

CFR 0057

Elmer W. Kruse

716 5-3303

*Wch*

Route 1, Box 320  
Wilsonville, Oregon  
July 15, 1958

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to certify that Walberta Farm, Section 183, S 1 E in Clackamas County, at Route 1, Box 320, Wilsonville, Oregon, will have been in the Kruse family for one hundred six years next month. The centennial was observed on August 10, 1952.

Verification can be found in THE ENTERPRISE-COURIER of August 5, 1952, and in the OREGON FARMER of October 5, 1950, as well as in records at the Clackamas County Courthouse.

John Kruse, a steamboatman, bought the 208-acre farm in 1852 from a homesteader. It is now owned by three generations of his descendants: his son Homer A. Kruse's widow, Rosa A. Kruse; his grandson, Elmer W. Kruse and wife Anna; and his great-grandson, Roger A. Kruse.

Four generations of Kruses are living on the farm, and active in the management of it are Elmer and his son, Calvin W.

*Elmer W. Kruse*  
Elmer W. Kruse

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 15th day of July, 1958.

*Jennie Kruse*  
Notary Public for Oregon  
My commission expires May 19, 1962

*Judge: -  
O/K by Witness letters  
dated Oct 14, 1852.  
77.*

CFR0057

SEP 11 1958

# 100 Years On Same Farm Observed by Kruse Family

by Elizabeth Ryan

Citation for 100 Years

Oregonians move around—in a hundred years, so there are not many families who have stayed on land their grandfathers got as donation land claims, or bought 100 years ago. Farmers on two farms in the Lake Oswego area have qualified as "century farmers," and were honored with the others at the recent Oregon state fair. They will be honored further during the 1959 Centennial year. Wilbur Wilmot is the century farmer of Lake Grove. Mrs. Homer Kruse and her son, Elmer Kruse, live on the 210 acres left of the John L. Kruse farm located on a mile of Willamette river frontage near Wilsonville.

The Wilmots and their farm will be the subjects of a future story in the Review. Four generations of the Kruse family live on the farm. Elmer Kruse's grandfather, John L. Kruse, acquired as a donation land claim in 1852. Rev. H. K. Hine's "Illustrated History of Oregon," contains a biography of John L. Kruse, which members of the family have corrected a little on the margin.

Kruse was born August 11, 1827 in Denmark, his forefathers were shipbuilders, and his grandfather lost his property in Napoleon Bonaparte's war. When John was 15 he became a sailor, sailing from Denmark two years. He came to the United States the winter of 1845-46, and made two voyages from New York to Savannah. He became a mate on a schooner, sailing to South Carolina, then worked on a railroad.

He went to New Orleans and plied the Mississippi on a steamboat, and worked along the shore. Starting west he landed in San Francisco January 3, 1850, came on to Portland, arriving April 1, 1859. He was employed for a time at Stephen Coffin's sawmill.

#### First Engineer on Willamette

Kruse returned to steamboating after helping build and put in the machinery of the Hoosier, and became its engineer. This was the first steamboat on the Willamette and ran between Oregon City and Dayton. As he travelled back and forth on the river, he got to see what land he'd really like for his own, and picked out the site on the west bank, and purchased the right for \$400 from a Mr. Moffett, who had located on it. On August 30, 1852, he married Iantha Geer, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Joseph C. Geer. Iantha was born December 6, 1836 in Ohio. Kruse brought his bride to their new home the day after the wedding.

#### Raised Wheat to Buy Land

The Kruses have a saying that John L. Kruse raised wheat to buy more land, to raise more wheat to buy more land—until he had 840 acres. He worked and improved his farm in summer, and steamboated in winter. In 1787 he bought a half section, in 1836, 102 acres.

His grandson, Elmer Kruse, over the river where the original cabin was located. John Kruse built the frame house in 1858, and in 1876 remodeled it and

driving a school bus for the West Linn school district and does maintenance work at the Wilsonville school. But they know their land with a mile of river frontage becomes more desirable every year for homesites, yet the cost of developing is high. However, they are proud their century farm is the only one with four generations living on it. Who knows? Maybe Kelvin Kruse's children, David 5, Cynthia 3 and Michael 2, will inspire their children to try for the 200-year mark.

There are other Kruses in the area. Loren Stanley Kruse is also a grandson of the John L. Kruses; his parents were Ernest and Mary Kruse. He bought 300 acres that had belonged to someone else. Herbert and Clarence Kruse of Lake Grove are more distantly related.



Elmer Kruse holds the citation he received at the recent Oregon state fair as one of the century farmers. He is the grandson of John L. Kruse, who got the donation land claim in 1852, then added to it until he had 840 acres. Four generations now live on the 320 acres left—Mrs. Homer Kruse; her son Elmer Kruse and his wife; their son Kelvin, his wife and three children, David 5, Cynthia 3, and Michael 2.—Oswego Review photo.

## Oregon's Largest Black Walnut



Elmer Kruse, century farmer, stands under the black walnut tree believed to be the largest in Oregon. The tree stands between his home and that of his son Kelvin, and has a spread of 130 to 140 feet. The circumference measures a good 16 feet, and is more where the branches start. Kruse estimated the tree is about 70 years old, he remembers it as being quite slender when he was a youngster. "All the Kruses were born in the century old house "in the background, where Kelvin Kruse lives", Elmer Kruse said.—Oswego Review photo.



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His grandson, Elmer Kruse, over the river where the original cabin was located. John Kruse built the frame house in 1858, and in 1876 remodeled it and added rooms for his growing family. More recently the L shape wing and the front porch have been removed, and Elmer Kruse's son, Kelvin Kruse, his wife and three young children live there. Elmer Kruse and his wife live in the larger house next door, and Mrs. Homer Kruse lives by herself in a house nearby. Her husband died in 1956. A nephew of Elmer's, Roger Kruse, has a third of the farm too.

But back to John L. Kruse and his wife. They had eight children. John L. was the oldest and lived nearby. He and his family, son and daughter all are dead. Frank Marion was the blacksmith. He is remembered among old timers because of his size. He weighed 350 and won a prize at the Oregon Exposition as the largest man in Oregon. He was young when he died. Archibald died when he was only three days old.

Albert O. grew up, married and had two steamboating sons. J. Fritz was a steamboat captain who was killed by an accidental powder discharge October 20, 1887, when he was only 26. Anna I. became the wife of Joseph F. Cook and she died when she was 23, leaving a son, who died a few years ago, and a daughter, Ernest was seven when he died. Homer A. was the youngest son of John L. Kruse, and he became professor of music at Willamette university. He married

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Children of the fifth generation of Kruses swing and play under this maple tree in front of the Kelvin Kruse home. There are two such maples, both around 90 years old, said the children's grandfather, Elmer Kruse, who lives next door. Elmer's grandfather, John L. Kruse, is believed to have planted them and the huge black walnut nearby. In the background here are filbert trees. The Kruse farm is located on the Willamette near Wilsonville.—Oswego Review photo

Rosa Wagner in 1897, and she lives on the farm now. Elmer's one of their sons, he was born in 1899, and Dolph in 1901, and he died in 1951. Roger, son of Dolph Kruse, and his mother, have a third of the farm.

#### Twice County Commissioner

Hines' History reported that John L. Kruse was a Democrat—until the firing of Ft. Sumter, then he joined the infant Republican party and worked for it. In 1878 he was one of the organizers of the Grange and served several times as master. Twice he was elected county commissioner of Clackamas county. In 1887 he served in the Oregon legislature. He was known as a good farmer who employed a number of hands, had good stock and equipment, including his own blacksmith shop and forge.

His grandson, Elmer and one of his two sons, Kelvin, do all the farming now. They raise barley, some wheat and oats, have about 15 acres in walnuts, and run sheep. They've cut their filberts to five acres, and are thinking seriously of joining the soil bank program which will take out 30-40 acres. Elmer Kruse said they will have to sign up for a minimum of five years, which he's not too keen about. "So many things can happen." His other son, Robert L. Kruse, is a successful Chicago businessman.

"I've farmed all my life, and getting poorer every year," Elmer Kruse added. The families are supplementing their incomes. Mrs. Elmer Kruse is teaching the second grade in the Stafford school. Kelvin Kruse is working this year