



STAFF PHOTO/JOHN D. HANLON

Peter Braman hauls corn silage on a trailer to feed to his herd of mother cows on Monday. Braman Farm was recently recognized by the New York State Agriculture Society after being in existence for more than a century.

# Group honors Penfield farm

◇ Braman Farm was recognized for remaining a family farm despite development pressure and time.

By Benjamin Wachs  
Messenger Post Staff

A farm can change a lot in 100 years, but the community around it can change even more.

The 148-acre Braman Farm in Penfield was just recognized as a "Century Farm" by the New York State Agriculture Society. In the 100 years it has been owned by six Bramans, the farm at 1411 Sweets Corners Road has gone from emphasizing produce to dairy cattle to beef cattle — its major commodity.

Meanwhile, the town of Penfield has gone from one that depended on rich agricultural land as a major industry to a town that recently needed to enact a green-space protection plan.

"Penfield is actually an area with a lot of development pressure, so for a farm to thrive in that kind of environment is extraordinary," said Agricultural Society spokesman Peter Gregg.

Penfield Supervisor Channing Philbrick agreed.

"Some of the active farms have been in the family for a number of years, and they want to see it continue, but it's very difficult when the value of the land is more than they can justify for farming," he said. "When you look at what's been happening in the community, what was once very productive farmland has



STAFF PHOTO/JOHN D. HANLON

Peter Braman feeds grain to a cow at his Penfield farm. Braman Farm, a 148-acre business, has gone from an emphasis on produce to dairy cattle and beef cattle over the years.

long since gone by the board, and we have development there."

But owner Peter Braman said he has always regarded the farm his father passed down to him as an opportunity rather than a burden. Taking care of it is what he always wanted to do.

"I enjoyed it growing up," he said. "I couldn't wait to get out of school and back home."

One of the secrets to the farm's century of success, he said, is family to keep it strong.

"It's always been family owned and operated, and with very little employment other than family," he said.

Each generation of the Bramans has had its own difficulty in maintaining the farm.

"I remember my grandfather very well. I was 21 when he passed away, and then my

See BRAMAN'S on page 2A

## Braman's

Continued from page 1A

dad passed on in 1999, and it kind of left me with little help," Braman said.

Upon taking over the farm from his grandfather, Braman's father had switched from vegetables to dairy cattle — and Braman wasn't sure he could keep that up.

"Dairy cattle are very hard. You've got to really be devoted," he said. "To keep a good

herd of dairy cattle, you should keep a real tight schedule ... When you don't have help, any breakdown on the farm causes that to get out of synchronization."

That left him with a choice — keep trying to farm the way his father had, or do what his father had done and take the farm in another new direction.

The choice was surprisingly easy.

"My father liked to work on the dairy farm, and I worked with him side by side for as long as I can remember, and

when I lost him that was a blow," Braman said. "But, I remembered what he taught me: If you can't do this, do something else."

So he dispersed the dairy herd for a good price and went into beef cattle, along with some crop rotations including barley — and says the farm is strong enough to last another 100 years.

That makes it very rare in New York, according to Gregg. Of the approximately 38,000 farms in New York, only about 1,000 have been identified as

Century Farms.

Whether the Braman farm sees a bicentennial award depends in no small part on the next generations, and Braman says he has no crystal ball.

He does, however, have an 11-year-old son.

"I'm divorced, he does not live with me, but he's here almost every weekend," Braman said. "He likes to work the farm, but he's young, (and) doesn't know what he wants to do. Someday, hopefully, he'll have his shot."