

Richard Corbin – part 1

This is Kansas Profile. I'm Ron Wilson, director of the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development at Kansas State University.

“Boot scootin’.” The term brings to mind a fun country line dance. Today we’ll meet a rural Kansas family who began with a boot scootin’ barn and grew their enterprise into a remarkable agritourism enterprise. It’s today’s Kansas Profile.

David Corbin is the fifth generation owner of Fulton Valley Farms in Butler County. David and Betty’s son Richard told me about it.

Their ancestors came from Ohio and settled here in 1863. The maternal side of the family was named Fulton - related to the Robert Fulton who invented the steamboat. A Fulton married a Corbin and the farm continued to grow.

The farm is located south of Towanda, west of El Dorado, north of Augusta and east of the rural community of Benton, population 821 people. Now, that’s rural.

David Corbin lives in a house which his ancestors built in 1880. He met and married Betty, a city girl from Wichita. She moved to the farm and observed that David, like other farmers, was constantly checking the markets to see how prices were doing. She became intrigued and ultimately set up her own brokerage firm. David joined the firm a couple of years later while continuing to farm.

For years, the market reports from Corbin Investments were a fixture on radio stations across Kansas. In 2016, the Corbins retired and sold that business.

David also pursued time in public service. He served in the National Guard and then was elected to the state legislature. He served two years in the House, 12 years in the Kansas Senate, and worked six years for the Department of Revenue.

David and Betty had two sons who were active in farming and 4-H. Richard served on the livestock judging team at Butler County Community College which won two national championships while he was there.

Then came the time that his brother was getting married. The wedding was to be held in a small local church, but the reception hall was not big enough. They looked around for a venue and decided to have the wedding reception right there on the farm.

The Corbins had a quonset hut which had been built in 1951 and used for hay storage. They figured they could clean it up and then use it for machinery storage after the wedding. The floor of the quonset was half dirt and half concrete, so they cleaned it out and laid a new eight-inch concrete floor.

“We bought tables and chairs from the church, asked people to bring lawn chairs, and set up port-a-potties,” Richard said. The reception was a success.

Then a couple of weeks later, a lady called who was also looking for a place for a wedding reception. She asked if they could rent the Corbin’s barn and the family agreed.

“My dad had already started moving his equipment back in,” Richard said. “We hauled it back out again and let the lady use it.” This demonstrated that there was a demand for such facilities. “That first year we hosted five or six weddings or receptions,” Richard said. Suffice it to say, David never got his machine shed back.

Because of its popularity for wedding dances, the Corbins called their facility the Boot Scootin’ Barn. Demand continued to grow, but one bride was put off by the term “barn.” “She loved the place but she assumed a barn was a stinky place full of animals,

even though there never been livestock in there,” Richard said. They decided to rethink the name.

Meanwhile, the county was going through the process of assigning street names and discontinuing rural routes. Because of the history of the Fulton family as early settlers, the adjacent road was named Fulton Road. The Corbins decided to name their place Fulton Valley Farms.

Today, Fulton Valley Farms has become a beautiful destination for rural weddings and more. For more information, see www.fultonvalleyfarms.com.

The Boot Scootin’ Barn became a popular place for lots of wedding fun, but that was only the beginning. We commend the Corbins for making a difference by growing this remarkable agritourism enterprise – even to include reindeer. We’ll learn about that next week.

For the Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development, this is Ron Wilson with Kansas Profile.