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Pictured from left: Anne Fields Lucas, Graham Lucas, Slate Lucas and Jeff Lucas. (Gift of Today Photography / Courtesy Image)

Spotlight: Whippoorwill Hill

By Jackie Sheckler Finch

On a date night to Rural King, Jeff Lucas and Anne Fields drove past a vintage For Sale sign on Fairfax Road. On a whim, the two decided to look at the country property. What they saw changed their future.

“We immediately fell for it,” Anne said. “Even when it was in disarray, it was so majestic and welcoming.”

Growing up as a farmer in Jackson County, Jeff had someday hoped to move to a Monroe County farm and what he saw warmed his heart. “We fell in love with the property,” he said. “The farm seemed to have potential with tillable ground and as pasture for my herd of cattle.”

Putting in a bid, the couple took ownership of the old Tate-Tatum farm in southern Monroe County in October 2015. A month after closing on the farm, the couple made another huge decision.

“Jeff proposed to me,” Anne said. She accepted and the couple began looking for a wedding venue that could host a 300-person celebration. “We have huge families,” she explained.

“We immediately fell for it. Even when it was in disarray, it was so majestic and welcoming.”

—Anne Fields, owner, Whippoorwill Hill

SPOTLIGHT
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MARK YOUR CALENDAR

FEBRUARY

- 13 – Chamber’s Speaker Series, Chamber Office
- 20 – Morning Buzz, College Mall Food Court
- 27 – Business After Hours, The Warehouse

MARCH

- 5 – Educator of the Year Awards, Ivy Tech Community College –Bloomington
- 12 – Chamber’s Speaker Series, Chamber office
- 26 – Business After Hours, Hyatt Place

Renovations and Remodels

Prep and finishing touches



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Anne Fields Lucas with Graham Lucas, left, and Slate Lucas. (Gift of Today Photography / Courtesy Image)

SPOTLIGHT

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Touring local event sites, Anne and Jeff were pleased with what they saw. “But none of them spoke to us like our farm did,” Anne said.

So, the couple decided to host their wedding on their own farm. But where? They didn’t want to erect a tent or build a new barn to hold their guests.

“We felt that putting up a new pole barn that might accommodate 300 people would be almost disrespectful to the property that felt so authentically, historically, Hoosier,” Jeff said.

As though in answer to their prayers, a family member told the couple about an 1892 barn outside Shelbyville that the owners wanted removed. That’s how the historic Russell Barn found a new home on Whippoorwill Hill in July 2016 and how the old farm became a popular event venue.

“We thought the barn maybe had potential and decided to visit the barn that, at the time, only had three standing corners,” Jeff said. “The Foltz family was looking to save the barn and donated it to us. We are so grateful to their family for their generosity, their part in saving a bit of Indiana history and for allowing this dream of ours to materialize.”

Since hosting Anne and Jeff’s wedding, Whippoorwill Hill has become a popular site for other events. The spectacular country venue has welcomed more than 100 weddings, plus additional celebrations.

“If you can dream it, we can do it,” Anne said.

“We have hosted birthday parties of all kinds: two different parties for two special 90-year-olds, and one for a 7-year-old who wanted an Army theme complete with an obstacle course.”

Whippoorwill Hill also has been the site of two beautiful celebrations of life. “Those were some of the most special events we’ve ever been a part of,” Anne said.

She listed other events - “Graduation parties, quinceaneras, we’ve done a few benefit auctions, corporate events, photo mini sessions. We have given our space away a few times for our ‘Good Cause Giveaway’ which honored local First Responders with a benefit gala and a calendar release party for the Down Syndrome Family Connection.”

An annual Barn Market is held the weekend before Thanksgiving where more than 50 local artisans, farmers and boutique vendors set up for two days. The couple also farm the property, rotating soybeans and corn annually, plus raising Crossbred Beef Cattle.

As to how Whippoorwill Hill got its name, that also seemed meant to be.

“On a dark and foggy early morning road trip to West Virginia, I was silently pondering what we should name our farm, our wedding venue and our eventual home,” Anne said. “I was overwhelmed and getting nowhere.”

Just then, a tune by Randy Travis - “Deeper Than the Holler” - began playing on the radio. The ballad celebrated love, country and the song of the whippoorwill. That, Anne and Jeff decided, would be the name of their new farm.

“We both love the sound of whippoorwills

“Whippoorwill Hill really was born because of our love for each other and the love of our farm. We are so looking forward to our next adventure.”

**—Anne Fields, owner,
Whippoorwill Hill**

and feel like it’s a nod to the past,” Anne said.

That decision was reinforced even more when Anne called her mother to share the prospective name. In turn, Anne’s mother told her to call her grandmother about the old 80-acre family farm that her grandfather owned down a gravel road and up a hill in Brown County.

“He lovingly called it Whippoorwill Hill,” Anne said. “That was unbeknownst to me when I first started considering the name Whippoorwill. Crazy how things work.”

Next on the couple’s agenda is hopefully having the farm listed on the National Register of Historic Places. “We have passed the local review and hope to pass the national review within the next year,” Anne said.

The history certainly deserves the recognition. John and Susanna Tate build a log cabin on the property in 1822. The 119-acre site also includes a two-story log house and a double crib barn, plus a circa 1860 wood storage and canning building, an 1822 well house, 1880 animal feed shed, 1880 granary, 1925 garage and 1900 concrete water trough.

“Whippoorwill Hill really was born because of our love for each other and the love of our farm,” Anne concluded. “We are so looking forward to our next adventure.”

