



## HISTORY

### THE EARLY YEARS

Paul Obery, his wife Catherine, and their family immigrated to the United States from France and in 1874 began farming the 127 acres north-east of Metamora, Illinois that would later become the Obery centennial farm. Born shortly after settling in the United States, Paul's seventh son, Martin, stayed on the farm and eventually took over after his parents retired. Martin was also a thresherman. His sister Louise kept house for him at the Obery homestead for many years. Although he and his wife Bena had six children, four died at birth. Surviving were Edward and Kathryn.

Edward farmed his father's land and also hauled gravel to earn money to buy a diamond ring for, Hilda, his bride-to-be. Edward and Hilda married in 1915 and were the parents of six children, Dorothy, Elmer, Viola, Walter, Eddie and Eugene. In 1925, Martin gave the farm to Edward and Kathryn. Edward then purchased his sister's share and continued to farm. In 1936, Edward bought an additional 120 acres in Greene Township for \$137.50 per acre.

Three of Edward and Hilda's sons, Walter, Elmer and Eddie, served their country during World War II. Walter enlisted in the Air Force in November 1942 and lost his life on July 31, 1943 while riding as a passenger in an Army car on Highway 17 near Jacksonboro, South Carolina. While his company was practicing night maneuvers, the car hit a concrete abutment at the approach of a bridge. Elmer enlisted in the Navy in June 1944, married while in the service, returned home and was employed by Caterpillar for years. He also rented a farm near Toulon, Illinois and later purchased a farm in Dunlap, Illinois and moved there with his family. Eddie enlisted in the Army in July 1944. After landing in the Philippines, he saw combat on the island of Luzon helping to take Belete Pass. He spent a total of 131 days in combat, and returned home on July 17, 1946 to farm with his younger brother, Eugene.

Edward and Hilda's daughters, Dorothy and Viola, also farmed. Dorothy, and her husband George Vogel, moved to his family's farm in Benson, Illinois, which their family still owns today. Viola and her husband, Joe Gensler, started farming in 1945 on her father's Greene Township farm and eventually purchased their own farm near Toluca, Illinois where they raised their family of six. Viola's grandsons still farm there today.

### THE FOURTH GENERATION

Edward retired in 1947, moved into town, and eventually sold the land and equipment to his sons Eddie and Eugene. They purchased the equipment from their father for only \$1,935 and formed Obery Brothers. The brothers baled hay and shelled corn for neighbors. They also raised cattle and Eddie prided himself on guessing the weight of the cattle that he hauled to market every Monday morning. Obery Brothers was incorporated



as Obery Farms Inc. on February 25, 1966. Edward continued to make daily trips to the farm until his death in 1969.

Eugene and his wife, Marjorie, raised their family on the Obery homestead. They were the parents of two sons, Joel and David, and two daughters, Kristina and Marla. Eddie and his wife, Marcella, raised their family on a farm located only a mile from the first Obery homestead. Marcella felt right at home as she also came from a family of farmers. They were the parents of two sons, John and Mark, and four daughters Ann, Sue, Kay and Joy. Obery Farms® was designated a centennial farm in 1981 by the Illinois Department of Agriculture for family ownership for over 100 years.

## **BUILDING AN ENTERPRISE**

All of the fifth generation sons followed their fathers into the fields, while the daughters pursued careers off the farm. During this time, the farm became a thriving enterprise as Eddie and Eugene raised their families. Eddie, Eugene and their sons continued to expand the farm operations by purchasing additional acres and offering farm chemicals and fertilizers, custom application, grain merchandising, field tiling, and trucking services.

A grain drying and storage facility was constructed on the original Obery homestead to serve Obery Farms® and other Central Illinois farmers. Obery Grain Inc. was incorporated on March 29, 1979 as the grain merchandising business grew. Eugene closely monitored the grain markets and would buy and sell several hundred thousand bushels of grain each year. Eugene's youngest son, David, eventually took over the management of the grain merchandising business. Obery Chemical and Fertilizer was founded in 1978 and incorporated on January 11, 1989 as a chemical and fertilizer dealer and custom application service provider. At the peak of their custom application business, the Obery's sprayed over 50,000 acres in Central Illinois.

After battling Alzheimer's disease for six years, Eddie passed away in 1994. His death marked a turning point for Obery Farms. The family decided that, with Eddie's passing and their aging equipment, they could no longer raise cattle. While the Obery's continued to farm and expand their chemical and fertilizer business, new technology and modern equipment brought about a different kind of change: farming has become safer and more efficient.

## **2005 TO PRESENT**

While in the past the Obery's raised cattle and hogs, and grew corn, soybeans, wheat, and oats, today the Obery's concentrate on growing corn and soybeans. They plant using twin rows and GPS-guided auto-steer technology, apply the latest chemicals and fertilizers to improve yields and monitor crop performance at harvest with advanced yield



mapping software. In 2005, Obery Farms® was named state winner in the National Corn Yield Contest with a yield of 250.7764 bushels per acre.

In 2006, David and Joel labored countless hours expanding the grain drying and storage facility and, sadly, that fall, while attending the State Semi-Finals in Springfield, David's life abruptly came to an end after suffering a massive aortic transection. This tragedy generated an uncertainty of the farm's future. In the aftermath of David's death, the grain merchandising business was retired and the custom chemical and fertilizer application business was scaled down. Eighteen months later, Eugene passed away after battling cancer for several years. He had celebrated his eightieth birthday just two days earlier. With his death, the fourth generation's reign of Obery Farms® came to an end, but their legacy lingers on. The day after Eugene's death, the Metamora Volunteer Fire Department presented Obery Farms® with the Mark J. Adams Memorial Award for generously volunteering time and support to improve the Metamora community.

Obery Farms® celebrated its 135th anniversary in 2009 with a documentary film produced by Levi Obery and his grandmother, Marcella, through Obery's production company, Ten Thirty-One Pictures® Entertainment. Harvest that year was the latest in the farm's history: it began on October 29 and finished on December 12. On November 25, 2013, John and Mark Obery and area farmers gathered together to clean up debris from neighboring fields after a devastating EF4 tornado struck on November 17. This tradition of farmers helping farmers dates back to 1948 when neighbors finished picking corn on Mrs. Joseph Imhoff's farm after her son was killed in a picker accident.

Today, Obery Farms and its 5th generation principals, John, Mark, and Joel Obery, grow corn and soybeans using the latest in technology, equipment, chemicals, and fertilizers. While Obery Farms has expanded into a thriving enterprise over the past 150 years, it has remained true to its humble beginnings, where hard work, a passion for agricultural excellence, and stewardship of the land have always been at the forefront. For the past century and a half, the Obery family has cultivated a legacy of trust and exceptional service that has become synonymous with the Obery name.