

# FAMILY LAND HERITAGE 2026

## TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

The Texas Department of Agriculture's (TDA) Family Land Heritage (FLH) Program honors farms and ranches that have been in continuous agricultural production by the same family for 50, 75, 100, 150, 200, and 250 years.

**\*\*For 2026, in honor of America250, FLH proudly welcomes families who have owned their property in continuous agricultural operation for 50 years and 75 years.\*\***

#### **HOW TO APPLY FOR THE 2026 FAMILY LAND HERITAGE PROGRAM:**

- Read each rule on the following page carefully to ensure your property qualifies.
- This application may be submitted in either digital or hard copy form.
- Please answer all questions as completely as possible.
- **PLEASE PRINT OR TYPE ALL ANSWERS.** If additional space is needed, submit information on a separate sheet, giving the section and item number to which it corresponds.
- Gather supporting land ownership documents and background material.
- If submitting a hard copy of the application, send copies of these supporting materials.
- **DO NOT SEND ORIGINAL DOCUMENTS.**
- Submit the completed application and supporting documents to the county judge for certification in the county where the farm or ranch is located.
- If submitting a digital copy of the application, include a scan of the certification signed by the county judge.
- Submit two photographs of the property and/or its owners. Please indicate which photo you prefer to be used for FLH purposes. These photos may be reproduced for display or in the FLH registry.
  - Hard copy photographs are acceptable if they are photographic-quality copies. Plain paper copies of photographs are not acceptable.
  - Digital photographs are acceptable if they are high resolution. Low resolution digital photographs are not acceptable.
  - Include a caption for all photographs. Include the date, location, and any names.
  - For hard copy photographs, label each photo with your name and address (mailing labels on the back of photographs work well). All hard copy photos will be returned.

- The FLH program shall assume all rights to publish and/or reproduce any photograph submitted to TDA for the FLH Program.
- Mail hard copies of the completed application, copies of supporting documents, and photographs to TDA at the address below.
- Email digital copies of the completed application, copies of supporting documents, and photographs to TDA at: [FamilyLandHeritage@TexasAgriculture.gov](mailto:FamilyLandHeritage@TexasAgriculture.gov).
- You will be notified whether the farm or ranch qualifies. If there are questions about the application, you may be required to provide additional documentation to support the statements.
- There is no charge to apply for the program.

PLEASE READ THE FOLLOWING RULES CAREFULLY.  
DO NOT SUBMIT AN APPLICATION UNLESS ALL REQUIREMENTS ARE  
FULFILLED.

*2026 Applications will be accepted Nov. 1 – June 30.*

### OWNERSHIP RULES

1. Farm or ranch owners must reside in Texas.
2. The line of ownership from the first family member owning the land to current owner(s) may be through wives, husbands, children, grandparents, siblings, aunts, uncles and cousins. Adopted children will be recognized equally with blood children. The line of ownership and dates must be clearly stated in the application and on the line of ownership on the last page.
3. Any land that has been sold or is in the process of being sold or leased to a non-relative is ineligible.
4. Owner or co-owner must actively manage and direct the everyday agricultural operation of the farm or ranch. **Absentee ownership of land devoted only to hunting and timber leases or similar enterprise does not qualify for this program.**

### AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION RULES

1. The land must meet the following old U.S. Census definition of a farm: 10 acres or more with agricultural sales of \$50 or more a year; or if less than 10 acres, sales of at least \$250 a year.
2. The land must have been agriculturally productive and owned by family members for 50, 75, 100, 150, 200, or 250 years or more.
3. If all the land has ever been rented or leased to someone outside the family, it does not qualify.
4. If only a portion of the land was leased, and as much as 10 acres retained in the family for agricultural production with sales of at least \$50 annually, it will qualify.

### APPLICATION RULES

1. Please answer all questions on this application as applicable. If the application is unclear or incomplete, it could be returned to you for clarification. Make copies of the appropriate pages for additional owners.
2. Applications must be certified by the county judge in which the property is located. Supporting documents must be submitted with the application when appearing before the county judge. No notary is required. Final verification of the applicant's admission in the FLH Program will be made by TDA.
3. TDA will provide one FLH certificate to each farm or ranch that is recognized. Additional certificates are available upon request for a fee. (subject to availability)

4. Include information on all current owners and co-owners. Only the names of the current owners and co-owners residing in Texas will be listed in the FLH Program. If a co-owner of a property was not registered on a farm/ranch that qualifies, he or she may not re-apply.

5. Once a 100-year farm or ranch has been recognized, it will not qualify for another 100-year certificate even though the land may have changed hands. If family members have developed separate farms or ranches from the founder's acreage and they meet all the program requirements, each property owner may apply separately for the program. For example, Hiram Johnson willed each of his three children a portion of his land and their descendants continue to farm or ranch separately. Each descendant's farm or ranch can apply for the program.

6. If a farm or ranch has previously been recognized for 100 years and it still meets the requirements, owners can apply for it to be recognized again for reaching 150 and 200 years. A farm or ranch does not have to be recognized for 100 years to apply for the 150- and 200-year designation.

**SECTION I: HISTORY OF THE FOUNDER OF THE LAND**

1. General location: primary county the land is located and direction from nearest city/town/landmark as the crow flies. (Example: "Travis County. Two miles northeast of Austin")

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2. Name of the first family member to own the land (hereinafter to be referred to as "founder"). If both a husband and wife founded the farm or ranch, they may both be listed as founders.

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3. Where was the founder born? \_\_\_\_\_

4. Reason for the founder coming to Texas, if known:

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5. Date founder acquired title to the land: \_\_\_\_\_

(You must be able to substantiate the date.)

6. From whom did the founder purchase or acquire the land:

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7. If information is available, trace land back to original grant holder who received land from the government of Texas or Mexico. \_\_\_\_\_

8. Number of acres in founder's original farm or ranch: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Number of acres added by founder and when: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Number of acres sold by founder outside the family: \_\_\_\_\_

11. Crops or livestock raised by founder:

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12. Name of the founder's wife or husband, if married: \_\_\_\_\_

13. Full name and number of children, if any: \_\_\_\_\_

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**SECTION II: HISTORY OF SUCCEEDING GENERATIONS/OWNERS**

The following questions must be answered for **EACH OWNER** of the Heritage Land between the founder and the current owners. **If we do not receive completed information on each succeeding owner, it will be necessary to return the application for completion. Make extra copies of this page, if necessary.**

1. Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

2. Relationship to previous owner: \_\_\_\_\_

3. Year(s) founder's land was acquired by this owner: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Number of acres acquired: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Number of acres added by this owner (other than founder's land) and year(s): \_\_\_\_\_

6. Number of acres sold outside the family: \_\_\_\_\_

7. Crops or livestock raised by this owner:  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. Name of the owner's wife or husband, if married: \_\_\_\_\_

9. Full name and number of children, if any: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**SECTION III: INFORMATION ABOUT THE PRESENT OWNER/CO-OWNERS OF THE LAND**

**This page needs to be completed for each current owner and/or co-owner. Make extra copies of this page, if necessary.**

1. Name of current owner(s): \_\_\_\_\_
2. Number of acres of land being farmed or ranched by you now: \_\_\_\_\_
3. Of the acreage you now own, how many acres can be traced to the founder that have been in continuous agricultural production by your family for 50 years or more? \_\_\_\_\_
4. Year(s) you acquired any land that can be traced to the founder: \_\_\_\_\_
5. What relation are you to the founder? \_\_\_\_\_
6. What relation are you to the family member from whom you got the land? \_\_\_\_\_
7. What activities of the current owner and/or co-owners, and family members have contributed to the development of the farm or ranch and to the agricultural progress of the state:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
8. Who operates the land today? \_\_\_\_\_
9. If you retain a manager, how are you actively engaged in the everyday operation of the farm or ranch?  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
10. Crops or livestock grown or produced on the land:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
11. Name all the family members living on the land today, if any, and explain their relationship to each other. Please provide first names and last names for all members listed.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
12. Name(s) of spouse and children, if applicable.  
\_\_\_\_\_
13. Agricultural associations and/or groups you and/or your family are involved in:  
\_\_\_\_\_
14. Are any buildings constructed 50 years ago or earlier still standing? Please describe and tell if they are in use today.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**INFORMATION FOR THE FLH CERTIFICATE:**

1. Check one of the following for the designation of your operation: Farm                      Ranch

2. Name of Farm or Ranch: \_\_\_\_\_

**Exactly as you want it to appear on the certificate and in the ceremony program.**

(Examples: Mulberry Farm, Smith Ranch, Hillview Acres, McDonald Farm and Ranch)

Some previous honorees have named the farm or ranch after the founder of the land; however, if someone already has the same property name, we may request you to modify the name.

3. Phonetic pronunciation of the farm or ranch name: \_\_\_\_\_

**PRIMARY CONTACT INFORMATION:**

**Please complete the information below for the person who will be the primary contact to receive all correspondence regarding FLH. It is this person's responsibility to disseminate the information from TDA to the property's co-owners.**

Full Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phonetic pronunciation: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
(Route, P.O. Box or Street)                      (City, State)                      (Zip Code)

County: \_\_\_\_\_ Phone (from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m): \_\_\_\_\_  
(In which you reside)                      (Area Code and Number)

E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_ Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

What is the primary contact's relationship to the property? Please specify: (i.e., owner, son, daughter, etc.)

\_\_\_\_\_

# FAMILY LAND HERITAGE PROGRAM

TEXAS DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE  
COMMISSIONER SID MILLER

## LAND OWNERSHIP TIMELINE

Please outline history of the land, beginning with founder and ending with current owner. For example:

Dates of Ownership	Name	Relationship to Current Owner
<u>1887-1918</u>	<u>Charles John Johnson</u>	<u>Great-grandfather</u>
<u>1918-1946</u>	<u>Edward and Clara (Johnson) Albers</u>	<u>Grandfather and Grandmother</u>
<u>1946-1986</u>	<u>Susan (Albers) Smith</u>	<u>Mother</u>
<u>1986-Present</u>	<u>Bill and Valerie (Smith) Brown</u>	<u>Owner</u>

Dates of Ownership	Name	Relationship to Current Owner
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____

*Please make sure it is completed correctly and that dates correspond to the application.*

## CERTIFICATION

**OWNER:** I declare that the statements made in this application are accurate and correct to the best of my knowledge.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Current Owner

**COUNTY JUDGE:** I declare that \_\_\_\_\_ (Owner's name)  
appeared before me on \_\_\_\_\_ (Date) with substantiating evidence that the land now in  
his or her possession has met the qualifications of the Family Land Heritage Program of the Texas Department  
of Agriculture.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the County Judge

\_\_\_\_\_  
Address

\_\_\_\_\_  
City, State

\_\_\_\_\_  
Zip

\_\_\_\_\_  
Phone Number

### For Internal Office Use:

Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_ Date Processed: \_\_\_\_\_

Photographs:    Yes    No



## Program Story Form

### **Requirements:**

- For inclusion in the commemorative program, please provide a brief history of your FLH property and its owners.
- Due to space considerations, maximum length is 200 words.
- Please ensure all information matches that provided on the application.
- A sample story has been included on the last page.
- TDA will edit all stories for spelling, grammar and proper word count. Every effort will be made to preserve your original story, but in some cases changes will be necessary.
- Stories may typed or handwritten on this form.
  - If writing your story on this form, please print clearly in black ink.
  - If typing your story, please follow the format below as close as possible.
- Stories may be submitted either in hard copy form via the U.S. mail or via e-mail. Please indicate your selection below.

### **Please Check One:**

My story is provided below or on an enclosed sheet

I have e-mailed an electronic copy of my story to TDA at [FamilyLandHeritage@TexasAgriculture.gov](mailto:FamilyLandHeritage@TexasAgriculture.gov)

Property name: \_\_\_\_\_

Primary county in which property is located: \_\_\_\_\_

Year founded: \_\_\_\_\_

Founders name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Current owners name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Acres in original parcel: \_\_\_\_\_

Physical location of parcel: \_\_\_\_\_

Crops/Livestock raised by founders: \_\_\_\_\_

Crops/Livestock raised today: \_\_\_\_\_

(Continued)



## Sample Story

### **GIERHART FARM**

*Wheeler County*

*One mile west of Twitty on FM 592.*

Founded In: 1907

Founder: Edson Byron Gierhart

Current Owner: Milton Leroy Gierhart

Edson Byron Gierhart was born in Jay County, Indiana. Edson traveled with his family from Indiana through Oklahoma to Wheeler County. On October 5, 1907, Edson acquired 160 acres from J.M. Shelton. He raised livestock, cotton, milo and wheat. Edson and his wife, Lucretia, had seven children – Milton Elbridge, Guy Balsler, Zenobia Amelia, Clell Edson, Verna Primrose, Harold Macklin and Bonnie Catherine. They raised all seven children on the farm and had them schooled in Twitty and Shamrock. Edson's parents lived next door to the family.

Lucretia acquired title to the land in 1944 after Edson died. She raised livestock, cotton, milo and wheat. In 1946 Milton Elbridge Gierhart acquired the land and continued to raise livestock, cotton, milo and wheat. Milton and his wife, Thelma, had two children, Lucretia Inez and Milton Leroy.

Milton Leroy Gierhart acquired title to 80 acres of the land in 1981. He raised livestock, cotton, wheat and milo. Milton and his wife, Mildred, have one son, Milton Leroy II. The family has been active in the Wheeler Farm Service Agency and the Wheeler County Farm Bureau.

Acres in original parcel: 160

Crops or livestock raised: 1907 — Livestock, cotton, milo and wheat; 2007 — Wheat.

As told by Milton Leroy Gierhart, grandson of the founder.