

15th Annual Sidney Center Tractor Parade Grand Marshall

Mark your calendars for the 15th Annual Sidney Center Tractor Parade to take place on September 20, 2025. This event honors the people and families of our Local Counties farming and recognizes the importance of the farming industry and its history in our country.

This year's parade organizers are proud to honor Richard (Dick) Blackman as the Grand Marshal.

Dick (Arabia Farms) has roots that are deep in the earth that his family has tilled for over 160 years.

My great-great grandfather, Alexander McGregor, son of Scottish immigrants, had grown up in Andes. After he married Olive Ackerly in 1863, he moved to the area of Franklin called Arabia and started his own farm. He built a small house and barn near Schoolhouse II at the north end of East Brook Road. He had 2 milk cows, 4 calves and produced 250 pounds of butter for market in 1864. He had one pig, which provided pork for the winter.

On 135 acres of land, he grew buckwheat, Indian corn, potatoes and beans. 100 pounds maple sugar was also produced.

Alexander's son, John S McGregor was born there in 1868. John married the girl next door, Emeline Jester, in 1891 and continued to farm on the homestead with his father all of his life. They had one daughter, Lena, who married Clinton Blackman, he was not a farmer. Clinton was a highway construction worker. He died suddenly and tragically when a steam shovel he was moving down East Brook Road contacted a live electric wire, electrocuting him.

Lena moved her young family back to her parent's farm and her son, Vanley Blackman (my father), grew up working on the farm with his grandfather. When he started farming he had 16 dairy cows and worked the land with horses. His first tractor was a Ferguson 20, purchased in 1950. The tractor was used with a buck rake to gather loose hay, which was stored in the haymow of the barn. Alexander's original barn had additions over the year to increase the size.

He was active in the community, serving on the Board of Education of A.L. Kellogg School in Treadwell, on the Delaware Valley Agricultural Society Fair Board. He was a farm equipment dealer and would set up an exhibit at the fair. It included a large cattle scale where fairgoers could weigh themselves. Young ladies usually found they had gained 10 to 15 pounds while he stood solemn and innocent by the controls.

I started helping on the farm as soon as I could walk. I did whatever chores I could do to help. At 9 years old I was driving the tractor. I couldn't even reach the brake or clutch at the same time.

After graduating from A.L. Kellogg High School in 1966, I worked on the farm full time. It was on-the-job training in being a herdsman, vet and a mechanic to keep things going.

I met Lois Newton, a nursing student from Long Island, at a square dance, and was married in 1973. Lois adjusted to farm real well, never complained about all the hard work.

We moved into the original farmhouse (where we raised three high spirited sons, Richard, Wayne & Kevin) after my parents built a small house next door. (We have 6 grandchildren)

The farm had expanded to 300 acres with the purchase of the Jester homestead and neighboring fields.

We were milking 65 cows a mixed herd of Holsteins and Brown Swiss, when again tragedy struck on a hot night in August 1989. The barn caught fire and burned to the ground. We were able to save most of the herd but lost the barn, milking equipment and all the summer hay.

We sold the cows, built a metal guonset-style shed and began raising beef cattle in addition to selling and repairing Barnstead equipment.

My first tractor was a Ford 8000 purchased in 1969. It was the beginning of my love affair with Ford tractors.

In 2006 (and continue to do) Richard and I started entering and winning pulls with our Big Blue Tractor.

Registration for the parade is free and begins at 9:00 AM at the Sidney Center Fire Station, registration ends at 11:45 AM. Parade starts at noon.

Last year there were 144 entries. There will be raffle baskets, 50/50 and delicious chicken BBQ by Sidney Center Fire Department.

For parade details, call Lynn at 607 369-9074-9074 or Tom 607 610-4098. ➡