

McCORMICK ESTATE / ROCK RIVER FARMS FAST FACTS

- In 1912 Medill & Ruth (Hanna) McCormick buy about 2400 acres north of Byron, Illinois. In 1913 they build a dairy farm there. Later the property would, among other things, include a poultry and a pig farm.
- Plans for the estate were prepared by Cross & Cross architects, NY. Alfred Hopkins was the architect for the working building groups.
- In 1937 Rock River Farms goes up for sale.
- In 1941 H. H. (Henry Heanon) Slingerland, president of Slingerland Banjo & Drum Co. of Chicago (1325 Belden Ave.) buys the dairy farm from “Rock River Farms Inc. of Colorado Springs, Colorado.” Ruth McCormick, whose husband Senator Medill McCormick died in 1925, had remarried in 1932 to former New Mexico congressman Albert Simms, subsequently moving to Colorado where she had purchased a 250,000 acre cattle and sheep operation (She would die there in 1944).
- Also in 1941 the heritage Rock River Farms poultry farm was sold to the three Helson brothers of Rockford, Illinois. That same year the heritage Rock River Farms “lower farm” (known locally as the “Norton Farm”) was sold to Chicago businessman Fred Sills.
- In 1942 Richard B. McLaughlin marries Marion Slingerland.
- In 1946 H. H. Slingerland dies, leaving the 1,078 acre Slingerland Rock River Farms to Richard and Marion McLaughlin, who continued to operate the enterprise, known famously for its breeding cattle.
- In March 1967 fire destroys the McLaughlin dairy barns, including a landmark 1910 round barn on the property (90 ft. dia., originally built by Ira Stires).
- In 1974 Mr. and Mrs. Gustafson buy the heritage McCormick mansion with about 370 surrounding acres, including three gatehouses. After bankruptcy and divorce, the property remained with Mrs. (Sue) Gustafson.
- Slingerland Rock River Farms has remained with the McLaughlins, their residence the heritage Rock River Farms superintendent’s house.