

# PRESS RELEASE



# AGRICULTURE

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## WASHINGTON CENTENNIAL FARMS ANNOUNCED

OLYMPIA -- Almost 400 farms, located throughout Washington State, have been designated as Washington Centennial Farms, under a program sponsored by the Washington State Department of Agriculture as part of the state's Centennial celebration. The Centennial Farms, which total 394, are farms that have been owned by the same family for 100 years or more.

"These farms, in a very personal way, highlight the importance of agriculture to the settlement and development of Washington State," said Director of Agriculture C. Alan Pettibone in announcing the designees.

The oldest Centennial Farms, in Lewis and Island counties, trace their roots back to 1851, to the time when Washington was still part of the Oregon Territory. Centennial Farms have been designated in 36 of Washington's 39 counties.

"The profiles of these Centennial Farms paint a very vivid picture of life in early Washington and how land was settled over the course of almost 40 years," said Pettibone.

Most of Washington's Centennial Farms were settled by people who came from midwestern states or northern European countries. Starting in western Washington, and moving north and east, they typically filed claims on public land and gained title to that land only after improving it and putting it under cultivation.

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Improving land took different forms in different parts of the state. A Skagit County settler would dike and drain land, while a Kittitas County farmer constructed irrigation ditches. Western Washington settlers first had to log and clear stumps from the land. Eastern Washington settlers broke out sod and often planted trees.

"Each of these farms has been a part of agriculture as it's gone through profound changes over the past 100 years, including changes brought on by mechanization, electricity, improved varieties, better production practices and the expansion of our markets throughout the world," said Pettibone.

Already by 1890, Washington State had more than 18,000 farms producing \$13.7 million in agricultural products. Agriculture continues to be one of Washington's most important industries, producing more than \$3 billion dollars of commodities each year on 38,000 farms.

"These Centennial Farms were settled and developed by families whose histories are an integral part of the history of Washington," said Pettibone. "Many of these families helped establish communities, churches and schools and played an active role in shaping Washington as it is today."

Each Centennial Farm will receive a certificate signed by Gov. Booth Gardner and Director of Agriculture C. Alan Pettibone. Each will also receive a copy of a book the department is publishing describing each of the recognized farms. The book is expected to be published in May.

"This has been a voluntary program and I am overwhelmed by the number of families who have chosen to participate," said Pettibone. "I want to thank each of the hundreds of individuals who have shared a part of their family history through the Centennial Farm program. Bringing these stories together in a book will create a valuable resource for anyone interested in the history of Washington and its agriculture."

Pettibone announced the Centennial Farms on March 20, National Agriculture Day, at an Agriculture Day luncheon sponsored by the Snohomish County Dairy Women. Centennial Farm honorees in Island and Snohomish counties received certificates from Pettibone and First Lady Jean Gardner, co-chair of the Centennial Commission, at the luncheon.

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**Editors:** See attached list of Centennial Farms. For more information on individual farms, contact the individual listed or Vicki Flynn (206) 753-6108.