

**Oregon Agricultural Education Foundation / Century Farm & Ranch Program
NEWS RELEASE**

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**OREGON CENTURY FARM & RANCH PROGRAM SEEKS 150 YEAR
FAMILY FARMS & RANCHES FOR 2ND SESQUICENTENNIAL AWARD**

As Oregon celebrates its 150th birthday as a state in 2009, the Oregon Century Farm & Ranch Program celebrates its 51th year of honoring Oregon families who have sustained their farming and ranching operations for 100 years or more. In 2008, the OCF&R Program introduced a new award for family farms and ranches, one that honored families who had continued the ownership and operations for 150 years or more. The first Sesquicentennial Awards were given to 14 families on February 14, 2008 at a special ceremony on the Capitol campus. The Program now seeks additional families who might qualify for that honor. An awards ceremony is being planned as part of Oregon's Sesquicentennial celebration of statehood in Salem.

Of the 1,082 recognized Century Farms and Ranches in Oregon, there are over 400 that were established prior to December 31, 1859, the year Oregon became a state. It is estimated that a percentage of those early farms and ranches may be no longer in the same family ownership, having been sold out of the family during the last fifty years since the Century Farm & Ranch Program was established in 1958.

Many of those that do remain have deep roots in Oregon agriculture thanks to the Oregon Donation Land Law of 1850. That federal legislation validated legal title to land already claimed by white settlers in Oregon Territory and served as an inducement to encourage additional immigration to Oregon by offering substantial acreage of free land. William Robbins, in his book, Landscapes of Promise: The Oregon Story 1800-1940, states that before the act expired in 1855, an estimated 25,000 to 30,000 immigrants, mostly of Euro-American descent, entered the territory. Many of those new immigrants had a farming background, so most of the early Donation Land Claims (or DLCs) were

staked out in the fertile Willamette, Umpqua and Rogue valleys. In the later 1850s, as most of the river valley bottomlands were already claimed, settlers began to seek out unclaimed land in the coastal lowland valleys or into the higher-elevation interior valleys, and finally to eastern Oregon.

Eligible family farmers and ranchers throughout Oregon are encouraged to apply for the 2009 year Sesquicentennial Award by submitting a completed application by the November 1, 2008 deadline. If applicants are not yet designated as a Century Farm or Century Ranch, an application for that status also needs to be completed.

The eligibility criteria for the Sesquicentennial Award, along with the application guidelines and official form, are available by contacting Glenn Mason, Oregon Century Farm & Ranch Program coordinator at (503) 297-5892 or orcentury@juno.com, or they may be downloaded from the Oregon Department of Agriculture's website at: <http://oregon.gov/ODA>.

The Oregon Century Farm & Ranch Program is administered through the Oregon Agricultural Education Foundation (OAEF) in Salem and is supported in part by a partnership of the Oregon Farm Bureau, Oregon State Parks & Recreation Department, Oregon Department of Agriculture, and the Oregon Historical Society, along with additional funding and support from the Wheat Growers Association, the Hazelnut Marketing Board, Roth's Family Markets, various Oregon county farm bureaus, and many individuals.

The Oregon Century Farm & Ranch Program is a program within the Oregon Agricultural Education Foundation. OAEF is an Oregon 501(c) 3 non-profit organization and is included in the Oregon Cultural Trust's list of organizations eligible for the Cultural Trust matching gift program. For more information about OAEF, please call (503) 399-1701 or send inquiries by mail to Janice Reed, OAEF, 3425 Commercial Street S.E., Salem, OR 97302.

The Oregon Century Farm & Ranch Program is a partner of OR150.



