

Families hold centuries of memories in Manatee



Danielle Glassburn, 7, a new generation of Keens and Glassburns, stands in front of the remains of an old family home. GRANT JEFFERIES/The Herald

Spanning generations

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DUETTE — In 1882, Jack and Sarah Keen bought 81 acres of Duette real estate for 90 cents an acre.

During the past 123 years, Keen family members continuously lived on the homestead.

In the 1940s, you could have called it Keentown with 75 Keens living there in 10 houses, said family

historian Silas Keen.

Today, eight family members live in three homes on the family's remaining 20 acres.

The Keens are among three Manatee County families that can boast of continual ownership of their land for at least 100 years, according to the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services' Century Farm Family Program.

The county's annual celebration of agriculture, Farm City Week, which starts today, has "Celebrating the Land" as its 2005 theme.

Florida has 80 Century Farm Families, according to the Department of Agriculture Web site.

Manatee County's Century Farm families include the Keens, of Duette, the Reasoners, of Oneco, and



DUETTE TO 13A

GIANCARLO RODRIGUEZ/The Herald

DUETTE FROM 1A

Louise Newmap, of Palmetto, who has owned land in Hillsborough County for more than 100 years.

Keen family members who remain on the land include Betty Glassburn, 60, whose father, John, was a third-generation Keen.

Also on the land are Glassburn's brother, Silas, 64, and his wife, Carolyn; Glassburn's sister, Gertrude Capo, 66; and Glassburn's son, Gene, 40, and his wife, Jennifer.

Also, Glassburn's daughter's children, Dustin 12, and Danielle, 7, live with Glassburn and are sixth-generation Keens.

The Keens' land, which is 1.8 miles south of Duette Elementary School on Keentown Road, has been used by the National Weather Service since 1948 as a weather collecting station, according to re. Dick Kamp, of the National on Weather Service in Ruskin.

Family pride

Jack Keen was born in the late 1850s in the Bunker Hill area of Duette and moved to the Keentown property in 1876.

He and his wife, Sarah, built a house, which is gone now, but the tangerine tree that was planted in their yard still has an honored place on the property.

Jake, one of Jack and Sarah's four children, built a cypress log cabin that still stands on the property.

Glassburn lived in Jake's house from age 4 to 11. It didn't have running water.

"We pumped water from the



GRANT JEFFERIES/The Herald

Silas Keen walks among what remains of the old home of his grandparents, Jake and Martha Keen. The home dates back to 1915.

Farm City Week Events

■ **Noon on Tuesday** : "Outstanding Agriculturist" announced at Kiwanis Luncheon at Bradenton Kiwanis Hall; student essays on agriculture published in The Herald.

■ **10 a.m.-1 p.m. Wednesday**: Ag Venture for 1,024 third-graders and 53 teachers at Mosaic Arena, Palmetto Fair Grounds, 1303 17th St. W., Palmetto; Leadership Manatee Tour.

■ **Noon on Thursday**: Agricultural Hall of Fame inductees announced at The Palmetto historical luncheon at the Women's Club of Palmetto, 910 6th St. W., Palmetto.

■ **8 a.m. to 4 p.m., or 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Friday**: Farm City Week Tour buses will visit Rocky Creek Ranch, Diamond D Tomato Farm, Watercross Farm, Old Miakka Methodist Church for lunch and John Peachey Dairy. Admission is \$35 per person, including lunch. Call Betty Glassburn at 722-4524.

■ **8:30 a.m. to noon and 2 to 6:30 p.m. Saturday** Youth Prospect Show and Educational Tracks, Mosaic Arena, Palmetto Fairgrounds.

homestead house — referred to as Beth Salem and finished in 1896 — is still standing just east of Sam's Club on S.R. 70 and is listed on the National Registry of Historic Places.

"That was a wedding present from Egbert's in-laws to he and his new wife, Sarah," Reasoner said.

Andy Reasoner's business, Royal Palm Nurseries, has its office on the second floor of the family homestead, which has been renovated and modernized. The Royal Palm Theater and Royal Palm Terrace Apartments also are on part of the old nursery.

"What we have left is almost five acres in that Oneco area where the house is," Reasoner said.