



ABOUT US

The history of the Riley family in Oak Glen began when Dennis and Sharon Riley homesteaded their farm in 1978. It was a prime orchard parcel that Joe Wilshire had planted at the turn of the last century. Having passed muster with Joe's son "Blackie", Dennis and his oldest son Devon began to work the orchards. Blackie showed how and where to draft water from the creek and flow it into irrigation furrows. He took pride in the style of pruning he had mastered over nearly a century that allowed for low hanging branches that could be easily harvested. Blackie kept that first year's crop, then we were on our own. After building our log cabin we had to decide what to do with thousands of bushels of apples.

We didn't have to wait long for an answer. Sharon noticed that folks kept asking if they could pick the fresh fruit. Selling a crop wholesale, required labor, which ate up most of the profit. On the other hand, a U-Pick operation would solve the problem of picking, packaging and storing each year's crop.

So we opened the gates to the farm. We provided the bags and picking poles (along with a lesson in how to pick an apple without injuring the tree's spur wood and branches) and city folk, eager for a country outing and some fresh fruit picked the entire crop – a fine partnership!

Next, we unlimbered an old cider press and found that people were lining up to squeeze their own gallon of fresh-pressed cider. Then teachers asked if they could bring their students up for a tour. At night Dennis called square dances in our barn and played the banjo. It was all hands on deck. Devon, the oldest son, soon had a field of corn for shucking and boiling in the field. He also had a pot of caramel for people to dunk their apples into. Middle son, Thad helped at the cider press and youngest son, Tim, played his harmonica and gave picking lessons. Sharon, who could remember all of our customer's names (mostly) booked tours and kept books.

About ten years later, we realized that there was more demand than we could handle. A good problem. But what to do? Dennis arranged for the adjacent Wilshire properties to be purchased by his father, Ray Riley. And so it came about that there are so many Rileys in Oak Glen to choose from. Good luck. Short story, Devon now has his own farm and manages Los Rios Rancho as well. Thad is a deputy sheriff for San Bernardino County, and Tim manages

our original homestead farm. Our dances now take place at Los Rios Rancho where Dennis continues to call and host gospel night sings. Our farm is a seasonal business – focusing mainly on getting the crop in and doing our historical tours. Dennis has a new hobby-rescuing antique tools and putting them to use on the farm for events like Apple Butter Festival. Sharon still does the books but gets a lot of help from our great crew managing the tours. Tim is the consummate musician, playing everything from the saw to bagpipes. He also builds homesteaders' cabins with axe and saw. By the way, Tim married his sweetheart, Faith Stevens on May23rd, 2010, complete with snow falling to accompany the cello, violin, and flute, as well as bagpipes at the end of the ceremony. That's why you'll see perpetual smiles on both their faces now.

In short, we love farming in Oak Glen. We try to not be discouraged by current events in politics and economics – and you won't be reminded of such when you come for a visit. Lord willing, and the creek don't rise we'll still be here next year.

