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The Land Report

Agrarianism:
The second of three special issues

Contents

Cover Photograph: Solomon D. Butcher. Nebraska State Historical Society

Back Cover Photograph: Wright Morris, *Straightback Chair, Home Place, Near Norfolk, Nebraska, 1947*

Above: Scott Jost, *Wahaub Prairie, The Land Institute, 1996*

Our Mission Statement

When people, land, and community are as one, all three members prosper; when they relate not as members but as competing interests, all three are exploited. By consulting nature as the source and measure of that membership, The Land Institute seeks to develop an agriculture that will save soil from being lost or poisoned while promoting a community life at once prosperous and enduring.

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The Whole Horse

Wendell Berry

This modern mind sees only half of the horse—that half which may become a dynamo, or an automobile, or any other horsepowered machine. If this mind had much respect for the full-dimensioned, grass-eating horse, it would never have invented the engine which represents only half of him. The religious mind, on the other hand, has this respect; it wants the whole horse, and it will be satisfied with nothing less.

I should say a religious mind that requires more than a half-religion.

—Allen Tate, "Remarks on the Southern Religion," in *I'll Take My Stand*

One of the primary results—and one of the primary needs—of industrialism is the separation of people and places and products from their histories. To the extent that we participate in the industrial economy, we do not know the histories of our families or of our habitats or of our meals. This is an economy, and in fact a culture, of the one-night stand. "I had a good time," says the industrial lover, "but don't ask me my last name." Just so, the industrial eater says to the svelte industrial hog, "We'll be together at breakfast. I don't want to see you before then, and I won't care to remember you afterwards."

In this condition, we have many commodities, but little satisfaction, little sense of the sufficiency of anything. The scarcity of satisfaction makes of our many commodities, in fact, an infinite series of commodities, the new commodities invariably promising greater satisfaction than the older ones. And so we can say that the industrial economy's most-marketed commodity is satisfaction, and that this commodity, which is repeatedly promised, bought, and paid for, is never delivered.

This persistent want of satisfaction is directly and complexly related to the dissociation of ourselves and all our goods from our and their histories. If things do not last, are not made to last, they can have no histories, and we who use these things can have no memories. One of the procedures of the industrial economy is to reduce the longevity of materials. For example, wood, which well-made into buildings and furniture and well cared for can last hundreds of years, is now routinely manufactured into products that last twenty-five years. We do not cherish the memory of shoddy and transitory objects, and so we do not remember them. That is to say that we do not invest in them the lasting respect and admiration that make for satisfaction.

Originally published in a shortened version,* Americus Journal, *Winter 1999

The problem of our dissatisfaction with all the things that we use is not correctable within the terms of the economy that produces those things. At present, it is virtually impossible for us to know the economic history or the ecological cost of the products we buy; the origins of the products are typically too distant and too scattered and the processes of trade, manufacture, transportation, and marketing too complicated. There are, moreover, too many good reasons for the industrial suppliers of these products not to want their histories to be known.

Where there is no reliable accounting and therefore no competent knowledge of the economic and ecological effects of our lives, we cannot live lives that are economically and ecologically responsible. This is the problem that has frustrated, and to a considerable extent undermined, the American conservation effort from the beginning. It is ultimately futile to plead and protest and lobby in favor of public ecological responsibility while, in virtually every act of our private lives, we endorse and support an economic system that is by intention, and perhaps by necessity, ecologically irresponsible.

If the industrial economy is not correctable within or by its own terms, then obviously what is required for correction is a countervailing economic idea. And the most significant weakness of the conservation movement is its failure to produce or espouse an economic idea capable of correcting the economic idea of the industrialists. Somewhere near the heart of the conservation effort as we have known it is the romantic assumption that, if we have become alienated from nature, we can become unalienated by making nature the subject of contemplation or art, ignoring the fact that we live necessarily in and from nature—ignoring, in other words, all the economic issues that are involved. Walt Whitman could say, "I think I could turn and live with animals," as if he did not know that, in fact, we *do* live with animals, and that the terms of our relation to them are inescapably established by our economic use of their and our world. So long as we live, we are going to be living with skylarks, nightingales, daffodils, waterfowl, streams, forests, mountains, and all the other creatures that romantic poets and artists have yearned toward. And by the way we live we will determine whether or not those creatures will live.

That this nature-romanticism of the nineteenth century ignores economic facts and relationships has not

prevented it from setting the agenda for modern conservation groups. This agenda has rarely included the economics of land use, without which the conservation effort becomes almost inevitably long on sentiment and short on practicality. The giveaway is that when conservationists try to be practical they are likely to defend the "sustainable use of natural resources" with the argument that this will make the industrial economy sustainable. A further giveaway is that the longer the industrial economy lasts in its present form, the further it will demonstrate its ultimate impossibility: every human in the world cannot, now or ever, own the whole catalogue of shoddy, high-energy industrial products which cannot be sustainably made or used. Moreover, the longer the industrial economy lasts, the more it will eat away the possibility of a better economy.

The conservation effort has at least brought under suspicion the general relativism of our age. Anybody who has studied with care the issues of conservation knows that our acts are being measured by a real and unyielding standard that was invented by no human. Our acts that are not in harmony with nature are inevitably and sometimes irremediably destructive. The standard exists. But having no opposing economic idea, conservationists have had great difficulty in applying the standard.

What, then, is the countervailing idea by which we might correct the industrial idea? We will not have to look hard to find it, for there is only one, and that is agrarianism. Our major difficulty (and danger) will be in attempting to deal with agrarianism as "an idea"—agrarianism is primarily a practice, a set of attitudes, a loyalty, and a passion; it is an idea only secondarily and at a remove. I am well aware of the danger in defining things, but if I am going to talk about agrarianism, I am going to have to define it. The definition that follows is derived both from agrarian writers, ancient and modern, and from the unliterary and sometimes illiterate agrarians who have been my teachers.

The fundamental difference between industrialism and agrarianism is this: Whereas industrialism is a way of thought based on monetary capital and technology, agrarianism is a way of thought based on land.

An agrarian economy rises up from the fields, woods, and streams—from the complex of soils, slopes, weathers, connections, influences, and exchanges that

Above: Paula Chamlee, *from the series High Plains Farm, Adrian, Texas, 1994*

Left: Solomon D. Butcher, *Charles Blakeman, Custer County, Nebraska,* c. 1890-91. Nebraska State Historical Society.

we mean when we speak, for example, of the local community or the local watershed. The agrarian mind is therefore not regional or national, let alone global, but local. It must know on intimate terms the local plants and animals and local soils; it must know local possibilities and impossibilities, opportunities and hazards. It depends and insists on knowing very particular local histories and biographies.

Because a mind so placed meets again and again the necessity for work to be good, the agrarian mind is less interested in abstract quantities than in particular qualities. It feels threatened and sickened when it hears people and creatures and places spoken of as labor, management, capital, and raw material. It is not at all impressed by the industrial legendry of gross national products, or of the numbers sold and dollars earned by gigantic corporations. It is interested—and forever fascinated—by questions leading toward the accomplishment of good work: What is the best location for a particular building or fence? What is the best way to plow *this* field? What is the best course for a skid road in *this* woodland? Should *this* tree be cut or spared? What are the best breeds and types of livestock for *this* farm?—questions which cannot be answered in the abstract, and which yearn not toward quantity but toward elegance. Agrarianism can never become abstract because it has to be practiced in order to exist.

An agrarian economy is always a subsistence economy before it is a market economy. The center of an agrarian farm is the household. It is the subsistence part of the agrarian economy that assures its stability and its survival. A subsistence economy necessarily is highly diversified, and it characteristically has involved hunting and gathering as well as farming and gardening. These activities bind people to their local landscape by close, complex interests and economic ties. The industrial economy alienates people from the native landscape precisely by breaking these direct practical ties and introducing distant dependencies.

Agrarian people of the present, knowing that the land must be well cared for if anything is to last, understand the need for a settled connection, not just between farmers and their farms, but between urban people and their surrounding and tributary landscapes. Because the knowledge and know-how of good caretaking must be handed down to children, agrarians recognize the necessity of preserving the coherence of families and communities.

The stability, coherence, and longevity of human occupation require that the land should be divided among many owners and users. The central figure of agrarian thought has invariably been the small owner or small holder who maintains a significant measure of economic self-determination on a small acreage. The scale and independence of such holdings imply two things that agrarians see as desirable: intimate care in the use of the land, and political democracy resting upon the indispensable foundation of economic democracy.

A major characteristic of the agrarian mind is a longing for independence—that is, for an appropriate degree of personal and local self-sufficiency. Agrarians wish to earn and deserve what they have. They do not wish to live by piracy, beggary, charity, or luck.

In the written record of agrarianism, there is a continually recurring affirmation of nature as the final judge, law-giver, and pattern-maker of and for the human use of the earth. We can trace the lineage of this thought in the West through the writings of Virgil, Spenser, Shakespeare, Pope, Thomas Jefferson, and on into the work of the twentieth century agriculturists and scientists, J. Russell Smith, Liberty Hyde Bailey, Albert Howard, Wes Jackson, John Todd, and others. The idea is variously stated: we should not work until we have looked and seen where we are; we should honor Nature not only as our mother or grandmother, but as our teacher and judge; we should "let the forest judge;" we should "consult the Genius of the Place;" we should make the farming fit the farm; we should carry over into the cultivated field the diversity and coherence of the native forest or prairie. And this way of thinking is surely allied to that of the medieval scholars and architects who saw the building of a cathedral as a symbol or analogue of the creation of the world. John Haines has written that "the eternal task of the artist and the poet, the historian and the scholar ... is to find the means to reconcile what are two separate and yet inseparable histories, Nature and Culture. To the extent that we can do this, the 'world' makes sense to us and can be lived in." I would add only that this applies also to the farmer, the forester, the scientist, and others.

The agrarian mind begins with the love of fields and ramifies in good farming, good cooking, good eating, and gratitude to God. Exactly analogous to the agrarian mind is the sylvan mind that begins with the love of forests and ramifies in good forestry, good wood-working, good carpentry, etc., and gratitude to God. These two kinds of mind readily intersect and communicate; neither ever intersects or communicates with the industrial-economic mind. The industrial-economic mind begins with ingratitude, and ramifies in the destruction of farms and forests. The "lowly" and "menial" arts of farm and forest are mostly taken for granted or ignored by the culture of the "fine arts" and by "spiritual" religions; they are taken for granted or ignored or held in contempt by the powers of the industrial economy. But in fact they are inescapably the foundation of human life and culture, and their adepts are capable of as deep satisfactions and as high attainments as anybody else.

Having, so to speak, laid industrialism and agrarianism side by side, implying a preference for the latter, I will be confronted by two questions that I had better go ahead and answer.

The first is whether or not agrarianism is simply a "phase" that we humans had to go through and then leave behind in order to get onto the track of technological progress toward even greater happiness. The answer is that although industrialism has certainly conquered agrarianism, and has very nearly destroyed it altogether, it is also true that in every one of its uses of the natural world industrialism is in the process of catastrophic failure. Industry is now desperately shifting—by means of genetic engineering, global colonialism, and other contrivances—to prolong its control of our farms and forests, but the failure nonetheless continues. It is not possible to argue sanely in favor of soil erosion, water pollution, genetic impoverishment, and the destruction of rural communities and local economies. Industrialism, unchecked by the affections and concerns of agrarianism, becomes monstrous. And this is because of a weakness identified by the Twelve Southerners of *I'll Take My Stand* in their "Statement of Principles": under the rule of industrialism "the remedies proposed ... are always homeopathic." Industrialism always proposes to correct its errors and excesses by more industrialization.

The second question is whether or not by espousing the revival of agrarianism we will commit the famous sin of "turning back the clock." The answer to that, for present-day North Americans, is fairly simple. The overriding impulse of agrarianism is toward the local adaptation of economies and cultures. Agrarian people wish to fit the farming to the farm and the forestry to

Above: Paula Chamlee, *From the series High Plains Farm, Adrian, Texas, 1994.*

Left: Solomon Butcher, *Henry Luther Home, Ortello Valley, Near Dale, Custer County, Nebraska,* 1887. Nebraska State Historical Society.

the forest. At times and in places we latter-day Americans may have come close to accomplishing this goal, but we never yet have developed stable, sustainable, locally adapted land-based economies. The good rural enterprises and communities that we will find in our past have been almost constantly under threat from the colonialism, first foreign and then domestic, which has so far dominated our history, and which has been institutionalized for a long time in the industrial economy. The possibility of an authentically settled country still lies ahead of us.

If we wish to look ahead, we will see not only in the United States but in the world two economic programs that conform pretty exactly to the aims of industrialism and agrarianism as I have described them.

The first is the effort to globalize the industrial economy, not merely by the expansionist programs of supra-national corporations within themselves, but also by means of government-sponsored international trade agreements, the most prominent of which is the new General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade. The new GATT is a product of the industrial ambition to use, sell, or destroy every acre and every creature of the world.

The old GATT contained 78 pages. The new agreement, with its "annexes," contains 26,000 pages; it is said to weigh 385 pounds. No individual who will administer it or be ruled by it will ever read it all. Obviously, it can be administered only by a big bureaucracy, which will not increase the size of any national government only because it will operate independently of any national government.

The second program, counter to the first, is comprised of many small efforts to preserve or improve or establish local economies. These efforts on the part of non-industrial or agrarian conservatives, local patriots, are taking place in countries both affluent and poor all over the world.

Whereas the corporate sponsors of GATT, in order to promote their ambitions, have required only the hazy glamour of such phrases as "the global economy," "the global context," and "globalization"—and thus apparently have vacuum-packed the mind of every politician and political underling in the country—the local economists use a much more diverse and particularizing vocabulary that you can actually think with: "community," "ecosystem," "watershed," "place," "homeland," "family," and "household."

And whereas the global economists advocate a world-government-by-economic-bureaucracy, which would destroy local adaptation everywhere by ignoring the uniqueness of every place, the local economists found their work upon respect for such uniqueness. Places differ from one another, the local economists say, therefore we must behave with unique consideration in each one; the ability to tender an appropriate practical regard and respect to each place in its difference is a kind of freedom; the inability to do so is a kind of tyranny. The global economists are the great centralizers of our time. The local economists, who have so far attracted the support of no prominent politician, are the true decentralizers and downsizers, for they seek an appropriate degree of self-determination and independence for localities. They seem to be moving toward a radical and necessary revision of our idea of a city. They are learning to see the city, not just as a built and paved municipality set apart by "city limits" to live by trade and transportation from the world at large, but rather as a part of a community which includes also the city's rural neighbors, its surrounding landscape and its watershed, on which it might depend for at least some of its necessities, and for the health of which it might exercise a competent concern and responsibility.

At this point, I want to say pointblank what I hope is already clear: though agrarianism proposes that everybody has agrarian responsibilities, it does not propose that everybody should be a farmer or that we do not need cities. Furthermore, any thinkable human economy would have to grant to manufacturing an appropriate and honorable place. Agrarians would insist only that any manufacturing enterprise should be formed and scaled to fit the local landscape, the local ecosystem, and the local community, and that it should be locally owned and employ local people. They would insist, in other words, that the shop or factory owner should not be an outsider, but rather a sharer in the fate of the place and its community. The deciders should live with the results of their decisions.

Between these two programs—the industrial and the agrarian, the global and the local—the most critical difference is that of knowledge. The global economy institutionalizes a global ignorance, in which producers and consumers cannot know or care about one another, and in which the histories of all products will be lost. In such a circumstance, the degradation of products and places, producers and consumers is inevitable.

But in a sound local economy, in which producers and consumers are neighbors, nature will become the known standard of work and production. Consumers who understand their economy will not tolerate the destruction of the local soil or ecosystem or watershed as a cost of production. Only a healthy local economy can keep nature and work together in the consciousness of the community. Only such a community can restore history to economics.

Terry Evans, *Arlene Bailey's Horse, Matfield Green, Kansas,* 1997

Net Surfing 2:00 A.M.

Mary Mackey

in the great invisible electronic
library of the world
the real thing is nothing
image is all

bleary with coffee
and grief for a friend
who died the day before
I find myself staring at the screen and wondering
how many pixels it takes
to make a wood duck
or an island of black frigate birds
mating in the mangroves
their globed orange throat pouches
pulsing with birdly lust

in front of me
in a space no larger than two hands spanned
I can watch flocks of pink flamingos
migrating
stick-legged, silly-beaked
bits of egg-laying confetti
left over from the big party
of creation

there's a comfort to the sight
of so many birds. Here at least,
I think,
life out-runs extinction

once in Cambridge
in the Peabody Museum
I came across the last passenger pigeon
ever sighted in America
neatly stuffed
with combed feathers and agate eyes
sitting on a fake limb in a glass case
under a card which informed me
that it had been shot
by the Harvard expedition of 1893

once I read
that Audubon himself
killed to sketch

now
in front of me
electronic snow geese
by the thousands
swirl over the marshes
of the Central Valley
now in one night
I can see
more cranes and herons
than ever fled south
before the snows of winter

I touch the screen with my fingertips
taste it with my tongue
how cold this tiny window is
that drugs me with perpetual flight
on tapes and chips and CD-ROM
the programmers have recreated paradise
and yet ...

I pause, consider, and decide:
I strike a key
I click the mouse
I let myself forget
the crossed out phone number
the returned mail
the name he no longer answers to
the silent woods
the long darkness
the quiet
empty
sky.

Community Supported Agriculture: Bringing the Dinner Table to the Farm

Dan Imhoff

Until our move to a rural valley, my family's primary provider of fruits and vegetables for the past four years has been a Northern California farmer named Kathy Barsotti. Every Tuesday a half-bushel box arrived on our doorstep, fresh from the fields and orchards at Capay Fruits and Vegetables, 80 miles northeast of San Francisco. While my wife or I sorted through the delivery, the other read aloud from the accompanying one-page newsletter, detailing the contents, relating weekly weather and farm progress, and offering some intriguing recipe ideas. One week in early April, Barsotti wrote:

> The tomatoes that we transplanted last week look very nice, thank goodness! It was a real blow to lose our first planting. We have fruit on the Asian pears, the figs, the apricots, and the peaches. As soon as we get a chance, we need to begin thinning so we get a decent size on the ripe ones. All of our thinning is done by hand. The mandarins are putting out their first flush of leaves, and the flowers are just starting to bloom. Soon we will be living in the heavenly fragrance of orange blossoms.

Twenty dollars per week (plus a five dollar delivery fee split among neighbors) supplied us and our two small children with most of the produce we needed, including leftovers for a weekly soup. Our son's first solid food came from these boxes, steamed vegetables and fresh fruits mashed with a small hand-mill. In winter, leafy greens, root crops and citrus predominated. By mid-summer, the boxes overflowed. We relinquished our choice in the arrangement, learning instead to make the most of what Kathy had managed to produce or procure from neighboring farmers during any given week. In doing so we were participating in Community Supported Agriculture, a movement which over the past decade has rescued many small diverse farms across the country struggling against rising land values, international competition, government price supports for agribusiness and increasing production costs.

According to *Farms of Tomorrow Revisited* (Biodynamic Farm and Gardening Association, 1997) co-author Stephen McFadden, there were upwards of 1,000 U.S. farms in 1997 which, like Capay Fruits and Vegetables, offered a direct relationship with a body of members. Individually each of these farms is referred to as a CSA. Although all CSAs have common goals, each is unique. Some are best described as "mutual farms," where members enter a partnership with the farmer, investing $450 - $900 for "shares" at the beginning of the year in return for edible dividends throughout the growing season. Others are monthly subscription arrangements with an emphasis on customer service, like pre-washed salad mix, fresh-cut flowers and home delivery. CSAs range from five-share gardens cultivated solely by members, to large farms serving nearly 1,000 share holders. While the majority relies on designated drop-off sites where customers retrieve their weekly bounty, some insist that pick-your-own programs are what separate pure Community Supported Agriculture farms from mere subscription arrangements and other less ideologically-driven interpretations. In terms of a national average, a weekly CSA share provides enough for three people and costs between $12 and $25.

"The CSA is a valuable model for many reasons," explains Judith Redmond, executive director of the Community Alliance with Family Farmers (CAFF) in Davis, California, and co-founder of Full Belly Farms, which has been operating a CSA in the Capay Valley since 1994. "Because most members pay a yearly share up front before the growing season begins, it significantly helps out with our cash flow. And because our members expect to receive what's done well on the farm on any given week, we have a guaranteed outlet for in-season produce and heavy yielders."

For my wife and I, CSA membership was a lifestyle choice, not much different than bicycling to work, using a cotton diaper service or composting in a backyard worm box. The challenge of broadening our culinary repertories by using only what was in season, combined with the fresh organic ingredients, elevated our culinary skills. We became creative with kale and kohlrabi, looked forward to weeks of leeks, learned to live without tomatoes and green beans (in winter and spring), and evolved into competent soup makers.

I visited Kathy Barsotti's farm on a sizzling hot May afternoon. The Capay Valley has a broad flat belly that meanders gracefully and is surrounded on both sides by hills with grassy meadows and oak groves. There was so much pollen in the air my head was pounding audibly, though the farm was about as pastoral a scene as one could imagine. A small, fit woman with a welcoming smile, Barsotti was watering tomato

It takes about

thirty years of active work, experiment, observation, and study to make a passable farmer.

—Charles Allen Smart

starts in the greenhouse when I arrived. A safari helmet shielded her face from the sun. Her three full-time farmhands, who I'd been reading about for some time, were thinning peaches.

Barsotti owned 25 acres herself and farmed a total of 90. The CSA resembled an extensive orchard and garden, and was producing 20 different vegetables. Each row hosted one or more crops: ambrosia melons and mickey lee watermelons; green zebra and Thessaloniki tomatoes; romaine and red leaf lettuce. "This is more like quilting than farming," said Barsotti. "This is what I wanted when I started farming 20 years ago, and running a CSA now allows me to earn my living off of 90 acres."

The Capay Valley has in fact been a haven for small diverse organic operations such as Barsotti's, and there were four other CSAs in the area, all delivering boxes to Bay Area residents in addition to selling wholesale, in farmers' markets and to restaurants. While these local farmers remained competitive on some levels, there was also a great deal of cooperation among them. "Having two or three CSAs in a region gives a real boost to a community's economy," explained Barsotti, who had been bartering and buying apricots, oranges, salad greens and a variety of other items from neighboring farmers to ensure each week's delivery was as fair to her members as possible.

Fellow valley farmer Judith Redmond concurred. Twice in the last four years, Full Belly has shared its waiting list with other CSAs needing a body of customers to grow their businesses. (A great majority of the CSA founders that I've talked to have had waiting lists throughout the 1990s.) I contrasted for a moment that gesture with the proprietary nature of agribusiness—in particular the great rush to patent nearly all the biological wealth on the planet, not necessarily to help feed and clothe the world, but to corner the market on it—and I caught a glimmer of the spirit that has cloaked the organic farming movement since its practitioners idealistically headed for the boonies in the 1970s to take charge of their own food supply.

Ironically, on my way out of the Capay Valley, I found few opportunities to eat or buy the outstanding food being grown in this productive region—not in the corner grocery store or at the local restaurant. In most parts of the country, farming remains an export-oriented system. Crops are primarily exported for distribution, while food is imported for consumption and for centralized processing. Over the past decade, I've read (and even cited myself) the 1983 statistic that the average food item in the United States travels 1,300 miles before it reaches the dinner table.[1] (Taking into account the North American Free Trade Agreement, and the increasing reliance on Chilean imports, that estimate could indeed be extremely conservative today.) CSAs have drastically diminished that distance between the farm and the dinner table. Most memberships are located within 100 miles or less of a farm. By limiting transportation and perishability—two factors which dictate what crops can be sown for national or international markets—CSAs offer better tasting heirloom varieties that stay fresher longer and don't have to be fumigated, irradiated, refrigerated or shipped great distances.

Distinctions between locally-produced and national or international farming systems were highlighted in 1997 when two Capay Valley farmers experienced run-ins with local bureaucracies. Both farms, delivering in two different communities, were employing the common practice of using a member's porch as a weekly drop-off site. Grievous neighbors, angry with the tenants responsible for creating the drop-off sites, filed complaints about both CSAs. In one instance, a city health department objected to the use of a porch as a delivery site for produce, not citing any specific code violations, but insinuating that there might be sanitation concerns with issuing uninspected produce. In the other, a city business zoning violation was cited, inferring that tax or licenses may be applicable to this type of unmitigated commerce. Both cases left CSA owners feeling vulnerable, because the concept—even though it involves freshly picked, carefully washed and appropriately packed produce—could soon be scrutinized by health and zoning bureaucracies.

"The lesson we learned," said one of the farmers, "was that we had to take a pro-active and friendly approach to any community we were going into. That

[1] Amory and Hunter Lovins and Marty Bender, "Energy and Agriculture," from *Meeting the Expectations of the Land: Essays in Sustainable Agriculture and Stewardship*, edited by Wes Jackson, Wendell Berry, Bruce Colman, North Point Press, San Francisco, 1983.

means not blocking traffic with our delivery trucks—even though couriers do it regularly—and giving out free boxes to neighbors to educate them about Community Supported Agriculture."

While a middleman-free, direct delivery system has forged new links between growers and consumers, there are still CSA farmers who feel that Community Supported Agriculture requires far more involvement than just monetary participation from its members. Many successful CSAs have survived primarily because they have recruited a "core group," with the sole purpose of "letting the farmer farm." These core group members actively and regularly assist with a variety of the organizational tasks necessary to keep the trains of these detailed operations running on time: bookkeeping, delivery, harvesting, packaging and communications. While the core group strategy seems to be more fully integrated on east coast and mid-west CSA farms than those in the western region, it points to the fact that there are a myriad other tasks besides growing and harvesting that go into the management of a CSA. Juggling tedious accounting systems, newsletter writing, weekly planting schedules, all help to double or triple the workload of the already maxed out market gardener. The core group is one way to delegate some of the work. Apprentices are common on most farms as well. Other farmers develop computerized bookkeeping systems, take out toll-free numbers, and cultivate large memberships to keep their operations manageable and profitable.

Many farmers believe the roots of Community Supported Agriculture lie deeper and spread farther still. Social and economic missions sometimes are as important as the food production. On many farms, members shoulder a proportion of the labor. One example is the Genesee Valley CSA outside Rochester, New York, which not only has an active core group of 21 members, but also requires a commitment among its 200 share-

In Celebration of a New Day

David Kline

This morning it was 60 degrees with patchy fog when I walked up over the east hill to get the cows. Even though the moon is waning toward its last quarter, its light, filtered by the fog, still illuminated the cowpath enough that I did not need the flashlight.

To the right of the crescent moon was Orion on his back, and shimmering Sirius hung low in the southeast. When I reached the top of the hill I stopped to listen. The quietude of the early morning was so complete that the katydids' grexing from the woods a quarter of a mile away to my left sounded only an arm's length away. So did the screech owl's quavering call from the farmstead to the right.

I waited. Then I heard the first one — a farmer calling his cows. A low "kummmsaaaaa" (the sa as in salve) from the next farm. Melvin's sort of a low-key guy and doesn't use the wild and free cry most of his neighbors do. I thought it was time for a wake-up call so I cupped my hands to my mouth, filled my lungs with the night-chilled air, and let lose with a high-pitched "Whoooooo, whoooooo." The echoes hadn't died out before two other neighbors joined the chorus with their finest calls.

Dennis has a wonderful repertoire; at least half a dozen different musical yodels. A joy to behold. Of course, he is also one of the best singers in church.

From Bert I learned a beautiful split "who/ooo." It is a melodious call passed down through his family; a call that was fine-tuned in the Alpine meadows of Switzerland. But I hadn't heard from him yet. Since he is an early riser he likely had the cows in the stable already.

I decided to check Bert out. Tempt him. (Usually when a farmer oversleeps he's very discreet about it and may not even call his cows; he simply fetches them.) I sent my finest version of the split "WHOOOO/ooooo" reverberating up and down the valley. Immediately Bert answered with a fine tenor, "WHOOOOOOOO/ooooooooo." Aha, he did get up a bit late. Five instead of four-thirty. From a mile west Enos answered.

Soon I heard soft lowing from the fog. Glow complaining about her arthritic hip. Then came Patsy and Gertie and Linda and Nell and the rest of the herd walking single file down the path toward the barn.

Once more I inhaled the sweet chill air rich with the ripeness of summer and called "WHOOO/ooooooooo." Not for the cows this time, but a call in celebration of a new day.

Anyone who isn't stupid enough to spend all his time trying to farm, or to make money, or books, or something, *knows* *that a neighbor's orchard is a perfect place for making love.*

—Charles Allen Smart

holders to spend 12 hours per season helping on the farm and four hours assisting with distribution.

This kind of hands-on participation is different from the semi-annual work days and harvest festivals which most CSAs sponsor, events which require a fair amount of organization and supervision by farmers, and which possibly net less productivity than one might think. On a visit to Live Power Farm in Covelo, California, I plowed a field behind a pair of Belgian draught horses with biodynamic farmer Steve Decatur at the reins. I struggled to keep the harrow in a straight line, the rich dark earth unfurling behind me, a flock of blackbirds trailing us, pecking at the newly exposed worms. We worked hard until dusk, the experience seeping into tired muscles. While Decatur no doubt could have done the work in a quarter of the time and much more effectively than I did, it was an experience that changed me, deepening my appreciation for the food on our tables and for the people who make it all possible.

The Food Bank Farm, on the confluence of the Connecticut and Fort Rivers in Hadley, Massachusetts, donates half of its weekly output to needy families, soup kitchens, halfway houses, and other organizations in the area. Not only do members fund these charitable outreach efforts, they still receive culinary dividends that are reputed to be a great bargain. According to one survey, the Food Bank Farm's yearly share of $375, would cost $800 if bought piecemeal at Stop-N-Shop, the regional conventional supermarket, and $1200 at Bread and Circus, an organic foods market.

In 1996 core group members at the Live Power Farm in Northern California tackled head-on one of the most difficult challenges facing CSA founders across the country: land tenure. Without ownership, farmers can spend a great deal of their income paying rent or a mortgage for land that would be worth far more as a supermarket or housing development than a responsibly stewarded CSA. Live Power's core group spearheaded a campaign which raised nearly $100,000 to purchase the land occupied by biodynamic farmers Stephen and Gloria Decatur. Within a year, Live Power Farm was placed into a conservation easement, requiring that any future land use of the 40-acre property remain agricultural. The Decaturs received the agricultural rights to the farm—not to the real estate development value. This separation between the agricultural and development values gave this hard working farm family equity in the land they were dedicated to improving. It also set up a procedure whereby the Decaturs could sell their farming title to a trust when they retire, or pass it on to their kids if they agreed to farm it.

"The CSA model is attracting new sources of capital to the issues of small diverse agriculture," explained Chick Matthei, of Equity Trust Incorporated, a Voluntown, Connecticut-based organization who worked on the Live Power conservation arrangement and continues to create new legal and technical tools to preserve small farms in public trusts. Matthei's "Gaining Ground" seminars, conducted around the country, are aimed at attracting diverse players to the issue of vanishing urban crop land, farm inheritance, and conservation. "Because of the CSA model, there is an openness now in public circles that small farms must be protected. While its overall percentage of the current food system remains small, Community Supported Agriculture is having an effect far beyond its size."

It is easy to wax overly optimistic and idealistic about the success of the CSA model, and some wild claims have appeared citing revolutionary overhauls of the small farm scene. CSAs continue to cater mostly to well-to-do city dwellers rather than rural residents—the same people who can afford to buy microbrews can now purchase hand crafted fruits and vegetables and feel good about them. Viewed even more skeptically, these farms-in-a-box schemes could be seen as just one more form of vicarious entertainment, in this case for people who have the time and luxury of preparing quality meals. Critics also argue that low-income families and farm workers are shut out of the movement, because of the hardship of paying cash at the beginning of a growing season or even on any given week, and these people, as much or perhaps more than others, are in need of fresh healthy food. Others point to CSA arrangements where members have very little connection to the work at all, other than writing a check at the beginning of the season and reading the weekly newsletters. Many farmers still live on low salaries. Relationships among farming couples are strained as ever. Member attrition can be a problem. And even successful farms struggle with under-capitalization.

Looking across the broad landscape of CSA organizations, however, there seems to be a farm somewhere working and experimenting with some solution or mechanism to address all of the above challenges and

...*Peggy* has supper ready before the fire, but has taken time to make us both a little drink. So we sit there, a minute, before the fire, and raise our glasses to each other, and talk about this and that, and fall silent.

***Then* we eat well, and clean up the table. Sometimes we call up Gerald Rowan, or somebody, and go to a movie. Or else we stay at home, and listen to music, or play chess, or talk, or read, sometimes aloud, some book that has blood in it. ...**

criticisms. Full Belly Farm offers their members a chance to sponsor boxes that are donated to single mothers. Sixth grade teachers at the Martin Luther King Middle School in Berkeley, California, use a weekly box to teach students about farming and nutrition. (They in turn go home and influence their parents, who transcend many ethnic and economic backgrounds.) The Rural Development Center in Salinas, California, runs a CSA solely for Latino farm workers, to improve the quality of foods available to them. Steve Smith, a third generation farmer in Bedford, Kentucky, believes the CSA is a model that can prevent a number of tobacco farmers from selling their family farms in his region. The members of yet another CSA farm congregate one day before the growing season to hear the annual budget presented and then decide how much each will contribute according to their ability to pay.

Community Supported Agriculture's biggest contribution to the organic farming movement may be its ability to serve as a crucible for a great variety of issues, from public education to health and nutrition to land ownership and agricultural access.

Since Indian Line Farm first offered shares in its apple harvest in Great Barrington, Massachusetts in 1986, CSAs have sprouted up almost exponentially across the United States and Canada (where there were at least 63 reported in 1996). They range from tiny five-member backyard gardeners in San Francisco's Mission District to 800-share operations like Angelic Organics outside Chicago or BeWise Farms in San Diego. CSAs reach as far north as Anchorage, Alaska, span the breadth of Canada, and sweep diagonally across the continent down into Florida. Though I have found no official figures on other countries, I am aware of subscription and core group arrangements in at least a half dozen other countries, including the Netherlands (abonnementer), England (box schemes), Australia, Switzerland, Germany and Japan (tokkei).

With a conservative back-of-the-napkin calculation, it is probably a prudent estimate to say that CSAs account for one percent or a bit more of the national organic sales in the Untied States. That is $30-40 million. With 1,000 CSAs operating on an average budget of $30-40,000, this hardly seems unrealistic. This may seem like a mere brush stroke on the big picture of the nation's food system, but what can't be quantified in economic terms is the opportunity that the CSA models have presented for addressing far-ranging issues about the actual costs of food production.

The term "Community Supported Agriculture" might not exactly capture the true spirit of these pioneering grower/consumer arrangements. The word "supported" is the most objectionable part of the phrase, as it implies that communities are somehow aiding farmers in some way or another. Perhaps "shared," or "stewarded," or "sustained," might be more appropriate. According to University of Massachusetts Extension Educator, Cathy Ross, even pioneer Robyn Van En—who co-founded the United States' first CSA and passed away in 1997—was dissatisfied with the term. "Robyn confided with me toward the end of her life," Ross said, "that she would have been happy with the term 'Agriculturally Supported Communities'."

In his 1955 book *Our Vanishing Landscape*, historian Eric Sloane wrote: "A hundred or more years ago, whether you were a blacksmith, a butcher, a carpenter, a politician, or a banker, you were also a farmer. If you were retired you were a 'gentleman farmer.' Even the earliest silk-hatted and powder-wigged American had gnarled hands that knew the plow and the tricks of building a good stone wall. Before setting out for the day, there were chores to be done that often took as much time as a complete day's work for the average man of today."

Some pine nostalgically for those good old days. Others feel a void of purpose in their lives as the connections to gardening and farmwork have been increasingly severed. While many aspects of yesteryear have and should be happily forgotten, there are still others that are worth keeping and in need of revival. CSAs have by no means solved the myriad of problems facing the small diverse farmer today, but they have at least created a mechanism by which issues can be discussed within the broader community. Perhaps for the first time since the days of the victory gardens, Community Supported Agriculture has brought the dinner table—and diners—closer to the soil than they've been in a long time.

Greg Conniff, *Lafeyette County, Mississippi, 1990*

Then **we put the dogs in their kennel, take the air a few minutes in the cold moonlight, listening to a hound somewhere far away, and go to bed.**

And after a while, when we are lying close to each other, and the windows are open, we watch the black limbs moving, and listen to the wind, or to a mouse in the wainscoting, and watch the moving firelight on the ceiling.

If there is a god, anywhere, who has done this to me, let him hear my thanks.

—Charles Allen Smart

Scott Jost, *Blowing Dust on 36th Street, Northwest of Newton, Kansas, April 2, 1996*

Ecological Determinism vs. the Jeffersonian Ideal

Wes Jackson

The summer I was fifteen going on sixteen, I abandoned myself to the prairies of South Dakota to work on a ranch belonging to an eccentric and childless first cousin of my mother and her Swedish immigrant husband, Andrew.

Ina was Andrew's second wife; his first had been her sister Bertha. Andrew and Bertha homesteaded one half section and Ina another. When Bertha died, Andrew and Ina married and joined their holdings. This was near the Rosebud reservation, and on Sundays I sometimes rode with half breed kids over those prairies, hearing such stories as to how their Indian grandfathers had trapped eagles on this hill or that.

Andrew, Ina, and I would go to White River on Saturday afternoons. Some of the Rosebud Sioux would lie in the shade of the stores and as the sun moved, they would pick up their belongings and move to the shade on the other side. Out on the ranch Andrew would cuss and swear about how the Indians never did anything with the land. In town, the Indian from whom Andrew and Ina were leasing some land regularly charged groceries to their account. Andrew always paid, for to fail to do so meant that a neighboring rancher would be only too willing to lease that land next year, perhaps forgetting that he, too, would be trapped into buying a bottle of whiskey at the liquor store, and that he, too, would have to tolerate coming upon what was left of one of his steers butchered by the same redskins.

I fell in love that summer at a Saturday night dance. She was a beautiful white girl and her magic was so overwhelming that I swear I failed to sleep the entire night after I met her. Thirty-five years later when I saw her, she was seriously overweight, had lost most of her teeth, her slip was showing, and she neither recognized nor remembered me as she lugged one of her grandchildren into the bar.

I think it was the same bar where, as a teenager, I learned more interesting content at lower tuition than anytime before or since. For it was there that I had scrutinized, with the civilized eye of a Kansas River Valley Methodist, drunk cowboys, married or not, who hugged and smooched young natives and from time-to-time disappeared into the shadows of the dusty back streets of White River.

The landscape was mostly unplowed then and still is today. The horse, central to that way of life then, is less so now. Out on the ranch, besides the moon and stars, the only lights were of Murdo and Okaton across the river 12 to 15 miles distant. It was a summer of branding, castrating, fence fixing, dens of rattlesnakes to discover, pond bass to catch. Many evenings on the ranch I'd drive out on "the point" in a Cadillac coupe or the pickup to shoot prairie dogs or to see the 100 head of horses in the bottoms or out on the range. "Junk horses," Ina called them, for in the dry 30s she'd pumped water for hours for the cattle, only to have 50 to 100 head of Andrew's horses show up, run the cattle away, and drink all the water. Andrew justified keeping these mostly wild creatures around on the grounds that it was horse trading that had made it possible for him to be so solidly positioned. Now I am amazed to think of the slack Andrew and Ina enjoyed to be able to afford those 100 head of mostly unbroken horses.

I lived in a small wooden hillside shack set up on steel wheels, a shack Andrew had bought from Millette County, which had used it to house the county road crew. It had been pulled by horses, perhaps the same horses used to pull the grader blade. Andrew and Ina lived in a small two-room house with a large attic which bowed from the weight of such old magazines as Andrew's *Life*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and Ina's *True Stories*, a magazine devoted to idealized romance. There was no electricity, only cistern water which was used at least twice, the last time always to water a small backyard garden or the chickens. Some evenings Andrew and I would sit on his porch, which overlooked the White River a half mile away, and Andrew would cuss Roosevelt, cuss the Yalta Conference, cuss Indians and neighbors and everybody but Ike the President — who happened to be Ina's first cousin, or I suspect Ike would have caught it, too.

With Ina on her buckskin Dickey and me on Bonnie or Violet (names I picked from two of my girlfriends back home), we rode the range from one dam to another, where poles were kept with lures so that we might catch some bass on the way home. Or we might go to the abandoned school on the school section for some cotton seed cake to distribute somewhere across the

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This essay is taken from a lecture delivered October 6, 1993, at Mountain View, California. The lecture series, sponsored by the Peninsula Open Space Trust and presented in honor of Wallace Stegner, was entitled "Land and the American Dream." A version of this essay appeared in an earlier* Land Report *without the photos.

Right: Shack, formerly owned by Mellette County, SD, for traveling road crew. Purchased by AJS ranch for bunkhouse in 1948 and parked in midst of never-plowed prairie with the White River in background. Home of author, summer 1952. Power lines and poles not present then.

Opposite Page: Sisters Bertha Stover Swan (left) and Ina Stover (holding horses) on the AJS ranch, late teens or early 1920s, near White River, SD. One year after Bertha died Ina married Andrew, her sister's widower. The house in the background was home to all three.

nearly 4,000 acres of paradise. I didn't want to go home and had it not been for high school football in September, I might have stayed. The place became my American dream.

And yet, looking back, even though Lewis and Clark's Missouri River was only 50 miles downstream, I now see that little of Jefferson's vision was there beyond the section lines and the system of laws. Here the land determined, for no yeoman farmer could exist here. Even so, I loved everything about it — the Indians, the rodeos, the Danish and Swedish immigrants delighted with their land holdings, the rattlesnakes, even the colorful prejudice and the way the natives got a little bit even with the butchered steer, the grocery bill, and the whiskey.

In the Kansas River Valley it had been another story. We were farmers there. Hoeing was endless during the summer, what with watermelons, sweet potatoes, cantaloupes, strawberries, peonies, phlox, sweet corn, potatoes, tomatoes, rhubarb, asparagus, and more. It was a relief to put up alfalfa hay or harvest wheat, rye, and corn (my dad won the county corn growing contest at least three years).

Our market was along Highway 24 and 40, a two-lane highway called the Pacific highway — a subconscious naming, I suppose, because the nation looked westward. Six children were born to my parents. A sister the first born in 1914, I was the last in 1936. Dad was 50 that year, my mother, 42. They were Jeffersonian agrarians — fiercely so, I see now. They were also Methodists and Congregationalists: don't waste time, motion, or steps. Don't drink pop, alcohol in any form, or eat out. The contrast between that truck farm and the South Dakota ranch was striking. The row crops required cultivating and hoeing. Sweat of the brow, good manners, and quotable scripture went together. And in the market, with people stopping on their way from coast to coast, I now sense that we were countrymen then in a way that we are not now. No bad jokes about either California or New Jersey then. We all inquired into one another's well being.

Here was an agriculture — row crop variety, of course — that I knew and, I will say, loved in a certain restricted sense. But it did not compare to the life of the range, with the juxtaposition of natives and grassland, ranchers and rodeos. I made up my mind I would have that South Dakota ranch one day, or one like it. But Andrew died of prostate cancer and Ina died of injuries sustained in a wreck with her pickup. The ranch was sold and some of the money willed to one of Ina's nephews who, within a year, paid it all out in a lawsuit due to being at fault in a car wreck.

Football and love kept me in college in what must have been one of the most misspent youths in history. And what smoldered in me were two experiences with land: the Jeffersonian agrarian, where sod had been busted, and the life of the cattleman. I preferred the latter.

One of my great-grandfathers had entered Kansas two weeks before the legal date, May 30, 1854, the day the Kansas-Nebraska Act was ratified. Twenty-six years old, he had already been to San Francisco by way of Panama. Fifty miles into Kansas, he broke tallgrass prairie sod and set right to farming his 160 acres, Jefferson-style, interrupting normal life to fight with John Brown against proslavery forces at Black Jack Creek on the Santa Fe Trail in 1857. But a man who was to become his son-in-law, one of my grandfathers, arrived in Kansas in 1877, one day before turning 22, with $300 to his name. He felt lucky not to have put his money in the bank, for it closed the next day. He thus preserved his grubstake and threw himself out onto the Flint Hills grasslands of Kansas to run cattle on more or less free grass. By the end of ten years he had enough to go in with a partner and purchase 160 acres of sandy loam in the Kansas River valley on the second bench, thereby assured of no more than a flood or two per century. In five years he had bought his partner out.

I was born on that farm, love those soils, love to plow them, love to smell them. But I have wondered why that grandfather, when the grass had been so good to him, would give up his cattle to farm. I think I know. He had come from the Shenandoah Valley of Virginia. A Virginian! An agrarian! He must have been an unconscious Jeffersonian. He played the role and he played it well for he and his family were well-off when he died in 1925.

As a school board member, he convinced his neighbors that the new school should be completely paid for in the year it was built. It was a fine, well-built school, two rooms for eight grades. My mother and I both went there. How could the community pay such a debt so quickly? I can't speak for the neighbors; I know that Granddad never expanded his income by expanding his acreage, though it was said of him that no matter what he did, things turned out right. I suspect that the explanation can be found in an offhand statement my mother made once. She said that he would lean on his scoop shovel or against the barn for a half hour or more, watching his hogs eat the ear corn or the soaked oats or the boiled potatoes he had raised. As much as his experience was a reflection of the times, it was also a combination of joy, sympathy, art, and love rolled into one and tuned to the demands of his place. Here was the Jeffersonian dream, as imperfect as it was, at its high water mark. The actuality or reality of that dream has been compromised and in decline ever since, and since World War II at dazzling speed.

In fact, now it seems as if the Jeffersonian dream is like what Aldo Leopold once said about conservation, "a bird which flies faster than the shot we aim at it."

The point here is that on the South Dakota ranch ecological determinism is the major factor. The original vegetative structure must stay intact or a steep reduction in carrying capacity will shortly follow the loss of ecological capital. The loss of biotic diversity will be followed by the flow of nutrients down the White River, downward toward the river Jefferson's emissaries opened up — the mighty Missouri. On the Kansas River valley soils, however, historical determinism rules and Jefferson's ideal can be a reality again. Across the ecological mosaic of this continent exists a range between and beyond these two extremes. Each piece of that mosaic will have to be evaluated as to where it falls on that scale.

To David and Ida Eisenhower

On the three acres in Abilene, Kansas, the Eisenhower family grew the following: potatoes, cabbage, tomatoes, onions, radishes, lettuce, sweet corn, beets, peas, beans, celery (only one year), cucumbers, strawberries, and fruit trees (cherry, apple, pear). They had a grapevine and grew hay and field corn for their livestock which included two cows, chickens, hogs, guinea hens, and a horse they used for both buggy and plow. They canned and they stored.

Ike's appreciation for what is described here is likely rooted in his agrarian connection.

April 21, 1939

Johnny and I have just completed a trip to the "Bontoc" region of the Philippines, where tribes, called the Igorotes, still semi-barbaric in culture have, over a period of some three thousand years, developed a system of rice raising that involves the terracing of whole mountain sides. Rice is raised in paddies, or relatively small plots, that must be so constructed as to hold water to a depth of several inches. A typical mountain side, prepared for rice raising, therefore resembles a series of gigantic steps, the outside wall varying in depth from two to twenty feet, with the top perfectly level and about a foot lower than the waterproof retaining wall. The water is brought in by several methods, the first of course being by direct rainfall, which in some seasons of the year is extremely heavy. In certain cases, a spring will empty itself into the top terrace, and an opening in the outside wall of that terrace keeps the water at the desired level, and permits excess water to flow down into the next. This is repeated as long as the water lasts. In other cases, where a swift stream boils down the mountain side, a sufficient amount is merely taken off at each level, and where this fortunate condition exists, every inch of ground is cultivated, and the terraces are crowded together to take full advantage of the abundant water supply. Since many terraces have been constructed on barren, rocky slopes, the topsoil has been brought in, often for a distance of miles, in baskets carried on the head. Often the slopes are incredibly steep, so that it makes the person raised on Kansas' flat prairies extremely tired and fatigued just to watch the Igorotes scampering up and down the mountain side.

Since, in the past, some of the tribes were very warlike (it is the country of the so-called head-hunters), the villages were ordinarily built on small, steep promontories, which could be easily defended. From these villages the people have to go daily to care for the rice, maintain the terraces, regulate the water and so on. In the circumstances just going to and coming from work would completely exhaust the average American and leave him unfit for any productive labor.

In some instances a mountain side may be suited to raising of rice except for lack of water. Where a sizeable stream runs through the valley this problem has been partially solved through the construction of irrigation systems. Since the country is mountainous the streams ordinarily have a considerable fall, or drop per mile, so, by topping the river a sufficient distance upstream from the area to be cultivated, it is possible, of course, to bring the water down in a ditch paralleling the stream to the desired spot. But to carry out this simple idea has involved an amount of labor, all of it performed by hand and with only the crudest of tools, that no other people would even have undertaken. We followed one such ditch for several miles, certainly no less than five. Every foot of it was cut out of solid rock, and often, because of the projecting points. On top of all these difficulties was the additional one of getting across the tributaries cutting into the main stream. Whenever these entered, the ditch had to be carried all the way up to the headwaters of the tributary, adding miles to the required construction.

All in all, a visit to the region leaves one well convinced that the rice terraces of the Bontocs deserve to rank, as they do, with the special wonders of man's accomplishments in this world. Moreover, there is no room left for doubting the archaeologists' contention that the terraces were begun at approximately the time of Moses.

The region is difficult to access. The mountain roads, or tracks, are so narrow that one-way traffic, controlled by gates, is compulsory. It is normal to be riding along a narrow winding shelf road, with hundreds of feet of over-hanging boulders and rocks on one side, and a seemingly bottomless abyss on the other. The roads have steep grades and during wet weather, which we had, the frequent slides across the road render it slippery and exceedingly treacherous. We were blocked at one spot by a land slide that was more than one hun-

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dred feet in length, and as many deep. A huge pine tree, certainly 50-75 years old, was carried down with the slide and sprawled drunkenly across the road. Luckily we were a few minutes behind its occurrence, and so, instead of being tossed over a sheer drop of some two thousand feet, we had merely to back carefully, I don't know how far, until we found a spot that permitted us cautiously and laboriously, but successfully, to turn around. Then we had to travel an extra hundred miles to get out of the mountains.

When I started this letter, I had no idea of including in it such a lengthy and wordy description of our trip. But since I have done so, I'll try to get one or two prints of pictures Johnny took in the region. They should tell you the story much better than I can.

All of us send love and best wishes to you two. Devotedly your son. — *Dwight D. Eisenhower*

Uncle Peewee

Donald McCaig

I don't believe more than a hundred people live in the countryside around Williamsville, Virginia, and there's fewer than a dozen in town. In a community where everybody knows everybody it is easy to see that John Donne had it right: No man is an island. Every man's death diminishes the rest of us.

We buried Uncle Peewee Wednesday. Preachers and the tax man knew him as "Andrew" Stephenson and that's the name he was given 97 years ago. He was "Uncle Peewee" to everyone for miles around, many unrelated to him. There is no way anyone can aspire to unclehood or campaign for the honor. Though old age is part of it, most old people don't ever become a community's Uncle or Aunt. Wisdom is one requirement. A generous spirit is another. An Uncle or Aunt is someone grown men or women wish they could become.

I first met the man 25 years ago when I was 30 and he was 72. Peewee had made the hay stored in my barn and drove down every other day to take a load on his pickup. The bales weighed 50 pounds and they were awkward and the twine cut my fingers. Uncle Peewee was half my size and twice my age. He bucked two bales to my one and when we finished he asked me how much he owed me for my help.

The men Peewee Stephenson learned from and admired as a boy were veterans of the War between the States. They taught him the world they knew and some of the world their fathers had known.

The influenza epidemic of 1918 hurt this community and entire families died within a week. Peewee and his brother Bob took up smoking the new tailormade cigarettes and believed the smoke kept off the germs and saved their lives.

When the first car he ever rode in got up to five miles an hour Uncle Peewee said it felt like he was flying. He tried flying too, once, with one of those barnstormers who took people up for a dollar. Peewee didn't care for it.

Uncle Peewee was a brilliant horseman and rode in jousting tourneys where the horseman gallops breakneck to pierce a small brass ring on the tip of his lance. Uncle Peewee won his last tourney at the age of 76. He was the Knight of Williamsville.

Excepting Sundays, Uncle Peewee worked with his hands every day of his life and though he never got rich, he reared two children, took care of his family, was an elder in the Williamsville church, and owned his own land. He was a horse logger and farmer. He always kept hogs, chickens, horses, cows, and sheep.

Three years ago, in wintertime, 94 years old, he waded the BullPasture river hip deep to check on a new born calf. The calf was alright, but on his return trip, Peewee stepped into a hole and was swept downstream 300 yards until he could crawl out. It took him two hours to get back upstream to where he'd left his pickup. For three days he never came out of doors and we all held our breath. But on the fourth day Uncle Peewee came out to look after his animals.

Two years ago, when his wife Pat got sick, Uncle Peewee cared for her, back and forth to the hospital, and was heartbroken when she died. We feared the blow might be too much for him and perhaps it was.

Every community is a gathering place moving through time and when Uncle Peewee died, we lost what he knew but we never thought to ask him about. His humor leavened us. We lost that too. With the death of our last 19th century man, Williamsville has moved entirely into the shiny new 20th century and the ex-confederates Peewee knew so well have slipped farther back into the darkness.

At the end of his life he did not spend many weeks in the hospital and nursing home but they were more weeks than he wished to spend there. Uncle Peewee wanted to come home. Now he is home.

Terry Evans, *Howard Taliferro and his hogs, and Jean and Steve Anderson, Matfield Green, Kansas, 1996.*

A farm is a very poor place to earn a living in the ordinary meaning of that phrase, and a very rich and splendid place to earn a living in every other meaning of that phrase.

I mean in the growing, so to speak, of ideas, sensations, intuitions, feelings, sympathies, and delight in action, all of those things that alone justify work and money.

—Charles Allen Smart

A Post Script to The Hog Wars

Maurice Telleen

No sooner had Gene Logsdon read "The Hog Wars" in the last issue of *The Land Report* than he was posting a letter to me stating that it was OK but I had overlooked one of the most compelling concerns about the huge confinement lots ... namely disease control. Not just for the pigs but for us, the consumers of pork.

Sure enough, about the time it was published, the *Des Moines Register* carried a front page story that was a 'good news-bad news' type of story about this very subject. The bad news was that "44% of the hogs produced by large operations in such states as North Carolina and Georgia are contaminated with salmonella bacteria, according to the data gathered by the USDA." The good news was that the hogs produced in large operations (more than 7500 head) in the midwest *only* had an incidence of 24 percent.

The differences between the two regions carry through with the same pattern in somewhat smaller operations (see chart). The message was plain. Raising hogs should be left up to us Yankees. Ours are only half as likely to make you sick.

Numerous experts were quoted. An economist from the University of Illinois said, "the implication would be toward smaller producers and toward a shift in competitiveness back toward the midwest." Well, yes. It would seem to suggest that.

Another expert, this one a USDA veterinary epidemiologist, said it could be related to climate. "Maybe in the warmer climate of the southeast, salmonella bacteria are more apt to survive than in the midwest." That, too, would seem to make sense. That may also be the reason that more thermal underwear is worn in Iowa and Minnesota than in North Carolina and Georgia. It isn't the cold so much as the wind chill, and it isn't the chill factor, or even the humidity so much as the fear of salmonella. Anybody knows that.

A couple of experts also were quoted. They had impressive credentials and were equally adept at pointing out the obvious. I was impressed but wanted a second opinion.

So I went up the hill to my next door neighbor, Russ Bruns, and discussed these things with him. He actually makes a living by working at the sale barn a couple days a week, patch farming a few little farms and acreages in the neighborhood with John Deeres that are so old they still go 'pop-pop-pop,' sells a lot of hay to horse people one pickup load at a time all winter long, markets maybe 150 hogs a year and 25-30 steers, can wire a house, build fence, and nail two boards together.

He also does my chores when I'm gone and borrows my trailers frequently, the stock trailer on the average of 2.6 times per month and the flatbed .7 times a month. (Neither he nor I have any use for anyone who doesn't keep good records. You can't make it in this day and age with unreliable data.) I once took those trailer figures to an expert on borrowing stuff at Wartburg College here in Waverly for analysis. He knew the situation. He needed only to glance at them and quick as a flash he said, "The difference is accounted for by the sale barn connection—animals jump off of flatbeds." Of course it was easy for him. This was his area of expertise.

Back to Russ. He also pays income tax but doesn't brag about it, has an IRA and a mutual fund or two, and he and Nora have raised three good kids. None of them has ever been in jail, nor are they walking around "in search of themselves." And he finds time to play with his grandchildren. Now, if that doesn't qualify him as an expert I'd like to know what it takes.

Russ read the article over, studied those figures, and looked thoughtful. He said he hadn't spent any serious time in Georgia but that he tended to agree that the fear of salmonella was the chief reason we wear long-johns for about four months out of the year.

But he was troubled by the chart. He pointed out that "fewer than 1,000 head was a rather broad category." He would have preferred to see it carried down to 200 or less; 201-500, and 501-999. I would have too, but maybe you aren't a pork producer with less than a thousand. "Yeah," he said, "maybe that's it."

After another couple minutes of studying the data he was ready to interpret it.

He said, "Anybody knows that when your kids start school they drag every bug their classmates are afflicted with home and share it with their little brothers and sisters. And anybody knows that people of all ages tend to be healthier in the autumn because they have been out in God's own sunshine all summer, not cooped up in some climate-controlled house. That is true, I imagine, north or south, east or west. And while salmonella isn't exactly the Bubonic Plague, the same ground rules apply. Bugs jump from person to person, from rat to person, from rat to rat, and—I reckon—from people to

rat, but in that case nobody seems to give a damn except, maybe, other rats."

Long pause. I knew he wasn't through by a long shot.

"Small pox probably killed more Indians than Winchesters. Do you know that in London, England, alone over 150,000 people died of Bubonic plague, and it didn't take but a few years? It was in the early sixteen hundreds. In the days of sailing ships, entire crews would share some affliction and die. A ship was sort of a floating confinement building."

I was beginning to think he would never shut up. So I said, "Russ, I didn't come up here to discuss the Middle Ages or to talk of sailing ships and sealing wax, we were talking about the hog business."

"Yeah, well, think about this. Is a little pig likely to be healthier and happier running around on a patch of alfalfa with his mama or down in the hold of a ship in an environment the creator certainly didn't have in mind for any living creature ... other than bacteria and bugs?"

"But Russ, these things are not the hold of a sailing ship. They have sensors to monitor the gases to detect ammonia and hydrogen sulfide, and the people wear breathing masks, and there are state-of-the-art forced ventilation systems in place. And they have elaborate systems to handle the waste. I mean they are *nice*. Several even fly old glory out in front of their buildings—like, you know, an Army post or a school or court house."

"Hold it, right there, neighbor. If any city sewage system worked as badly as many of these do, everyone would move out of town. Except the lawyers—they would hang around to file more suits. It would be a ghost town. Like those ramshackle old mining towns in the west.

"Now, as for manure, it has gotten a bad rap. It is a lot like money. Spread around and used in moderation it is both a blessing and a boon to mankind. Get too much of either in any one place and you got trouble. I don't know why people can't see money and manure as kissing kin—they bear a strong family resemblance to one another.

"I suppose you are going to tell me that land is too high priced to raise hogs on. Personally, I don't think it is. Right now, *anyplace* is too high priced to raise hogs on. But you don't have to raise them on pasture. They have these hoop houses and deep bedding systems that the Scandinavians (your people, Maury) use to good effect. Of course it is hard to raise 10,000 pigs in hoop houses or in A-frames, but who was the first turkey who gobbled that all the pigs had to be raised by a relative handful of people—half of them indentured servants to large corporations. Of course there would be a lot more labor involved, but needing ten, or twenty times as many part time producers, spread around, isn't such a bad deal, is it? Is it?"

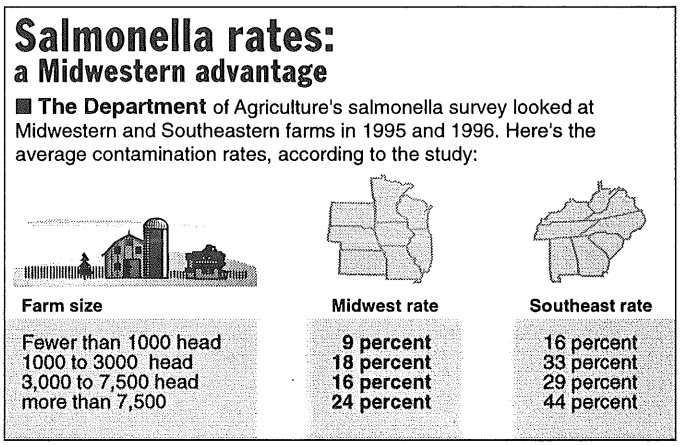
"No, but it doesn't sound very—well—efficient."

I cannot quote his response. "Efficient" was not the right word to use. After the unquotable blowoff, he wound up with "Efficient for who? For some distant stock holder who eats lobster for breakfast? Efficient for the processor? Efficient for who? And how about 'safe'—for the consumer. Cheap food is, I know, our official national policy and has been for years. That is so people can blow most of their money on other stuff and to enable agriculture to 'do it's share' for our trade balance and the global economy—which is another bunch of crap. By the way, did you know that the Crusaders brought the Bubonic Plague to Europe? Yeah, wasn't that a dandy little present for them to lug home. Yes sir, they did. Now, this global economy is sort of like the old time religion gone wild too. Did you know... ."

"Russ, I gotta go."

As I climbed into my pickup he said, "By the way, do you need your stock trailer tomorrow? I need to haul a steer and a couple of hogs to the locker."

"No, help yourself, just don't flood the market. It is in enough trouble the way it is."



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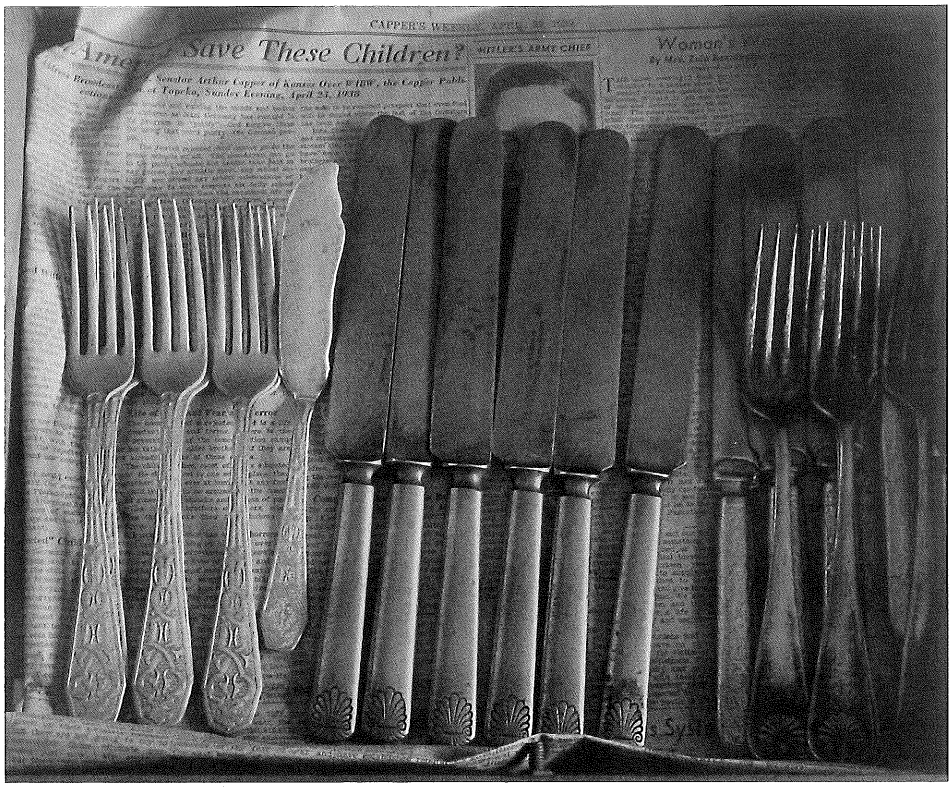

Above: Wright Morris, *Drawer with Silverware, Home Place, Near Norfolk, Nebraska, 1947*

Opposite Page: Paula Chamlee, *Creitz Farm, Adrian, Texas, 1995*

When I walk over good land and crops ruined by droughts and floods, when I feel the heat of the sun, and the cold from beyond the stars,

I feel something a good deal larger than ourselves, something without any interest in us, something in whose presence we simply cannot go on being hogs, cowards, and fools, and survive.

—Charles Allen Smart

There is also a society of trees, which is certainly more important to human society, and is more important to me personally, than the gracious society of flowers. When your old trees, your old friends, are dying, and being hewn into firewood, not only a reasonable attention to the first principles of agriculture, but also an inner hunger, a psychological necessity, demands their replacement.

They cannot really be replaced, within a century or two, but as any old person, and especially any old person without children and grandchildren, will tell you,

a beginning
is already something.

—Charles Allen Smart

At The Land

The Land Institute Makes History

Two university libraries and the Kansas Historical Society requested the papers of The Land Institute. We have chosen the Kansas Historical Society as the best repository. It seemed logical to keep these materials in Kansas in an institution with excellent staff and new facilities. Boxes of materials have already made their way there and more will be added from time to time. When cataloged and organized, they will be available to researchers interested in our origins, ideas and overall development.

NSA Research

We have had working meetings with many of our NSA Advisors. Options and opportunities for pushing the research onto a larger stage were explored when three Advisors participated in a membership of ten that included funders and a media representative. We met with six Advisors at the University of Georgia to discuss the future of NSA and to explore the connections between their work and ours. We visited Stephen Jones, breeder of perennial wheat at Washington State University-Pullman and will soon acquire seed from him for our own experiments. Steve is interested in collaborating with us and claims a spark for his original interest in perennial breeding was his exposure to Land Institute ideas as early as 1980. Six Advisors led discussions on various science topics and spent a day to two last summer in our workshop with Graduate Research Fellows. Kendall Lamkey, agronomist at USDA-ARS, traveled with us to visit the Green Revolution research site in Mexico (CIMMYT). The Advisory Team is increasingly a working body and we are grateful for the gift of expertise its members make to our work. Advisor John Doran was instrumental in our participation in a soil science meeting he led in Greece that resulted in new interest in Natural Systems Agriculture from scientists of Greece, England, Austria, Germany, France, Spain and Canada. Advisor Peter Hartel visited and became so interested in soil work Marty Bender was doing that Peter spent the day taking soil samples for analysis and is sending back results important to our work.

Outreach to a variety of other institutions and Advisors included numerous meetings with researchers to expand our exposure and to build a constituency, and with representatives of various major foundations to develop ideas to finance a major research program. A teaching engagement in England was combined with other meetings there: the Queen's biologist, the head of the Royal Botanic Garden-Kew, researchers at a grassland research experiment station working on intercropping wheat with legumes, and professors who work on agriculture in Africa and Asia.

Alice Sutton, a former employee, returned in a new capacity as greenhouse assistant to David Van Tassel. Our receptionist, Laura Underwood, helped in the greenhouse when the work timing became critical. Our greenhouse is busy. David has a busy schedule of research and will report results following the growing season. David takes the largest responsibility for the Fellows program and has organized the July Fellows Workshop.

NSA—Fellows Program

In addition to renewing our research fellowship grants to the first five Fellows from last year, we have added eight new Fellows for a total of thirteen. All participated in the Fellows Workshop in July. Fellows submitted proposals to conduct research projects at the master or doctoral level on university campuses; about half are working with professors who are members of our Natural Systems Agriculture Advisory Team. Each project fits the matrix of work planned to bring NSA to fruition. The eight days spent with us at Matfield Green for seminars with staff and with visiting scientists was our opportunity to expose the graduate students to the thought and scholarship that has influenced the work of The Land Institute. The workshop allowed us to get to know the Fellows personally, learn from their insights, and introduce them to the staff, projects, and facilities of The Land Institute. The interaction among speakers, fellows, and people of The Land Institute serves to enlarge and strengthen a still-modest but growing network of Natural Systems Agriculture researchers, to spark new ideas and ways of thinking, new angles from which to approach the scientific research and ethics.

Sunshine Farm

Farm manager Jack Worman retired this winter with a celebratory dinner and our warm wishes. An era rich with yarns and a one-of-a-kind Kansan has passed!

Marty Bender leads the way in our seventh field season of a ten-year experiment. Two growing seasons beyond this one (through 2002) will complete the second five-year crop rotation. Marty does not need more data on the draft animal and chicken experiments, so 1998 was their last year. This is the first year we have employed a local farmer on an as-needed contract basis to farm most of the plots. Our new man, Charlie Melander, has farmed in the Salina region for many years and uses few chemicals in his own operations (and none in our fields). His equipment is up to date and he makes his living farming, so he must be savvy in the business sense. To accommodate his equipment, we widened our crop strips, maintaining the same rotation scheme. There is utility in this change beyond mere accommodation—we will also be testing a more farmer-ready regime while holding to the same principles and goals of the ten-year experiment. Charlie's work will allow an energetic comparison of farming scale with our use of small field implements and narrow crop strips in previous years.

Marty has three Sunshine Farm papers accepted for publication, two in review, and four in various stages of progress.

Above: Terry Evans,
Spring, Saline County,
Kansas, February 1991

Rural Community Studies

Bev Worster, Director of Education for our Rural Community Studies, is really busy now! The Matfield Green Consortium for Place-Based Education, formed under Bev's leadership two years ago, received a funding commitment in March from the Rural Challenge for $518,965 over three years. Three central Kansas school districts are members: Baldwin, Chase County, and Flinthills. Over 80 percent of the grant monies will go to the schools for new programs developed in this grant proposal.

School districts of the Consortium will implement programs to expand understanding of both human and ecological communities. The proposed curricula will feature the concept of sustainability. Students will learn of the uniqueness of their places. They will relate various school subjects to their home place—the school, its community, its natural and physical place, and its place in the larger world. Interdisciplinary learning and experiential learning are planned, since students learn in various ways beyond books and blackboards. Funding will also support workshops for teachers and additional teaching materials.

Bev has already contributed to in-service teacher planning sessions and organized a week-long workshop in June with co-sponsor Emporia State University, which offered optional college credit. "The Tallgrass Prairie: Reading the Landscape of Home" was attended by 24 people including 19 teachers from Consortium schools. The day after, Bev led 20 teachers, administrators, and community members from the Consortium districts in a curriculum planning session that was joined by three university observers.

Prairie Festival

A late switch of program titles became necessary and Prairie Festival 1999 featured "The Agrarian Mind in an Industrial World—The Industrial Mind in an Agrarian World," with a fine cast of characters that ranged (alphabetically) from Wendell Berry to Ann Zimmerman. More than 350 people participated in the weekend, and it was the first in awhile in which we missed extreme Kansas thunderstorms.

Public Notices

A chapter on "Natural Systems Agriculture" by Jon Piper appeared in *Biodiversity in Agroecosystems*, Wanda Collins and Calvin Qualset. A major article by Scott Russell Sanders, "Lessons from The Land Institute," appeared in the March *Audubon Magazine*. Hugh Sidey of *Time* mentioned us in "America's Last, Great Factory for Decency," *Progressive Farmer*.

Filming at The Land Institute included *Lost Landscape* by a freelance group. An appealing film *The Living Land* features four segments on food including The Land Institute, John Jeavons, chef Alice Waters of Chez Panisse, and organic farmer Mas Masumoto. We were part of a PBS Kansas program *Farming the Wheat State*.

Wes Jackson taught one week of a three-week course on biotechnology at Schumacher College in Devon, England. Presentations included participation in a symposium of the National Academy of Sciences meeting at the University of California at Irvine on "Plants & Population: Is There Time?" Two presentations on agriculture were made to foundation boards, and we participated in a panel at the Environmental Grantmakers annual retreat. We made presentations in meetings at Columbia University, Kansas State, Dartmouth, University of Missouri—Kansas City, and Union College. Media attention included a local week-long radio call-in program assignment and numerous interviews with AM and FM stations across the country.

About the Authors...

Wes Jackson

In this issue, as in the last, we are featuring articles by **Wendell Berry**, **David Kline**, and **Maury Telleen**, all farmers, all unapologetic agrarians.

Dan Imhoff is a free lance writer who lives in Northern California with his wife and two small children. They have recently come to a piece of land they are learning to know.

Mary Mackey is a poet and author of several novels. She is a professor at California State University at Sacramento.

Don McCaig likes to write books about dogs and other living things all of which are extraordinarily good tales. He lives on a 280-acre farm in Williamsville, Virginia, with his wife Anne and five border collies.

Charles Allen Smart was born in Cleveland in November 1904; his family moved to Long Island when he was about 12. He died in Chillicothe, Ohio, in March 1967. His books are: *New England Holiday* (novel, 1931); *The Brass Cannon* (novel, 1933); *RFD* (memoir, 1938); *Wild Geese and How to Chase Them* (philosophy, 1941); *Sassafras Hill* (novel, 1947); *Rosscommon* (novel, 1948); *The Green Adventure* (play, 1954); *At Home in Mexico* (essays, 1957); *Viva Juárez!* (biography, 1963); *The Long Watch* (autobiography, 1968); and *Letter to a Sunday Writer* (essays, 1969).

About the photographers...

Terry Evans

In this issue, as in the preceding one, we feature the photography work of **Paula Chamlee**, **Greg Conniff**, **Scott Jost**, and **Terry Evans** whose sensibilities are about care of land and people together.

We are pleased to add the work of **Solomon Butcher** and **Wright Morris**. Butcher photographed Custer County, Nebraska, from settlement with sod houses to later white picket fenced yards, with an eye for the details of the domestication of the prairie. Morris also photographed Nebraska, but later in the 1940's. His work is an early elegy for rural life on the prairie.

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from Dorothy F. McNeil

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from Gretchen DeVries

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Lucy M. & E. Leonidas Smith, Jr.

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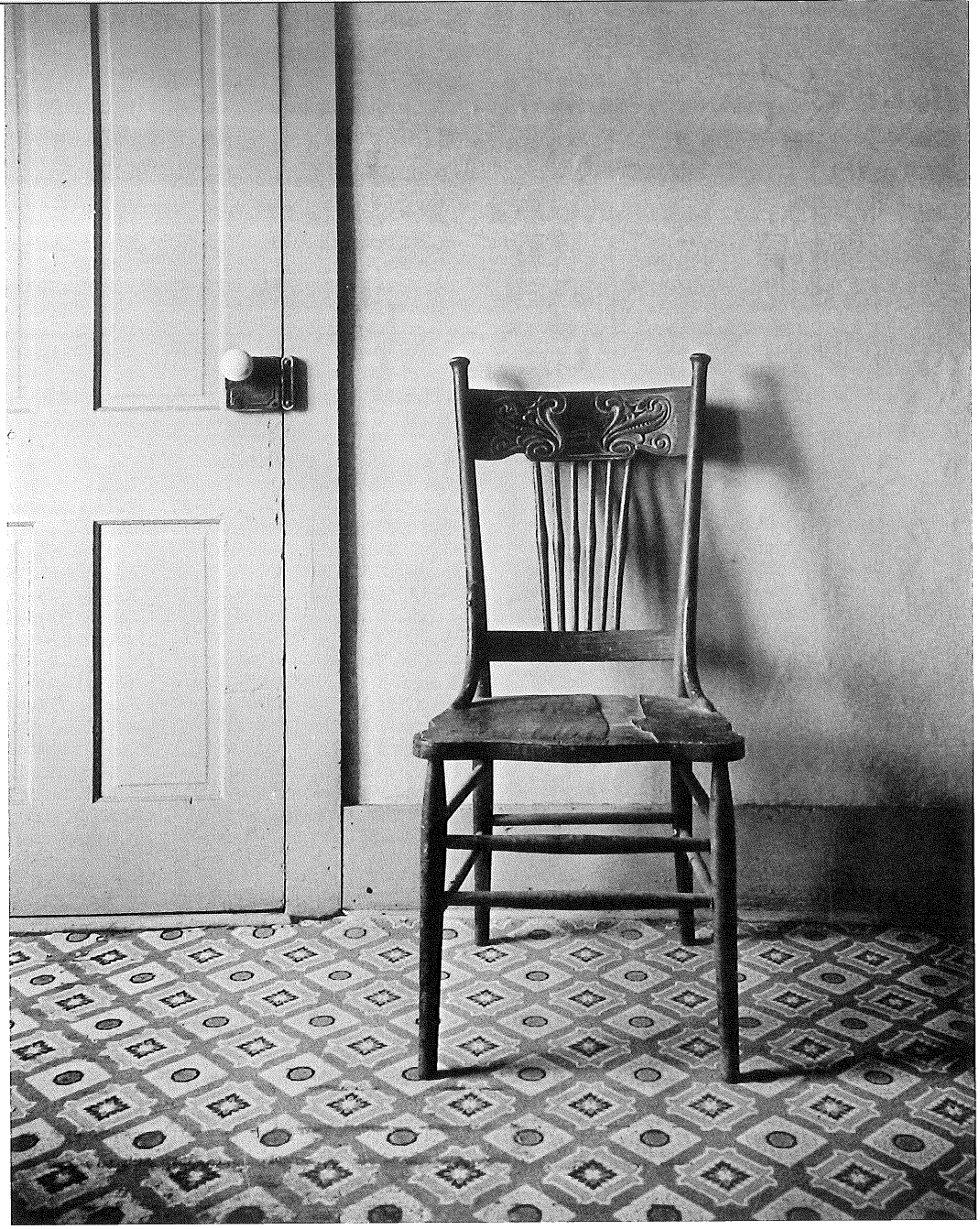

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