

Abraczinskas Tree Farm

Abraczinskas Tree Farm as told to Patchwork by Greg Abraczinskas

Interviewed by Dustin Weaver and John White in the spring of 2003

Abraczinskas Tree Farm was started in 1914 by Greg's great-grandfather and was further by his grandfather Andrew and his great uncle Anthony. It was then passed onto his grandfather's sons Donald, Eugene, Gerome, and Anthony Jr. They grow many trees like Douglass Fur, Fresher Fur, Norway spruce, and White Pine.

Greg Abraczinskas

Greg Abraczinskas has lived in Columbia County for all 43 years of his life. More descriptively he lives in a place called Catawissa just outside of Bloomsburg. He is also a fourth generation worker at Abraczinskas Tree Farm.

PATCHWORK: Today we are interviewing Greg Abraczinskas and we are going to ask him a few questions concerning Abraczinskas Tree Farm. What kind of trees do you sell and what is your best seller?

ABRACZINSKAS: All evergreen trees, primarily Douglass Fur and Blue Spruce. The best seller is the Douglass Fur.

PATCHWORK: Are trees the only things you sell? If not what else do you sell?

ABRACZINSKAS: Basically, the only thing we sell is trees and we can sell them three different ways. We sell cut trees for Christmas. We dig trees for landscapers. We also sell seedlings flats for reforestation.

PATCHWORK: On average how many trees do you sell each year?

ABRACZINSKAS: Right around 120,000 trees a year.

PATCHWORK: What type of wild life that kills your plants?

ABRACZINSKAS: Certain times of the year bucks will rub their antlers against the trees and there is really not much you can do about it. They don't do a lot of damage but they

do a little bit. Extreme winters if there is not feed, sometimes they will start chewing on your trees and you can either shoot them or place some feed around the perimeter of the property and that will keep the deer away from the trees.

PATCHWORK: Did your family start this business?

ABRACZINSKAS: My great-grandfather actually started it right around 1914.

PATCHWORK: Do you know what the land was used for before it was a tree farm?

ABRACZINSKAS: Primarily, it was used for farming. Back then, a lot of it was potato farms and tomato farms.

PATCHWORK: Has this always been a family business?

ABRACZINSKAS: Yes, it has. Right now we are working on our fourth generation.

PATCHWORK: How many people on an estimate work there?

ABRACZINSKAS: Certain times of the year when we're not so busy, we having probably as small as 20 people and at our busiest time up to 150.

PATCHWORK: Are tree farms common?

ABRACZINSKAS: In certain areas they are common. Usually if the soil conditions are right trees grow well. They're a little more retail, we do all the wholesales.

PATCHWORK: What trees do they usually sell.

ABRACZINSKAS: Depending on as Whole sellers can handle 2 or 3 varieties. Because they hold their needles better, Douglas Furs are the best trees. People who have choose and cut might choose 5 to 6 different varieties and they're usually closer to cities and do a little better.

PATCHWORK: How did the idea for a tree farm first come up or don't you know?

ABRACZINSKAS: My great grandfather had a lumber mill and as he cut trees down, he believed he should replant them, and one day a car pulled up and the people asked if they could cut a tree down for Christmas and how much he charged. I think at that time it was 25 cents. So he started cutting trees and taking them to market like people take

produce to market. Then he started taking the trees over the mountain to Shenandoah and selling them in the town.

PATCHWORK: Were there any other places where he sold trees that you know of?

ABRACZINSKAS: When he just started out, it was pretty local then my grandfather really expanded the business. Then he started selling a lot to New York City and all over New Jersey and down into Philadelphia.

PATCHWORK: You're the fourth generation right?

ABRACZINSKAS: Right.

PATCHWORK: So. . .

ABRACZINSKAS: We sell trees now as far as the Caman Islands, Bermuda, we sell trees to Mexico, Texas, but we are a little further away.

PATCHWORK: So you're going national almost.

ABRACZINSKAS: Right.

PATCHWORK: So you don't stop within Pennsylvania?

ABRACZINSKAS: Right.

PATCHWORK: Is this the only tree farm in Columbia County?

ABRACZINSKAS: No, there are quite a few. I really don't know how many but there are a few organizations. I wouldn't doubt that there are 50 tree farms, anywhere from 3 acres to 100 acres.

PATCHWORK: Do you enjoy being a partial owner of a tree farm?

ABRACZINSKAS: Do I enjoy it?

PATCHWORK: Yes.

ABRACZINSKAS: Most of the time. I enjoy working outside.

PATCHWORK: Are there any hectic times during your job.

ABRACZINSKAS: There are always deadlines. Of course, Christmas you have to have the trees cut and sold before Christmas. And the weather. You are always a burden of the weather. The environment is always against you. It could be too dry, too wet, snow will slow you down, and people don't want to work in bad conditions. Then in spring time you have the warm weather common. You have to have everything done before June. You only have so long to do it. So it is always hectic.