

The Stephens Farmhouse Story

Long, long time ago, back before Disco, or even man walking on the moon, there was a woman called Ma Steph (pronounced "Steve"); she was a widow, a farmer and had bazillion children to feed (o.k., 9 children). She grew a large garden filled with vegetables, flowers and fruit.

In 1964, she decided to sell the extra melons from her garden in her front yard on Wilson Road. In this first year, Ma Steph hoped to sell enough melons to give each of her sons, Ray and Loyd, \$100 for each of their children.

Loyd and Raymond were following in the family tradition of farming. Their crops included plums, peaches and walnuts here in Sutter County.

Loyd had two daughters, Karen and Janet, and Raymond had two sons, Dan and Jeff. Everyone would soon be involved with Ma Steph's melon project.

In years to follow, Norma and Violet, (Loyd and Raymond's wives) would become the keepers of the fruit on Highway 99, selling and sampling watermelon, Crenshaw, Persians, casaba and our very own Pershaw melon.

For many years the melon stand continued, until in 1990 Loyd and Ray decided to retire, see the world, and enjoy the fruits of their labor.

Ray's sons had been faming since 1978, so they moved the melon stand to their corner of Garden Highway and Highway 99. In 1990 Dan and Jeff took over the growing of the melons and Cherie (Jeff's wife, a.k.a. the melon lady) along with Ray and Violet (who had supposedly retired!) took over the selling only the best of Stephens' melon to old and new melon-lovers alike.

All went well for many more years. Dan married Kelly (a city girl that became a Farm Chic) and had a son named John. Jeff and Cherie had Megan, Madeline and Sam; these four children being the fourth generation and great-grandchildren of Ma Steph.

In 2001 Jeff and Cherie were approached by Lee and David Johnson who were looking to retire after 25 years of a successful produce and baking business at Johnson's Farm. The timely opportunity was too good to let go.

We are continuing the quality and tradition that the Stephens and the Johnsons have given and one that Ma Steph would be proud to call her own.