

Russians begin four-generation tradition

The Miller Homestead

By JACKIE LONG

Listening to the birds chirp every day and not the rush of traffic was something Don Miller wanted for the rest of his life. He decided city life wasn't right for him even if his Navy buddies didn't agree with his passion. Don decided after leaving his hat and blue uniform behind on the ship he would settle down with the woman he loved.

"He asked me to marry him and wanted to know if I wanted to farm," Margie (Isaak) Miller said. "And that's the only thing I ever knew."

Finding the house and land was the next step after he found the woman he would spend 60 years with in June of 2008. Don and Margie moved in with his parents Henry and Minnie Miller for only a month before the older Millers moved into the city.

As the third generation to live on the now 480 acres east of Hazen Bay, Don is proud of what he's accomplished through his life on the farm.

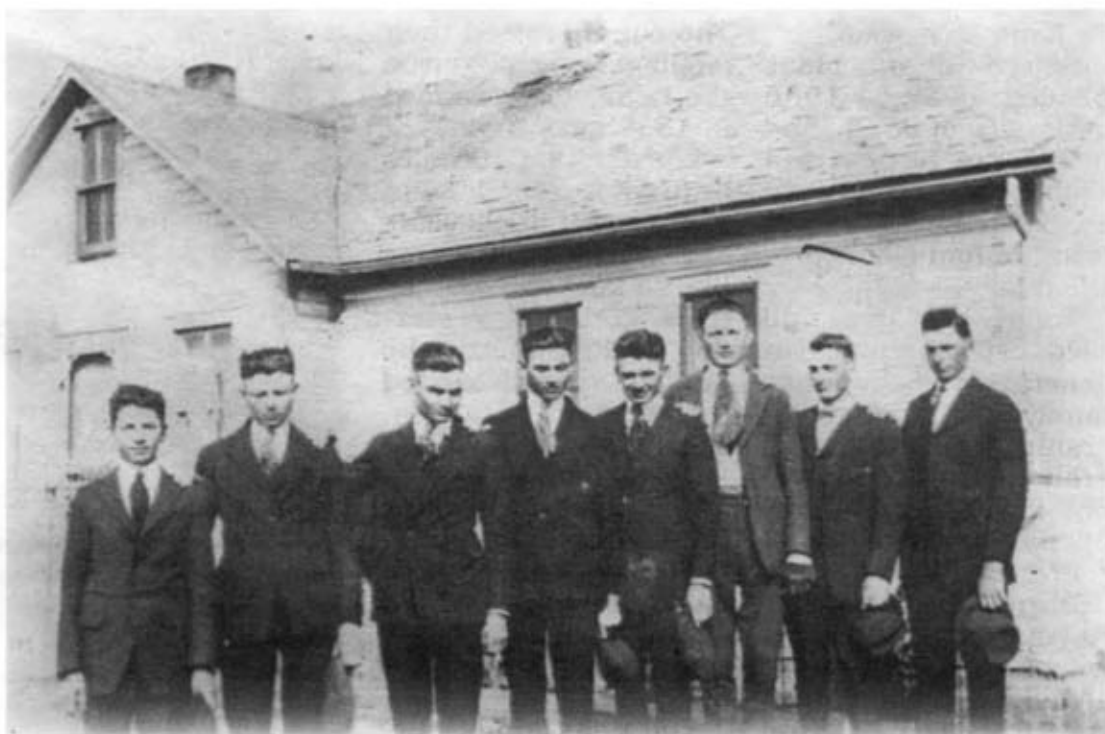
The Miller homestead celebrated 100 years of ownership in the 1990s while Don and Margie were owners. Since that time the two have sold the land to their youngest son, Tim. But since the beginning of the

ownership in the family, changes have been made with each generation.

A young man immigrated with his family of parents, brothers and sisters to the United States when he was only 18 years old. Johann (John) Miller was born in 1867 in Leipzig, Bessarabia, South Russia. The family moved to North Dakota where John worked for the railroad. It was through his work that John learned the English language, Margie said.

Farming became the trade of John and his wife, Elizabetha, who also emigrated with her family from Bessarabia. The homestead papers were signed by the president at the time, Theodore Roosevelt, which Don and Margie still have on hand today.

Like many young couples starting out at any time in history, there were problems. The mud house was built but the water was a different story. Digging for water was not simple on the land John had homesteaded, so the family lived on land a little west of the homestead and across the road. In order to homestead the land, John was required to sleep at the mud house for 18 months. At the time



The large family of Johann and Elizabetha Miller included eight sons, one being Don's father, Henry. This picture was taken around 1915. From left are the Miller men: Edwin, George, Fred, Emil, Henry, Albert, Emanuel and Rudolf.

of the homestead John was still a bachelor.

Only 20 years later, the entire family had been born including the second-generation owner of the land, John's fourth son Henry Solomon Miller. The oldest boys decided to sow their own oats in North Dakota while John and the younger half of the family headed to Washington. The trip out west was a decision after the death of Elizabetha for John.

An auction sale took place and the two halves

of the farm were split between Henry and his brother Albert who was three years older than Henry. Since the two were bachelors, for awhile the brothers lived in the family house together. But eventually a wife entered the picture for Henry.

Minnie and Henry were married in June of 1925 and officially bought half of the land in 1927. A three-room house was built along with a large barn, which still stands today.

"That barn is three

years younger than I am," Don said.

Don, his two sisters, Mardel and Edris, and his parents all lived in the small home that Henry built. The house consisted of a living room, kitchen and a bedroom. With no running water or electricity and barely any insulation, the family learned to live the rough life of rural living.

"It was just the way that it was, I slept in the kitchen on a daybed,"

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The large barn is still standing from when Johann built it in the late 1800s. The small house next to it is the same house Don was living in from his birth. It has since been torn down.

Don said.

Working with his hands on the farm and attending the same country school his father attended in Mercer County was something Don loved with every fiber in his body. But Don also wanted to be a member of the U.S. Navy once he graduated high school in Hazen. For 19 months Don was traveling back and forth over the Pacific Ocean transporting American troops to Japan and the Philippines.

Once he returned home Don went to work "shucking bundles" for Margie's dad, which is how the love connection was made. The two dated for almost two years before the lifelong commitment was made on June 20, 1948.

"Just kids yet ... I'm glad my kids didn't get married that young," Margie said with a laugh.

The newlyweds

moved into the three-room house with Don's parents but were only sharing the living arrangements for about a month, Margie said. Nearly 10 years went by living in the small house before Don and Margie bought another house that they had moved to the farm. The old house was torn down and the new one was placed near the barn.

A new place was needed for the young family. Three of Don and Margie's children had lived in the old house, which was more than a little drafty in the winter.

"We had times when it was so cold the blankets froze to the wall," Margie said.

"We couldn't change the bedding until the spring," Don joked in reply.

Don worked on the farm diligently with his dad guiding him along the way. The farm was bought by Don and Mar-

gie in 1972, as well as another quarter section of land north of the farm. During their reign on the land, Don and Margie were dairy farmers and also grew grain, alfalfa, wheat, oats and corn.

The family grew into five children, Tom, Jocelyn, Janet, Tim and Laurel, plus the Millers had 29 foster children in their house over 11 years.

In 1997, the farm was passed on once again to another Miller son, Tim, who currently owns the land. Mom and Dad still live in the little white house while Tim lives in Hazen. The younger son has always had a knack for the farm life, helping dad with picking rocks in the field.

The idea to move into town has never crossed the couple's minds.

"I don't know what we would have done; I would have had to get a job," Margie said about



Today Don and Margie love living outside of town. The two live on the farm but their youngest son Tim works most of the fields. Margie still raises chickens and butchers them every year. Their Border Collie, Andy, is no longer with them but they have a new one, Fred, who is playful with everyone that stops by.

moving into the town.

A large book sits in the little white house in the country that compiles the Miller family history. Every once in awhile, Margie skims through the pages looking at the pictures of her husband's grandfather who braved the boat over the

ocean. The family farm will hopefully continue as the soil keeps getting turned each year with new seeds. New life will eventually roam the farmland that a young man stepped on more than 100 years ago and saw a dream come true.