

## CELEBRATING A CENTURY OF AGRICULTURAL HISTORY

### Robinette's Commemorates 100th Anniversary (1911-2011)

BY DIANNA STAMPFLER  
PHOTOS PROVIDED BY ROBINETTE'S APPLE HAUS & WINERY

**T**his year, the Robinette family is celebrating a historic milestone – their Centennial anniversary!

Harvey O. Braman purchased the original 136-acre tract of land northeast of downtown Grand Rapids in 1870. A fruit tree salesman from Ohio, he knew the area's mild climate and hilly, sandy loam soil would be an ideal site for growing peaches. He built up a successful orchard operation, exporting to Chicago and Milwaukee.

When Braman retired in 1911, the farm was purchased by Barzilla A. Robinette and

his son, Edward James. Thus began the Robinette's 100-year reign as one of Michigan's fruit growers. Apples and peaches were sold wholesale in the earlier days, in Grand Rapids and at the Eastern Market in Detroit. In 1944, a modern refrigerated storage system was built and apples were then packed on the farm and sold to distributors who transported them elsewhere around the state, by semi-truck.

In 1956, the farm was passed on to the third generation when Edward's son, James – and his wife, Mary Bethel – purchased the operation and expanded the wholesale fruit farm over the years to a farm market, supported by a

cider mill, donut shop, bakery and lunchroom, winery and gift shop.

The apple storage unit was converted to retail sales space – with a kitchen, dining room and restroom facilities. The barn, built in 1881, received new windows, doors and stairs, and was insulated and heated. Today, a paved ramp leads to the second-floor gift shop, while the lower stone-walled basement houses Robinette's Winery – where hard cider, apple wine and Michigan fruit wines are offered for sampling and sale.

The farm is currently owned and operated by fourth generation sons Edward James,



and his wife Alicia; William Penn; and John Allan and his wife Karey. The retail operation now offers fudge, popcorn, kettle corn, jams and jellies, honey and maple syrup. A successful gift basket and mail order operation provides the Robinette treasures to those around the state and the country.

Open year round, each season brings a different experience to those who visit Robinette's. During the winter, the orchards are a popular destination for cross country skiers. In the spring, visitors are welcomed by the fragrant blossoms. Summer means cherries and peaches, ripe for picking. The apple harvest and fresh cider pressing highlight the autumn season, along with the six-acre Corn Maze, horse-drawn wagon rides and other fall festivities.

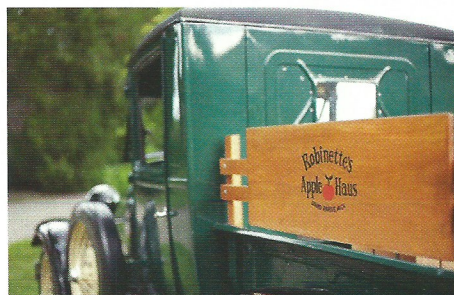
In addition to its farming operation, the Robinette family is active in countless agricultural and tourism-related organizations around the state including Farm Bureau, Michigan Certified Farm Markets, Michigan State Horticulture Society, Michigan Cider Makers Guild, Michigan Farm Market and Tourism Association, Michigan Council on

Vocational Education, Michigan Wine Council, West Michigan Tourist Associations and others. In addition, a Robinette has served as a member on the Grand Rapids Township Board since 1930.

Urban sprawl has taken root in the area, and Robinette's is now the last farm in the neighborhood, located at 3142 4 Mile Rd., NE in Grand Rapids.

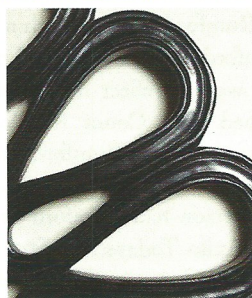
Find them online at [www.Robinettes.com](http://www.Robinettes.com) or on Facebook: [www.facebook.com/Robinettes](http://www.facebook.com/Robinettes). □

Dianna Stampfler is an avid promoter of all things Michigan – especially the agricultural treasures that dot the back country roads and scenic byways of the Great Lakes State.



6744 Cascade Road SE  
Grand Rapids, MI 49546  
616-774-9200

Marian Silverman  
[www.thehomestudio.net](http://www.thehomestudio.net)



**KICHLER**   
LIGHTING

*Visit our showroom  
for all of your  
lighting and  
home decor needs.*

 **GRAND RAPIDS  
LIGHTING CENTER**

3800 29th Street S.E.  
Grand Rapids, MI 49512  
[www.grandrapidslighting.com](http://www.grandrapidslighting.com)  
**(616) 949-4931**

*Serving West Michigan for 40 Years!*