

# Farmland SEASONS

SUMMER 2015

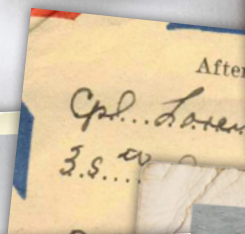
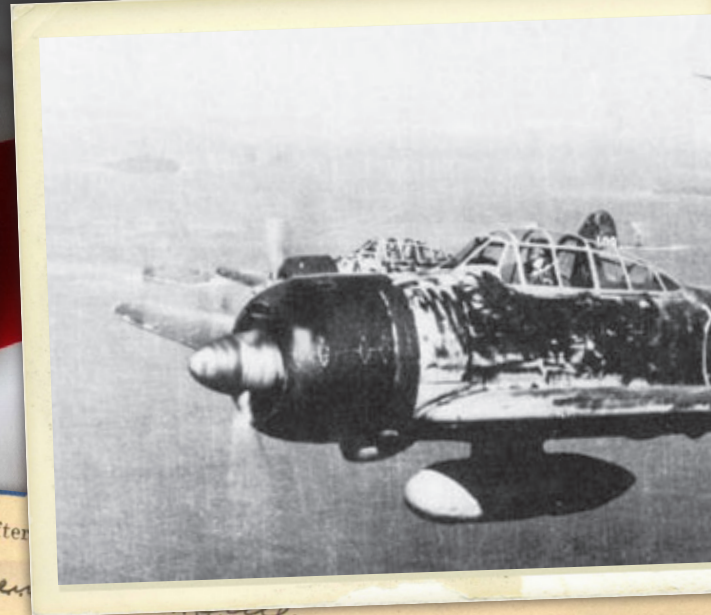


*We plant profitable investment ideas  
in every season*

Special Feature

## Patriotic Stories from the Farm

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# Patriotic Stories from

It's mid-summer. A time when we remember those throughout history who served so bravely to keep us free. In fact, 2015 marks 70 years since the end of World War II, a war that required great commitment from our entire nation. To prevail, everyone had a vital role to play. Farmers grew the food to fuel our troops, women joined men in building our war machine, and society as a whole worked together to give the best possible support for those fighting. In honor of this anniversary, we share the following stories with you—stories about two men who grew up on the farm, went to the war, and made agriculture their career.

For Harold Steele, the son of a second generation farmer in Bureau County, Illinois, the news in the summer of 1941 that he was headed to the University of Illinois had come as a bit of a shock. "I was going to be a farmer. I never considered anything else." But Mr. Steele's mother, a second generation teacher, insisted. And it was in December of that year that Mr. Steele found himself standing next to the grand piano in the front room of the "Farm House" fraternity in Champaign-Urbana when President Roosevelt informed the nation that the United States was at war. In Mr. Steele's words, "I remember the exact spot when we got word the Japanese had attacked Pearl Harbor, and the damage that had been incurred. And then reality set in. We were in it now for sure, period. And then of course the president spoke the next day. We were in it. We had declared war." Within days, Harold and so many of his peers from all across the United States had enlisted in various branches of the military to assist the war effort in Europe.



*Mr. Harold Steele with his collection of historical farm equipment.*

Harold's first stop was basic training in Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Because of a strong need for infantrymen, he was eventually sent to Fort Benning, Georgia, where he enrolled in Officer Candidate School to become an infantry lieutenant. Once trained, Harold joined a group of young men aboard a 36 ship convoy headed for England. During the 17 days of horrible weather and rough seas, the Americans had advanced at the Battle of the Bulge, causing the convoy to be re-directed to Le Havre, France. Upon arriving at the shore, the men climbed down a rope ladder, settled into their tent camp, and prepared for their future in ground combat. The infantry regiment was tasked with holding position lines across Germany on their way to meeting up with Soviets coming from the east.

Like many World War II heroes, Mr. Steele's humble position is that during his time at war he was simply carrying out his training experiences as best he could under real conditions. He knew that "... the Germans were keen of mind in military operations.

They were seasoned troops and they did all that they could to halt any advancement that the Allies made. So out in the open area, particularly when you came into some trees, quite likely they would be there in hiding. So we had to maintain a vigilance of awareness at every moment."

For his efforts as a platoon leader of Company I, 353rd Infantry Regiment on March 15, 1945 near Alf, Germany, in connection with military operations against an armed enemy, Harold received the Silver Star. First Lieutenant Steele led his men towards formidable enemy defenses which were supported by machine gun and automatic rifles. Once he and his platoon encountered a minefield, Steele led his men out of the area, and then resuming the attack, captured the first objective, killing ten men. Steele then spurred his men forward despite enemy machine gun and sniper fire. When his platoon was ordered to a new position, First Lieutenant Steele personally administered first aid to a seriously wounded man and helped carry him one and a half miles to safety.

"One particular day, probably I'll say 50, 60 miles, maybe a short week after crossing the Rhine (River), my platoon happened to be in the lead position of the company, and the company lead position of the battalion in this sector. I had my scout out front. At about eleven o'clock, I'd guess from 600 to 800 yards, there were low-profile buildings and some trees and German machine gun fire. At the pace of our movement, it would have been—I don't know—10, 15 minutes perhaps, until we reached that point. And having heard the German machine gun fire, we advanced into that area with great precaution. But as



# the Farm

we came to, oh I'd say 100 yards from there, I noticed two US recon vehicles. So this offered us an opportunity of saying, well, apparently the Germans are gone; some of our buddies are there. So we advanced rather quickly." What they found were deceased prisoners and a few remaining survivors—the first discovery of a Nazi concentration camp (Ohrdruf).

Shortly thereafter, top US commanders, including General Patton and General Eisenhower, surveyed the camp. Steele recalls the order then came from General Eisenhower that the division would get all of the German civilians in the city of Gotha, to force them to witness the German atrocities. The order was that, "They would go through and see what we saw." Steele states that, "And I remember so clearly, as I was near the bodies and the Germans would walk around the perimeter, and their faces, their faces! They were struck with anguish the same as we had been, realizing the Germans could be actors. But I believe that the vast majority of these people had no idea that this was going on."

In July of '47, Harold came home to the United States. At home, Harold went to work for his brother for two years on the farm and then went on his own, farming 220 acres. "We still had rotations then, in 1948. A rotation of corn to corn, seeded it to oats, and alfalfa and legumes, and then hay or pasture the next year. That's the way my dad did it. My dad produced about 50 bushels of corn to the acre; a good year it was 60." Harold's brother

retired a couple years later, opening the opportunity for Harold to take over the 1,000 acre family farm.

Mr. Steele farmed full time until 1970, then having his son Greg take over when Harold agreed to run for Vice President of the Illinois Farm Bureau. Harold was elected to the post and retired in 1983 from the Farm Bureau, having eventually served as president. Then, in the mid-1980s during the collapse of the farm economy, a congressional study was being made to determine the financial position of American agriculture and American small business. It was requested that Harold chair the effort, upon which he committed. Then in 1989, Harold was invited to become Chairman of the Board & CEO of the Farm Credit System under President George Bush. In that role, Harold was instrumental in establishing more favorable mortgage terms for all farmers, especially young farmers who needed the capital to grow their businesses.

After all these years, and the variety of experiences across the world, Harold still reflects fondly upon his days on the

farm. "My father didn't go broke, didn't lose the land, but dad was very, very skillful in management and not spending a penny unless he had to. He was frugal. We were happy. Our entertainment was families getting together with the neighbors; our entertainment was to entertain one another. You stayed home at night; you read stories. But not like Abraham Lincoln in front of the fireplace necessarily, but you learned to live with what you had. You didn't buy new things except on Christmas. And I would say, on Christmas was the only orange I had in a full year, and that orange was right down in the toe of my stocking that hung over the fireplace. That wasn't just Harold Steele; that was all of us. You couldn't go to the grocery store in July and buy an orange because it wasn't there, nor did you have the money. So today we have all these wonderful things that we didn't have then, but we didn't know any different because it wasn't that way."

Harold's appreciation for our country runs as deep as his farming roots. He holds steadfast in our need to protect the constitution and elect those who

are willing to do the same. "We need to be far more willing as individual farmers to be more proactive in the political arena. And select those people with the honor and integrity, and a belief in our system of the constitution. And protect that constitution."

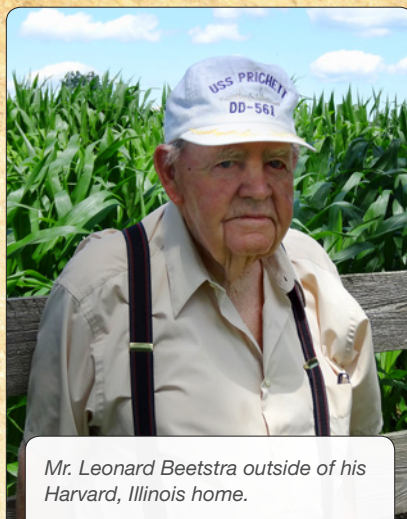
Much like how Harold has approached his life, he offers this for young people entering agriculture, "If you want it, go after it."





The Beetstra Farm, 160 acres near Harvard, Illinois, was very similar to most farms across the Midwest in the 1930s. Leonard Beetstra, a teenager at the time who always saw his future in agriculture, had a daily routine of feeding cows, cleaning the barn, hauling manure, harnessing horses and the like. The Beetstra family, like all farmers in the 1930s and early '40s, did everything by hand and horses. "That was a daily routine. When I got up in the morning, my dad had the fires all stoked up in the house. We had a potbelly stove in the living room, and it was my job to have a little kindling ready for him in the morning so we could start the stoves. We'd go out and milk, and when we got done milking then we'd come in the house. My mother had breakfast made for us on the old cook-stove that we started before we went off to the barn. You'd have to have a lot of wood on hand for cooking and so forth, wood and corncobs. Milking by hand those days was a struggle." Beyond the milking, the Beetstra's collected chicken eggs every morning and headed into Harvard, Illinois to trade the eggs for groceries.

This routine of hard work was nothing new on The Beetstra Farm. The younger Beetstra never remembers his father missing a day of milking, and even holidays didn't amount to much—



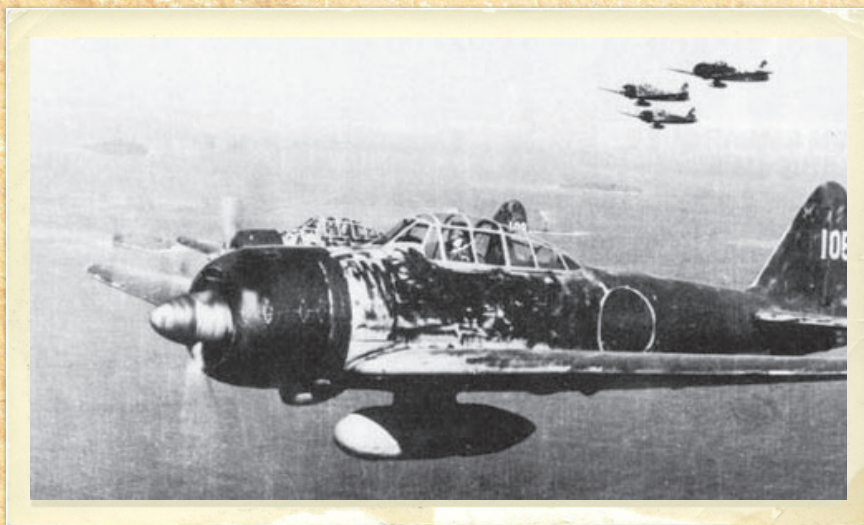
*Mr. Leonard Beetstra outside of his Harvard, Illinois home.*

as there was always work that needed to be done. When war broke out, Leonard responded as he always had on the farm. He enlisted in the United States Navy and entered the war effort. Like so many brave young people in cities and on farms across America, he was not looking to be uprooted and sent around the world to fight a world war. He did it because it needed to be done.

"In 1943 I turned 18, and World War II was underway. My friends went and joined the Navy, and I decided that I was going to go too. So I volunteered for the Navy on November 8, 1943, and about a week later I was on a train to Chicago for

a physical. About three weeks later I had my orders to report to the Woodstock office on the 2nd or 3rd of January for induction into the service." After basic training in the Great Lakes, Leonard served in New Orleans and San Francisco before boarding a troop ship headed for Guam. After being in Guam for 2 or 3 weeks, he was stationed aboard a destroyer that just came from Iwo Jima. Leonard served the rest of his time on that ship, The U.S.S. Pritchett DD-561.

While on the U.S.S. Pritchett, Leonard Beetstra recalled the most striking moment of his service. "We took the last kamikaze hit of World War II. This happened at about 1:30 in the morning." Leonard and his team picked up the enemy on radar, 60 miles out to sea and closing at 60 miles per hour. "They were coming our way. It took about five minutes to get your guns, get the cotton in your ears, and get ready to fire at them." The first plane that came in hit the U.S.S. Callaghan, a sister ship to the U.S.S. Pritchett. "She was stern of us 500 yards to our south. There was a big explosion and the ship started burning. You could see she was sinking. We weren't far away from her. All the sailors from the Callaghan were in the water with life jackets on. The sea was full of guys floating with nothing to hang on to but their life jacket. So we pulled in alongside next to the ship when it was burning. We made a brief stop, maybe 2 seconds, and we then pulled about 500 feet away. We had cargo nets on the side of the ship, and some guys grabbed onto the cargo nets and climbed on board our ship, probably 20 or 25 at that point. Then, just a few minutes later, there was a tremendous explosion off the Callaghan, and after that she started going down. We made a big circle and pulled alongside her again, and by this time the bow was straight up in the air. They jumped on our ship and then we pulled away. We had 160 guys





we picked up out of the water off the Callaghan. We took them into Okinawa and transferred them to a hospital ship.”

Meanwhile, the Pritchett was still firing on the one remaining suicide plane that was flying around. “He came in so close and would go away. We kept firing at him until he was out of gas. Then he made his dive on us, but missed our ship by a few feet. The bomb on the plane exploded on the water line, but the rest of the plane all lay on the deck of the ship, including the pilot. It was all mangled. The propeller of that airplane was made in the United States in 1927. It was a wooden prop. It was broke up a little bit, but it lay on our deck. Different sailors took things off it. That was quite an experience that night, not knowing at the time that the plane we salt-watered over the side was the last one of World War II. That was near Okinawa, Japan.”

Once the war was over, Leonard headed back to establish additional roots in the McHenry County farming community. The only money he had at that time was “mustering out” money, about \$250. That, along with an “old rattle-trap car” was enough for Mr. Beetstra to get started on his ambitions. Since all farmers in the area had cattle, and Leonard enjoyed the cattle business, he began trying his hand at the buying and selling of Holstein cows and heifers. The business took off and Leonard found himself doing business daily with clients across the United States.

Right out of the gates, Leonard worked to purchase 66 acres for \$485 per acre (\$32,000 total). Leonard was determined to make the purchase, and did so with a bank loan of \$18,000, the \$6,000-\$8,000 he had at the time, and additional help from his brother and dad. Leonard’s father was also kind enough to provide a couple cows to the new operation. On his 66 acre farm, Leonard cleared a few trees to add cropland for silage, and then fed heifers on the property.

As the cattle business progressed,

Leonard was in a position to purchase his second farm. Upon hearing Leonard was in the market for a farm, a neighbor called up asking if Leonard could stop to see him sometime. They met the next morning. The neighbor was asking \$1,000 per acre and was willing to offer seller financing at a 5 percent interest rate, significantly lower than the 7 percent banks were charging at the time. The neighbor didn’t require much money down, and eventually the farm became worth more money. Leonard later sold off 40 acres for about what he paid for the whole 160 acre farm. He now effectively had the remaining 120 acre farm paid for. The property was a productive grain farm and his son lives on the land today.

As word spread that Leonard was an active buyer of farmland, soon another neighbor came calling. Leonard balked at the neighbor’s \$3,000 per acre asking price, saying it was too high. After some negotiation, the two struck a deal for \$2,500 per acre and some creative deal making. As Leonard recalls, “I offered \$2,500 per acre for it. I told the seller he could live on the farm and stay in the house. I’ll pay the light bill, I’ll fix the pump, and he can live in the house 10 years for free. I also bought his machinery for \$5,000. He stood up,

shook my hand, and said he wanted to make a deal with me.”

Years later, Leonard, with a partner, purchased 400 acres on the north edge of Harvard, Illinois. Some time later, the farmland turned to development land when a major U.S. corporation came calling, wanting to build a business campus on the site. “Motorola came around and bought 300 acres from us. That was a big payout.” Over the coming weeks and months, Leonard worked to reinvest the sale proceeds into other farmland by utilizing a 1031 tax deferred exchange. The Motorola land, which was originally purchased 25 years earlier for \$350 per acre, sold for \$17,000 per acre in 1993.

In reflecting on his previous land deals, cattle enterprise, and war experience, Mr. Beetstra offers the following to young people in agriculture, “Ambition is the greatest thing of all.”

Mr. Harold Steele and Mr. Leonard Beetstra are two examples of a generation of people who were willing to do whatever it took to keep us free. We hope you enjoyed their stories. As you celebrate at this festive time of year, please take a moment to ponder the sacrifices made both past and present to keep our nation great.





# APPRAISAL DIVISION UPDATE

Farmland often represents a substantial portion of many landowner's net worth. Today's agricultural operations are much more diversified and expansive than ever before. Appraising these complex businesses and assets requires specific expertise from an appraiser who has broad experience in doing so. Asking just any appraiser to place a value on your farmland or agribusiness assets can come with risk if that person is not an expert on appraising the type of property you own. That's why we have always focused our appraisal efforts on what we know best—farmland and agribusiness. Given that we are in a year of transitional values in the agricultural sector, we sat down with Michael Miner and Brad Waddell of MGW Appraisal Services for some perspective on the appraisal business.

**Q: Brad, can you give us some background on MGW's history in the appraisal business?**

A: Michael Miner, MGW's Chief Appraiser, has been a licensed appraiser for over 20 years. Michael, along with our appraisal team, continues our tradition of ethical, uniquely qualified appraisal work dating back to the early 1980's. Our focus has historically been on appraisals of farmland and related agribusinesses. We have done work throughout a number of Midwestern states for landowners, farmers, attorneys, bank trustees, and lenders.

**Q: Can you provide insight on how MGW Appraisal Services operates?**

A: Our firm is capable of accurately completing any farm or agribusiness appraisal in a timely fashion, regardless of location. Unlike many appraisers in the business, we devote 100 percent of our time to completing appraisals—inspecting, evaluating, analyzing, and drafting a high quality product that meets and exceeds all industry standards. Plus, we bring years of perspective and experience to the appraisal process, drawing on our firm's long history as a leader in the farmland business. Our Midwestern focus has always been on appraising land, whether transitional, recreational, agricultural, or development, as well as on agribusinesses like grain elevators and livestock facilities.



Michael Miner & Brad Waddell working up an appraisal in rural Dekalb County, Illinois.

In the event we are called upon to service an appraisal need outside of our core area, we are able to source the needed expertise through our structure as an Appraisal Management Company (AMC). Because of that, there is no geographic limitation to our appraisal services—we are able to appraise grain elevators in Minnesota, rice agribusinesses in Arkansas, fertilizer facilities in Iowa, or farmland in Illinois, among other things.

**Q: Michael, who typically seeks out your appraisal services?**

A: Families and individuals have been a large part of our appraisal business since the beginning. Our appraisals have helped them with succession planning, gifting, family buyouts, or simply learning the market value of their assets. A major focus of our business is working with professionals employed by the individuals. These attorneys and accountants call on us from time to time as they assist in estate settlement, financial and tax planning.

We regularly work with banks and lenders across the Midwest. These appraisals are often required to obtain insurance, mortgages and collateral for land or agribusiness purchases, as well as to understand the value of certain assets in a bank's portfolio.

## IN ADDITION TO FARMLAND, WE ALSO APPRAISE:

- Transitional & development land
- Commercial property
- Limited Liability Corporations
- Recreational land
- Equipment dealerships
- Partial interests in real estate
- Farmettes
- Fertilizer plants
- Livestock facilities
- Grain elevators



# Martin, Goodrich & Waddell LAND LISTINGS

All acreage and mileage figures listed here are approximate

## ILLINOIS PROPERTY

### BOONE COUNTY

- 70.7 acres. Dougall Farm, 5 mi. SW of Belvidere. \$9,150/ac. SOLD
- 42.4 acres. Highway 20 Farm, 2 3/4 mi. E of Belvidere. \$7,900/ac. SALE PENDING
- 205.8 acres. Leroy Center Farm, 1 mi. NW of Capron. \$7,900/ac. SALE PENDING
- 29.7 acres. Angling Road Farm, 2 1/2 mi. S of Capron. \$7,850/ac.

### BUREAU COUNTY

- 95.3 acres. Spring Valley Farm, city of Spring Valley. \$23,900/ac.

### CARROLL COUNTY

- 155.8 acres. Maring Farm, 4 mi. SW of Chadwick. \$8,250/ac. SOLD

### DEKALB COUNTY

- 5 acres. Donnelly Property, 1 mi. S of DeKalb. \$148,500. SALE PENDING
- 239.1 acres. Parcell Trust Farm, 4 mi. N of Malta. \$14,700/ac. SOLD
- 84.7 acres. Pearson Farm, city of Genoa. \$17,500/ac.
- 57.2 acres. Karras Farm, contiguous to Cortland. \$16,250/ac. SOLD
- 114.1 acres. Sycamore North Farm, city of Sycamore. \$16,500/ac.
- 100 acres. Malta Road Farm, 2 mi. SW of Kirkland. \$9,450/ac. 5 ac. farmette, \$289,000.
- 2 acres. Olson Farmette, 3 mi. SW of Genoa. \$159,900
- 76 acres. Rimsnider Farm, 3 1/2 mi. NW of Hinckley. \$13,900/ac. 2 farmettes, \$174,000 & \$189,000
- 160 acres. Gonzalez Farm, 2 3/4 mi. NW of Somonauk. \$12,900/ac.

### HENRY COUNTY

- 123.4 acres. Herren Farm, 3 1/4 mi. NE of Geneseo. \$10,500/ac. SOLD

### JO DAVIESS COUNTY

- 15 acres. Hilltop Property, 6 mi. NE of Elizabeth. \$149,500 SOLD

### KANE COUNTY

- 82 acres. Lueth Farm, 3/4 mi. S of Algonquin. \$14,900/ac.
- 97.5 acres. Turner Farm, 1 1/2 mi SW of Elgin. \$10,900/ac.
- 111.3 acres. Godfrey Farm, 3/4 mi. NW of Campton Hills. \$10,900/ac.
- 28.8 acres. Burlington Road Property, village of Burlington. \$449,000 SALE PENDING
- 211.8 acres. Lasher Road Farm, 1 mi. SW of Kaneville. \$9,900/ac.

### LASALLE COUNTY

- 102 acres. Wallem Farm, 2 1/2 mi. NE of LaSalle. \$14,500/ac. SOLD
- 130.7 acres. Lacey Farm, 3 mi. E of Oglesby. \$11,900/ac. SOLD
- 104.6 acres. Groveland Farm, 1 1/2 mi. NW of Dana. \$9,400/ac. SOLD



### OUR FEATURE FARM:

### THE GONZALEZ FARM

DEKALB COUNTY, IL, \$12,900/AC.

160 total acres. 156 tillable acres. Top quality farm in an excellent location, 18 miles southwest of Aurora. \$12,900/ac.

### LEE COUNTY

- 48 acres. Ikeler Property, village of Paw Paw. \$7,900/ac.

### MCHEMRY COUNTY

- 99.7 acres. Gober Farm, 1/2 mi. W of Marengo. \$8,400/ac.
- 10.5 acres. DiSilvio Farm, 5 mi. W of Huntley. \$340,000.
- 59.1 acres. Johnsburg Property East, village of Johnsburg. \$17,995/ac.
- 30.5 acres. Johnsburg Property West, village of Johnsburg. \$19,950/ac.
- 80.3 acres. Doty Road Property, 1 mi. N of Crystal Lake. \$13,900/ac.

### OGLE COUNTY

- 127 acres. Ogle County Crossroads Property, city of Rochelle. \$39,900/ac.
- 150 acres. Interstate Transportation Center Property, city of Rochelle. \$19,500/ac.
- 6.43 acres. North Pointe Property, city of Rochelle. 5.36 ac. at \$5.50/sq. ft. & 1.07 ac. at \$7.50/sq. ft.
- 26.9 acres. McKinley Farm, 5 mi. W of Polo. \$344,500.

### STEPHENSON COUNTY

- 69.1 acres. Patriot Farm, 1 1/2 mi. W of Ridott. \$5,950/ac.
- 4.7 acres. Patriot Property, 1 1/2 mi. W of Ridott. \$285,000.

### WILL COUNTY

- 69.1 acres. Lockport Property, city of Lockport. \$21,700/ac.
- 54.9 acres. Lincoln Highway Property, city of Frankfort. \$29,500/ac.
- 103.5 acres. Brettingen Farm, 3/4 mi. E of Beecher. \$5,950/ac. SALE PENDING

### WINNEBAGO COUNTY

- 159.2 acres. Dickenson #2B Farm, contiguous to Rockford. \$19,000/ac. SOLD
- 120 acres. Durand Farm, 5 1/2 mi. SE of Durand. \$8,690/ac. SOLD
- 231 acres. Rogers Farm, village of Roscoe. \$10,500/ac.
- 170.2 acres. Sedarquist Farm, 1 mi. W of Rockford. \$5,900/ac.
- 36.6 acres. Riverside Development Property, city of Rockford. \$9,150/ac.
- 34 acres. Baxter Road Farm, village of New Milford. \$7,900/ac.
- 147.6 acres. Brolund Farm, contiguous to Pecatonica. \$6,750/ac.

- 40 acres. Tipple Road Property, 2 mi. W of Rockford. \$525,000.

## INDIANA PROPERTY

### LAKE COUNTY

- 53.5 acres. Merrillville Road Property, town of Merrillville. \$8,350/ac.

### NEWTON COUNTY

- 54.5 acres. Forest Knolls Farm, contiguous to Lake Village. \$5,750/ac.
- 10 acres. Lincoln Property, 1/2 mi W of Roselawn. \$68,500.

## MISSOURI PROPERTY

### HOWELL COUNTY

- 424.9 acres. Smith Property, 14 mi. S of West Plains. \$885/ac. SALE PENDING

## WISCONSIN PROPERTY

### ROCK COUNTY

- 144 acres. Billimack Farm, 11 mi. W of Beloit. \$3,950/ac.

### WALWORTH COUNTY

- 279.4 acres. Elkhorn Farm, 1/2 mi. E of Elkhorn. \$12,900/ac.

## AUCTIONS

- 141 acres. Route 251 Farm, Contiguous to Davis Junction, 8/18/15
- 60 acres. Gustafson Farm, 3/4 mi. N of Byron, IL. SOLD
- 80 acres. Marie Fabrizio Farm, 1 1/2 mi. S of Virgil, IL. SOLD
- 79 acres. Kamrow Farm, 4 1/2 mi. W of Manteno, IL. SOLD
- 133 acres. Nu-Way Farm, 2 1/2 mi. SE of Belleville, WI. SOLD
- 2480 acres. Timberline Ranch, 4 1/4 mi. N of Musselshell, MT. SOLD

For details on these properties, call Jeff Waddell, Josh Waddell or Mark Mommsen at 815-756-3606 or visit our website at [www.mgw.us.com](http://www.mgw.us.com).



# CHERISH YOUR NATURAL RESOURCES

As you've likely noticed driving through the countryside in recent years, farmland has been planted "fence row to fence row." It's really no surprise given the world's increased need for more corn and soybean production. Strong profit potential from historically high grain prices encouraged producers to bring some of their more marginal land into row crop production. Now that we've settled back into plentiful grain supplies and much lower trading ranges for corn and soybean prices, many landowners and farmers are rethinking their cropland strategy and considering placing some of their less productive tillable acres into a conservation program.

At Martin, Goodrich & Waddell, Inc., we have always held a firm belief in taking caring of our natural resources. Personally, I have been implementing and managing conservation programs since the mid-1990's, starting by helping others and then implementing these practices on my own family farm in Lee County, Illinois. Given my avid interest in hunting and outdoor recreation, preserving the land and creating wildlife habitat seemed like a natural thing to do. I have enhanced my property in a number of ways over the years, adding features like quail strips, filter strips, set-aside land, pine plantations, hardwood groves, numerous waterways, and two stocked ponds to better manage water flow and wildlife habitat. Not only has it been fun making these improvements over the years, but my family and I, along with friends, have been able to enjoy the property in many ways that we could not before.

Conservation can be self-directed or done in partnership through a variety of voluntary conservation programs available through the United States Department of Agriculture. These programs work to address a number of issues, including:

- Protecting drinking water
- Reducing soil erosion
- Preserving wildlife habitat
- Restoration and preservation of forests and wetlands

In fact, this December 23rd marks 30 years since the beginning of the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). Since its inception, the CRP program has helped reduce phosphorus runoff from cropland by 85 percent, limited nitrogen runoff by 95 percent, protected more

than 170-thousand miles of rivers and streams through riparian and grass buffers, and created nearly 300-thousand acres of flood-plain wetlands, among other things.

It is important to note that conservation programs are not a "set it and forget it" strategy. There is certainly some work involved in getting the programs set up, planted, and established. Beyond that, there are some annual maintenance items, including mowing, spot spraying of weeds, and possibly burning vegetative growth. While this may sound like work, it can serve as a source of enjoyment for those who appreciate nature and what it has to offer. I have found that many owners take great pride in conserving their land, creating memories while tending to it over the 10 or 20-year term of their program.

However, not all farmland is capable of being enrolled in certain conservation programs, and not all owners are eligible to receive the payments offered by these programs. In the event you would like to discuss how a conservation program might be a good fit for you or your farm, please feel free to call upon our team of farm managers at any time. They have been actively involved in designing, implementing, and managing a variety of conservation programs since our company's founding in 1975.

In the coming years, should you find yourself farming or leasing farmland that is susceptible to significant erosion, better suited for wildlife habitat, or possibly not profitable at lower grain prices than we've had in the past, I strongly encourage you to see if a USDA conservation program, or even a personal conservation plan could be of benefit. By taking the time to preserve our natural resources, we, along with future generations, will be able to enjoy the great outdoors for years to come.



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