

# Title Page & Abstract

An Interview with Nate Janssen

Part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Illinois  
State Museum's *Oral History of Illinois Agriculture* project  
Interview # AIS-V-L-2008-028

Nate Janssen, dairy operations manager for the Golden Oaks farm in Wauconda, Illinois, was interviewed on the date listed below as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library's *Oral History of Illinois Agriculture* project.

Interview dates & location:

Date: May 8, 2008

Location: Wauconda IL

Interview Format: Digital video

Interviewer: Michael Maniscalco, IL State Museum Oral Historian

Technical Support: cameraman, Robert Warren

Transcription by: Tape Transcription Center, Boston, MA

Edited by: Michael Maniscalco and Amy Moore

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Session 1: Growing up on a dairy farm, and managing a modern dairy operation

Session 2: Walking tour of the dairy operation

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Interviews are archived at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library in Springfield,  
Illinois.

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# Abstract

Nate Janssen, *Oral History of Illinois Agriculture*, AIS-V-L-2008-028

**Biographical Information Overview of Interview:** Nate Janssen was born on May 27th 1974 in Syracuse New York. Nate moved to Illinois when his father accepted a job at Golden Oaks farm in 1989. The rest of the Janssen family lives in Iowa and has always been involved with agriculture. While in New York, Nate was always interested in farming, and showed cows through the local 4-H. He was also interested in sports, focusing especially on basketball and tennis. In his high school years he won a regional tennis tournament. In his college years Nate returned to New York, attended Cornell University in Ithaca to study animal science.

At the time of the interview, Nate was a 33 year old dairy operations manager for the Golden Oaks farm located in Wauconda Illinois, a suburb of Chicago. He points to the advantages of having Chicago very close to the farm. The location allows for international visitors interested in the farms genetics business, as well as a lot of public out reach. Nate has experienced all types of agricultural business, beginning with selling feed on both the East and West coast. This experience led to his employment with Golden Oaks, which sought to expand its dairy operations.

The Golden Oaks farm, owned by the Crown family of Chicago, was started in 1948, and by 2009 included 1,500 acres. In addition to the dairy operation, the farm grows its own grain, and also runs a recycling operation. The Crown family has resisted selling the farm, despite the dramatic increase in land value due to suburbanization. The dairy operation was just built in 2002 and has a double twelve herringbone milking parlor, where the herd's black and white and red and white Holstein cows are milked. Currently, the farm's milk is sold to Grande for processing into cheese. The farm's genetics program identifies the top cows and captures their genetics. After the capture, the embryo is sold or placed in a surrogate mother. Both males and females may be kept or sold depending on the herd situation. This program allows the employees to show cows and sell cows.

**Topics Covered:** Nate Janssen, Dairy Operations; Golden Oaks Farm; Chicago; Syracuse New York; 4-H; sports; Cornell University; feed sales business; Crown family; crops; recycling operation; Holstein Cattle; Brown Swiss Cattle, genetics, milking, Grande cheese, employees/hired help

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