

## **HISTORY OF THE RAE VALLEY HERITAGE ASSOCIATION, INC.**

During the 1950's, '60's and '70's individuals from this community [Petersburg] and communities form around this area collected antique tractors, engines, and machinery of all sorts, including horse drawn machinery.

With lots of interest from several folks of the younger generation, who never worked with this type of machinery, we managed to get the individuals together for an old fashioned machinery and threshing display held in conjunction with the St. John's Bazaar in the fall of 1980. What a great turn out!

On March 5, 1981, about 20 people from this community [Petersburg] and communities around, met at the M&D Steakhouse in Petersburg. Everyone talked of the great time they had, and wondered how we could preserve this old agricultural farming technique? First of all, we needed an organization! We planned another display in the fall of 81' at St. John's Bazaar. The majority of people were from this community. We called our group the Rae Valley Heritage Association. The old fashioned machinery and threshing display in the fall of 1981 was a success.

In 1982 The Rae Valley Heritage Assn. took part in the Centennial Parade and celebration in Raeville, NE.

In 1983 The Rae Valley Heritage Assn. added another event, the Antique Tractor and Horse Plowing Contest. First place trophies were given in each event. Expenses were paid with association dues. The machine show and plowing contest was head at the Charles Huisman farm west of Petersburg.

In 1984 The Rae Valley Heritage Assn. held their Antique Tractor and Horse Plowing Contest at the Theodore Ketteler farm south of Petersburg. This year's show drew more plowing entries and exhibitors, even though it was a windy cold day. Donations were taken at the gate to help with expenses.

The 1985 Antique Tractor and Horse Plowing Contest was held on September 8, at the Bill Rueth farm northwest of Petersburg. Added to this show was a parade with 43 entries, all farm related antiques. Also a first

was an 1886 Case Steam Engine on display, along with many more exhibits, displays, and plowing entries. With another cold, damp, windy day the crowd was bigger than ever.

The show and contest had grown to the point where the association members alone couldn't put it on without the help of local townspeople and organizations. We're most grateful for their support.

On October 1, 1985 the Rae Valley Heritage Assn. met at the Duane Filsinger repair shop in Clearwater, NE. The club reorganized and for the first time voted officers for the coming year. The 1986 Chairman was Steve Stokes, Co-Chairman Roger Lee, Secretary and Treasurer Judy and Larry Petsche.

On June 13, 1986 The Rae Valley Heritage Assn. became officially incorporated with its purpose: to preserve and promote the awareness of the agricultural heritage of Northeast Nebraska; and to sponsor the plowing contest.

The 1986 Nebraska State Antique Tractor and Plowing Contest, originally scheduled for September 7, took place September 21, 1986. The postponement was due to a long rainy spell, which also was the reason for the change in show sites, from the Bill Rueth farm to the Charles Huisman hill west of Petersburg.

The 1986 show was also the kickoff celebration for the 1987 Petersburg Centennial Celebration. Along with the plowing and parade there was the beginning of the beard growing contest, with some of the participants being shaved that afternoon by members of the Young Women's Club, who were sponsoring the contest. There was also an auction of one Centennial belt buckle and key chain set (No. 250 of 250) which sold for \$115.00. There was available various centennial items which could be purchased that day.

Again with the help of the local townspeople, organizations, and the cooperation of the members of the club, the show and parade was bigger than ever.

The Petersburg Public School Band led the parade with more than 45 entries following. Most of these were farm related and centennial related entries. There were over 40 various exhibits and displays for people to enjoy. Awards and trophies were given for various

categories in the parade as well as the plowing contest.

The Rae Valley Heritage Association Inc. met to reorganize for the coming year at Cunningham's restaurant, Main Street in Petersburg. With approximately 30 members present, the officers for 1987 were chosen with Chairman-Steve Stokes, Co-Chairman, Jeanne Stokes, Secretary-Judy Petsche, and Treasurer-Larry Petsche. The date was set for the 1987 Nebraska State Antique Tractor and Horse Plowing Contest for August 2, 1987. The contests would again be held on the Charles Huisman hill two miles west of Petersburg. 1987 Centennial Book

With the large crowds attending the antique show, approximately 2,000, in 1987 Charles Huisman decided RVHA was in need of a large building to house antique machinery throughout the year and during the show. This would also give the vendors a place to set up their wares, bring protection from the sun and any inclement weather!

In the spring of 1988 Charlie purchased a 50x100 Quonset building. Through the spring and summer members of the club and neighbors gathered to erect the building in time for the show that fall! The attendance that year was nearly 3,000.

As the show grew larger, a two day show was started in 1989 which included a good old time tractor pull.

At this time Charlie and members decided the Huisman farm would be the permanent place for the show in future years! Landscaping was done to better accommodate vendors and four dozen 10 ft. cottonwood trees were transplanted on the grounds over a couple years-time.

Charlie spent hundreds of hours caring for and watering the young trees. Today some stand over 30 ft. tall and provide wonderful shade.

In 1995 the plowing contest was stopped and renamed the Plowing Bee. It was decided to eliminate competition and make it an even where people could go out and have fun watching and/or participating and just have a good time!

Through the years The Rae Valley Heritage has received recognition for their efforts. In October 1999 The Rae Valley NCIP nominated

them. Volunteers donated over 7,000 hours to the two-day event which attracted more than 2,500 visitors from 43 counties and 7 states! This award was presented by Governor Mike Johanns at the Lincoln Station Great Hall at Lincoln's Historic Haymarket District.

In the spring of 2000 there were plans for the demolition of the former Frank Selting barn, three and one half miles north of Raeville, NE. In an effort to save the barn, Joyce Selting Temme and family donated it to the Rae Valley Heritage Association and moved it to the show site on the Charles Huisman farm. On May 2, 2000 Jim and George Majerus accomplished this task. Members of the Rae Valley Heritage Association spent many hours cleaning and restoring the barn for use at future Rae Valley events.

August 26, 2001 the first annual Petersburg Antique Consignment Auction added to the Plowing Bee with John and Jeff Temme as Auctioneers, clerked by the John Temme Auction Co. The consignment auction was a success and the decision was made to have this a permanent Saturday morning event in the future. This has proved to have been a good move. The number of items consigned has continued to increase each year offering three to four hour auction with good attendance.

The year 2008 was the first year for what is now known as the Annual Tractor Cade. Beginning in Creston, NE, Harold Boning organized a group to drive their tractors to the Rae Valley Show on the Friday before the event! This is a distance of over 45 miles. They are cheered on along the way and welcomed onto the show site by many spectators and treated to a cream can supper. In 2010, 43 tractors and drivers arrived with the Annual Creston, NE to Petersburg, NE Tractor Cade. Following their arrival a cream can supper served 180 meals from six ten gallon cream cans cooked over an open pit!

The year 2011 Rae Valley Heritage Threshing Bee had 190 sponsors and just over 100 members strong. 2011 was also the kick off for the Petersburg Q125 Cel. Albion, NE.

Lots of activities are being planned for the year 2012!

- by Larry and Judy Petsche