

Maryland has long been known for the names of its old plantations. The state abounds with the likes of: 'His Lordship's Kindness,' 'Crooked Intentions' and 'Hard Bargain.' When we got our property in southern Maryland, we decided to keep that tradition alive and called our land, 'New Poverty.' However, within a few months of acquiring our place I was able to buy a circa 1800, story-and-a-half house with six fireplaces for the spectacular sum of one dollar. There were two conditions: one, I had to move the house (which I did — over 40 miles), two, I had to call it by its traditional name, 'Bolton.'

"The story does not end there. When my wife first saw our home to be, she suffered what I believe to be a coronary and gasped, 'horrible house!' That is the name that has stuck in our community. I restored the house to its original condition and when we moved into our new, old house, our old neighbors gave us a neatly carved sign that reads: 'Horrible House.' I have even received mail addressed only with my name and 'Horrible House,' St. Mary's County, Maryland."

Terrain was the environmental cue for the name **Luanne and John Goerlich** of **Richmond, Michigan**, chose:

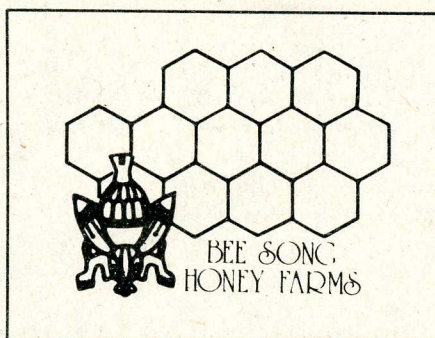
"We moved here a year and a half ago. We named our place 'Rock Botton Farm' for two reasons. One, naturally, we are low on funds (very low) and two, because as my husband, John, was plowing for our garden, he kept digging up rocks. Thus, 'Rock Bottom Farm.'"

And speaking of digging, **Linda Gill** of **Somerset, California**, shared this story:

"Our property is called 'Gill's Diggin's' and came about in this way: We live in the mother lode of California and the area abounds with gold mines from the 1800s which were often called 'diggin's.' So, when we decided to dig into the hill to build an underground house, the name 'Gill's Diggin's' seemed like a natural. Who knows, maybe we'll strike gold!"

Several names had a literary inspiration. **Fawn Valentine** and **Barry Rupp** of **Union, West Virginia**, wrote: "Our country home (80 acres of mostly wooded hills and 'hollers') is named 'Innisfree' after the poem 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree' by W.B. Yeats, who wrote: 'And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow . . .'"

And **Cathy Bauer** of **Montague, California**, was inspired by a page from Margaret Cheney's book, *Meanwhile Farm*: "The 'iffer' one's reality, the more gilded the dream. Bee-song, honey-drip, sweet-smelling



meadow grass, ant-toil, apple blossom, perfume of green pippins winter-stored in a cold tin shed, pig grunt, chicken song, bird-cry, sigh or egg fall."

So what did she name her place? Since she raises honey, 'Bee Song' seemed most appropriate.

Charles Dickens was the source of the name chosen by **Bob and Donna Krout** of **Somerset, Pennsylvania**:

"I grew up on a small 'mini-homestead,'" Bob wrote, "Where I helped my father and stepmother raise chickens, ducks, an organic garden to supply *all* our needs and a fantastic amount of flowers, as well as apples, cherries, peaches and pears. We called the place 'Almosta Farm.'

"For years I knocked around from place to place and job to job and dreamed of having just such a mini-homestead of my own. Finally, four years ago, Donna and I found the place we had been looking for. It was not as big as we hoped, but the house was solid and, by using intensive techniques, would support all we wanted to do. Above all, the price was so ridiculously cheap, we were able to pay it off in only three years.

"At first everyone said it was too small to constitute a real homestead, being only half an acre, but a line from the Charles Dickens' novel, *Bleak House*, kept running through my mind. I am no longer sure of the exact wording, but it ran something like this: 'For I found that Bleak House was what you make of it, and our Bleak House would be a house of love.'

"With a lot of love and a lot of work we are turning our Bleak House into the mini-homestead I had long dreamed about, and we are well on our way to a self-sufficient life divorced from the debt-riddled, consumer-oriented, throw away society of modern America."

The Bible was the inspiration for the name chosen by **Wilna and Paul Miller**, **Greencastle, Indiana**:

"'Dun Movin' were the christening words

of my husband, Paul after we acquired our place in 1969. It was God's gift to us — a shelter on a hill surrounded by 15 pines and hemlocks. Its name could only be expressed by the Psalmist:

"Who maketh the clouds his chariot; who walketh upon the wings of the wind" (Psalm 104:3). Wings of the Wind became their name.

The Bible was also a factor in the name chosen by **Mr. and Mrs. John Dean** of **Glenrock, Wyoming**, who call their homestead, 'Our Father's Place':

"The name of our homestead is 'Our Father's Place' and our sign is a heart with a cross in the middle. The name came about because we bought the land for one purpose, and that was to do the Lord's work on it.

"We are planning on building many small cabins on it, so people who have no home or no place to go can stay here for free as long as they need to. As we get livestock we will give a major portion of the meat and eggs to the poor so they will always have plenty of food to eat, just as we do.

"The cross is for the Lord who has richly blessed us with this land, and the heart is for all the love we will share with those who need. This is truly, 'Our Father's Place.'

Mini-homesteads, like the one Bob Krout described, are very common, and sometimes their size suggests a name:

Greg and Lois Murray of **Gilson, Illinois**, wrote:

"Our 'in town' homestead is just a little less than one acre, so it could be said that our place is 'Shy-An-Acre' (which is the name we chose for the place). Some may pronounce it like Cheyenne Acre, which is alright, too.

"As we always seem to be wishing we had more space, this name will fit even when we get the 20 or 30 acres we've dreamed about. We'll probably always feel we're Shy-An Acre."

Sidney and Marilyn from **Elk Creek, Missouri**, call their homestead 'Mighty Small Farm.'

"The sign hangs at the beginning of the driveway and people do seem to notice it and tend to remember the place. We named the 20-acre farm that also because we were able to use the initials of our first names. It seems to fit quite well for us. Our farm is small, but mighty."

Jack Ryan and his family, of **El Dorado, Arkansas**, inherited a name with their place — and kept it:

"When we moved to Union County,



Arkansas, from El Paso, Texas, we came to a 4.62 acre homestead which was about two-thirds cleared and one-third woods. Except for the mobile home for us to live in, it was just what we were looking for.

"Out front, near the highway, was a sign (see photo) which names our homestead, 'Whippoorwill Hill.' At the time we felt that the name was a bit corny. The name had been chosen by the previous owners, a retired couple, and we figured that we would find a more suitable name after we'd got settled in a bit.

"Well, we've been here nearly six years now, and the sign is still there. Every night in the spring when we settle down for the night, out in the darkness we can hear the crickets and the peepers. And from out back somewhere comes the beautiful and haunting call of the whippoorwill.

"I guess the sign will stay right where it is as long as the whippoorwill keeps singing out there for me and Janet and our boys, Clint and Scott."

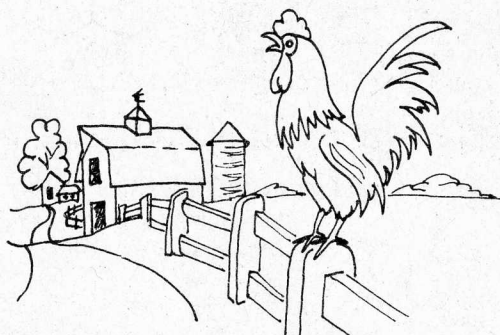
As you might guess, farm animals played a prominent role in the names many homesteaders chose — animals like **Gene** and **Mary Ann Perkins'** cat named **Rag**:

"In September of 1980 we moved to our homestead in Owen Valley on the White River at Spencer, Indiana. We decided from the beginning the name of our place would be after our favorite pet, so we called it **Rag's Ranch**. We own no more than a lot and it is not a ranch or farm. But to us **Rag's Ranch** means small place, since **Rag** is a small cat.

"**Rag** showed up at our first home as a small kitten. The vote was unanimous that she stay.

"**Rag** has six toes on both front feet, her appearance is multi-colored and she looks like an old rag. She has had 13 litters of kittens and we have had no trouble

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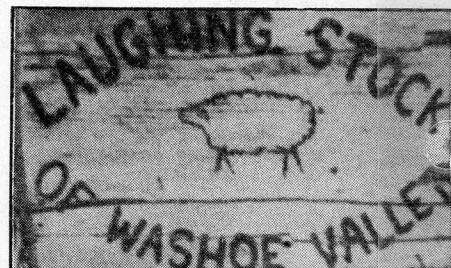
finding homes for them. **Rag** has lived in seven different homes and even felt at home in the back of a U-Haul truck.

"When we were moving and doing 55 mph in the truck, **Rag** jumped out the window onto the highway and was run over by a car. She was a mess and didn't appear to have long to live. Nobody had the nerve to shoot her, so my wife took her to the vet. The Sunday afternoon vet bill came to \$70.00. After two days **Rag** showed some improvement. **Rag** survived.

"Words could never express the enjoyment **Rag** has given us."

Ron and Weed Evans of Hesperia, California, also considered their stock when they came up with the name, 'Laughingstock Farm.'

"We like our name. We had just finished our barn and were contemplating getting a few black sheep instead of the large Suffolks for 4-H that dominated our valley, and my husband remarked: 'We'll be the laughingstock of Washoe Valley.' And I



said, 'That's it, we'll call ourselves 'Laughingstock Farm!' We have since moved, once to Nebraska to farm with friends, where the name stuck, but we didn't. Now we've moved to Hesperia. Our neighbors here know of a Laughingstock Farm in New Jersey that raises goats. Somebody else likes the name. So that makes at least four Laughingstock Farms."

And then there's the **Krause** family, whose sign artwork appears on these pages. From **Coleman, Michigan**, **Arnold** and **Toni Krause** wrote:

"To homestead, we believe you need a family partnership, and, of course, a sense of humor. We share the work, the heart-break and, above all, the rewards. It's not just yours, mine and ours, it's one another's. With this thought, our farm name was achieved. Although we may never be rich or famous, we will be content on 'One-N-Udders Farm!'"

These are just a few of the letters we received on names for country places, but we want to share them all, so watch for our 'What's in a name?' feature in future issues.

—SUE PFRANG

