

Premiere of ‘American Farm’ a big hit

by Erica A. Norrbom

COOPERSTOWN – The premiere of “American Farm,” a documentary focusing on a Richfield Springs farmer, was held this past Saturday at the Fenimore Art Museum in Cooperstown and was so packed that another showing was held the next day.

The beginning of the film shows home movies of the family that were collected by director James Spione. “When I showed the film for the first time to my family, you could hear the gasps as many didn’t even know half of the pictures and the old films existed,” said Spione.

The movie continues with real-life problems as Spione’s cousin, Langdon “Lanny” Ames, talks about how, after five generations, there is no one left who is willing to take over his farm. Unfortunately, it is a tale that is too familiar these days. Spione said, “This is not only a film about farm life, but a film about issues of family, dealing with children, and a tradition that is becoming a relic of age.”

Ames’ farm is called Contour Meadows and was established in 1828. Spione got the idea for this movie because his mother grew up on the farm. “As kids we visited the farm a lot and it was very important to us,” said Spione.

The premiere’s audience members included some of the Ames’ family, such as Marilyn and Bertha, Lanny’s sisters; Janet, Lanny’s daughter; Shirley, Lanny’s aunt and Spione’s mother; and Douglas, Lanny’s son. But, what was really amazing was the diversity of the audience. There were farmers there who know the Ames or are experiencing the same difficulties on their farms, and also city-slickers, who got an inside look at the farm life and have a newfound respect and understanding of farming.

An audience member said, “I am very pleased with the honesty of the Ames family to the public.” Another member of the audience said, “The biggest part of farming is the dedication – you have to have a passion for it.”

Spione was pleased with the turnout. “We were packed to capacity, even more than we should have as we had to add folding chairs along the wall,” he said. “The community responded to the movie as I hoped they would.”

Spione is going to continue showing the documentary throughout New York State, hoping to receive similar praise elsewhere. “I want to bring the movie directly to the community, to as many people as I can,” he added. Spione is hopeful that the movie will one day appear on television. “Rural America is an important issue, just not a trend right now.”