The four Gilliland brothers work on the harvest on the R.T. Gilliland Farm in 1919. The farm was established in 1914 and recently given the Century Farm designation.

Celebrating (more than) a century of farming

By JOHN TILLMAN
EO Media Group

PILOT ROCK — A Pilot Rock area farm in 2021 earned recognition as a Century Ranch.

Robert T. and Willie Gilliland founded R.T. Gilliland Farm in 1914 on Stewart Creek, 1.75 miles north of Pilot Rock.

Robert Gilliland's grandson-in-law, Donald H. Bensel, 89, now of Pendleton, formerly Pilot Rock, preserved all deeds going back to the foundation making for a successful Century Ranch application.

In 1914, Robert T. — R.T. — purchased 160 acres homesteaded by the Smith family. He added another 160 acres from Ephrus Shafer in 1919, as well as another 160 acres in 1920 from Frank Curl. Stewart Creek is a right bank tributary of Birch Creek, downstream from Pilot Rock.

Kelly and Brenda Bensel stand in front of a modernized farmhouse on the R.T. Gilliland Farm, which was established in 1914 and recently designated a Century Farm.
Kathy Aney/East Oregonian