



# Green Historical Society

## Landmark No. 9—Merestead Farms

The original land patent for the southwest quarter of Section 8 of Green Township was issued on June 2, 1814 to Samuel Stover, the assignee of Christopher Johnson. Samuel moved to Green Township shortly thereafter and began farming on the subject property. Samuel Stover married Elizabeth “Betsy” Kepler on November 26, 1816. Betsey Kepler was the daughter of Andrew Kepler, one of the first settlers in Green. Samuel Stover is credited with building the original barn at Merestead Farms circa 1844. Unfortunately, Samuel Stover died in 1845 and his property was sold to Abraham Foust by court order to pay debts in 1849.

Abraham Foust built the subject homestead in 1858. He purchased a portion of Section 7 from the Himmelright Family to expand the farm in 1871. Abraham Foust died in 1875 and his heirs, Joseph and Mary Foust, Houston and Catherine Kepler, C.F. and Ellen F. Kreighbaum, Jacob Foust, Magdelana Foust, Elizabeth Foust, and Mary A. Foust, sold the farm to Abraham J. Foust and Jacob Foust in 1880.

John Beese, the great-grandfather of John Beese, the current property owner, was a Welch miner and was the superintendent of mines for the Middlebury Shaft in Akron. For a time, he was responsible for a mine operated on Merestead Farms. John’s grandfather also worked in the same mine. He left the mine when he broke his leg in a mine accident. He went to Akron to become a butcher, but returned in 1914 to buy the farm.

For many years, Merestead Farms was operated by earlier generations of the Beese Family as a dairy farm. The Beese Family had a herd of Guernsey cattle and later was home to a large herd of Ayrshire cattle. John Beese and his wife Lee bread champion Murray Gray cattle for many years. Now the farm is home to four Murray Grays and many horses boarded at the farm.

The Foust Family referred to part of Merestead Farms as “Forest Farm.” When John’s father began registering the Guernsey Cattle that he inherited from his father, he needed a farm name. John’s father, an avid reader, knew the old English definition of merestead as a farmstead or farm lands. John’s father adopted the name “Merestead Farms,” the plural farms referring to the fact that the two Foust farms were combined back together by the purchase of John and Mary Beese in 1914.

**Architectural Significance** - The home retains many of its original architectural characteristics. The original homestead is a side-gabled Greek Revival brick farmhouse with a four-bay façade. The entrance is in the third bay and features classical enframement with dentils and fluted pilasters. The façade is painted and includes a 2-story porch with square columns. The porch and columns were added to the home in 1963 for the 60<sup>th</sup> birthday of Fredda Beese. Windows have original 6-over-6 sashes and sandstone lintels and sills. A one-story 1958 addition is visible from the front of the home, but is clearly distinguished from the original homestead and does not distract from the historic character of the original home.

Typical of the style, the cornice has a wide frieze board with gable end returns. The side gables have two bays on each floor and small attic windows. The north gable has an exterior brick chimney with arched inset stone with “A·F·1·8·5·8” inscribed, see photo at bottom right.

The homestead remains in its originally constructed location and is surrounded by noncontributing structures including period agricultural buildings that are typical of a well-kept, working farm. The homestead and other structures occupy a three acre plot within a 112 acre working farm.

A mine operated on the property from around 1884 to 1897. Around 1887 a spur rail line was added across the property to connect the mine to the Valley Railway. The mine entrance and railway bed are still clearly evident on the property today.



Middle Right: Historical Photograph of Agricultural Buildings on the property. To the left is the summer kitchen. The bell visible at far left atop the summer kitchen is still on the Beese property.



John Beese (grandfather of the property owner) and a Guernsey cow in front of the original Stover barn circa 1920.

Below: John Beese driving an early tractor pulling a hay wagon.

