



As recent owners of White River Valley Farm, located at 6275 Sheridan Springs Road, Town of Lyons, Walworth County, one of the joys has been to learn the history of the farm from the descendants of the original owners who have shared with us photos, memories and love of the place.

The first owner was Hermann Schmidt (later Smith). Born in 1861, he grew up in the Lyons area and eventually developed a threshing as well as a grain mill business in Lyons. He married Theresa Schneider in 1889. They settled on the farm, the house dating from 1892. They had two children, Della, born in 1894 and Andrew, born in 1897. Hermann is remembered as a calm, gentle, hard-working man.

In 1920, Della married Joseph Ahler. Joseph's father, Gerhard, had emigrated from Germany in 1883 and settled in Walworth County. He had married Josephine Eisenbart, and they had 12 children, including Joseph. Della had helped her father on the farm and in 1922, she and Joe bought the farm from her parents for \$13,000. Hermann died in 1929 and his widow continued living with Della and Joe and their 6 children until her death in 1938.

The Ahlers continued working and developing the farm which was eventually taken over by their son, Vincent. In 1985 the Ahlers sold White River Valley Farm to Mr. James Campbell, who in turn rented it to Bob Mathison.

We were lucky enough in 1989 to find this wonderful homestead. The land and the farm have been in production for over 100 years. It has a dairy barn, rebuilt in 1969 after the original barn burned. Members of the Ahler family have given us photos taken circa 1902, showing the parents in horse and buggy outside the wonderful house which was at that time surrounded by orchards and lilacs. We have had fine guidance in restoring the house and truly sense and respect the loving history of White River Valley Farm.

*Dr. James & Sally Downey, Owners*