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CARL DROEMER, owner of Lehm Berg Winery in Giddings, stands next to a number of barrels that will be used to ferment wine. The

wood barrels will be filled with wine and then left in a nearby smokehouse, where the wine will age for a year or longer. The winery, ex-

pected to open for business in about a month, features seven different blends of wine and is working on developing more.

Old family recipes used by the Droemers to start a local winery

Lehm Berg Winery to open on CR 208 in a month or so

When Ben Droemer became interested in wine-making five years ago, he had no idea that it would lead to the opening a winery in Giddings.

After experimenting with a few wine-making kits and trying to duplicate his uncle Helmuth Droemer's home-made wine, Ben decided to consult with his father, Carl.

Carl, who helped his father make wine, suggested they try the old family recipe.

So in 1998, Carl and Ben picked wild grapes and made 42 gallons of mustang grape wine. They also made a raisin wine and some other fruit wines.

After serving the different wines at a number of gather-

ings, local residents loved it and asked the Droemers to consider marketing it.

"They were familiar with this type of wine because it was the type they remembered having at 'grandpa's house,'" Carl recalls.

The father and son started visiting different wineries and

WINERY

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grape growers in the area to gain information.

They later joined the Texas Wine and Grape Growers Association and attended enology classes at Grayson County College in Dennison to learn more.

Considering constructing a small building on the old home place on CR 208 just south of Giddings, it dawned on them that the perfect site for the winery already existed -- the Droemer family brick home that had been vacant for 20 years.

Last year, Carl acquired a commercial wine-making license and started making wine in a room adjoined to his home.

With this license, he began experimenting with different grape varieties and the blending of wines while plans for restoration of the old house were made.

Carl and his wife, Mary Beth, decided to restore the old home and turn it into a winery. They added a covered receiving area and a new front entrance to the building, making it accessible to visitors.

The Droemers decided to name the wine-making business Lehm Berg Winery. It will be open to the public in about a month or so.

History of the old family wine recipes

The Droemers' ancestors came over from Germany and brought their old recipes and customs with them. They developed ways to get the results they desired and made wines from any available fruit.

While some of the old ways still remain, there is a lot of modern technology that makes it easier today.

Using the old method, they would simply crush the fruit, add a small amount of sugar and ferment it for several

days. Then the juice was extracted and, because of the high acid common to this area, an equal amount of water was added.

Sugar was then added to the mixture until an egg would float, which is now known at about 25 brix. Since it had fermented a few days, it contained a small amount of alcohol.

This, along with the 25 brix mixture, was about right to yield 15.3% alcohol, the point where natural yeast will die and leave the desired sweetness.

This wine was then put in wood barrels and left to ferment. As it fermented, the barrel was filled with water each day and impurities floated out of the top fill hole.

When the wine quite fermenting, the hole was loosely closed. After a few months, it was tightly sealed and left to age.

This wine was kept in the barn and exposed to weather changes. It is now known that high acid wines are improved when exposed to freezing temperature.

"We have tried to take the good points from these old recipes and blend them with modern technology to produce wine as our ancestors knew it," said Carl Droemer. "We are trying to do in the winery what mother nature did in the barn in the best of seasons."

How the winery building came about

John Ewald Droemer and Anna Marie Goetz married in 1906 in San Antonio. They moved to Giddings and bought the family farm in 1913.

In addition to brick-making, they also farmed the land. Bricks were made in the fall and winter after the crops were harvested.

John Droemer decided to build a new house in 1926 and laid the foundation, which still exists and adjoins the present parking lot to what is now

Lehm Berg Winery.

Before the house could be built, living conditions were so bad in the old house that the family decided to build a garage and tenant house, which is now part of the winery. This house was completed in 1928.

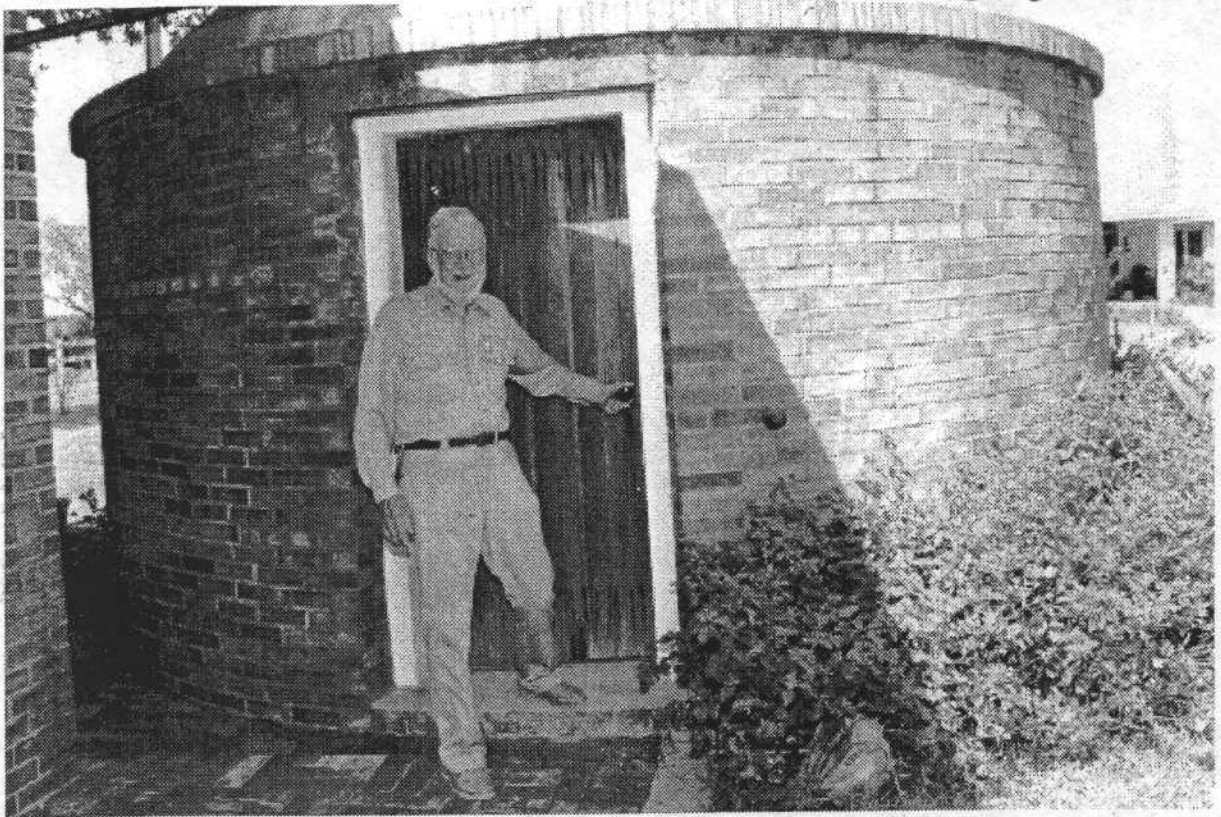
It was then decided to wait on the new house until it could be made out of pressed bricks instead of the old-type mud bricks.

About 1930, a brick press and grinder for processing the brick clay were purchased and the family began making pressed brick, the type that were used in the addition to the original house.

In 1931, John Droemer became ill and spent several months in a hospital. He was unable to work for several years as he recovered. At this time, three bedrooms and the brick arches were added to the existing home.

After this was completed, all plans for building the new house were discarded. In 1950, the area now used to make the wine was added and a tin roof was placed over the entire house.

In 2002, Carl and Mary Beth Droemer decided to restore the home and turn it into a winery. They added a covered receiving area and a new front entrance to the building.

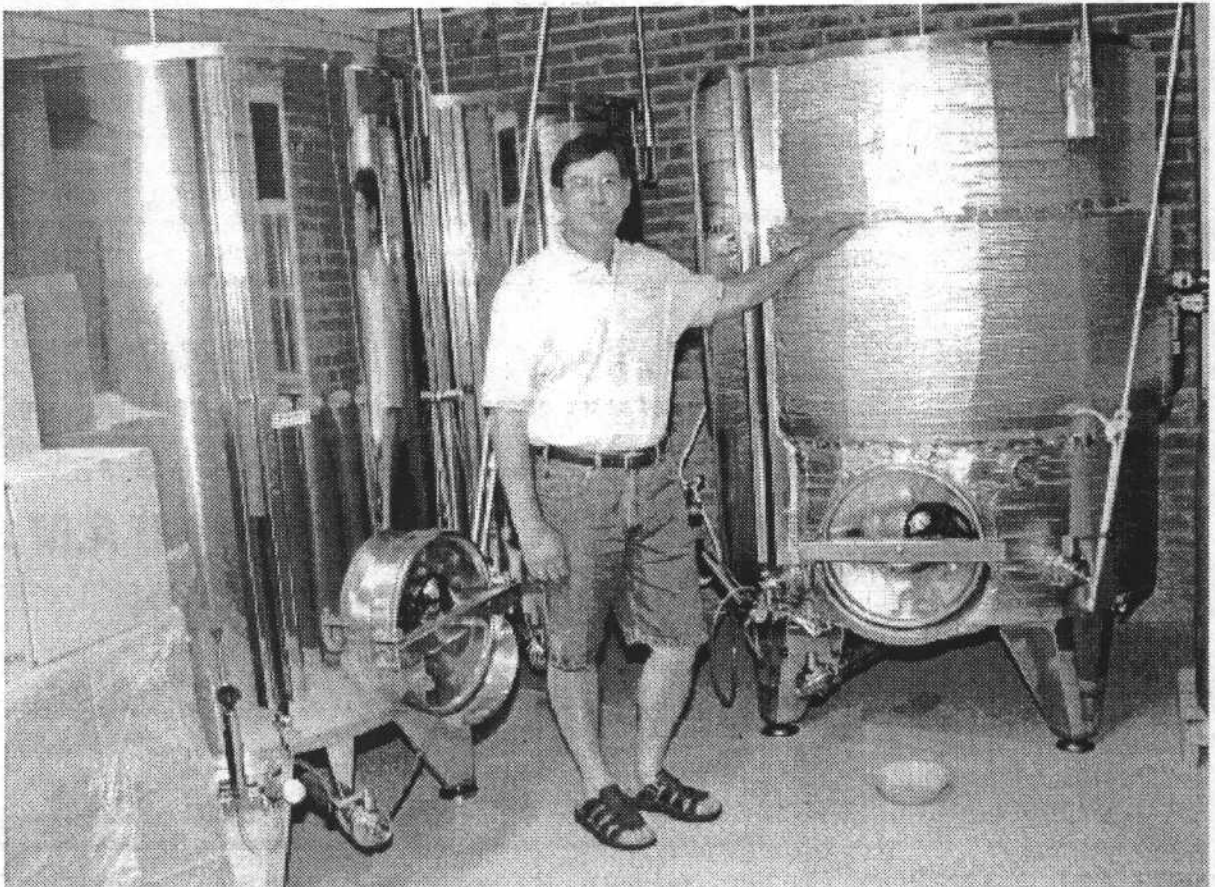


THIS OLD BRICK smokehouse was built by John and Anna Marie Droemer in the early 1930s. It was used for

meat storage, but will now be used by Ben and Carl Droemer (pictured) to store wine from Lehm Berg Win-

ery. The wine will age in barrels for a year or more before being bottled.

--Times & News Photo



THESE STEEL TANKS can each store and cool up to 500 gallons of wine at Lehm Berg Winery in Giddings.

Ben Droemer, who started experimenting with wine kits about five years ago, teamed up with his father,

Carl, to start the winery. Ben is shown standing in front of the tanks.

--Times & News Photo