States largest independent pork producer network. The family has several items on loan to the Museum, including the 1912 80hp Case Steam Engine, and the Slaughterhouse display, which has recently been added. Josh's degrees include a BS from the University of Illinois, 2007, MS from Purdue University, 2014, and a MBA from Indiana University, 2014. He and his wife, Angela and son Kyler (9-28-14) live in Hoffman, IL.



Continued: The first step in that direction was selling grain bins. In the early years, the farmers would erect the bin themselves. As the farms got bigger, the farmer needed bigger bins and found that they could not afford or safely operate the specialized equipment needed to erect them. Under the leadership of Larry Unverfehrt and with the help of other family members and skilled employees, the grain system business has grown to meet the expanding yields, changing marketing tactics and advances in technology. In the early days, UFS sold 20 to 30,000 bushel grain bins to farmers. As the farmer's yields increased, the size of the bins increased, and UFS began supplying and erecting entire grain systems comprised of unloading pits, high capacity elevators, drying equipment, grain quality monitoring equipment and loading equipment for trucks moving the grain to market. Their markets also expanded to large commercial grain companies.

As the technology advances occurred in other industries, it has also been deployed to grain systems. It is common to have a touch screen computer running the entire system—turning on and off motors, monitoring and controlling the quality of grain entering and exiting a dryer, and providing quality information for the grain in each bin to computer tablets or smartphones located miles away. For example, a farmer can identify hot grain in a bin located in another state and turn the fans on in that bin using his/her smart phone.

A similar story of meeting changing needs exists of UFS's livestock service business which has thrived under Kevin Unverfehrt. The nature and size of hog, beef and dairy operations has changed dramatically and UFS has adapted to those changes.

The key to Gus' early success was the recognition of changes in the industry and filling the need that arose. He passed that same gene along to his family members who have combined hard work with a commitment to fulfilling customer needs. It will be interesting to see how future generations of the Unverfehrt family satisfy the needs that arise during the next 60 years.

The Illinois Rural Heritage Museum is pleased to announce that the Peterson Farm Brothers, Greg, Nathan, and Kendal, has joined our list of elite members on our Executive Board. They are siblings who farm together with their parents. They produce entertaining and educational videos that teach others about agriculture and it's misconceptions on their YouTube channel and other social media pages. Aside from their production on social media, they travel around the country to speak on the need and how to advocate agriculture. They have opened their farm up for public tours to further help the education process. Through all of this they hope to educate the general public on where their food comes from and what a real Midwest family farm looks like. Greg is a 2013 graduate of Kansas State majoring in agricultural communications and journalism. Nathan and Kendal are currently students at Kansas State.



Illinois Rural Heritage Museum
 187 Fairground Road
 PO Box 58
 Pinckneyville, IL 62274
 618-357-8908

irhmuseum@gmail.com
www.illinoisruralheritagemuseum.org

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)

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