

Storms heritage approaches 150 years in Lynden Township

When David Dwight (known as D.D.) Storms arrived in Minnesota in 1867, little did he know the legacy that he would leave in Lynden Township and in Stearns County.

115 years later, in 1982, D.D.'s Minnesota heritage included a Century Farm, so designated in a letter from United States Senator Rudy Boschwitz; a 280-acre farm operated by him and his descendents; and a line of active citizens in the area. Between 1962 and 1981, the fourth and fifth generations of Minnesota Storms were proprietors of Stormy Oil Company, first operated out of their home farm and later located in St. Augusta.



David D. Storms

D.D. Storms was born August 17, 1839, in Hannibal, Oswego County, New York, according to *History of Stearns County Minnesota*.¹ He became a teacher, surveyor and farmer in New York State, earning \$14 a month as a teacher and boarding at a variety of homes. In 1860 he traveled west to visit his brother in Iroquois County, Ill., where he also taught for a time. After the Civil War broke out, he enlisted in the Band of the Twenty-fifth Illinois Volunteer Infantry, where he served for about eight months. Then the band was abolished and D.D. returned to New York State where he taught school winters and farmed summers. He was married in 1863 to Mary Ann Ketcham, who died in 1884. The couple had one son, Frank F, born March 9, 1866. Striking out for Colorado in 1867, D.D. stopped to visit his uncle, the Rev. William Dady, who was then preaching at Clearwater. He was “so impressed with the advantages of this locality that he abandoned his trip to Denver, partly on account of an Indian outbreak on the plains.”¹

Family follows forefather's pattern as farmer, active citizen

That same year, D.D. purchased 160 acres of land in section 30, Lynden Township, Stearns County, for a price of \$700. The “land was wild and covered with brush. He broke and grubbed the land, built his home and a set of buildings, and engaged in farming.”¹

“His first house was rebuilt from an old wagon shop which he moved from Clearwater. This, however, soon gave way to more commodious structures. In addition to his original land purchase, he bought forty acres of railroad land and homesteaded eighty acres of government land. On his large farm, thus acquired, he lived for many years.”¹

The Stearns County History adds that D.D. “also became one of the leading school teachers of the county. Thus teaching and farming, his industry, his strong will and his ability won him success and he became an important factor in Stearns County life.

“He was a land surveyor and a G.A.R. man,” said great-grandson Dave, who currently (April 2014) lives in the original house on Storms property. “Quite the gentleman, from what they tell me.”

“D.D. Storms came from a patriotic family, his grandfather having served in the War of 1812 and he, with four brothers, having served in the Civil War.”¹

Upon taking up residence in Lynden Township, D.D. took “a deep interest in the affairs of his township, and his opinions are eagerly sought and looked upon with the utmost respect,” continued the Stearns County History. He was also a long-time clerk of the school board (now St. Cloud District 742); served as justice of the peace and town supervisor; and was an assessor for 20 years, at different periods of time. The history volume also cites his membership in the Clearwater Lodge, No. 28, A.F. & A.M. and his numerous offices and activity in the G.A.R.

“In 1904 he retired from the more strenuous duties of farm life and turned the home place over to his son, Frank F. In 1907-08 D.D. was an industrial teacher at the Standing Rock Indian Reservation in North Dakota.¹



D.D.'s son, Frank F. Storms married Laura Foster in 1886, and they had two sons, Lewis D., born April 5, 1885, and Earl F., born December 9, 1890. Frank built a cottage home next to the original Storms home in the spring of 1914, and his father, D.D., lived with him in his later years. D.D. died in November 1917. Dave said his grandfather, Frank, farmed the original 320 acres. Frank also became a prominent citizen of the township. According to the 1915 Stearns County History, “He conducts the old home farm and is regarded as a substantial and successful man in every way.”¹

Frank and Laura's eldest son, Lewis D. (who liked to spell his name Louis), was born in 1885. He married Regina Thole and they built a home on the Storms property. Lewis and Regina had five children: Herbert, Agnes, Cyril, Cieola and David (Dave). In addition to farming, Lewis served on the Lynden Township board and was a constable for many years. Dave said Lewis's eldest brother, Herb, also served on school and township boards. Frank and Laura's second son, Earl F., married Pauline Kiffmeyer and the couple became the third generation to occupy the original Storms home.

At some point, D.D. Storms' 160-acre-tract was divided, and 80 acres are still included in each of the farms today, according to *Century Farms of Minnesota*.²

Dave said in 2014 that the wagon shop, which had been moved to the original Storms property from Clearwater, was torn down in the early 1900s, and a home was built on the same site. That home was first occupied by Earl's son, Harold, and is currently the home of Harold's son, Lawrence Storms. Dave and Rita's portion is currently owned by Dave's son, David Gerard (known as Jerry).



Farming, business occupy third



and fourth generations

Through the years, Dave continued the family pattern of farming and citizenship. He farmed 120 acres, had 20 to 25 head of cattle (an oriental breed), and hogs. He paid off the farm mostly with the income from his hogs, he said. “And, of course, Rita raised chickens.” He also added a family business into the mix.

Dave Storms was born in July 1929, in the home where he currently lives, delivered by Dr. Kingsbury from Clearwater. He attended Weyrauch School in Lynden Township (now a part of St. Cloud District 742) for six years, skipping third and fifth grades, he said.

He married Rita Kemper in 1950, and their home, where Dave continues to live in 2014, was a part of D.D. Storms' original tract. The couple raised three children: their daughter Janelle Schaefer works at the Annandale School District. She and her husband, Fred, have two children, Joe and Sarah. Joe (Erin), who has a daughter, Kenlie. Dave and Rita's sons are David Gerard (Jerry) and Jeffrey (Jeff), who has a daughter, Andrea. Rita died in April 2013.

Dave Storms served in the Army from 1950 to 1953, during the Korean War. He earned his GED (high-school equivalency certification) after completing his military service. He was a charter member of the St. Augusta Legion, served in local offices, and attended several national American Legion conventions, including in Honolulu, Indianapolis and twice in Minneapolis. The family-business mix entered the Storms' life in 1962, when Dave started Stormy Oil Company on the farm, and began delivery of bulk gasoline. The business was later located in St. Augusta near the bank, and dealt also in diesel fuel. He also continued to farm until the early 2000s, when he sold the farm to Jerry. Through the years, his son Jeff helped with the company and was the primary farmer.

"We had some good years during the I-94 construction," he said. Stormy Oil supplied fuel for freeway construction as it moved from Monticello to the area of St. John's University. "For 52 days there, they had 19 machines going and took 83,000 gallons of diesel fuel. In 1976, after Gov. Rudy Perpich cut the ribbon, opening the freeway, Dave said he and Rita "had the pleasure of going to the Capitol and having lunch with the governor." The Storms sold Stormy Oil in 1981, he said, and the name was changed to Union.

Until about 2009, Jerry conducted his own business as Stormy Transport, operating 69 trucks, Dave said. Since selling this business to Wayne Transport of Sauk Centre, he does dispatching and public relations for Wayne, from his home.

Dave continued to farm until about 2004, he said, and then sold the farm to Jerry.

A special link to the past came for Dave in 2011. Reaching back through the years, he was able to honor his great-grandfather's military service, he said. After working with the national veterans' program, he was successful in receiving an 18 x 18-inch brass marker, which has been placed at D.D. and Mary Ann's gravesite in Acacia Cemetery, Lynden Township.

Footnotes:

1. *History of Stearns County Minnesota* by William Bell Mitchell. H.C. Cooper, Jr., and CO. 1915, pages 965 and 966.
2. *Century Farms of Minnesota* compiled and edited by Dorothy L Wanless. Taylor Publishing Company, 1985.