

Maple Glen Farm and The Walter Family

If you are taking the time to read this history, chances are that you have been touched by the people and activities at Maple Glen Farm in Maine, New York.

2021 marks the 100th Anniversary of the Walter Family ownership of Maple Glen Farm; the family has inhabited those grounds nearly continuously since then. Throughout the years, Maple Glen Farm produced many consumables for the benefit of the local community, including but not limited to milk and dairy products, sweet corn, maple syrup and maple products, and garlic. Wagon loads of hay destined for the farm to feed and bed the dairy-producing cows were a common sight along Town of Maine roads for many Summers. Additionally, novelty products such as The Weather Rock were created on farm grounds and distributed nationally. Let us review the family history as it relates to the farm to provide insights into the work ethic ingrained within the family to this day.

On March 14, 1921, Emmett and Gertrude Walter purchased what is now Maple Glen Farm from the Couse Brothers, bringing with them their sons Clyde and Glenn. The early years were surely wrought with long, work-filled days with little time for rest and pleasure, but the farm soon became prosperous, becoming one of the premier dairy farms of the Nanticoke Valley. The family leased out the farm for a short period in 1926 to try their hand at farming near Gainesville, Florida, but the allure of the Valley called them back only after a short time. The Depression Years saw minimal impact on the farm and its development and as the two sons grew into men, the ability to diversify from dairy into other agrarian concerns. While Clyde moved from the farm, he did remain close enough to assist in some of these activities, particularly the production of maple syrup, until he moved to California in the late 1950's. Glenn on the other hand stayed behind to help his parents with the farm, being groomed to take the helm upon their retirement.

Glenn married Barbara Smith in November 1939 and thereafter had two children – Wayne (Bucky) and Linda. They inhabited the upstairs of the farmhouse with Emmett and Gertrude still occupying the downstairs. During World War II, Glenn received deferment from service due to his participation in the dairy industry, which was vital to keep the supply lines flowing to our servicemen abroad. At that time, Glenn became involved in Town of Maine government, running for and gaining a seat on the town board. By the close of the war, the Walter Family expanded its operations more, adding a large chicken coop run by Gertrude to its repertoire. Further modernization arrived with the purchase of the farm's first tractor, replacing the family's beloved draft horses, in the early fifties.



Figure 1a-d. Aerial view of Maple Glen Farm, over the years. Top left: 1955; notice the tree-lined highway and open space inside the driveway. Top right: 1968; the highway is still tree-lined but note the trailer and small corn patch inside the driveway. Bottom left: 2006; there are no more trees along Route 26 but the workings of the garlic farm are in evidence. Bottom right: 2017; the farm has seen many changes through the years but has remained with the Walter Family and will continue to do so for many years. Courtesy Historic Aerials website.

The 1950's saw the passing of the torch to the next generation, with Glenn and Barbara purchasing the farm from his parents in 1957. They assumed the downstairs of the old farmhouse while Emmett and Gertrude retired to a mobile home placed on the farm where they lived out their remaining years, with Gertrude running the seasonal corn stand for years thereafter. Meanwhile, Glenn expanded the dairy business substantially, moving out of home delivery to producing milk for local establishments such as Crowley's, for whom Glenn served

on the Board of Directors in the 1960's. He converted the old chicken coop into a second barn, then had an addition built to the original barn in the late sixties, along with a new silo for storage of ensilage for the cows, ultimately having a milking capacity of about 120 head. Milk had been gathered in cans and transported to local creameries in these times, but 1973 saw automation of the milking process with the construction of a new milk house built around a large capacity holding tank. Tanker trucks now picked up the milk every other day. Additionally, a pole barn was built around 1970 to protect equipment from the harsh Upstate Elements. For recreation, many spiedie roasts and clam bakes were held at the farm each summer. As for the children, Linda married Ken Dingman in 1965, moving "up the road" by his family's auto garage, but was still close-by, and Bucky remained behind, marrying Mary Stephens in 1964, and although he did not participate in many of the aspects of the farm, his contributions to the fabric of the farm are nonetheless enjoyed to this day.



Figure 2: Maple Glen Farm about 1978 during ensilage season. Note the tractor and wagon in the barnyard.

The seventies saw additional change to the farm. In 1975, with his father's blessing, Bucky converted the old sap house into a workshop out of which the Weather Rock was perfected. Designed as a wooden novelty, Bucky nonetheless secured a copyright and patent for the Weather Rock and in its peak years was selling 25-30K units annually to wholesale companies

supplying souvenir shops all over the United States. Bucky and Mary also built many wooden toys in the workshop with plans to sell them at craft shows or local shops; however, December 1979 saw catastrophe as the workshop burned down as a total loss. Undaunted, Glenn and Bucky and countless others worked through the Winter to build a new shop near the cemetery side of the farm, going “online” for Weather Rock production just a few months later. Meanwhile, Bucky and Mary’s children were becoming of age to help in both the farm as well as the “Weather Rock”.

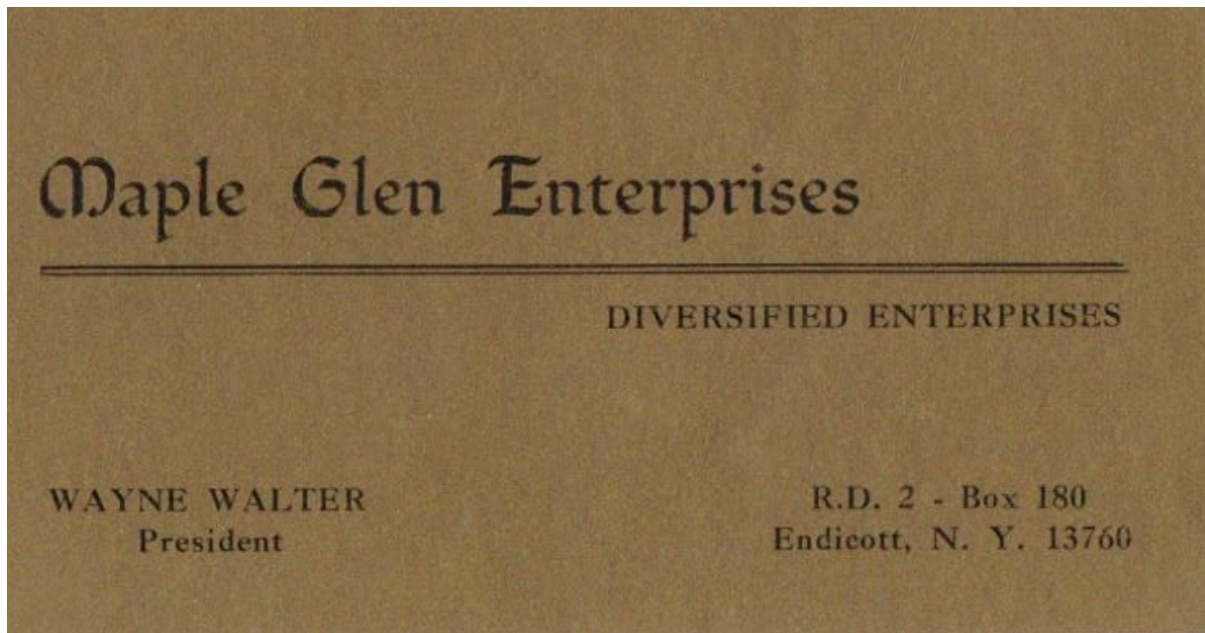


Figure 3: Maple Glen Enterprises Business Card.

The original picnic shanty was built in 1976 as a measure to counteract Mother Nature and her propensity to bring rain to picnics at the farm. Once built, summer evening dinners with the entire family became commonplace, and the shanty became nerve central for other outdoor activities such as horseshoes. Bucky would often host parties with his Bluegrass buddies, continuing a tradition of large gatherings started by Glenn years before. Intended to last through the season, the shanty nonetheless survived over ten years before being replaced by a more permanent structure.

The changes continued into the eighties, with Glenn deciding to retire in May of 1982, with the intent to travel the country with Barbara. This never materialized as dairy farming remained in Glenn’s blood – at the day of the auction, he managed to buy back eight to ten cows and continued to produce milk for local customers that preferred whole milk to the homogenized product sold in supermarkets. He remained semi-retired until the day of his death in October 1985, spelling the end of dairy farming at Maple Glen Farm.



Figure 4: Equipment lined up for Glenn's "retirement" auction, May 1982.

With Glenn's passing, sole ownership of the farm turned over to his wife Barbara. While dairying no longer continued at the farm, it is unfair to say that the farm immediately went into a period of decline. Indeed, the new permanent shanty was constructed in 1987 by Bucky and his tradesmen friends who had the capability of adding dedicated electricity and a concrete floor. Boards taken from the "old hotel", which collapsed earlier in the year, added to the rustic charm of the new shanty. Running water was also added to the shanty, with Bucky building a solar water heater to provide hot water.

However, with not enough income to sustain the farm, the family brainstormed ways to economize. To save on taxes and electricity, power was shut off in many of the outbuildings in the late 80's, and the old milk house and wooden silos were torn down about 1989. Several parcels of the farm were sold off in the 1990's, ultimately leaving the core of buildings and immediately surrounding land in Walter Family ownership. Finally, Barbara's passing in December 2003 brought the fate of the farm to a crossroads.



Figure 5: Working in the garden in the 1990's. The Walter Family canned a lot of vegetables and fruits for the Winter months, most notably tomatoes and pickles.

Barbara's will stipulated that ownership of the farm be divided evenly between her surviving children. Neither Bucky nor Linda cared to have the added responsibility, but ownership stayed in the Walter family, with Bucky's daughter Sann Dee and her partner Bob Marshman assuming responsibility. Bucky gave his share with the stipulation that he remain at the farm, and Linda sold her half to Sann and Bob at half the assessed value of the farm at that time.

In Sann and Bob's hands, the farm made a comeback – not as a dairy farm, but as a farm with many types of animals. Goats, pigs, ponies, rabbits, ducks, and chickens called Maple Glen Farm home. Moreover, Bob took over growing garlic from Bucky, doubling his output annually over a long period of time. The little barn received some much-needed attention to its foundation, preserving a home for the animals living there.

In 2010, Sann and Bob began an annual tradition of holding a party in the first weekend of August, called Maple Glen Fest. Several local music acts regularly play the Fest, and attendance typically numbers 150-200 persons. They also became involved in 4H around 2014-2015 and held many monthly meetings and exhibits at the farm. Proceeds from t-shirt and food sales at

these events also helped with the farm's preservation as an important concern within the community.



Figure 6: 2019 Maple Glen Fest panorama.

Despite Bob's passing away in 2021, Sann plans to continue growth of Maple Glen Farm, through the support of friends and family, as the Walter Family begins its second century of ownership.