

# Heritage of a Farm Near Eagle Is Told

By **BOB BOUZEK**  
Freeman Staff

**EAGLE** — When young Bobby Stanisch surveys the gently rolling 120 acres of farmland and patches of shaded woods near his home, he's looking at territory that has been in his mother's family for four generations.

Bobby, now 10, hopes some day to take over from his father, Robert K. Stanisch Sr., who began working the 120 year old Betts farm on Hy. S near Hy. 67, Feb. 1.

The heritage of the land is evident in the history books carefully kept by Bobby's mother, the former Lillian Betts; in the tradition of the 10 room house where some died; in the reminiscences handed down from one generation to another.

**OLD Jonathan Betts, Bobby's great - great - grandfather, an emigrant city dweller who homesteaded here and survived the trials of pioneering, could well be proud that "family" still is keeping the farm going.**

Jonathan came from England in 1830 and, after four years in New York state and another four years as a stage driver in Illinois and Indiana, settled in the town of Eagle July 12, 1838.

Betts and Col. Francis Draper walked from Chicago (then Fort Dearborn) earlier that year after finding the few houses in that community on stilts because of the marshy land. They returned to Chicago, then brought back their belongings on prairie schooners drawn by oxen. They paid \$1 an acre for 240 acres of government land, paying some down and 25 percent interest on the rest.

"They were about the first men to locate in these parts," the 1880 history of Waukesha county notes.

**THE PIONEERS worked** the 240 acres until 1841, when Betts took 80 acres on the west side of what now is Hy. S where the present homestead is. Later he bought 80 more acres. Sixty acres have since been sold.

The original farm site, purchased when James Polk was president and when Eagle was still part of the Northwest Territory (Wisconsin became a state in 1848), was slow to yield the fruits of the pioneers' labors.

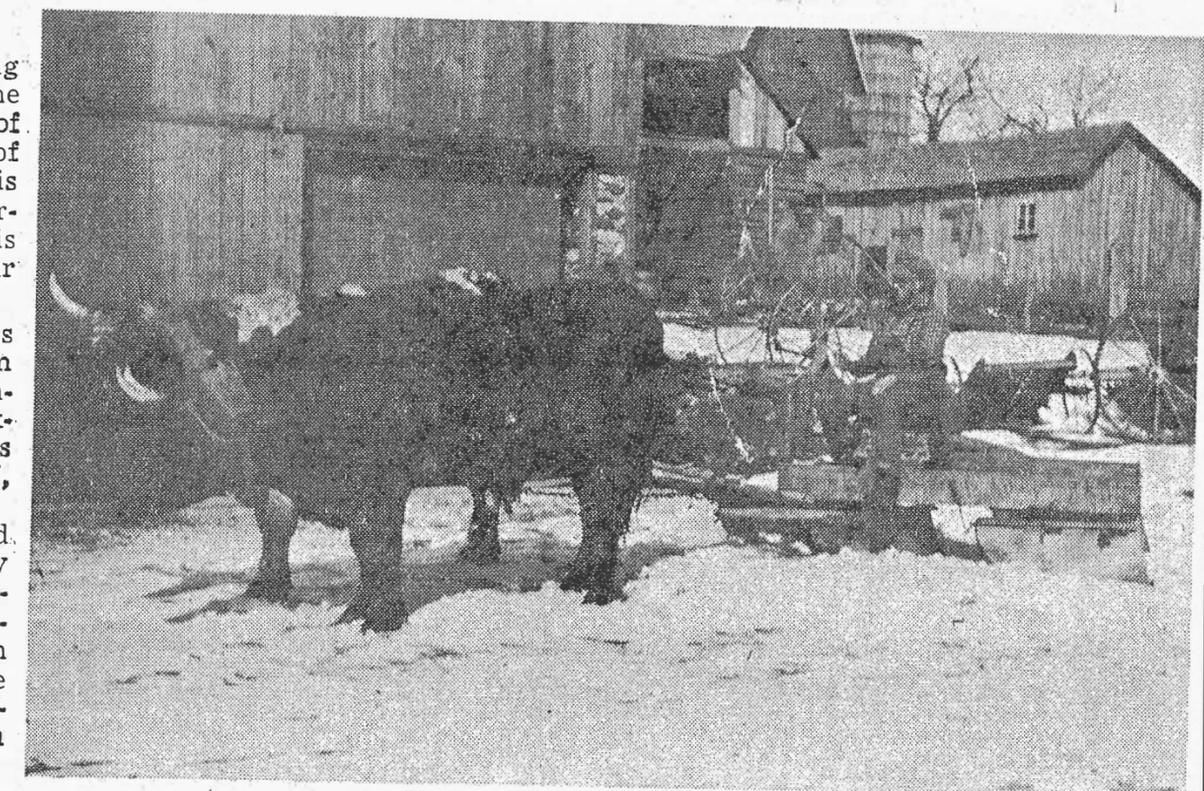
On one occasion, tradition notes, Betts and Draper journeyed back to Vermont for seed potatoes. During the severe winter that followed their return, food was scarce so the families ate the potatoes and saved the parings. These they planted in the spring and were rewarded with a crop of potatoes.

The Indians, main occupants of the Eagle area at the time, were friendly and taught the early citizens how to raise corn and hunt game. Nearby Mukwonago was an Indian settlement. Waukesha was called Prairieville.

**AFTER clearing scrub** oak from the land, settlers Betts and Draper planted 20 acres of wheat, their first crop. They lived in a large log cabin until Betts married in 1844 and built his own house on the present site.

At first the newlyweds had no furniture so they slept on the floor. A bearskin served as a door covering. Betts' wife, the former Lucina Ewer of New York, shared the pioneer's difficult life. She did spinning, weaving and knitting, made her own soap, cooked in huge black iron kettles hung over the fireplace.

Once, the story is told, Mrs. Betts was chased by a



Oxen (top picture), no longer in use on farms, transported Eagle pioneer Jonathan Betts from Chicago in 1838. In picture below, Bobby Stanisch (right), fifth generation on his mother's side to occupy the 120 year old Betts farm near Eagle, admires an old rifle. Looking on are his father, Robert K. Stanisch, Mrs. Stanisch and sister Kathleen Ann.



(Freeman Staff Photo)

bear. Jonathan shot it, skinned it and presented it to his wife for a rug. It was used as late as 1939, when Mrs. Stanisch remembers being bundled in it on a sleigh which took her to school.

Farmers' fortunes fluctuated even in those days. One year, Betts commanded \$1 a bushel in Milwaukee for 1,100 bushels of wheat. A few years later, he was given 36 cents a bushel.

**THROUGH the years, Jonathan and Lucina Betts had** two sons and five daughters. The younger son, Fremont, inherited the farm. He married Luella Burton, a local girl, in 1890. They had two sons and three daughters.

Bobby Stanisch's grandfather, Thompson Betts, was next in line. He reared four children, two sons and two daughters, among whom is Lillian, the present occupant. A son Donald farms 187 acres adjoining the homestead farm. Another son Fremont is a major in the air force, and a daughter Vivian lives in Oklahoma city.

Thompson Betts worked the farm until his death in a tractor accident July 12, 1950. His wife died Oct. 1, 1957. The farm was then rented out until Feb. 1, when Mrs. Stanisch became the first woman descendant of Jonathan Betts to occupy the farm. She and Robert Stanisch have three children: Bobby Jr., Kathleen Ann, 8, and Eugene, 2½. They expect a fourth child in November.

Stanisch said the Betts farm is "good land" and works a dairy he has which 28 are milk cows. He has corn and hay and some oats.

Stanisch uses modern methods than his wife's ancestor Jonathan. McCormick machinery has replaced oxen and horses, and gas and electric appliances grace the interior of the homestead.

However, much remains from the past, aside from memories. Practically every day Stanisch rides along Hy. 67 and Hy. S, originally plowed out with oxen by Jonathan Betts when he settled here. Twenty years ago the farm went "modern" under Thompson Betts, but the horse stanchions were taken out only a few years ago.

Bobby Stanisch is preparing for his role as the "fifth family" to run the farm. He's in 4-H club work for the first time this year, and is raising two calves, the better of which he hopes to exhibit in the county fair. He also helps with the chickens, geese and hogs and does other chores.

He was the last of the "line" to attend Ward school, a one - room building located about a mile from the farm. It was consolidated in 1955. Now he is

surprised that he walked 10 miles a day while attending the school, but he learned great things. His grandfather Betts had decided that "settling it" was too swampy.

## Rainstorm Cuts the Princess' Visit Short

**FREDERICTON, N.B. (AP)** — A brief but sharp rainstorm cut short Princess Margaret's evening at the harness races here Friday night.

The rain came at the beginning of the fourth race. A drop fell on her wrist. She looked at it, frowned and then it began to pour. She accepted the protection of a large black umbrella and, with other members of the party, made her way to cover.

When caught by the rain, the princess was hatless and coatless. She was wearing a midnight blue taffeta dress with white flecks.

**GOING  
BALD?**

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