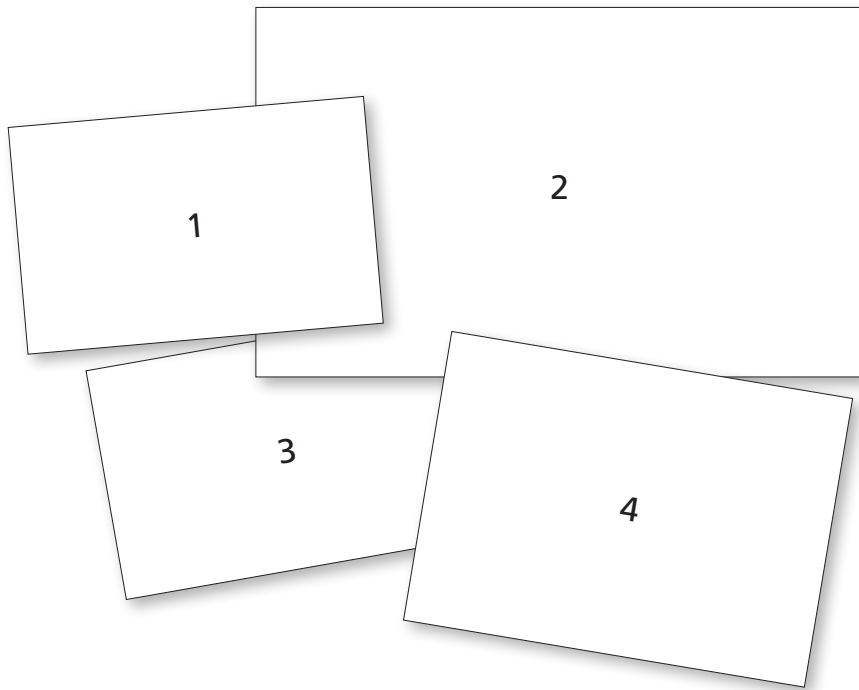




PLANT YOURSELF IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC LANDSCAPE STUDY OF FARMING AND FARMERS IN COLUMBIA COUNTY, NEW YORK



MARTIN VAN BUREN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE
SPECIAL ETHNOGRAPHIC REPORT



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1. Members of the Birney family and helpers haying at Lindenwald, c. 1917-1922 (Martin Van Buren NHS/de Prosse collection)
2. 1805 map by William Dickie, "A survey of the lands of John and William Van Ness...on the West Side of the Albany Road in Kinderhook" (Martin Van Buren NHS)
3. One of the Lindenwald fields during Ray Meyer's ownership, c. 1960s or 1970s (Permission of Robert and Dorothy Van Alstyne with assistance from Patricia Van Alstyne)
4. Volunteer and paid workers in Roxbury Farm Field, 2010 (Photo by Cathy Stanton)

PLANT YOURSELF IN MY NEIGHBORHOOD: An Ethnographic Landscape Study of Farming and Farmers in Columbia County, New York

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Prepared under cooperative agreement with
University of Massachusetts – Amherst

**Martin Van Buren National Historic Site
Special Ethnographic Report**

**Northeast Region Ethnography Program
National Park Service
Boston, MA**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was designed to provide Martin Van Buren NHS with information about farming as a way of life in the Lindenwald neighborhood and its environs over time. In addition to creating an ethnohistorical context for understanding the mid-nineteenth century farming activities of Martin Van Buren, the study was also intended to provide insight into contemporary Columbia County agriculture, as a way of supporting the park's expanded management focus on farming. Building on previous scholarship that examines Martin Van Buren's post-Presidential farming activities in relation to his political life and beliefs, the study extends existing knowledge in several ways:

- It approaches farming as a *cultural* activity—that is, one shaped by the specific ethnic, familial, class, and other identities of farmers, and one that, despite a wide range of variation in method and approach, constitutes a distinct way of life.
- It expands the geographical context for understanding farming at Lindenwald by examining it in relation to neighboring properties and the county as a whole.
- It provides additional depth for periods other than the Van Buren era that is the park's central focus.
- It considers nineteenth and twentieth century farming in relation to activities such as pastoral tourism, land conservation movements, and historic preservation.
- It provides much greater depth than previous studies for understanding how the farming of the Lindenwald fields fits within the contemporary agricultural sector of Columbia County, by showing how current debates and trends reflect long-standing tensions and cycles within American agriculture.

Key Findings:

- Farming is an enormously dynamic activity, a fact that may be in tension with nostalgic or romanticized views of rural life held by urbanites, suburbanites, and non-farmers, and potentially also with preservationist missions focused on interpreting a single specific time period.
- There is no simple, one-to-one correspondence between Martin Van Buren's approach to farming and any single example from today's industrial agriculture practitioners or with local food, sustainable agriculture, biodynamic, organic,

and other movements and practices. Like all farmers, Van Buren forged his own combination of innovation and conservatism, adopting some aspects of early nineteenth century reform aimed at regenerating the northeastern farm economy through refertilization practices, but also demonstrating knowledge of much more traditional Dutch farming practices and some of the caution typical of farmers of his background and generation.

- Current debates and trends reflect tensions and cycles within American agriculture which are extensions of and reactions to processes whose histories can be traced in the area over a long span of time. Although the current interest in local food and Community Supported Agriculture is not an exact parallel to pre-industrial food systems, this movement does seek to reconnect to many aspects of those systems—in particular, the reintegration of more local and regional systems of food production, consumption, and exchange—in ways strikingly reminiscent of the period before the mid-twentieth century. Interpreting these questions and processes offers opportunities not only to connect with Martin Van Buren’s responses to them but also to present today’s farming at the site as part of a very long civic debate over the role of farming in a market economy. The park is well positioned to host and participate in contemporary civic dialogue about these topics.

Key Recommendations:

- The park should develop and articulate a clear vision for its role(s) in relation to the history and present-day practice of farming at Lindenwald and in Columbia County.
- If the park is to forge meaningful, lasting relationships with working farmers, it must continually take into consideration the dynamic, market-oriented realities of farming as a way of life.
- In developing programming and activities relating to farming, the park should begin by considering the broader political, economic, and social issues and questions linked with Martin Van Buren’s farming activities, as a way of creating a permeable boundary between past and present issues and of countering visitors’ tendency to view “old time” farming with nostalgic eyes.

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Cathy Stanton
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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE OF THIS STUDY

Background

In 1841, following defeat in his Presidential reelection bid, Martin Van Buren returned to his home town of Kinderhook, New York and took up farming at an old Dutch farm he had purchased three years earlier. He renamed the property “Lindenwald,” a reference to the linden trees growing there, and declared himself happy to be “a farmer in my native town.”¹ Although many prominent politicians of the period, including George Washington and Van Buren’s own hero Thomas Jefferson, had followed this pattern of becoming “gentleman farmers” in their post-Presidential lives, this was far from a simple retreat into pastoral peace and quiet for Van Buren. For one thing, he continued to be heavily involved in national politics, actively vying for the Presidency in two more federal elections and attempting to shape the course of the nation in the contentious antebellum years. For another, farming itself was—and is—anything but apolitical.

Recent scholarship and public activism shows that agriculture can be very much a political act, filled with questions about the limits and responsibilities of land ownership, the role of government in a market society and of markets in a democracy, the effects of technological innovation, the changing nature of labor, and the expression of a host of different values, including foundational American notions about autonomy and self-determination. The farming activities of Martin Van Buren, his neighbors, and contemporaries in the heightened political atmosphere of the 1840s, 1850s, and 1860s intersected with all of those questions to varying degrees, making the 220 acres of farmland at Lindenwald part and parcel of the story of Van Buren’s political career and turbulent times. But those questions also radiate out in the direction of both past and present, connecting to questions about land ownership, sustenance, and community identity from the period of European arrival in the Hudson Valley to the present day.

In recent years, Martin Van Buren National Historic Site (NHS) has worked to incorporate Van Buren’s post-Presidential years more fully into the park’s interpretation, a shift that has been facilitated not only by new scholarly studies but also by the recent expansion of the park boundary to include the lands cultivated by Van Buren. With the March 2009 legislation authorizing the expansion, the park is more fully able to tell

¹The quote is from Van Buren’s will, housed at the Columbia County Courthouse in Hudson, New York.

the story of Van Buren as a farmer and to interpret how he and other farmers in the still-mostly-agricultural society of mid-nineteenth-century America understood their world. Of equal importance with the interpretive shift is the way that the expanded park boundary repositions Martin Van Buren NHS as part of the contemporary working landscape of agriculture in Columbia County, through its developing relationship with the large biodynamic farm currently working the fields surrounding the Lindenwald mansion. The move toward preserving the farmland and interpreting Van Buren as a farmer opens up new areas of inquiry that the park has been working to address through a series of commissioned studies, of which this is the most recent.

Why an Ethnographic Landscape Study?

This study differs from previous work on farming at Lindenwald in that it takes an *ethnographic* approach—that is, it uses anthropological methods and perspectives in order to situate the farming practices used at Lindenwald within a set of contexts relating to cultural identities and values. The project was conducted under the auspices of the National Park Service’s Ethnography Program, which was created to help parks understand particular groups of people—often ethnic or occupational—who have long-standing “traditional” associations with park resources that are part of their sense of belonging and their shared understanding of themselves as a group.² The scholarship of recent decades has demonstrated that such collective identities are continually constructed, contested, and reshaped rather than being static categories or characteristics simply handed down intact from the past.³ Farming is particularly difficult to characterize,

² The Park Service defines “traditional association” as enduring for at least two generations (approximately 40 years), predating the establishment of the park, and being expressed through the practices, values, beliefs, and sense of identity of a coherent group or people. Park resources that may be important to traditionally-associated peoples may include all forms and types of naturally-occurring and human-modified or constructed geographical features, landscapes, ecosystems, species, places, structures and objects. Information gathered through Ethnography Program studies is used to inform park management and interpretation, and to assist park managers to consult with the appropriate peoples and groups when particular resources are the subject of management considerations and decision-making. See NPS Management Policies, Chapter 5.3.5.3, “Ethnographic Resources.”

³ For some influential work on the construction of cultural and ethnic identity, see Fredrick Barth, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference* (Boston: Little Brown and Company, 1969), James Clifford, *The Predicament of Culture: Twentieth Century Ethnography, Literature, and Art* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988) and *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), and Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

as discussed in a later section of this chapter. It has also continually changed in response to markets, consumer trends, policies, and climate, making it anything but a unitary “way of life” practiced by a cohesive community of people. But given that the fields around Lindenwald have been farmed continuously for many centuries, and that agriculture remains an important part of Columbia County’s economic life and the image that it presents to the world, it is very appropriate to approach farming as a cultural practice with a very long history in this place and to investigate it ethnographically. The report therefore provides the park with information about the development of farms and farming in the immediate neighborhood, the county, and the region, placing the specific histories of Martin Van Buren and Lindenwald in a broader context. This expanded context goes beyond the changes to the physical landscape that are typically the focus of cultural landscape studies, and investigates the ideas and concepts that people in the area have brought to their farms and farming practices over a long span of time. The specific methods and research design used in the study will be discussed in a later section of this chapter; the remainder of this section will show how the study builds on what has previously been learned about farming at Lindenwald, and what this kind of anthropological perspective adds to our understanding of Martin Van Buren as a farmer and politician.

In a general sense, the study draws on a number of bodies of scholarly literature, particularly agricultural and environmental history, studies of consumption and material culture, and food studies, a new and rapidly growing field that has emerged in tandem with consumers’ and growers’ own concerns and activism over the past decade.⁴ Work

⁴Some representative works in environmental and agricultural history that have influenced this study, even if they do not all appear directly among its citations, are: William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), R. Douglas Hurt, *Problems of Plenty: The American Farmer in the Twentieth Century* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2002), Sally McMurry, *Transforming Rural Life: Dairying Families and Agricultural Change, 1820-1885* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), and Ted Steinberg, *Down to Earth: Nature’s Role in American History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008).

The emerging field of food studies dates from the 1980s and 1990s; previous work that considered food in a scholarly way was largely focused either on policy (particularly relating to issues of development and hunger) or its relationship to ethnic culture. The more recent “deconstructive” literature is a multi-disciplinary one that overlaps substantially with “trade” or popular works. Some important forerunners in the field are Warren Belasco, *Appetite for Change: How the Counterculture Took on the Food Industry* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1993 [1989]), Harvey Levenstein, *Paradox of Plenty: A Social History of Eating in Modern America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), and Sidney Mintz, *Sweetness and Power: The Place of Sugar in Modern History* (New York: Viking, 1985). Examples from the more journalistic and activist side of this literature are surveyed briefly in Chapter Eight.

in these fields since the 1980s provides a foundation for reevaluating modern and industrialized agriculture as a set of processes shaped by many competing and sometimes contradictory factors: the search for food security and abundance, changing consumer tastes (often linked with social class and geographic or social mobility), the search for profitability in food production (ranging from colonial mercantilism to present-day global and corporate capitalism), technological innovation, debates over the role of the state in agriculture and public health, changing definitions of health itself, and ideologies of progress, individualism, and independence. Recent work on these topics is essentially deconstructive: that is, it questions previously taken-for-granted assumptions about the food systems that have become dominant in contemporary American and other modern societies. In many ways, the central narrative framework for this report is based on the contested, complex, uneven emergence and growth of those systems. It also shows that the current widespread critiques and development of “alternatives” (such as “eat local” campaigns) are only the most recent in a long series of efforts, beginning in the early nineteenth century, to strengthen or revitalize local and regional food production in the northeastern U.S. and to keep farms viable and farmers on the land.

In a much more specific sense, the study builds on the work of three previous research projects focusing on farming at Lindenwald in particular. The earliest of these was by historian Reeve Huston, who completed a Special History Study for the park in 2002 and subsequently published a detailed article about Martin Van Buren’s post-Presidential career as a “gentleman farmer” (Huston 2004). Huston discusses the meanings of farming in the young American republic, the emergence of an agricultural reform movement in the 1830s, and the roles and relationships among prosperous landowners like Van Buren, their tenants, and wage laborers. Huston’s work is particularly useful in providing specific names of workers and neighbors, who could then be investigated more thoroughly by exploring genealogies, census records, and other sources.

Llrena Searle’s *A Farmer in his Native Town : Cultural Landscape Report for the Martin Van Buren Farmland* (2004) builds on the baseline of Huston’s research. This excellent Cultural Landscape Report expands the body of data about property owners

For thorough surveys of the recent anthropological literature on food, see the series of *Annual Review of Anthropology* articles from the past decade: “The Anthropology of Food and Eating” (2002, Vol. 31, pp. 99-119, edited by Sidney Mintz and Christine Du Bois), “Food and Memory” (2006, Vol. 35, pp. 361-78, edited by Jon D. Holtzman), “Food and Globalization” (2006, Vol. 35, pp. 35-57, edited by Lynne Phillips), and “Food and the Senses” (2010, Vol. 39, pp. 209-223, edited by David E. Sutton). Given the rapid pace at which the scholarly study of food is developing, the earliest of these is already somewhat out of date.

and workers, the crops and other products they produced, agricultural trends, and the reshaping of the physical landscape of the Lindenwald property over time. A strength of the study is its meticulous attention to specific crops and landscape features from the early nineteenth century to the present. The CLR also helps to bring into visibility some of Van Buren's tenants and hired hands. The report discusses farming practices at Lindenwald within the context of regional and national trends in different time periods. The Van Buren period receives the strongest emphasis here, but there is much valuable data about other owners and times as well.

Searle states that "little evidence has survived of agricultural and landscape-related practices for...other periods" besides that of Van Buren's ownership (2004:3). While that seems largely true as far as the Lindenwald lands themselves are concerned, there is considerable additional evidence about neighboring farms, farmers, and farm practices that can help us to contextualize agriculture at Lindenwald more fully, and there has also been more to be discovered about some of the specific families and individuals involved in farming at Lindenwald. This Ethnographic Landscape Study has reframed the inquiry somewhat so that the network of family and ethnic relationships, ideas about economic life, and other "intangible" elements associated with this farm come more fully into view. In essence, it shifts the focus from landscape—the core concern for a Cultural Landscape Report—to people, culture, identity, and meaning-making, which are the core concerns of anthropology.

One additional work that contributed extensively to the knowledge base for the current research is the park's 2006 Historic Resource Study, *A Return to His Native Town: Martin Van Buren's Life at Lindenwald, 1839-1862* (Richards et al. 2006). This study provides additional context for understanding Van Buren and his household within the changing agricultural and political landscapes of early to mid-nineteenth-century New York State. It also addresses gendered relationships within Lindenwald's household economy and those of comparable antebellum estates.

Three of the most important local histories of the late nineteenth, early twentieth, and late twentieth centuries—Franklin Ellis's 1978 *History of Columbia County*, Edward Collier's 1914 *A History of Old Kinderhook*, and Ralph Duck's 1985 *Kinderhook and Its People, 1914 to 1984*, respectively—become much more useable when linked to this kind of specific inquiry about known individuals and families with some connection to Lindenwald, local farming, or the changing agricultural economy of the area in different periods. Additional locally-focused works offering similar fine-grained context or

information were Martin Bruegel's detailed study of the mid-Hudson Valley's transition into a market economy in the early nineteenth century, *Farm, Shop, Landing: The Rise of a Market Society in the Hudson Valley, 1780-1860* (2002), Patricia West's work on Irish domestic servants (1992), and park neighbor Robert Worsfold's self-published history of his own farm (2009), which provides valuable additional documentation on a property that was once part of the same farm as Lindenwald.

The present study builds on these existing works in the following ways:

- It works to *illuminate the cultural contexts* for farming at Lindenwald and in Columbia County, as noted above.
- It *expands the geographical context* for farming at Lindenwald by examining it in relation to neighboring properties and Columbia County as a whole. Searle explored the specific case of Lindenwald in great detail and set it within a very broad national context; this report works to bridge some of the gaps between the micro and macro levels by focusing on case studies of nearby farms and families and relevant county-wide information.
- It *provides additional depth for periods other than the Van Buren era* that is the park's central focus. Although this study, like Searle's, goes well beyond Van Buren, the goal is always to use earlier and later material to illuminate processes, trends, places, and ideas that are linked to the park's core interpretive mandate.
- It seeks to provide much greater depth for understanding where the farming of the Lindenwald fields fits within the *contemporary* agricultural sector of Columbia County. It works to show how current debates and trends (for example, farm tourism, the local food movement, and the emergence of land trusts) reflect long-standing tensions and cycles within American agriculture which are both extensions of and reactions to processes whose histories can be traced in the area over a long span of time. The report seeks to connect these kinds of developments with the mid-nineteenth century "period of significance" at the park by emphasizing the dynamic qualities of this—or any other—agricultural landscape. In essence, it frames the emergence of a market-oriented and industrialized American society as a process whose consequences (for democracy as well as for farming) we are still coming to understand and to grapple with.⁵

⁵ On understanding places and place-making as dynamic processes, see, for example, Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2004) or Steven Feld and Keith Basso, eds., *Senses of Place* (Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press, 1996).

Challenges and Opportunities for Farm/Historic Site Relationships

To a large extent, this Ethnographic Landscape Study has been prompted by the need for administrators and staff at Martin Van Buren NHS to more fully understand the park's emerging role as preserver, interpreter, and (to some extent) participant in Columbia County's working agricultural landscape. This section of the chapter will set out some of the "real-world" concerns emerging from that role, and will show how this report fits into potential strategies for managing it.

There are several **types of potential synergy between historic sites and working farms:**

- indirect synergy
- direct synergy
- implied synergy

Because farming was such a widespread way of life in America until well into the twentieth century, many—perhaps most—historic sites have an *indirect synergy* with farms and farmers, even if that is not their original mission. For example, Revolutionary and Civil War battles very often took place in farmers' fields, so preserving those battlefields necessarily means preserving open farmland even though this is not usually part of the site's interpretive mandate. A commitment to maintaining a historic property (which may include its viewshed or neighborhood) often involves or leads to a desire to preserve open farmland surrounding the site so that its historic character and use can be more fully grasped by visitors. Because sites seldom have resources or ability to maintain farmland themselves, they often partner with working farms, but there may be little or no involvement of the farmers in the site's interpretive mission.

Another kind of indirect synergy emerges from shared concerns with educating the public about farming practices, whether of the past, present, or both. For many farmers, especially those associated with the local food and sustainability movements, public access to farms and education about farm practices is essential to fostering informed consumerism that will enable small-scale and artisanal farms to survive within challenging economic and policy environments. For historic sites, of course, education about historic farming practices is seen as inherently valuable as a way of deepening public knowledge about the past; education about *present* farming practices falls into a somewhat grayer area, as discussed below. A third type of indirect synergy springs from the shared values and concerns of the kinds of people who tend to work in historic

preservation, interpretation, education, and cultural resource management. In addition to the ways in which their professions involve them in “localism,” land stewardship, and environmentalism (for example, creating networks of knowledge about local history or charting the environmental impacts of landscape changes), they are often personally sympathetic to the values and practices of things like organic farming, the local food movement, and efforts to preserve open space and working farmland.⁶

Direct synergy arises when a historic site’s agricultural or agrarian history is part and parcel of the rationale for preserving it.⁷ Living history farms and villages, model farm estates, and the settlements of intentional communities such as the Shakers, New Harmony in Indiana, or Ephrata Cloister in Pennsylvania are all examples of places where farming is integral to a site’s mission and interpretation. While these connections may seem to be very direct, however, in practice there are some surprisingly gray areas. The most “authentic” and holistic agricultural landscapes are often re-creations; this is the case with many living history villages. And the importance of farming may take on greater or less importance over time, as it has at Lindenwald, shifting from indirect to direct synergy or possibly in the other direction. Another form of direct synergy arises from the fact that farmers themselves are often historians of the lands they are farming. There is usually utilitarian value in knowing what has been grown and where, with what success, and so the kinds of knowledge produced and disseminated at historic sites on farmland is of potentially great value to farmers, while farmers are an important resource for information about the history of the properties they are the stewards of.

Finally, the popular association of farming with the American past also creates a kind of *implied synergy* that can complicate or bedevil the farm/historic site relationship. For many contemporary visitors, farming is inherently historic, old, and unfamiliar, creating expectations and perceptions that may turn out to be at odds with contemporary farming practices and landscapes within historic sites.⁸ Particularly in the

⁶ For a discussion of the prevalence of liberal values in public historical practice, see Cathy Stanton, *The Lowell Experiment: Public History in a Postindustrial City* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006), pp. 137-48.

⁷ “Agricultural” simply connotes activity having to do with farming or land cultivation. “Agrarian” means actively (and usually politically, often radically) promoting the interests of farmers, especially by advocating for more equitable bases of land ownership, sometimes including redistribution of lands held by wealthy owners.

⁸ On the fundamental but problematic relationship of history and heritage display to sites and practices perceived as obsolete or archaic, see Bella Dicks, *Culture on Display: The Production of Contemporary Visitability* (Maidenhead, UK: Open University Press, 2003) and Barbara

all-encompassing environment of the older-style living history farm, visitor nostalgia, escapism, and purely aesthetic pleasure can easily override interest in more present-oriented farming issues and practices, although the growth of the local-food movement suggests that there is new potential for blending old and new in visitor experiences at farms that are both “historic” and “working.”

We can see these multiple synergies in operation in many contemporary partnerships between historic sites and farming. For example, the John H. Chafee Blackstone River Valley National Heritage Corridor in southeastern Massachusetts currently helps coordinate a series of farmers’ markets in historic settings. Jan Rietsma, the Heritage Corridor’s executive director, articulated the multi-layered farm/heritage/preservation connection in a statement quoted on the Heritage Market website:

Farms are an important part of the Valley’s history and should be an important part of its future. Farmers markets at historic sites are a great way to educate people about history, offer an interesting experience, and encourage us to eat locally produced food which is good for our health as well as the environment and the local economy. It’s a great way to protect our working landscapes, too. (Blackstone Valley Heritage Markets)

In addition to pointing out the direct connection (“Farms are an important part of the Valley’s history”), the statement argues that farms should continue to be an important presence in the landscape for a host of preservationist, educational, and health reasons—a reflection of a certain set of beliefs and values held by Heritage Corridor staff, administrators, and partners. At Lindenwald, too, the various types of synergy are in evidence. Recent scholarship has clearly shown the links between Martin Van Buren’s post-Presidential activities as a farmer and his political, economic, and ideological stances, making the farm fields part and parcel of the park’s core mission. More indirectly, preservation and cultivation of the Lindenwald fields helps to ensure integrity of the historic viewshed and farmscape of the immediate area around the park, and contributes to the historic ambience that visitors to the site expect and enjoy (sometimes in simplistic or romanticized ways). And park staff tend to share an interest in local agriculture and environmental stewardship, as well as a personal concern, to varying degrees, with many of the related civic, political, and economic questions that have prompted those movements.

Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, *Destination Culture: Tourism, Museums, Heritage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998).

Despite the many real and potential synergies between farms and historic sites, there are also underlying **tensions or differences**. These tend to cluster around two related areas:

1. Most historic sites are in the non-profit realm, while most farms must pay for themselves economically.

This simple fact means that the decisions made by historic sites and working farms may be driven by entirely different kinds of considerations. The logic of markets operates quite differently from that of public agencies, non-profit funders, and foundations. The urgent necessity to keep a farm alive financially dictates choices that may be at odds with the more education- or preservation-oriented choices made at historic sites. Even farmers with significant educational or preservationist missions, such as those at Shelburne Farms in Vermont or Land's Sake in the Boston suburb of Weston, often see financial viability as a test of the soundness of their vision and methods. Brian Donahue, founder of Land's Sake, has argued, "If a farm project isn't ecologically and economically sound, then it usually isn't very educational, either. It just isn't convincing to...students to do things that require a large subsidy just to break even" (Donahue 1999:81). The ability to survive in a volatile, challenging market economy is central to what a working farm is all about.

The for-profit/non-profit distinction often reflects subtle differences relating to socioeconomic class, which may be felt but not articulated in farm/historic site partnerships. Workers, funders, and visitors in the non-profit realm tend to belong to a professional, white-collar, middle- to upper-middle class, college-educated demographic, while American farmers as a group occupy a much more ambiguous socioeconomic position. Once widely understood to be the bedrock of American economic and civic life, farmers have seen their social status and political influence continually erode since the late nineteenth century with the increasing urbanization of American life, the industrialization of work processes (including those involved in agriculture), and the dwindling numbers of farms and farmers since the late nineteenth century—developments that will be discussed in the chapters of this report. Farmers continue to struggle with the issue of how they and their work are perceived by non-farmers. Their socioeconomic status hovers somewhat uneasily between a rural working class, a professionalized and

industrialized agricultural sector, and romanticized remnants of older ideas about a virtuous yeoman farmer class. All of this places many farmers in quite a different demographic position from the more unequivocally professional classes who tend to occupy the non-profit sector. Farms and farmers that *do* have close working relationships with land trusts, historic sites, and similar projects are often those whose founders and staff more closely resemble that white-collar demographic—for example, people with backgrounds in professional, educational, or artistic fields. This tends to limit the types of farms and farmers with whom historic sites are able to forge lasting working relationships.

With the emergence of a new public interest in reconnecting with the sources of our food supply, this sense of difference between the white-collar preservation/education realm and more a blue-collar model of farming may be changing, and successful partnerships between historic sites and working farms have the potential to help shift it further. But at present, although these class differences do not map neatly onto the for-profit/non-profit divide, they are still felt by many farmers, who do not believe that non-profit organizations and workers fully understand the pressures they face in keeping their farms afloat.⁹

2. Farms and historic sites both appear to be about continuity and permanence, but farming is actually in continual flux.

Non-farmers often think of farms as fixed in place, sustained by generational continuity within farm families, and linked, on a basic level, with methods of cultivation—digging, planting, harvesting—that have an ancient lineage. Even a cursory acquaintance with American agricultural history, however, shows that the only real constant in American farming is its changeability. As one pair of scholars have put it, “Much like Joseph Schumpeter’s description of capitalism, agriculture is, by its very nature, always in motion. Farmers could not stand still even if they wanted” (Olmstead and Rhode 2008:14). From one generation to the next, even before the advent of industrial tools and materials, farmers have continually shifted their products, methods, and—to a surprising extent—their locations, by exchanging, abandoning, or re-purposing specific

⁹This discussion of class in relation to the for-profit/non-profit divide is drawn from interviews and observations gathered during this study, and builds on the author’s earlier research on socioeconomic class and professional labor in public history and contiguous fields.

parcels of land or by relocating themselves and their operations altogether. And while agricultural knowledge has certainly been and continues to be passed along generationally within many farm families, other sources and ideas have always played a role as well. Furthermore, farming has often been combined with other forms of livelihood, even during the heyday of yeoman farming, as the histories of Lindenwald and its neighboring farms will illustrate.

The popular vision of traditional American farming—a multi-generational family farm in a single location—is thus actually highly anomalous, in large part a nostalgic image created after the majority of Americans no longer lived or worked on farms. In the modern era, much of the changeability of agriculture has been driven by market conditions, including the development of a market society itself, but farming itself is inherently changeable due to its relationship with weather and other environmental factors, as well as to changes in the political and social networks within which farmers are embedded (Rottle 2008:139). This study takes a view of farming as a continuous set of practices with a very long history, but it is important to note that one of the core characteristics of those practices is how they are continually adapting and adjusting to a range of factors.

Historic sites, on the other hand, are bound by a set of conventions and methods that emphasize permanence and stability. Even though the meanings and uses of these places and their stories can and do change over time, the basic logic of a historic site is to preserve or restore something of a particular time period; indeed, many preservation projects are initiated precisely because of the threat that something will be lost in changing circumstances. This creates a foundational tension between farms' need to adapt (sometimes very quickly) to new opportunities and circumstances and historic sites' missions of preserving a specific place or story for posterity.

Historic sites, working agriculture, and preserved or protected farmland thus have an intertwined, sometimes complementary, sometimes divergent relationship. The chapters of this report will trace how that relationship has grown over the past two centuries and how it reflects the wide range of Americans' responses to the expansion of their ever more industrialized society. We will see how urbanization and the emergence of industry in the early nineteenth century gave rise to both anxiety and nostalgia for older ways of life associated with farming, and how these reactions later became interwoven

with the growing tourism industry and the preservation/conservation movements. One key finding of the study is that despite the surprisingly deep historical roots of what is now called agritourism, the sharpest separation between working farms and those that were “enclaved” for purposes of preservation or tourism happened only comparatively recently, in the second half of the twentieth century. By the period of sweeping period of social, technological, and economic changes that followed World War II, most small working farms that used “traditional” methods were no longer able to stay viable in the contemporary agricultural markets. They either went out of business or—following the pattern established by earlier preservationists and tourism promoters, ironically including many of the same reformers and industrialists whose innovations had made older farming approaches impractical—were set aside as objects of curiosity and nostalgia.

Although the separation of working farms and farm museums in the post-World War II period was sharp, it was never absolute, with many small farms offering “Pick Your Own” experiences, roadside farmstands, or “value-added” farm products for sale to people who visited them for a variety of sentimental, recreational, and practical reasons. And there are many signs that we are now in a period when market-oriented agriculture and preserved or tourist-oriented farm sites are beginning to edge back toward one another again. Americans continue to debate the effects of their industrial capitalist society, and food and farming continue to be at the forefront of those debates. New types of partnerships are emerging among farms, educators, historic sites, national parks and heritage areas, and land trusts. And people involved in these partnerships are grappling, as Martin Van Buren NHS is, with questions of how to combine the various shared interests, areas of expertise, and underlying tensions between the missions and methods of working farms and those who are more primarily concerned with history, education, preservation, or tourism.

In general, it appears that such partnerships are firmly rejecting the older model of the living history farm based on a faithful reproduction of historic models—what one pair of scholars has called “mimetic realism” (Handler and Gable 1997, especially pp. 73-77).¹⁰ For one thing, this labor-intensive model has proven to be prohibitively expensive in an era of funding and staffing cutbacks.¹¹ But it also seems that the emergence of a vigorous

¹⁰ For a discussion of the multi-layered artificialities inherent in this approach to interpreting the past, see Kirshenblatt Gimblett, *Destination Culture*, Chapter Five, “Plimoth Plantation.”

¹¹ For an analysis of how the economic conditions of the past couple of decades have played out at sites heavily invested in living history interpretation, see Amy Tyson, “Living History: Performing Historical Narratives in the Service Economy,” Ph.D. dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2006.

local food and sustainable agriculture movement over the past decade has created opportunities for partnerships that go far beyond “mere” representation to engage audiences at historic sites with “real” issues and realities in American food production.¹² The agricultural landscape “is no longer regarded with mere nostalgia” by visitors and neighbors, as Brian Donahue notes of the reclaimed agricultural land in the suburban setting of Minute Man NHP. “Local farms are increasingly seen as a vital part of healthy communities—as important to preserving our future as to preserving our past” (Donahue 2009:2). This reality challenges some of the conventions of historic preservation and interpretation and opens up exciting new possibilities for these fields.

The outlines of these new working relationships are still coming into focus, but it is safe to say that there is a lively atmosphere of encounter and experimentation and a sense of urgency and importance at the interface of the real and the represented in farm/historic site partnerships at present, to which this study hopes to contribute. Along with providing specific ethnographic and historical data pertaining to the Lindenwald fields and nearby or comparable farms, this report seeks to provide data which could inform both management and interpretive decisions relating to farming activities. The next section will discuss one possible model that incorporates some of the concerns sketched above.

Continuum and Process

This model, described as a “**continuum and process framework**,” emerged from a recent review of land protection tools and a 20-year-old General Management Plan at Ebey’s Landing National Reserve. This large rural area in Washington’s Puget Sound was designated as culturally and historically significant in 1978. Landscape architect Nancy D. Rottle, who participated in the review, noted that there had been some definite successes in protecting landscape features deemed important to the area’s character. However, farming overall had continued a long, incremental decline, as it has in so many parts of the U.S. This prompted the reviewers to ask about possible ways to counter a downward spiral of agricultural functionality that they saw as threatening the remaining farm infrastructure—for example, farm-related businesses and transportation networks—

¹² The quotation marks in this sentence indicate that of course representation is never “mere,” but serves many important functions in human societies, while the “real” world always contains elements of representation. In general, though, it is fair to say that historic sites are more concerned with interpreting and representing reality, while farmers are more immersed in immediate concerns of growing and selling food.

necessary if the area's overall rural and agricultural qualities were to be retained (Rottle 2008:134). Rottle notes,

The paradox of preserving the historical integrity of agricultural landscapes is that in order to preserve the character of a historic period, the landscape must in most cases continue to evolve in agricultural use. Indeed, it seems inevitable that in most rural historic landscapes the period of significance must continue to the present in order to be preserved. (Rottle 2008:138)

In other words, if farming is constantly changing, and if active farming is considered key to preserving the character and uses of a particular place, then management of farm landscape as a historic or cultural resource must somehow be able to incorporate present-day farming, with all its changeability, in ways that may be in tension with conventional designation criteria and management models.

"Preserving...agricultural landscapes requires management protocols that prioritize processes of living, working landscapes," Rottle argues (2008:138). History, then, is seen as a continuum that includes the present, and preservation of historically and culturally significant landscapes incorporates the processes central to creating those landscapes.¹³ In the case of Martin Van Buren NHS, interpreting the issues that Van Buren was dealing with on his farm requires showing the kinds of processes involved. These include:

- strategies for fertilizing the soil on older farms, which were viewed as insufficiently productive
- farmers' striving for economic independence through land ownership and cultivation (a search that was often frustrated by market realities and was often counterposed to other forms of agricultural labor, such as tenancy and slavery)
- changes in regional, national, and international agricultural markets
- changes in agricultural technologies in the growing industrial economy (which continue to be debated and elaborated in the present).

¹³ Rottle acknowledges that NPS guidelines for evaluating and documenting rural historic landscapes have already shifted to incorporate an understanding of multiple and extended periods of significance (2008:137), if not quite the "continuum" that she sees as necessarily incorporating the present day. She traces the scholarly roots of this concept to work by Catherine Howett ("Integrity as a Value in Cultural Landscape Preservation" in *Preserving Cultural Landscapes*, Alanen and Melnick, eds.), Melody Webb ("Cultural Landscapes in the National Park Service," *The Public Historian* 9, Spring 1987), Richard Longstreth ("When the Present becomes the Past" in *Past Meets Future*, Lee, ed.), and Robert E. Cook ("Is Landscape Preservation an Oxymoron?" *George Wright Forum* 13:1 [1996], 42-53).

Each of these processes touched on civic, political, and economic questions of Van Buren's day; each of them continues to play out in Columbia County's contemporary farming sector.

Rottle's suggested approach is for cultural resource managers to find ways to become active advocates for present-day farming. She urges managers to go beyond the standard National Park Service rubric for treatment and rehabilitation of historic landscapes (preserve, protect and maintain, repair, replace, design for missing features, and make alterations and additions that are compatible with a historical period of significance) to include acts of *intervention* in a system seen as central to the landscape being preserved and managed. In the case of Ebey's Landing, she notes that NPS staff have moved beyond the standard tools (for example, purchasing conservation easements and particularly vulnerable properties) toward more direct measures that include facilitating partnerships between dairy farmers and value-added processing businesses, providing education and advocacy for farmers, and working with local government on regulatory issues (for example, proposing a zoning overlay that supports continued farming) (Rottle 2008:144). This shifts the NPS into a more active role in influencing the system of use that it is working to support and preserve.

Questions remain about the model that Rottle proposes. As noted above, many "real-world" considerations about marketing and profitability sit uneasily with non-profit models and priorities. Publicly-funded historic sites' missions are explicitly non-commercial, reflecting, in the case of historic farms, specific histories of separation from the present-day farm economy. State and federal sites, such as national parks, are also bound by many regulatory and legal requirements, not to mention funding constraints, that may limit how innovative they can be in forging new kinds of relationships with working farms. Social and political differences, often subtly reflecting class positions and backgrounds, may also create divisions among farmers and between farmers and their potential non-profit partners. Historic sites' mandates to preserve and interpret certain types of landscapes and stories means that not all farms and farmers are appropriate partners, a fact that may widen the gap between farms that are affiliated with preservation projects and those that are not. Defining those differing potential partners can be surprisingly difficult: terms like "conventional," "traditional," "progressive," "local," "organic," "sustainable," and "industrial" turn out to be much less specific and more value-laden than they appear at first, and they often overlap in actual farming practices. For example, "big organic" farming essentially mirrors any other large-scale agriculture

except in its avoidance of certain pesticides or fertilizers, while small-scale farming that uses chemical pesticides but sells to an extremely local market may contribute substantially to the viability and “sustainability” of a local or regional food system.¹⁴

Developing a terminology for the kind of agriculture that was practiced before commercial and industrial farming became the norm, reflecting the particular type of farming appropriate for a specific historic site, is similarly problematic. For example, Martin Van Buren embraced some of the cutting-edge farming technologies of his day (like the sub-soil plow) while also using some reformist ideas (such as an emphasis on manure as a fertilizer) that combined a forward-looking desire to render old farms more productive and a somewhat past-oriented attempt to revitalize what were seen as moribund farming economies. It is possible to understand him as a proto-industrial farmer who would likely have embraced mechanized agriculture as it developed. But he has also been interpreted as a somewhat progressive “back to the lander” (as Reeve Huston’s work to some extent implies) more analogous to something like today’s Stone Barns Center for Food and Agriculture, which combines elite New York City-based patronage with the values of many aspects of the local or sustainable food movement. There is, of course, no way to know for certain how to interpret Van Buren’s unique mix of approaches to farming, given the inherent difference of past and present and the heavy load of emotion, memory, and political opinion with which most agricultural terms and projects are freighted. Once a historic site moves beyond an attempt at the strict one-to-one representation of mimetic realism, it enters a gray area where historical precedent may not provide tidy answers about what kind of farming to support or ally with, or how to configure the relationship so that it is workable for all.

This report proceeds from the assumption that a study of comparative cases and broader contexts for Columbia County farming can provide at least some guidance in these gray areas. For example, the comparative case of Kinderhook farmer Ephraim Best in Chapter Five helps to confirm that Van Buren was both progressive *and* conservative, adopting some new strategies but retaining older ones in ways that seem reflective of other large landholders in the area in that period. But the basic orientation for the study also echoes Rottle’s: that is, if historic sites are to forge meaningful, lasting partnerships with working farms, they must understand and to some extent accept the market-oriented, continually changing realities of farming itself, rather than evaluating everything

¹⁴ Pollan (2006:130-33, 134-64) discusses the paradoxes of “big organic” or “industrial organic” agriculture.

through the lens of a single “period of significance.” Interpretation of agricultural realities over time is perhaps best based on *questions* and on how a core set of questions about farming as a way of life—such as those set out in a later section of this chapter—has been addressed by specific people in a particular place over time. Holding open those questions, which continue to be discussed and debated in American civic discourse today, can help to illuminate present circumstances and inform present-day actions by farmers, visitors, consumers, and local publics alike.

The Physical Setting: Columbia County, New York

Kinderhook sits in the northwestern corner of Columbia County, a fairly sparsely-populated county in the mid-Hudson River Valley. Encompassing about 626 square miles, or just over 400,000 acres, Columbia County is at the eastern edge of New York State, approximately 125 miles north of Manhattan Island. The river valley’s utility as a transportation corridor has long made it an important conduit for people and trade goods, including agricultural products grown in the fertile soils of the valley. Modern political boundaries have made the county part of the dividing line between New York and Massachusetts, and twentieth-century highways have created new boundaries and divisions, notably the New York State Thruway which traverses the northern part of the county and the Taconic State Parkway which bisects it vertically. These recent demarcations reflect long-standing routes and physical features—for example, between the western side of the county, with its orientation toward the Hudson River, and the more mountainous, eastern side in the slopes of the Taconic mountain range. The Catskill Mountains on the opposite side of the Hudson, visible from many parts of the county and one of the most striking aspects of its scenery, represent a quite different ecological niche, creating a visual and environmental border on the west. In terms of its climate, geology, biology, and topography, Columbia County has somewhat varied traits and characteristics, as this section will show briefly.

The county’s climate can generally be characterized as typical of southern New England, but its higher regions are more like northern New England, with average growing seasons that can differ by three weeks between the hilltops and the lowlands along the Hudson and other river valleys. The flora and fauna here reflect two somewhat different biogeographical regions (see Fig. 1). The forests are classified as northern or eastern hardwood forest or beech-maple forest, while the species for which it provides habitat include some associated with northern climates but also some that are more

at home in southern regions. Given the immense development pressure on New York counties immediately to the south, Columbia County's character as a blend of northern and southern climate and habitat makes it important in the preservation of ecological niches that are being threatened and erased in the southern part of the state (Vispo 2008:10). The area falls within plant hardiness Zone 5 as defined by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.¹⁵ Average temperatures for the northwestern part of the county around Kinderhook in January are 23 degrees F, about 74 degrees in July.

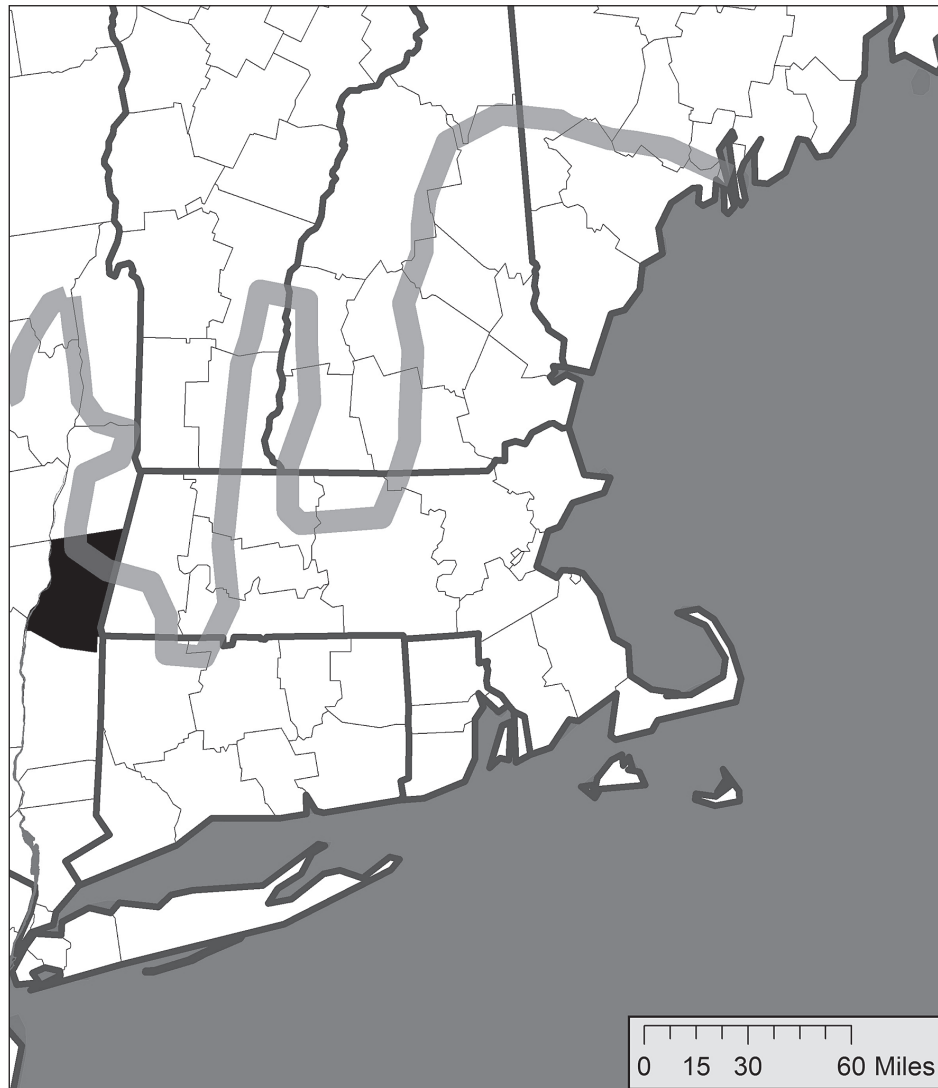


Fig. 1. Columbia County (in black) and the "New England Tension Zone" (gray band) as derived from analysis of forest tree distributions. (Modified from C.V. Cogbill, J. Burk, and G. Motzkin, 2002, "The forests of presettlement New England, USA: Spatial and compositional patterns based on town proprietor surveys," *Journal of Biogeography* 29:1279-1304)

¹⁵ Most of the county is within Zone 5A, with the slightly warmer southwest corner falling in Zone 5B.

The Taconic mountains form a natural, if somewhat open, boundary on the east. On the western side, the mighty Hudson River creates a more definite edge. The Hudson's watershed is divided in two sections at the point where it is joined by the Mohawk River just north of Albany. The Lower Hudson River watershed, from its mouth to Troy, 153 miles to the north, is actually a tidal estuary (see Fig. 2). It reverses its flow four times a day, with an inundation of salt water that reaches to about fifty miles north of Manhattan Island. This hybrid body of water creates a shifting aquatic environment that provides habitat for a wide variety of marine species (USGS 1991) and provided the area Natives' name for themselves: "Muh-he-con-neok," People of the Waters That are Never Still (Brasser 1978:211).¹⁶

The soils of the county have been shaped by the movement of mountains over time, periods of glaciation, and periodic flooding along small and large floodplains. The Taconic mountains, which are geologically distinct from their near neighbors, the Berkshires, were pushed over and crushed by the pressure of drifting land masses some 450 million years ago, creating a bedrock layer that is essentially "a geological rubble heap" (Vispo 2008:5). During the last Ice Age, the area was under glacial Lake Albany, which formed about 15,000 years ago from the dammed run-off of retreating glaciers and which had drained by about 13,500 years ago (Franzi et al. 2007). Columbia County's richest farming soils, along its western edge, were formed by deposits from the slow draining of this giant lake. Farther upland, the melting glacier left outwash deposits in the form of more sandy-loamy soil and gravel banks. These upland soils are enriched in places by calcareous bedrock (Vispo 2008:5). Upland or lowland, the best farming soils are to be found in the valleys, as shown in Fig. 3. Along the Hudson and some of the substantial smaller rivers, like Kinderhook Creek, alluvial floodplains provide fertile land that continues to be replenished by periodic spring flooding. The richness of these soils supports abundant plant life that has made these lands appealing to animal and human habitation for millenia.

¹⁶ The Anglicized version of this name has been spelled in many ways over the centuries: Mahican, Mohican, Mahikan, Mahiecan, Maykan, Muhheakunn, Hoheakun, and sometimes Mohegan (the latter being the name of a different Indian tribe located in Connecticut). Seventeenth-century Dutch documents most commonly use "Mahican" or "Mahikander" (Dunn 1994:8). Following current scholarly usage, this text uses Mahican.

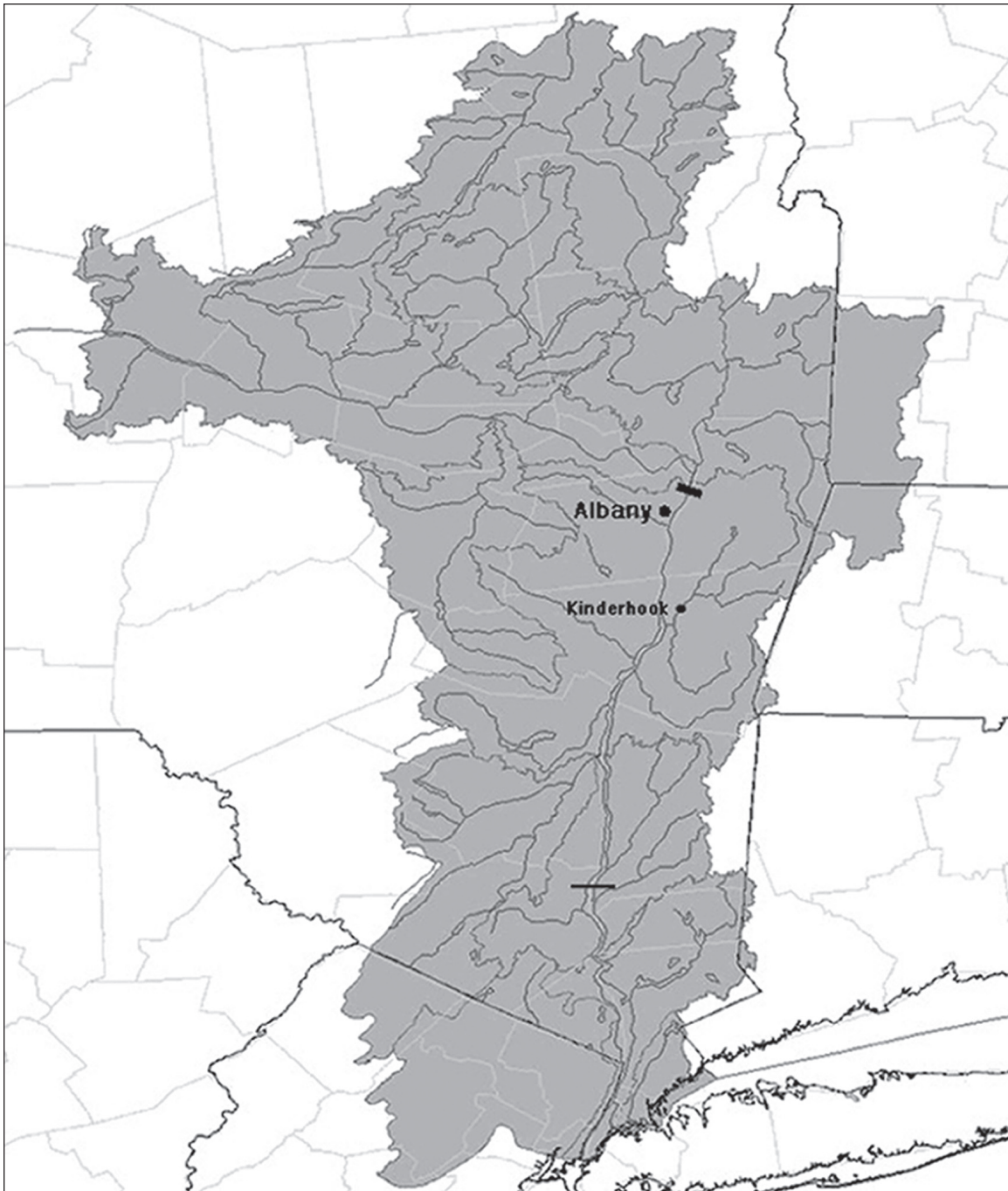


Fig. 2. The Hudson River watershed is a tidal estuary from its mouth at New York City to Troy, just north of Albany (indicated by heavy bar on map). Salt water reaches as far north as the narrower bar about 50 miles north of the city. (Image used by permission of the Hudson River Watershed Alliance; text and bars added)

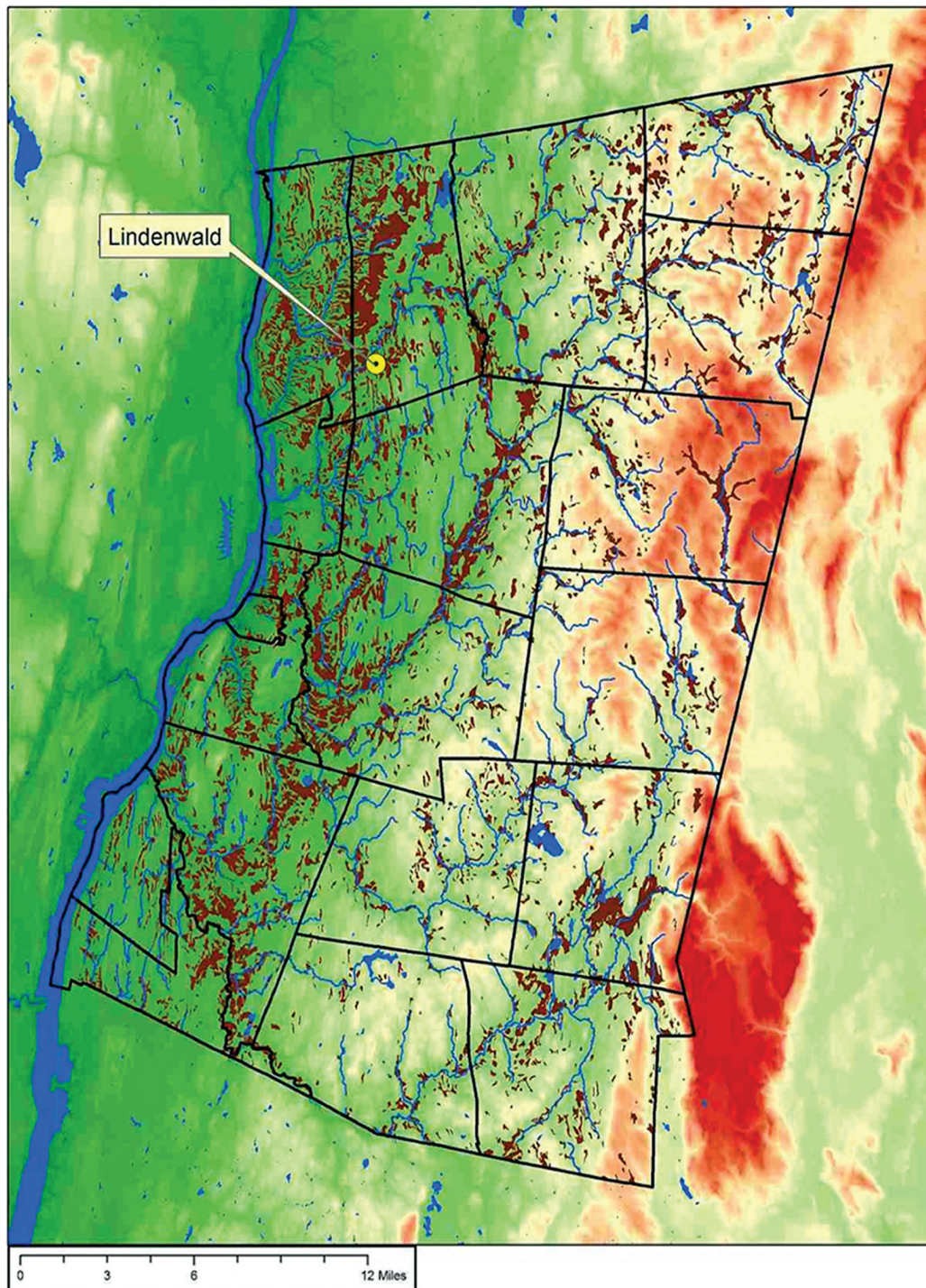


Fig. 3. Prime agricultural soils in Columbia County are to be found in valleys.¹⁷ On this map, altitudes range from about 30 feet above sea level along the Hudson River in the southwest corner to about 2,300 feet above sea level in the Taconic peaks in the northeast corner. (Farmscape Ecology Program)

¹⁷ New York State soil reports can be found online at http://soils.usda.gov/survey/online_surveys/new_york/

Kinderhook is just a few miles inland from the Hudson River. Particularly on its western side, the town contains some of the most fertile and concentrated farmland in the county (see Fig. 3). The land rises from about 180 feet above sea level at the southern end, near Lindenwald, to 550 feet above sea level around Mile Hill Road (Route 21) to the east. It is drained by several small rivers (see Fig. 4). Kinderhook Creek follows a winding southwesterly route through the southern part of town, including along the western edge of the Lindenwald property. Kline Kill runs along the border between Kinderhook and Chatham and flows into Kinderhook Creek at the border. Valatie Kill, whose steep drops once furnished the water-power for a number of mills, joins Kinderhook Creek within the Village of Valatie. To the northwest, some branches of the Muitzeskill form another drainage area, and in the west, some feeder streams come together to form Stuyvesant Brook, also known as Saw Kill (Piwonka 1989:15). The area around Lindenwald is largely a floodplain which rises quite steeply in steps, the first of which is the sharp hillside between the “lower terrace” and “upper terrace” on this and similar properties along Kinderhook Creek. The hills to the east of Old Post Road represent the next step, at which point the prime agricultural land quickly turns to much less fertile soil.

Lindenwald, then, sits on some of the most desirable farmland in one of the most heavily agricultural towns in the county. It is a site that has long been attractive to human cultivation and it continues to provide diverse habitat in an area pressured by development of various kinds. These qualities were part and parcel of Martin Van Buren’s reasons for purchasing the property in 1839, and he made explicit connections between the fertility and productivity of this land and the political and economic programs he envisioned for the region and the nation. But the agricultural uses and meanings of the site extend far beyond Van Buren’s time into both the more distant and more recent past. The following section will outline how this study made thematic connections with a unified set of questions about those uses and meanings.

Study Themes in This Chapter

The chapters that follow present a chronological narrative about farming on and near the Lindenwald lands over time. Within the segments of that narrative, though, certain themes emerge which it will be helpful to set out here. These themes are by no means neatly separable, although the report will note how each one appears in specific periods and cases.

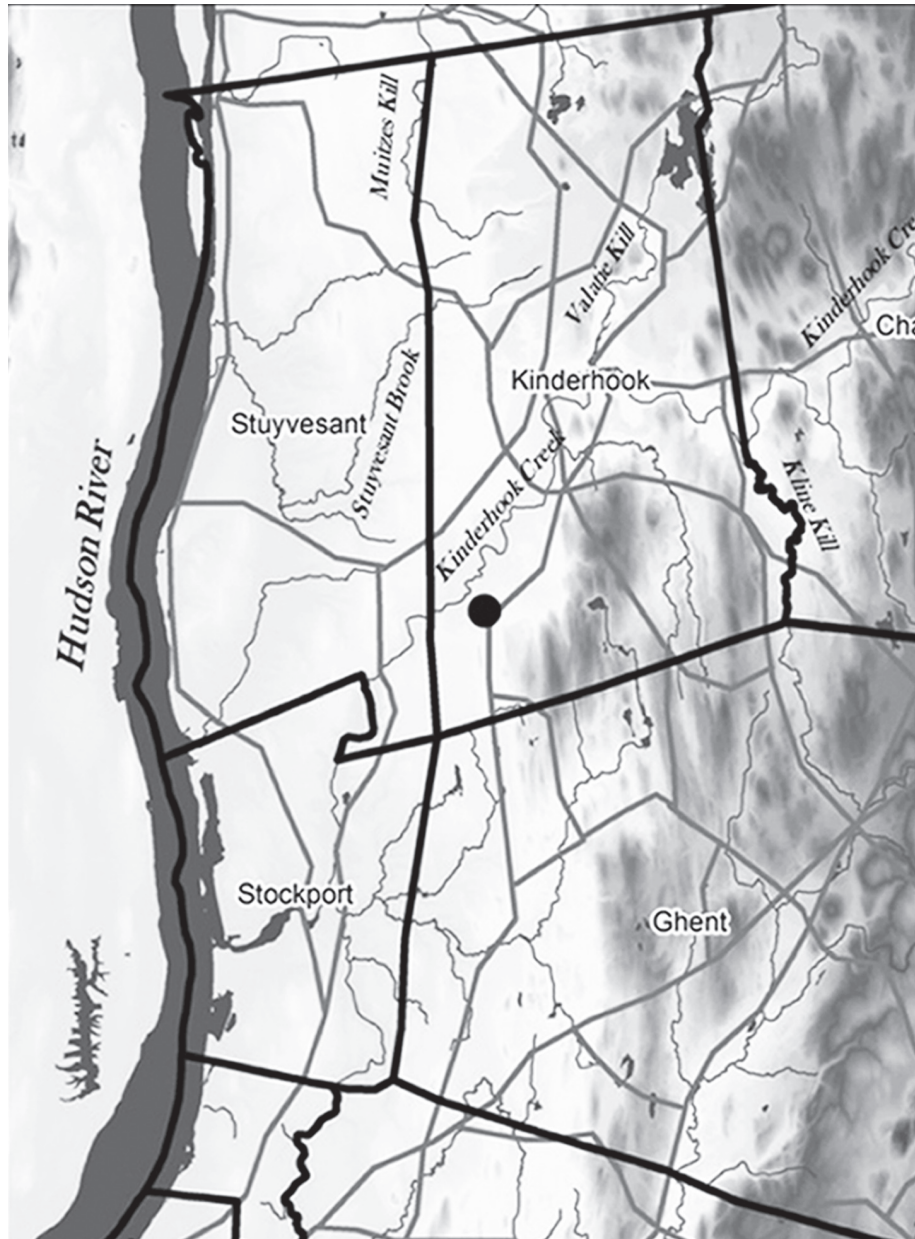


Fig. 4. Rivers and creeks in the Kinderhook vicinity. Lindenwald is shown by a black dot.
(Farmscape Ecology Program)

The three main clusters of themes and ideas are as follows:

A. Changing agricultural methods and approaches

This very broad theme will allow us to encompass specific information about:

- various cycles of agricultural reform, which have a long history dating to at least the early nineteenth century, when “improvers” sought to rejuvenate the northeastern agricultural economy, to make a point about the “inefficiency” of southern plantation agriculture, and to keep young people on the land and in the region as industry and westward expansion began to offer enticing new possibilities
- approaches to soil health and fertility
- the role of agricultural organizations and publications in the education of both farmers and consumers about farming and food
- the enduring tension between ideas of growth, abundance, and limitlessness, on the one hand, and nagging anxieties (regularly confirmed by depression, depletion, or scarcity in the agricultural sector) about the possibility of lack and the reality of limits to growth in American agriculture, on the other.

B. Farming in a market economy

This theme is central to the study, as so many of the decisions made by American farmers have been direct responses to changing market conditions. Similarly, many of the enduring tensions and debates within American farming reflect the paradoxes of farming within an industrial capitalist economy—primarily the fact that maximizing production and efficiency tends to lower profitability, over-exploit finite resources, and work against the long-term viability of agricultural places and communities. An examination of this facet of farming history includes questions about:

- different types of land tenure (for example, collective ownership, land trusts, individual or family ownership, tenancy) and the ideas or values associated with them
- types of markets and destinations for food (local, regional, national, and international markets; barter; CSA; self-sufficiency)

- the economic interdependency of rural and urban agricultural producers and consumers (particularly, in the case of Columbia County, with the Albany/Capital District and with New York City)
- patterns and demographics of farm labor (the range of class identities associated with farming; ethnic and cultural groups in farm labor, for example, African American, Dutch, Irish, German, Mexican, Polish).

C. The roles of policy and law in farming

This theme encompasses ideas about legal and political attempts to mitigate or balance the effects of free markets on farming (for example, the creation of land trusts or cost-of-production guarantees for farmers). It also includes material about different conceptions of land ownership and stewardship—for example, different ideas about the ownership, sale, and management of various rights associated with land. While to a large extent this theme merges with Theme B, it also looks more directly at the role of government and non-profit organizations in facilitating farming activity, farmer and consumer education, and preservation of agricultural land.

A point-form summary of how these themes have appeared in each segment of the story appears at the end of each chapter.

The report is structured into chapters corresponding with particular periods of ownership at Lindenwald:

Chapter 2: Pre-Contact Period (before 1609)

Chapter 3: Colonial Dutch era (1609-1787)

Chapter 4: Van Ness/Paulding era (1787-1839)

Chapter 5: Martin Van Buren era (1839-1862)

Chapter 6: Van Buren heirs and Wilder era (1862-1873)

through Wagoner era (1873-1917)

Chapter 7: Birney/deProsse, Meyer, and Campbell era (1917-1974)

Chapter 8: Meyer and NPS/OSI/Roxbury Farm era (1974-present)

In addition to examining the kind of farming that took place at Lindenwald itself in each period, most chapters include at least one somewhat more in-depth case study about a person, farm, or organization linked in some way with agricultural developments in the area. These case studies were chosen based on relevance but also on the availability of

sufficient information about a given topic or person. The chapters also explore the long-term histories of a number of neighboring farms, as described in the following section. The earlier chapters are somewhat more general because of the limited availability of detailed information about specific people and families before the mid-eighteenth century; later chapters become more specific in their use of material by and about particular farmers and organizations. The report concludes with a chapter exploring some of the implications and possible uses of this data for future park management and interpretation, along with a list of gaps remaining in what was discovered for this study and suggestions for future research.

Research Design and Methodology

This study began with a preliminary, exploratory phase from September 2009 through February 2010. Primary research was carried out between March and July 2010, followed by the drafting and revision of this report.

Research for the study proceeded from a fairly simple principle of identifying, documenting, and contextualizing as many specific people and groups as possible associated with agriculture on and near the Lindenwald lands from the period of European settlement to the present day. During the preliminary phase of the project, the Principal Investigator developed a list of these names, and the primary research period was then devoted to investigating those people and groups in more depth, focusing on the following core questions:

- Who *were* these people and groups, in ethnic/racial, cultural, familial, economic, and political terms?
- What ideas, values, and meanings they did attach to their farming choices and practices?
- What agricultural networks—economic, philosophical, social, etc.—were they part of, and how were those linked to the contexts of local, regional, national, and global agriculture, economic circuits, and political power?

The preliminary list of names was developed through close readings of recent studies of agriculture at and around Lindenwald as already described, consultation with knowledgeable local historians and other researchers, and examination of maps and census records for the period from the 1840s to the 1920s. Additional names were later added to the list through suggestions from interviewees and others, further examination of maps and census records, and reading of local history sources. A data grid was

developed that showed individual names for different periods, along with what was known about:

- their demographic characteristics (cultural/class identity, tenure in the area, how they came to farming)
- farm methods, products, and non-farm forms of livelihood associated with them
- type of land tenure
- markets for their products
- values, beliefs, philosophies, and expectations informing their farming practices
- connections to specific historical, economic, cultural, and technological trends in agriculture in the county and beyond

Primary research was designed to follow up on what seemed to be the most significant or promising leads from the list of names. People associated with farming at Lindenwald itself (including owners, tenants, managers, laborers, and others who lived and worked here) were made the highest priority for investigation. A second, substantial area of inquiry focused on adjacent and nearby farms, particularly those whose owners or workers had familial, professional, economic, social, or other connections with Lindenwald or Martin Van Buren. These nearby farms include Kinderfields/The Bouwerie/Sleepy Hollow Farm (across Old Post Road), the Dingman/Wagoner properties to the north of Lindenwald, the Van Alen property north of that, and Sunnyside and the other Van Alstyne farms across the creek to the west (see Fig. 5).

Casting more broadly around Columbia County, a select number of additional farms were investigated briefly in order to provide a basis for comparison for certain targeted topics (for example, the widespread shift into dairy farming in the mid-twentieth century or the emergence of the Community Supported Agriculture movement). These tertiary examples were chosen either for their specific relevance or because a body of useable information about them was readily available. A small number of “support” figures—people or groups involved in networks of agricultural exchange, promotion, preservation, or education—were also explored, so that the report would have material to illustrate some of the ways that wider debates and developments in farming were playing out in the specific settings of Columbia County, Kinderhook, and Lindenwald. The main research phase of the project used a set of ethnographic research methods that included both formal and informal interviewing, participant-observation, archival research, and reading of primary and secondary written sources. The Principal

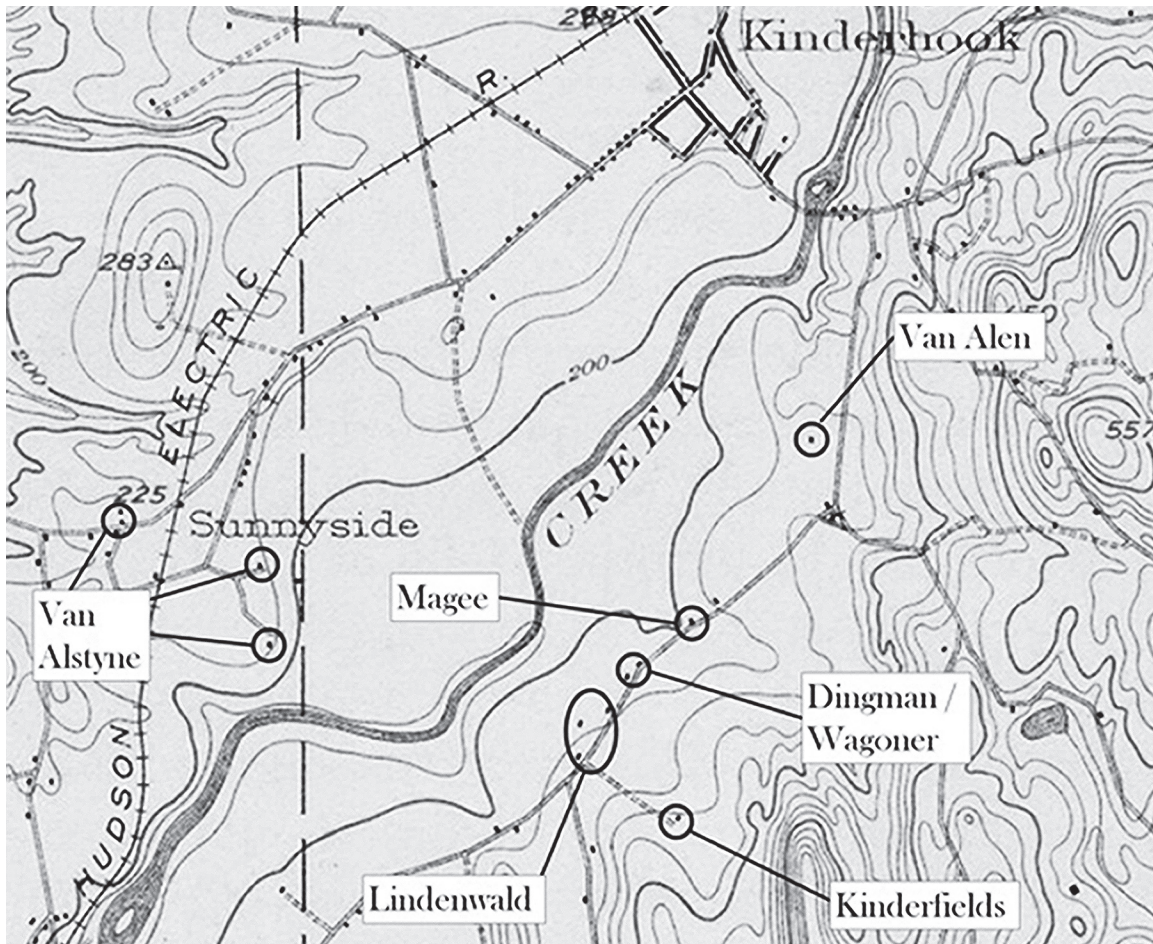


Fig. 5. 1903 USGS map of southern section of Kinderhook, showing locations of main farms discussed throughout this report.

Investigator spent a total of 26 days conducting research in Kinderhook and environs (see Appendix C for listing of fieldwork trips and tasks), in addition to telephone interviewing and extensive reading and other work. Additional targeted archival research was performed by Kinderhook historian Ruth Piwonka. Archives consulted included the Columbia County Historical Society in Kinderhook, the Columbia County Courthouse in Hudson, the State Library and State Archives of New York in Albany, and the database of Ancestry.com. Staff at the Farmscape Ecology Program at Hawthorne Valley Farm in Ghent also served as consultants on the project, providing mapped data and contextual information about farming in Columbia County.¹⁸ These researchers met with park and

¹⁸ In addition to these researchers, a Tufts undergraduate anthropology student researching a senior thesis on Community Supported Agriculture contributed participant-observation data about farming at Roxbury Farm, and a University of Massachusetts/Amherst public history graduate student transcribed selected primary documents for use in the study.

NPS Ethnography Program staff midway through the primary research phase to consider the data grid at that point and to refine ideas about the remaining research and the final report outline.

As with all ethnographic studies, the data gathered reflect a combination of planned inquiry and circumstances “on the ground.” With a highly compressed five-month primary research phase, choices had to be made quite quickly about which names from the data grid seemed worth following up in more detail and which should remain in the category of “future research suggestions.” The final part of the research phase—inevitably its most productive, since leads and contacts had been more fully identified by then—coincided with the very busiest time of year for farmers, which limited some of the information-gathering that could be done. Some conversations led to new avenues for exploration, while repeated efforts to speak with other potentially important interviewees led nowhere. The data gathered during the study were shaped by these realities as well as by the plans set out at the beginning of the project.

Initially, interviewees were identified by park staff and people knowledgeable about local history. Through a “snowball” method, the list of interviewees expanded as the research went on and people suggested other names and connections. Interviewees included people with direct knowledge about farming at Lindenwald and neighboring farms (for example, farmers or descendants of farmers known to have worked these lands) as well as people who were able to provide more general or comparative data about other farms or aspects of agriculture in the county in general. The project benefited greatly through identifying descendants and property-owners who had already compiled extensive genealogies or property records. 13 formal and 14 informal interviews with a total of 30 people were conducted during the project (see Appendix A for a full list of names and dates).

Although the initial plan was to record most interviews and fully transcribe the most useful (with précis transcriptions of the rest), the circumstances of many of the interviews for this project worked against formal recorded interviewing. In the case of many of the farmers consulted for this project, there was only a brief window of opportunity to talk in the midst of a busy work day, making a focused informal conversation a better choice than the somewhat cumbersome process of a more formal interview. Some more lengthy conversations took place literally “in the field” (the farmers’ fields), a setting which does not conduce to linear, transcribable interviews. A number of interviewees requested not to be recorded, and in some cases (for example,

three elderly farmers interviewed at the Barnwell Nursing and Rehabilitation Center), there was again only a very short window of time in which to talk, and no good opportunity to set up recording equipment. The information gathered through these interviews is thus contained in detailed fieldnotes rather than transcriptions.¹⁹ Out of consideration for the ethical principles guiding all research with human participants, interviewees were told about the purposes of the research and the uses to which their information might be put, and given the opportunity of speaking off the record or not being interviewed if they preferred.²⁰ All were given the project documents (see Appendix B), and gave informed consent verbally if not in writing. In the judgment of the PI, this was the most effective way to gather data given the wide and somewhat unpredictable variety of circumstances encountered during the research.

Data analysis took place in stages throughout the project. As new data were accumulated about specific individuals, families, and organizations for various time periods, they were integrated into what was already known about existing local and broader contexts. Specific family genealogies and farm histories were analyzed through comparison with one another and with material from primary and secondary sources. The specific farms and families traced in these chapters were chosen because there was a body of data available about them and because they illustrated some aspect of the major study themes described in the previous section. After the initial draft of this report was produced, in addition to internal NPS and external peer reviews, historian Ruth Piwonka and staff at the Farmscape Ecology Program reviewed the draft in detail, offered corrections and comments, and supplied some additional research and material to fill identified gaps (for instance, providing more genealogical information about specific families and creating many of the maps and tables included in this report). The report was revised to incorporate this new material as well as reviewers' other comments.

A final component of the study was a roundtable discussion held at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst (the cooperating partner for the project) in October 2011. The Principal Investigator and NPS managers and others involved in the project

¹⁹ These fieldnotes have been provided to the park as part of the project archive. An index of topics discussed in fieldnotes and interviews was prepared by two UMass interns.

²⁰ The Work Plan for this project was submitted to the University of Massachusetts/Amherst Institutional Review Board, but the research was deemed to be low-risk enough not to need IRB approval. A consent form (included in Appendix B) was nevertheless developed and used for the formal, recorded, in-person interviews and for some of the conversations that were documented in fieldnotes.

met with others from the NPS and the University of Massachusetts faculty to discuss ways that this study might help to inform possible future research, management, and partnerships relating to farms, national parks, and other historic sites with an interest in the intersection of working agriculture and historic preservation and interpretation.

Conclusion

It is customary in scholarly studies to note that much research remains to be done. It is also common for ethnographers to feel that their fieldwork has only brought them to the point of beginning to feel familiar enough with a research environment to navigate its many social networks with any kind of competence. Both are true in the case of this Ethnographic Landscape Study, and the final chapter of this report will contain a list of suggestions for future research. Chapter One will conclude by noting, however, that the project was not intended to produce a comprehensive and definitive study of agriculture in Columbia County or even just at Lindenwald. A key purpose was to explore farming as a way of life in and around this specific place over a long span of time, and to illustrate and amplify the connections between this way of life and the historical significance of Martin Van Buren—connections already sketched out in previous studies.

A second key purpose—more in the realm of practice than pure scholarship—was to provide data that could inform the park’s emerging role as a more active participant in Columbia County’s agricultural sector. Following the “continuum and process” approach suggested by Rottle, this report seeks to demonstrate the long continuity in the types of questions and issues raised by farming in this place over a span of time that includes the present. The many gaps remaining in the narrative can thus be seen as openings for future collaboration and inquiry with a variety of different types of partners, perhaps including some of the scholars, educators, and farmers who contributed knowledge and insights to this study.

CHAPTER TWO

NATIVE AMERICAN FARMING IN THE HUDSON VALLEY

When Dutch traders and settlers began to arrive in the Hudson River Valley in the early seventeenth century, they encountered people who had been living—and farming—in the region for many centuries. The area that later became Columbia County was part of the territorial homelands of the Mahican people, an Algonquian-speaking group that combined hunting and gathering with cultivation of crops. Although current research does not enable us to say precisely who was farming along Kinderhook Creek before Henry Hudson’s 1609 expedition up the river or what they were growing, there is enough fragmentary and comparative evidence to allow for a general exploration of Native farming and diet in the region in the time before European Contact.¹

“An Abundance of Provisions”: Mahican Subsistence Patterns

Tribal mobility, territorial conflicts with the neighboring Mohawks and others, and misperceptions on the part of many early European chroniclers make it impossible to trace the boundaries of the Mahicans’ territory with precision (Bradley 2007:12). But it is clear that present-day Columbia County was squarely within the ancestral homeland of the group, which encompasses both river valleys and mountains centered around the Hudson River Valley. As with much Native American history, what scholars know about the Mahicans of the Pre-Contact Period has been gathered from archeological data, oral tradition, accounts by early traders and colonizers, and fragments of documentation from colonial records and writings.² This material gives us a picture of the Mahicans as a people who combined hunting, fishing, and foraging strategies with some cultivation of crops—a fairly widespread pattern among many Natives in the northeast—and who alternated between riverside villages during the growing seasons and more dispersed

¹ A study being completed for Martin Van Buren NHS concurrently with this report contains much more specific and detailed data on the Mahicans of the Hudson River Valley in this and subsequent periods. Because the study was still in draft, it could not be used as a source for this chapter. Readers wishing further information about Mahicans should consult this work by William A. Starna, entitled *From Homeland to New Land: A History of the Mahican Indians, 1600-1830*.

² Foundational contemporary writings from this period include accounts by Dutch and other colonizers (many of whose works are included in J. Franklin Jameson’s 1967[1909] volume *Narratives of New Netherland, 1609-1664* [New York: Barnes and Noble]).

hunting camps in the colder months (Bradley 2007:12; Brasser 1978:199; Dunn 1994:224). The archeological record suggests that the Mahicans preferred to maintain more mobility and flexibility in their living and food-gathering arrangements than the neighboring Mohawks, an Iroquoian group that built larger, more permanent settlements. Known Mahican sites, in contrast, are smaller—usually under half an acre—and less structured than Mohawk villages, suggesting that individual families and groups were quite autonomous and the culture rather loosely organized politically. James Bradley estimates the total Mahican population at between two and three thousand people before the Contact Period, a number that was already dropping by the time of Henry Hudson’s 1609 voyage due to the effects of new diseases that arrived with Europeans (Bradley 2007:12).

The Mahicans’ combined subsistence strategies appear to have provided abundant food resources, both wild and cultivated, throughout most or all of the year. These strategies would have developed in the period after 5000 BCE, by which time the northeastern climate and environment had settled into something essentially like our own following the end of the last Ice Age.³ River floodplains were attractive settlement sites for the Mahicans as for other Natives and later Europeans, for the same reasons: food, transportation corridors, and fertile soil could all be found there (Bradley 2007:12). The Mahicans used dugouts, canoes, nets, spears, and fishweirs to fish, and they also gathered mussels and other shellfish closer to the salt-water end of the river near Manhattan Island. Dutch colonizer Adriaen van der Donck, a particularly acute observer of nature and culture in the region, wrote that the North River was “rich in fish, such as sturgeon, rockfish, black bass, and sheepshead” (van der Donck 2008:10). Herring and shad ran up the Hudson in abundance in the spring, and there were also carp, bass, pike, trout, minnow, silverfish, sucker, tadpoles, flounder, eel, perch, and other species new to the Dutch (van der Donck 2008:58).

Local fauna also supplied a good part of the Mahican diet. Squabs and passenger pigeons were plentiful in the spring, and raptors, song birds, water birds, and game birds were also hunted. Fur-bearing animals included deer, beaver, otter, marten, foxes, mink, bear, and wild cats, all of which were important to the regional fur trade that began in the sixteenth century. Other animals that the Mahicans hunted and used in various ways included deer, raccoon, squirrels, muskrat, and woodchuck, elk, porcupine, fisher, hare,

³ Unless otherwise noted, general information about the Pre-Contact period is taken from Custer 1996 and Grumet 1995. The term BCE (“Before Common Era” or “Before Current Era”) is used here along with CE (“Common Era” or “Current Era”) in place of the more Christian-centered “AD” (“Anno Domini”) and BC (“Before Christ”).

rabbits, chipmunk, wolf, turkey, mice, and voles (Funk 1976:7).

Trees and other plants were useful in myriad ways, including for canoes, weapons, containers, mats, building materials, medicine, and food. Hickory, chestnut, walnut, and beech trees provided nuts that were processed and eaten (Bradley 2007:12). Berries of all kinds grew during the summer months. Tree bark was sometimes utilized as a source of food, perhaps as a late-winter season alternative; early European colonizers reported finding large stands of stripped white pine trees in the Atlantic region, and the name “Adirondack,” describing an upper New York State group, means “tree-eaters.” Natives in the northeastern region also made teas from many barks, roots, and berries, including sassafras, sumac, wintergreen, sweet fern, rose hip, and catnip (Berzok 2005:77-78).

In addition to hunting and foraging, however, the Mahicans, like many of their neighbors in the region, also cultivated plants.⁴ Utilizing the rich bottomlands of the river valleys, they grew corn, beans, and squash as well as tobacco and perhaps sunflowers and other crops within walking or canoeing distance of their villages (Dunn 1994:224-25). Dunn reports that Mahicans stored dried corns and beans in the ground over the winter so that there was always ample food “even at lean seasons” (Dunn 1995:224), although Brasser believes the food supply could grow perilously low toward the end of the winter (Brasser 1978:199). Describing his 1609 encounter with the Mahicans, Henry Hudson noted that one village contained “a great quantity of maize and beans of the last year’s growth and there lay near the house for the purpose of drying enough to load three ships, besides what was growing in the fields” (Jameson 1967:49). Hudson’s mate, Robert Juet, wrote in his journal that the Indians—presumably Mahicans—whom they encountered in the Columbia County vicinity brought them pumpkin, Indian corn, and tobacco, describing them as “a very loving people” (Jameson 1967:21), and Hudson himself noted that they were “friendly and polite people, who had an abundance of provisions” (Jameson 1967:7).

The fertile floodplains along rivers and creeks seem to have served as the Natives’ main farming fields (Dunn 1994:226, 231). The eighteenth-century Mahican historian Hendrick Aupaumut reported many good rivers, creeks, and ponds in Mahican territory, and noted that the banks and floodplains of rivers or creeks were the only places known to be “capable of producing skommonun or Indian corn, and tupohquaun or beans, and

⁴ Indians in Mesoamerica began cultivating plants—particularly the “three sisters” of Indian farming, corn, beans, and squash—as early as 5000 BCE. Knowledge about the cultivation of corn and other crops diffused northward after 3400 BCE, with corn becoming the dominant food crop after 800 CE (Hurt 1994:3-4).

uhnunnekuthkoatkun or Indian squashes, until...[the land] fell into the hands of white people, who convert even many swamps and rocky hills into fruitful lands” (qtd Dunn 1994:231)—a clear reflection of how the more intensive European farming methods could radically alter a piece of land using draft animal power and technologies such as plows.

Brasser suggests that villages were moved every decade or so due to the exhaustion of garden plots and firewood supply (Brasser 1978:198-99). Van der Donck noted that Natives seem to have let their cultivated fields lie fallow for considerable time, suggesting that they knew the importance of letting land rejuvenate after the cultivation of corn and other nutrient-depleting crops. In van der Donck’s words,

Once when I was discussing various matters with some *wilden* (as we call those not born of Christian parents) one of them said to me, while we were standing near a young forest, “I see that you are having that land made ready for use; you will do well, it is very good land and bears grain in quantity; I know that, because only twenty-five or twenty-six years ago we planted grain there, and now it has reverted to forest.” I asked him earnestly if that was truly so, and he assured me it was, as several other Indians present also testified. (van der Donck 2008:20-21)

Since beans fix nitrogen in the soil, the inclusion of beans in Indian fields may have delayed soil exhaustion to some degree; Cronon (2003:48) notes the difficulty of knowing the extent to which Native farmers were aware of this benefit.

Corn was a particularly labor-intensive crop and an important food for the Natives. Dunn argues that close attention would have been necessary to guard vegetable fields against deer, birds, raccoons, and other animals (1994:225), although van der Donck remarked that the Indians did not fence off their garden plots and did not devote a great deal of attention to them (van der Donck 2008:98). After the arrival of the Dutch, the Indians gained new tools, like the mattock, that they used in the cultivation of corn (Piwonka 2008:399). Cornfields were sometimes mentioned, specifically or by implication, in Dutch deeds, reflecting their importance to both the Mahicans and the colonizers, who often began farming immediately on land cleared and formerly cultivated by the earlier occupants (Dunn 1994:224-25).

Food was relatively abundant in the Hudson River Valley, but it took deep knowledge of the landscape and its flora and fauna to enable year-round human survival using essentially simple technologies. By the time the Dutch arrived in the Hudson Valley, Mahican farmers had developed a flexible and sophisticated combination of growing techniques that coexisted productively with the periodic mobility needed for hunting

and foraging. In this, they mirrored the proficiency of Native cultures throughout the Americas who had similarly adapted to their own specific environments and climates. As Hurt writes of these Pre-Contact Era cultures, “no one surpassed their achievements until the advent of modern agricultural science and the creation of the state agricultural experiment stations during the late nineteenth century” (1994:4). Together, these subsistence strategies would have provided the Mahicans with a varied diet and the ability to store considerable food over periods of time.

Farming and Mahican Cultural Patterns

The skill and sophistication of these subsistence techniques were not apparent to most early European colonists, whose own cultural assumptions blinded them to most of the subtler aspects of how the Natives were interacting with the landscapes they inhabited. Cultural misperceptions operated in other ways, too, leading to deep European misunderstandings about the gendered division of labor in Native subsistence patterns as well as about use-based conceptions of land ownership in Native societies. These misunderstandings had sweeping repercussions for Natives’ ability to maintain control over their ancestral territories once the colonists had begun to become entrenched and able to defend their own newer claims and their very different ideas about husbandry, property, and productivity.

To the European gaze, hunting, fishing, and foraging seemed merely to be taking advantage of the natural bounty that the Mahicans and others lived among. But the colonial observers failed to realize that the Natives were in fact practicing a variety of forms of husbandry in addition to the familiar activity of cultivating crops. For example, the Mahicans seem to have cleared their Hudson Valley fields and flatlands regularly by burning, a practice described in detail by van der Donck:

The Indians are in the habit—and we Christians have also adopted it—once a year in the fall to burn the woods, plains, and those marshlands that are not too wet as soon as the leaves have dropped and the herbage has withered. Portions that were missed, as may happen, get their turn later in the months of March and April. This is known among our people as well as the Indians there as bush burning and is practiced for several reasons, some of which we will briefly note. (van der Donck 2008: 21)

The reasons listed by van der Donck focus primarily on how burning facilitated hunting—for example, by getting rid of undergrowth that might betray a hunter’s presence. In fact, periodic burning had a wide range of results, including recycling forest nutrients more

quickly, letting in more light and heat to warm and dry the soil, creating an ecological “edge effect” and a more open habitat that made favorable conditions for various species like berry bushes and oaks (with their edible acorns), adding minerals and reducing soil acidity, and keeping various pests and diseases at bay (Cronon 2003:50-51; Hurt 1994:5). As with the wisdom of growing beans along with corn, it is hard to say how explicitly the Mahicans recognized how the details of these interlocking systems operated, but it seems clear that they recognized the general beneficial effects. Their interventions supported what Cronon calls the “mosaic quality” of the region’s ecosystem and led to a forest environment that contained many different stages of ecological succession simultaneously, helping to create a more dynamic and productive landscape (2003:51).

Even in the case of the form of husbandry that Europeans found most familiar—the cultivating of crops—there were gaps in perception and understanding. Many of these related to gender. Mahican farming was undertaken mostly by women, a pattern that was consistent with other societies that combined hunting and foraging with agriculture (Brasser 1978:199; Cronon 2003:44, 52-3; Hurt 1994:4). Adriaen van der Donck wrote, “The women do all the farming and planting. The men are hardly concerned with it, unless they are very young or very old, when they help the women under the latter’s direction” (van der Donck 2008:97-98). The sight of Native women working in their farm fields violated many of the accepted gender norms of European farming and led Dutch and other colonists to conclude that Indian men were lazy or exploiting their female kin and were thus undeserving of land ownership (Cronon 2003:52; McWilliams 2005:8).

It is around the issue of land ownership—a crucial element of many colonists’ goals and ambitions—that the deepest and most consequential misunderstandings arose. Current scholarship presumes that the Mahicans shared the widespread Native conceptions of long-term stewardship of land rather than short-term resource extraction, collective rather than individual property ownership, and a layered system of rights in which individuals or groups could be granted permission to work or use a piece of land without removing it from an overall ancestral territory. As has been very well documented by now, most Native/European land transactions were based on a fundamental misunderstanding created by two entirely different paradigms relating to land (Cronon 2003:61-69; Hurt 1994:31-32). Assuming that everyone shared their own system of commercial exchange and individual property ownership, Europeans believed they were buying land outright from Natives and did not perceive that what appeared to

them as empty or unused land was actually part of the Native land base. Native groups and individuals, on the other hand, believed they were granting specific short-term rights (for example, to farm or fish) to newcomers who had no basis for asserting lasting claims to the area. They related to land as a dynamic and essentially a living entity that was interwoven with human, animal, and cosmological relationships of exchange, rather than as an object that could be detached and converted to exclusive use once and for all.

The Dutch began acquiring land from Natives by 1630. Mahicans exchanged their land—or rather, permission to use their land—for various European goods, including wool cloth, alcohol, brass or copper kettles (which were sometimes taken apart to make projectile points), guns (after the 1640s), clothing, shell and other kinds of currency, tools and utensils, tobacco from Maryland (which the Mahicans preferred to locally grown tobacco), and other trade items (Dunn 1994:251-256). When Jacob Jansen Flodder,⁵ one of the first freeholders in Kinderhook, bought a piece of land from Natives in 1667, the price was one blanket, one axe, three hoes, two bars of lead, three handfuls of powder, one knife, and one kettle (Collier 1914:50). Like other European colonizers, the Dutch tried to identify “chiefs” and political leaders with whom they could do business, failing to understand the shifting character of the kinship-based political structures within which the Mahicans made collective decisions. For example, in 1650, this same Flodder had bought land on Schodack Island from a Mahican identified in Dutch records as Aepjen, adding to land on which Flodder had already erected a mill for the feudal Rensselaerswyck patroonship. In 1663, other Mahicans sold the entire island to two Beverwyck (Albany) traders, leading to conflict with the Van Rensselaer patroons, who claimed that Flodder’s earlier purchase meant the island was rightly a part of Rensselaerswyck. When the dispute went to court, Mahican witnesses verified Flodder’s earlier purchase but complained that he had expanded his holdings from there without their consent. From their perspective, he was only to have “rented” for one year the right to grow oats and build a rick for winter grain storage, rather than “owning” the land itself. The Dutch court, though, interpreted this in favor of the Rensselaerswyck claim (Dunn 1994:176-77).

For the Mahicans, as for Native peoples all over the Americas, these kinds of misunderstandings were fundamental (along with the force of armed warfare) to the conflict and displacement they experienced between the seventeenth and nineteenth

⁵ Known in subsequent years under the last name of Gardenier. Surnames denoting an occupation or skill were sometimes part of the early Dutch names.

centuries. By 1609, when Henry Hudson made his voyage up the Hudson River, recent and long-standing animosities among Native groups in the region had already been exacerbated by other changes caused by European colonization—huge population losses due to introduced disease, radically altered exchange and trade patterns associated with the advent of the fur trade, and newly emergent national rivalries. Mahican ideas about farming were based on flexible use within socially-defined territories and regular seasonal patterns, a system that was not necessarily incompatible with Europeans making use of specific pieces of land for cultivation or even settlement. But the European “all or nothing” system of ownership could not coexist with Native modes of settlement, and the two paradigms quite quickly came into conflict, diminishing the farm fields and large hunting territories that had supported the complex and ecologically sophisticated Mahican mode of life in the region.

Study Themes in This Chapter

Changing agricultural methods and approaches

- the adoption of farming among northeastern Native groups
- practice of a mix of farming and hunting/fishing/foraging
- cultivation of Native crops including corn, beans, squash
- burning fields to clear them, improve fertility

Farming in a market economy

- incompatibility of European model of individual land ownership and sale with Native model based on “use ownership” and lineage rights

The roles of policy and law in farming

- collective decision-making about land use within Native groups
- incompatibility of European and Native legal systems and ideas about land

CHAPTER THREE

COLONIAL DUTCH SETTLEMENT, FARMING, AND FOODWAYS (1609-1787)

Dutch colonists first established a presence in the Hudson Valley in the early seventeenth century. By mid-century, a varied population of settlers had come to the area under the auspices of the Dutch West India Company, including a man named Jan Martense (“Martin’s son”) Van Alstyne. Van Alstyne had seemingly been a weaver from Meppel, a town in the northeastern Netherlands province of Drenthe (Collier 1914:95; Wilson 1965:1; see Fig. 6). Two of the sons born to Jan and his wife Dirkje were christened at Meppel, but by 1655 the family was in New Netherland, where a son named Marten was christened at the Dutch church on Manhattan. By the 1650s they had moved north, buying a piece of land on Broadway in Beverwyck (modern Albany) and two tracts of land in Ulster County, on the west side of the Hudson. In 1671, they acquired a tract on the west side of Kinderhook Creek, vaguely designated as “behind Kinderhook” (Collier 1914:94-95).¹ From the landholdings of Jan Martense and Dirckje Van Alstyne, several family farmsteads were later carved out. In the same period, two brothers from the Van Alen family, Pieter and Lourens, acquired land on the other side of the creek and established a farm. Sometime before 1674, Pieter Van Alen sold some of his land to Jan Martense Van Alstyne’s third son, Lambert.² Lambert established a farm there—the first European farmstead on the property that would later become Lindenwald.

The Van Alstynes, Van Alens, and other Dutch settlers formed a close-knit core in the town of Kinderhook for well over two centuries, and many of their descendants remain in the area today. This chapter will explore where these colonists came from,

¹ Collier states that Jan Martense Van Alstyne returned to Europe at some point and that he co-owned a shipping vessel with another Dutch colonist in New Amsterdam (later New York City), but Ruth Piwonka questions whether this is accurate, and suggests that Collier may have confused Van Alstyne with another colonist who shared a fairly common Dutch name. Court records from Fort Orange show that Van Alstyne had some association with Beverwyck by January of 1653, when he forfeited to another settler a garden lot he had been given; he was also mentioned in court citations in 1656 (*Fort Orange Court Minutes 1652-1660*, Charles T. Gehring, ed. Syracuse University Press, 1989, pp. 36, 230, 239, 265).

² Legal disputes about this sale continued until at least the turn of the eighteenth century, reflecting the fact that the specific details of the original transaction were—and remain—unclear. Searle’s statement (2004:11) that the Lindenwald lands were originally part of a much larger parcel owned by Jan Martense Van Alstyne is erroneous, but it is difficult to know with certainty who the first European owner of the property was.

how they settled in the area, and some of the land-holding, farming, culinary, and kinship patterns and practices they brought with them and adapted in their new setting. It will also compare some of what is known about the Van Alstyne's farms with those of the neighboring Dingman family, who were also among Kinderhook's Dutch earliest settlers and who owned property abutting Lindenwald until the 1830s.

Early Dutch Settlement

Shirley Dunn (1994:15-16) speculates that through their network of family and trade relationships, the Mahicans were probably aware of the visits of white foreigners to the Atlantic coast and St. Lawrence River areas during the early period of European incursions into North America. The French began to visit the coastal and St. Lawrence areas regularly by the 1530s, and the Spanish, French, and English had all visited and mapped the Chesapeake Bay area by the same period. The effects of European diseases also traveled far in advance of actual contact itself in many cases, with Native populations drastically reduced by epidemics before the foreigners themselves had actually appeared (Cronon 2003:85-91). But it appears that no Europeans actually moved inland up the Hudson Valley before Henry Hudson's two-week sojourn with Mahicans along the upper reaches of the river in 1609.³

Hudson was English, but he was working for the Dutch East India Company, which had contracted with him to find a passage to the East Indies. Hudson's report of fertile lands and friendly natives inspired merchant-traders in the Netherlands to fund future expeditions and settlement as a way to extract resources and wealth through the lucrative fur trade. In 1614, they built a fort, called Fort Nassau, on an island just south of present-day Albany.⁴ The Dutch West India Company was chartered in 1621 to establish a vigorous Dutch trading presence around the Atlantic rim; within a decade, the company began to develop an administrative structure that enabled increasing settlement of the area along the Hudson as far north as modern Albany, then called Beverwyck (Piwonka 1989:18). At its peak, the colony known as New Netherland extended from Delaware to Albany, taking in parts of what became the states of New York, New Jersey, Maryland, Connecticut, and Delaware. Its two main centers of population, in New York and New Jersey, probably comprised about 8,000 people in the 1670s, when Kinderhook was being established as

³ Giovanni da Verrazano visited the mouth of the Hudson River in 1524 but left almost immediately because of a storm (Dunn 1994:15).

⁴ In 1623, this was renamed Fort Orange, and then, in 1652, Beverwyck.

a Dutch town (Cohen 1992:13). The Hudson and other rivers were crucial features of Dutch settlement patterns as they had been for Native Americans (Cohen 1992:67).

Who Were “The Dutch”?

The colony of New Netherland was established and administered under the auspices of prosperous merchants based in what was then the Republic of the Seven United Provinces of the Netherlands. However, the single term “Dutch” to describe these people and others who populated the colony is over-simple and rather misleading. Like most European powers at this time, the Netherlands included many regional and cultural differences retained from the older provinces, duchies, bishoprics, and other entities that had combined to form nations, federations, or republics. The Low Countries’ location had long made them a crossroads and an important shipping and trading region, fostering a certain cosmopolitanism within the Netherlands itself (Lambert 1971). According to one study, about a third of the colonial emigrants from the Netherlands came from North Holland (including Amsterdam, the largest single group), with smaller percentages from South Holland, Utrecht, Gelderland, and other provinces (Cohen 1992:19-21). But much of the settler population that came to this part of America in the seventeenth century—particularly the non-elite artisans and farmers—was actually drawn from across northern Europe. Many were German. In the eighteenth century, the most well-known of these were from the area in southwestern Germany known as the Palatinate (*Pfaltz* in German). They were sent to New York by Britain’s Queen Anne, who had bought 8,000 acres of land from Livingston manor to work in what proved to be a short-lived enterprise extracting tar from pitch pines (Knittle 1937, especially Chapters 3 and 5). Many other German areas adjacent to the Netherlands and further up the Rhine River were represented as well.⁵ Other New Netherland settlers came from France (including many Protestant French Huguenots), the Spanish Netherlands, Schleswig-Holstein (then part of Denmark), and Scandinavia (Cohen 1992:15-19).⁶ Suggestions of this diversity

⁵ Germany did not unite as a modern nation until 1871. In the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, the former Holy Roman Empire, which had encompassed a number of German principalities, fractured into a set of warring states, among which the Austrian Habsburg monarchy and the Prussian kingdom became dominant by the mid-eighteenth century.

⁶ Data in this section is drawn largely from David Cohen’s *The Dutch American Farm* (New York University Press, 1992). Cohen based his conclusions on a sample of 904 seventeenth-century families (approximately 4,500 people) in New Netherland, out of a total population of about 8,000 people in the colony at this time (Cohen 1992:13).

can be found in the names of Kinderhook's early settlers. For example, "Dirk, the Swede" was a landholder and roadmaster in the town's early days, and the Sharp (Scherp) family was also Swedish (Collier 1914:44, 96, 321), while Omie de la Grange (alternately Omeda Legrange or, in the 1686 town charter, Ami de Lagrange), the son of a French Huguenot, came to New Amsterdam from the busy transatlantic port of La Rochelle in the 1650s (Collier 1914:97). The early Hudson Valley "Dutch," then, were already quite a heterogeneous group, representing a number of religious, cultural, ethnic, linguistic, economic, and culinary backgrounds.

They were also occupationally diverse. They were not primarily farmers, nor were they drawn from the ruling or merchant classes, although the more ambitious among them may have modeled themselves after those elites after arriving in America (Cohen 1992:13, 15). Cohen's sample of more than half the New Netherland population showed that only about a third were described as having been farmers in Europe; some others had been farm laborers, but there were also substantial numbers of soldiers (28%) and artisans (25%) as well as servants, fishermen, and other kinds of workers (Cohen 1992:13-14).⁷ Jan Martense Van Alstyne is described in some documents as "De Weever" (Collier 1914:354). This suggests the kind of artisanal background that was often found among farmers' families in Drenthe, where an inter-regional market economy had begun to flourish in the late medieval period of the fourteenth through sixteenth centuries (Spek 2006:1, 4). Jacob Jansen Flodder, also known as "Gardenier" (perhaps because of his abilities as a farmer or gardener), was a carpenter, and a strong-willed one at that: an immigrant from Kampen in the eastern Netherlands, he allegedly angered his patroon by demanding higher wages and seems to have struck out on his own, eventually becoming an important landowner in Kinderhook (Collier 1914:90).

No matter what their backgrounds, most of the settlers would have taken up farming to some extent in the New World (Wermuth 2001:49). The fur trade only offered a living to a limited number of the new arrivals, and the directors of the Dutch West India Company actively encouraged agricultural settlement as well. Farming was something of a necessity in a place without sufficient infrastructure to provide widely for a non-farming population's needs. The company sent colonists who were specifically charged with establishing their own farms, and also hired farmers to cultivate land owned by the company itself (Cohen 1992:67). In 1629, they enacted a Charter of Freedoms and

⁷ Cohen cites a similar study by Oliver Rink that found 38% of the New Netherland immigrants had worked in agricultural occupations prior to leaving Europe (Cohen 1992:13).

Exemptions that allowed private freemen to claim as much land as they could “properly cultivate,” on condition that they brought over at least fifty adults to live there. These settlements were known as “patroonships,” and they created a social structure that included well-to-do (often absentee) landlords or “patroons” and settlers of varying degrees of wealth and autonomy. Rensselaerswyck, a patroonship granted in 1630 to jewel merchant and Dutch West India Company director Kiliaen van Rensselaer, was the most successful of these. It incorporated more than a million acres around what is now the Capital District and endured until the 1830s (Cohen 1992:69).



Fig. 6. Contemporary provinces of the Netherlands; dots show significant cities and towns. (Wikimedia Commons, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Netherlands_map_large.png)

Dutch Land Use Patterns

In establishing the patroonships, the Dutch colonizers were following one of several familiar land-use patterns which were tied to particular regions and types of land in Europe and which shaped particular family configurations and types of farms in America.⁸ The **patroonships** were based on a pattern in which arable land was divided into strips that bordered a road, and wetter areas were used as common grazing land that was later drained and reclaimed as fields. In Europe, this model had been used as a way to encourage various Low Country elites (for example, knights or religious orders) to promote settlement in empty areas, much as the English did in Scotland and northern Ireland. It was a system easily adapted to colonial settlement (Cohen 1992:70).

Other configurations existed, however. Many New Netherland settlers, including the Van Alstyne family, founded relatively **isolated farmsteads** along rivers and creeks.⁹ Fertile existing fields already cleared and cultivated by Natives would have provided a starting-point for many of these farms, with additional lands cleared later, and the flat floodplains along tidal estuaries and freshwater rivers and streams would have offered a familiar topography for the type of farming and land management that many of the settlers knew in Europe. In Kinderhook, these early farms seem to have been around five hundred acres in size, but with only 80 to 120 acres under cultivation (Piwonka 1989:22). In addition, 10- to 25-acre parcels of prime agricultural land along the waterways were frequently bought and sold at very high prices, perhaps, as we will shortly see, as a way

⁸ Geographer Audrey Lambert delineated five types of rural settlements in the Netherlands, each of which influenced New Netherland land use to some extent: (1) the *brinkdorp* or nucleated agricultural village, (2) *kransesdorp* or “ring villages” with farmsteads ringed around individual enclosed pasture lots and a lord’s or chief’s farmstead, (3) *waldhufendorp* or farmsteads forming enclosed courtyards along a village street, (4) *terpdorp*, a hamlet or farmstead built on a constructed earth mound surrounded by pastureland and small, square fields with hayfields farther away in lower-lying land, and (5) *geestdorp*, in which farmsteads were built on a circular track, embankment, or dyke, usually on sandy dune areas in coastal or fenland regions of the western Netherlands, with more arable land was in the center, divided into long strips, and inland swamps and peat bogs used as common grazing land which was eventually drained and reclaimed as fields (Cohen 1992:23-25, 27). Cohen sees the patroonships as being influenced by the *geestdorp* model, while New Netherland agricultural villages reflected the *brinkdorp* pattern.

⁹ David Cohen believes these farmers may have seen themselves as following the model of individual farmers in the Low Countries who worked to reclaim “wasteland” in marshy coastal or delta areas, and that the existence of these isolated farms suggests that the settlers were viewing much of the American territory as open space to be reclaimed using drainage and other techniques they were familiar with in Europe (Cohen 1992:69).

to create viable farms for younger family members (Cohen 1992:142; Piwonka 1989:21-21). But as well as individually-owned farms, Dutch and other settlers imported the idea of the “commons,” unenclosed land available to those who held shares to use for grazing livestock and other purposes. In Jan Van Alstyne’s home in the eastern Netherlands, as elsewhere, these common areas were the subject of continual negotiation and often contention, as farmers tried to find a workable balance between their individual needs and the carrying capacity of their shared environment (van Zanden 1998).¹⁰

Although nucleated settlements were found at Fort Orange and Fort Amsterdam, **agricultural villages and towns** did not appear in New Netherland until the 1640s and later, and settlers had to be actively encouraged to move into towns at that point as a defensive measure during the Indian wars of that decade. Three compact hamlets existed in the Kinderhook area by the late seventeenth century: one at what is now Stuyvesant Landing, one somewhere within the Powell Patent, and one east of Valatie. A 1763 map of the area by Isaac Vrooman shows how greatly the English methods of surveying and planning had changed the existing Dutch patterns. Only what had been referred to as the *dorp* (Kinderhook Village) and the early isolated farmsteads along Kinderhook Creek seemed to remain in place (Piwonka 1989:21).

Early Kinderhook

The name “Kinderhook” was first used on a Dutch map in 1614. By the middle of the seventeenth century, the name had come to designate a navigational landmark and became attached to its immediate hinterland and the sizeable “creek” that flowed through it to the Hudson. The center of the fur trade had moved north and west by then, and farming was becoming the chief work in the area (Wermuth 2001:13), but European settlement in this territory was sparse until the 1660s and 1670s. By that time, New Netherland had experienced a sweeping change when it was made a part of the English colonies in America in 1664. The Dutch retained their existing religious, language, and many other rights, and actually increased their settlement under English rule (Cohen

¹⁰ In a study of how this played out in the eastern Netherlands between the thirteenth and nineteenth centuries, Jan Luiten Van Zanden (1998) argues that peasant farmers identified the demands of the emerging capitalist market as a threat to environmental stability, and worked to balance short-term market-oriented gains with the longer-term health of their commons, or *markegenootschappen* (also called marks). While they were successful at managing this in many ways, a growing population and weak enforcement mechanisms skewed the balance by the sixteenth century; ironically, the greater specialization and professionalization associated with the expansion of agricultural markets after that point enabled better enforcement and regulation, restoring some of the stability to the system. The marks were dismantled in the later nineteenth century.

1992:74); the shift was largely felt in terms of legal and governmental structures and personnel. As far as the nascent community of Kinderhook was concerned, Dutch culture and practice remained dominant, and it was mostly Dutch families associated with the Albany area who first purchased lands in the Kinderhook territory from Mahicans in the 1660s and 1670s (Piwonka 1989:18).

The first purchase was formalized in the Powell Patent of July 1664, which almost immediately had to be re-ratified when the English took over later that year (Collier 1914:45). For personal, financial, or geographical reasons, the Powell Patentees wished to remove themselves from Beverwyck (later Albany), noting in their petition that they could “no longer make their living in this village and are obliged to settle with their families in the country to gain their bread with God’s help and honorably” (Collier 1914:46)—perhaps a reflection of their need for more land or their desire, as in the case of Jacob Jansen Flodder/Gardenier, to be their own masters.¹¹ Subsequent land transactions in the town are marked by inconsistencies and ambiguities that local historian Edward Collier referred to as the “indefiniteness of boundaries” in the early deeds (Collier 1914:47), making it difficult to state precisely who was the first European owner of the land that became the Lindenwald estate.¹² But it seems clear that before 1674, a portion of the land along the east side of Kinderhook Creek was sold to Lambert Van Alstyne, third son of Jan Martense Van Alstyne and his wife Derckje, by Pieter Van Alen, beginning a period of Dutch ownership of this land that would include Martin Van Buren and last well into the twentieth century.

By 1686, there were 31 Dutch landowners in the area defined as Kinderhook, and they applied to the governor for and were granted a charter as a town (Piwonka 1989:19).¹³ Unlike the vast empire of the Van Rensselaer family just to the north, this

¹¹ The original petitioners were Thomas Powell, Teunis Abrahamsen, Claes Van den Bergh, Hendrick Cay, Jochem Ketel, Evert Luyccassen, Bert Bagge, and Jan Dicksen (Collier 1914:46).

¹² The first of these transactions, in 1666, was for 200 acres of meadow deeded by an Indian named Taukamekeheke (Collier 1914:46). Collier discusses other Indian/Dutch land transactions in Kinderhook on p. 48–53 of his *History of Old Kinderhook*. Natives named in this discussion include Eunick or Emikee, Walthansett, Pompoenick, Taeppehismen, and Attawanoe.

¹³ At this point, the Town of Kinderhook was part of Albany County. Columbia County was formed from this large land area in 1687, and what was originally Kinderhook was later divided as land from the town was made part of Chatham (to the east), Ghent (to the southeast), and the entire town of Stuyvesant Falls (to the south) (Piwonka 1989:19). The present-day town is only about one-fifth of its original size; its borders have remained largely the same since 1823 (Piwonka 1989:20). The original patentees in the Town of Kinderhook were listed in the 1686 charter (in some cases with their patronymics but without their surnames) as: Claes Beever, Pieter Bossie,

new town was a place where families of more modest means could aspire to buy enough farmland to support themselves and perhaps add to their wealth as time went on.

Wermuth notes that these town charters were covenants or community agreements, but without the moral overtones of New England town covenants; the Dutch farmers of the Hudson Valley were primarily concerned with “the ability to provide easy access to good, fertile land for the present family and future generations” (Wermuth 2001:16-18). A charter provided for somewhat limited local government and ensured the continuation of Dutch inheritance patterns, discussed in more detail below.

Once a town charter was granted by the governor, the incorporating families, or freeholders, would divide the land roughly equally among themselves, reserving some for common use and future sale among themselves or to outsiders (Wermuth 2001:16). Common land was a resource by which a town could meet its own operating expenses. In Kinderhook, a 1721-acre tract of land was sold in 1763 to cover the administrative costs of surveying and dividing the Great Kinderhook Patent; the surplus was divided among the town’s freeholders (Collier 1914:78). Following European patterns, land was also held in common for grazing and other purposes, a practice that lasted until after the American Revolution in Kinderhook and other towns. In Kinderhook, “Comonage for the Publick Benefitt and advantage as well as for grazing of [freeholders’] Sheep or feed of any other Cattle” was set aside (Collier 1914:535). The usual pattern in Dutch farming communities was to graze cattle, young horses, and swine on these common lands from spring through fall, using brands or other marks to distinguish who owned them, and then to shelter them in barns during the winter (Cohen 1992:123). The actual extent of Kinderhook’s “Groot Stuk” (“great piece”) is not certain; Collier (1914:54) believed that it ran all the way from Valatie to the Lindenwald neighborhood, but Ruth Piwonka questions whether it extended this far south (1989:80-81). Whatever its precise extent, this extensive flatland next to the creek was drained and used as common meadowland through the end of the eighteenth century. In the early nineteenth century it was divided into small parcels of 12 to 15 acres which the town shareholders used or sold individually.

Jurian Caljer, Hendrick Coenrads, Michael Coljer, Martin Cornelissen, Thom Craven, Jan H. De Bruyn, Adam Dingman, Albert Gardinier, Andries Gardinier, Jan Jacobsen Gardinier, Andriaes (or Andries) Hansen, Dirck Hendricksen, Gerrit Jacobsen, Lambert Jansen, Ami de Lagrange, Yeanken Lammersen, Jacob Martensen, Jan Martensen, Franz Pietersen, Peter Schuyler, Robert Sielhsen, Gerrit Teunissen, Jan Tyssen, Laurens Van Alen, Isaac Vosburgh, Jacob Vosburgh, Peter Vosburgh.

Early Dutch Farms

No specific sources were found during this study to suggest what crops and livestock Jan Martense and Dirckje Van Alstyne, Pieter and Lourens Van Alen, their family and neighbors were growing on the fertile bottomlands next to Kinderhook Creek in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. But from other general and comparable sources, we can get a picture of what these early Dutch farms were producing, and how they balanced farming for their own subsistence and participation in the various levels of market exchange that existed within the colonies. Most or all Dutch farms would have been mixed farms devoted largely to growing food for the family with perhaps some products exchanged with neighbors or sold in local or regional markets (Cohen 1992:131). This would have been a model familiar to many farmers already from their European backgrounds; as Spek (2006:1) notes, the period when the New Netherland settlers were emigrating was one in which a fairly vigorous set of regional markets had already developed in the Netherlands, including Jan Van Alstyne's home province of Drenthe.

Columbia County's mixed production appears to have been mirrored by the general agricultural economy of the "Middle Colonies"—New York, Pennsylvania, New Jersey, and Delaware—in this period, according to James McWilliams:

Whereas every other region had or did not have a staple crop, the Middle Colonies sort of had one: wheat. Whereas every other region had or did not have a slave-based labor source, the Middle Colonies sort of had one, with a combination of whites and slaves working the land. Whereas every other region had or did not have a competent level of self-subsistence, the Middle Colonies sort of had it, with the backcountry and the urban areas forming a kind of mutually beneficial relationship that fostered self-subsistence over a much larger geographical area than the single New England town. (McWilliams 2005:168)

Within this mixed economy, the Dutch farmers worked industriously to transplant and adapt particular crops and farming techniques to their new environment. Piwonka (2008:424) sees the Dutch as profoundly attentive to plants (particularly vegetables) and gardens, to the point of regarding a well-tended garden as a kind of symbol of Holland itself. This system of integrated mixed husbandry reflected both the localness of most agricultural production in the area at the time and the fact that it was not entirely separate from other cultures and more distant settlements and markets.

The products of the early Dutch farms would almost certainly have included some **native crops**, as well as many types of food brought from Europe (Piwonka 2008). As

already noted, Dutch farmers were sometimes able to begin farming immediately on fields that they believed they had purchased outright from the Natives (Dunn 1994:224-25), probably including those that had been left lying fallow (van der Donck 2008:20-21). And like other Europeans in the Americas, they also recognized the wisdom of growing food already in use by the Natives. In McWilliams' estimation, the "relatively rough, frontier-influenced style of gathering, cooking, and eating food" in the Middle Colonies included a greater openness to Native American practices on the part of settlers in the region. The colonists learned from Indians how to grow pumpkins and squash (which the Dutch called *quassiens*), corn, and tobacco (Cohen 1992:112-113; McWilliams 2005:9, 177), although tobacco seems never to have been very successfully grown in the region by either the Natives or the colonists (Piwonka 2008:416-17).

Corn, sometimes called "turkey wheat" or "Turkish wheat" by the Dutch, was a staple crop for the Dutch, as it had been for the Mahicans, and they grew it plentifully into the eighteenth century despite its labor-intensive nature (Cohen 1992:112; Piwonka 2008:398). Cohen reports that early Dutch farmers grew corn by plowing and harrowing the soil, then digging furrows in two directions to form five-foot squares. Cohen describes them putting fertilizer (rotted manure, earth from pasture ground, lime, or ashes) into holes at the corners of each square before sowing several corn kernels in each. The corn was hoed after it had sprouted, and the tops of the stalks were cut off in mid-September for use as fodder for dairy cows. The harvest took place in mid-October, with the husking and shelling done by hand in lively work parties that often included a convivial "frolic" (Cohen 1992:112, 114-15; Hurt 1994:60).¹⁴ Pumpkins were sometimes intercropped with corn as the Natives had done. The pumpkin was not terribly popular in Europe, but the North American varieties were of much higher quality (Cohen 1992:113).

It is difficult to gain a precise sense of how Dutch farmers' methods may have depleted or—alternatively—nourished the land. As will be seen in the following chapter, agricultural reformers and innovators of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century were often harshly critical of colonial farm practices, and one widely-accepted historical interpretation that has emerged on this topic is that early farmers responded to the scarcity of labor and the abundance of land by farming a field until it was no longer fertile and then simply moving on to another parcel of property, or moving farther west as lands

¹⁴ The term may come from the Dutch word *vrolijk*, meaning "merry" (Cohen 1992:59).

there became more open to settlement.¹⁵ However there are problems with this analysis. Clearing new land is not necessarily less labor-intensive than continuing to cultivate cleared land; rather the opposite, in fact. And the family histories of people like the Van Alstyne and countless other colonial-era farmers in Kinderhook and throughout the northeast show us people staying in place generation after generation and subdividing their farms so that their children and grandchildren could also make a living from the land. This does not seem to reflect wasteful, short-sighted cultivation, but rather suggests that farmers were generally utilizing their land effectively and even farming it *more* intensively from generation to generation. David Cohen, quoting the late eighteenth century diary of Alexander Coventry and other sources, notes that Dutch farmers used little or no manure on their fields (1992:112- 115), but this does not necessarily mean that they were neglectful or unaware of the value of manure.¹⁶ An alternate explanation, offered by Hal Barron, Brian Donahue, and some others, is that the demands being made on farmland by an expanding and increasingly acquisitive population were simply beginning to outstrip the capacity of older methods and resources by the turn of the nineteenth century—as Donahue puts it, “The limits of what a certain way of living from the land could deliver had been reached” (2004:203).

Reformers and politicians in the young republic responded to novel and unsettling market conditions by disclaiming the methods and practices of earlier farmers and calling for change. They were not wrong about the problem: older American farms *were* declining in productivity. And their solutions, detailed in the following chapter, did offer ways to make farms more efficient and profitable. Where they may have been wrong, in the alternative analysis proposed by Donahue, was in believing that greater efficiency would actually make the problems go away. The subsequent history of American farming suggests precisely the opposite: that the ongoing cycle of increased productivity, competition, and lowered prices has only ever made it more difficult for farmers to make a secure living from their land. That cycle began even before the new nation gained its

¹⁵ This is the view of scholars like Steven Stoll, who writes in *Larding the Lean Earth: Soil and Society in Nineteenth Century America* (p. 31) that “Americans tended to drain the body that hosted them, and the vector always pointed to fresh blood in the West.” This interpretation is accepted uncritically in Searle’s 2004 Cultural Landscape Report, and forms the basis for much of her analysis of Martin Van Buren as an adopter of reform strategies in the later nineteenth century, but it should be revisited in light of the differing views of Donahue and others.

¹⁶ Donahue (2004:203-6) analyzes the use of manure as fertilizer in colonial Concord, Massachusetts, and concludes that the problem was not that farmers did not realize the value of manure, but that they simply did not have enough of it to go around.

independence, sparked not just by declining fertility on older farmlands but by the refusal of Americans to accept that that fertility might have limitations. In this view, it was not “wasteful” colonial farming methods, but rather the imperatives and anxieties of new markets, combined with an emerging national ethos of abundance and limitlessness, that caused nineteenth-century reformers to point fingers of blame at what they saw as failures of earlier generations to produce as effectively as they should have. Agricultural reform of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century may have helped set American farming on a long road in pursuit of an ever-receding goal. This issue, and farmers’ struggles and strategies in relation to it, will recur throughout the following chapters. Here, it is just worthwhile to note that from the earliest period of American farming, soil, and the food that could be produced from it, were topics of deep concern and vigorous debate—literally and figuratively the ground on which Americans were negotiating questions about security, prosperity, and identity.

Agriculture in the Middle Colonies at first seemed set on the same course as that of New England, with an emphasis on diversified farming with no single staple crop. New York farmers grew a variety of grains, including rye, which was used for straw and later in paper-making, oats (mostly as animal feed), and barley.¹⁷ But by 1710, the growing population of the region included a substantial number of settled farmers who were looking for ways to pursue those goals of expansion and increased profitability (McWilliams 2005:187). During this period, **wheat** became a particularly important crop in colonial New York, including in Columbia County. Wheat seemed to be particularly suitable for the kinds of dispersed farms and fields held by many farmers in the Hudson Valley area. It was not as labor-intensive as many other crops, an asset in an area where labor was still a scarce resource (Bruegel 2002:16; McWilliams 2005:189). It required little active maintenance during the growing season, and once it was harvested, bound into sheaves, and stacked in barns, processing it by threshing, winnowing, and grinding into flour could be done over the winter season, spreading out the work involved (Bruegel 2002:20; McWilliams 2005:205). Perhaps most important, it could be stored and transported relatively easily, allowing farmers and traders in the Middle Colonies to reach the growing markets of the West Indies and later Europe. By the mid-eighteenth century, grain accounted for three-quarters of all exports from America to Europe, and the Middle Colonies—sometimes called the “Bread Colonies”—were the primary exporters

¹⁷ Rye was a traditional crop in many parts of the Netherlands, including Jan Van Alstyne’s native Drenthe (Spek 2006:4).

of wheat and flour to southern Europe, Ireland, and Britain (Hurt 1994:53; McWilliams 2005:188). New England, too, which had already depleted its best wheat-growing soils and experienced wheat blights and diseases, was a market for the Middle Colonies' wheat by the late eighteenth century (Hurt 1994:53). Wheat from the Albany region commanded top prices in New York and Boston in the colonial period (Piwonka 1989:38).

The Middle Colonies' emphasis on wheat in the eighteenth century shaped the region's overall economy and contributed to the development of cities, markets, and transportation networks that increasingly affected how farmers in and around Kinderhook shipped and sold their produce. Colonial cities like Philadelphia and particularly New York grew rapidly in this period, in large part because of the new prosperity and opportunities afforded by the expanding economy. By the time of the Revolution, these developments had made the region into what McWilliams calls "a stable economic powerhouse tightly woven into the transatlantic world" (2005:196). Wheat was an important driver for the cycle of competition and market-driven change that characterized—and continues to characterize—the more market-oriented farm sector that was developing in the region and the nation by the turn of the nineteenth century.

Fruit was another significant part of the Hudson Valley's agricultural economy. Adriaen van der Donck reported that

Dutch horticulturists, noting the opportunities existing in New Netherland, have ventured to carry across and plant various apple and pear trees that thrive there. The trees will also grow from seed. . . . In short, many kinds of fruit trees and plant varieties that grow in this country are now already plentiful in New Netherland or are being imported by fanciers. Some thrive also much more naturally than they do here, mainly those requiring warm weather. (van der Donck 2008: 24-25)

Van der Donck was particularly struck by how well peaches thrived on the Dutch farms, and mentioned that fruit trees on these farms were propagated successfully even without grafting (Piwonka 2008:409). According to Cohen, "Eighteenth century travelers often commented upon the fact that each farm had an orchard" (1992:116). The Dutch also grew both sweet and sour cherries, apricots, several varieties of plums and currants, almonds, persimmons, figs, gooseberries, and other fruits, although they apparently made do with wild grapes instead of importing European varieties that were better for making wine (Cohen 1992:113).

The raising of **livestock** was important to New Netherland's farms from their earliest days. Both horses and oxen were used as draft animals, but the Dutch differed

from other colonial-era farmers in their preference for oxen (Cohen 1992:120; Piwonka 1989:10). Dutch farmers also raised goats for milk, sheep for milk and wool, and pigs for meat (Cohen 1992:119). Cows were kept for both meat and milk. Cohen, drawing on Adriaen van der Donck's account, reports that in the seventeenth century these were mostly what he calls the "Holland breed," and that these cows grew slightly smaller in the New World because the quality of the fodder was not as high and they were mated while younger and smaller (Cohen 1992:119-121). Van der Donck also noted that English cattle breeds were purchased from New England because they needed less care and withstood severe winters better than Netherland breeds (van der Donck 2008: 44-45).

Dutch farmers grew a wide variety of **vegetables** both in kitchen gardens and as field crops. Van der Donck energetically catalogued the botany of the region, reporting many kinds of native and imported produce including a number of varieties of cabbage, parsnips, carrots, beets, endive, succory (chicory), sorrel, spinach, artichokes, asparagus, radishes, cresses, onions, leeks, turnips, peas. The varieties of beans included horse beans, Turkish beans, large Windsor beans known as *tessen* or house beans. Melons thrived in the Hudson Valley, especially watermelon (also called *citrull* or water-citron). The Dutch were familiar with watermelon in Europe, but where they imported it from Portugal rather than growing it themselves in the Netherlands. Cucumbers and gourds also grew abundantly (Cohen 1992:113-14). Potatoes were introduced in the area in the eighteenth century and were very widely grown (Cohen 1992:116).

Van der Donck also took careful note of what was growing in Dutch farmers' herb gardens.¹⁸ Some of these herbs were for culinary uses, while others were medicinal. The **medicinal plants** were part of a longstanding botanical healing tradition among doctors in many parts of northern Europe, which seems to have intersected with Native American botanical healing practices in various places, including New Netherland. Van der Donck pointed out this shared use of medicinal herbs by both the Dutch and Natives in the seventeenth century: "The land is full of different kinds of herbs and trees...among which there undoubtedly are good *simplicia*, with which discreet persons would do much good; for we know that the Indians with roots, bulbs, leaves, &c. cure dangerous wounds and old sores" (O'Donnell 1968:28). These remedies were used for veterinary as well as human medicine. By the late seventeenth century, a newer medical science was already

¹⁸ His account mentions rosemary, lavender, hyssop, thyme, sage, marjoram, balm, onions, wormwood, belury, chives, pimpernel, dragon's blood, five-finger, tarragon, laurel, parsley, chervil, and dill, among other herbs. Medicinal herbs mentioned include various kinds of fern, white mullein, "priest's shoe" (likely monkshood), plantain, mallows, comfrey, sassafras, and many others.

beginning to become prominent whose practitioners were scornful about the older models. But plant-based healing, an important fore-runner of modern pharmacology, continued to be practiced by Native and European healers during and well after the colonial period in the New World (Cohen 1992:157; Piwonka 2008:412), and it remains an important aspect of many contemporary “alternative” medical practices.

Dutch farmers drew on longstanding traditions and folk practices in many ways (Cohen 1992:156). An elaborate calendar system, linked with the phases of the moon and the signs of the Zodiac, determined the dates when certain crops should be planted and harvested. A mid-eighteenth-century Kinderhook farmer, Lambert Borghardt, wrote in his day-book:

Soad my flax May the 10. New moon the 8[th] 1766. Begune to plant my Corn May 14, 1766... May the 12 ye 1767. I Sowd my flex [flax] att full moon. Planted my punking [pumpkin] Seeds. May the 25:26 Day att the Last Quarter... May 19:1768. Soad my flax Seed. New Moon 16... Planted my punking seeds May 25. 26:1768. Last Quarter 23 full mo[on] 31. (Cohen 1992:156)

Astronomical schedules, along with a wide variety of information and advice on topics relating to the weather, human and animal health, and home economy, could be found in the almanacs that were an important source of knowledge for early Americans, especially in the days before newspapers and magazines became widespread (Cohen 1992:156; Stowell 1977:xv, 13). Almanacs were printed in various languages for different immigrant groups—for example, there was a Dutch-language *Americaanse Almanac* published in Philadelphia—but aside from some specific Dutch holidays listed on the calendar, the basic format was the same as for English-language almanacs (Cohen 1992:156). Most included a diagram of the “Man of Signs” (Fig. 7), a symbolic representation of the human body showing how its systems and functioning were interconnected with ecological and cosmological systems (Cohen 1992:156; Stowell 1977:19).¹⁹ The almanacs were not self-consciously “folk” publications. Rather, they represented the blend of traditional and modern knowledge that was current at the time. They readily mixed anecdotal lore, Copernican and Newtonian science, humorous aphorisms, recipes, and general advice on a wide variety of topics (Stowell 1977:xv). The almanacs and the folkways associated with them reveal the many layers of knowledge

¹⁹ This *homo signorum* or Man of Signs has been found in almanacs dating as far back as the thirteenth century, but the symbol itself is much older, with ancient Egyptian and other models similarly showing parallels between the individual human body and natural or cosmological ones (Stowell 1997:19). The diagram often linked the twelve signs of the Zodiac with the natural elements, human genders and organs, the planets, and signs that were used to determine the most efficacious times for planting and harvesting crops and carrying out other farming tasks (Cohen 1992:156).

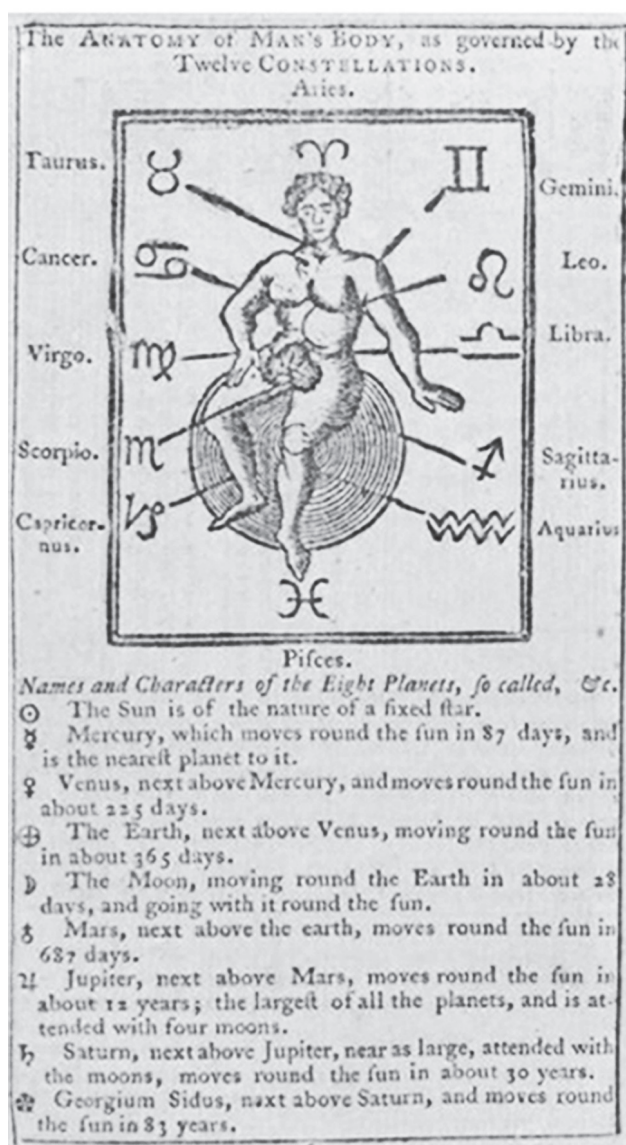


Fig. 7. A "Man of Signs" from Benjamin Banneker's *Pennsylvania, Delaware, Maryland and Virginia Almanack and Ephemeris*, published between 1791 and 1802. (Library of Congress, American Memory Collection/African American Odyssey)

that these early Dutch farmers were drawing on and their sense of their farms as part of an interconnected set of natural systems imbued with both sacredness and scientific structure. Like the Native Americans whose land and crops they were rapidly adapting to their own uses, then, the early Dutch farmers drew on longstanding land-based traditions of both cultivation and healing.

Among the farm implements that the Van Alstyne and other colonial Dutch farmers in Columbia County would have used, three were distinctly Dutch: the Dutch

plow (also called a hog plow), Dutch wagon, and the Flemish scythe or sith (also called *Hainaut*). This style of scythe came from the Low Countries and was used with a “mathook” that held the grass in place so that a reaper could stand more upright while cutting it. It was more efficient than the sickle or reaping hook and was used on Dutch farms through the eighteenth century and later (Cohen 1992:125-26). These tools, and the other available agricultural implements at the time, meant that farming was slow, back-breaking work; two men and a team of draft animals (four to six oxen or three horses) could only plow an acre or two in a day (Wermuth 2001:48). And most farm households owned few tools and few draft animals, meaning that the majority of the work was provided by human muscle-power (Bruegel 2002:21).

The availability of **farm labor**, then, shaped the running of colonial Dutch farms, as it has continued to be a determining factor throughout the long history of agriculture in Columbia County and beyond (Hurt 1994:36). In general, farmers in the Middle Colonies could draw on a diverse labor pool that included family members, enslaved workers, wage laborers, tenant farmers, indentured or “redemptioneered” servants,²⁰ cottagers, and apprentices (McWilliams 2005:193). Because of the high wages that agricultural laborers were able to command in a labor-starved market, most farmers made do with family labor (Bruegel 2002:20). Slavery was by no means as extensive in this region as in the colonies farther to the south, but about half of New York’s Dutch farmers, like the Van Alstyne family and many of their neighbors, did own slaves—typically one or two per family, except in a few of the wealthiest households—before slavery was abolished in 1827 (Cohen 1992:144-45; McWilliams 2005:191).²¹ Like servants, slaves generally lived in the house with the farm family, often above the kitchen or in separate quarters (Cohen 1992:145; Wermuth 2001:50). Many became culturally quite Dutch, and there are still African-American families who share surnames with Kinderhook’s original Dutch freeholders living in the area today (Cohen 1992:145).

Servants and wage laborers were harder to come by in the colonial period, although in comparison with other regions, the Middle Colonies did have a sizeable pool of available free labor—as high as 30% of the total labor force at times, according to one

²⁰ Indentured servants were contracted before they migrated to work for a certain period. Over the eighteenth century, this system became less popular, and “redemptioneering,” or striking independent deals with employers on arrival, became more common (McWilliams 2005:192).

²¹ Bruegel reports that the proportion of enslaved to free labor varied quite widely in the Hudson Valley, ranging from less than 1% in Canaan, in the northeast corner of Columbia County, to almost 30% in Hurley, on the western side of the Hudson (Bruegel 2002:21).

estimate (McWilliams 2005:192; Wermuth 2001:49). Cottagers (workers who lived in housing provided by the landowner) and tenant farmers (who farmed the owner's land in exchange for housing and a percentage of the crop) were also fairly commonly found in the region. Tenant farming was quite widespread in New York state, including of course at the large patroonships or manors to the north (Rensselaerswyck) and south (Livingston Manor, founded by a Scottish colonizer in 1686) of Kinderhook (McWilliams 2005:193).

Although, as we have seen, "Dutch" identity could encompass people from various parts of Europe, Kinderhook's seventeenth century white population was not much more diverse than that. By the middle of the eighteenth century, a handful of new families, including some of Irish, Palatine German, and English (from New England) backgrounds, made appearances in the town assessment roll, a trend that continued up to the time of the Revolution. Most of these newcomers were tenant farmers or squatters who moved onto vacant land (Piwonka 1989:27-28). Acquiring land was a basic goal for many of the people who chose to migrate to America, and one that increasingly shaped the political choices they made and—ultimately—the nature of the nation they would shortly create.

Van Alstyne Ownership of the Lindenwald Lands

Jan Martense and Dirckje Van Alstyne had five sons, from whom the various branches of this extensive family are descended. Two of the five are important to note for this study. The youngest, Abraham, owned the property on the east side of Kinderhook Creek that became "Sunnyside" in the nineteenth century. And Lambert, the middle son, purchased property on the east side of Kinderhook Creek sometime before 1674, including the lands that later became Lindenwald. We will return to Abraham's branch of the family in Chapter Six. Here, we will follow the transfer of the Lindenwald lands from Lambert to his children and grandchildren as a way of exploring how the early Dutch families approached questions of land succession, property ownership, and community ties.

When Lambert died in 1703, his 700-acre property was divided among his children, as was common among the early Dutch settlers. Particularly in the northern and eastern Netherlands, where the Van Alstynes and many other early Kinderhook families seem to have originated, families practiced "partible inheritance," or equal division among male and female heirs, rather than "primogeniture" in which the eldest son inherited all or most of the property. English custom and law favored primogeniture, but in many parts of the northeastern colonies, and particularly among the Dutch, it was

usually the *youngest* son who inherited his father's farmstead, reflecting the fact that older siblings would already have established their own households by the time the parents died (Piwonka 1989:23). This equal sharing of the inheritance reflected the relatively communitarian ideas about property that many of the Dutch brought with them to America and that appear to have intersected compatibly with the emphasis on pursuing opportunity and prosperity in the New World. Individual families sought to increase their wealth and to pass it on, setting them to some extent in competition with other families. But *within* a family, the goal was to equalize everyone's share, thereby preserving the family itself (Narrett 1992:130-31, 144). In the early days of Dutch settlement, spouses merged their property upon marriage and wives inherited all of their husband's assets, often continuing to manage farms and other businesses after a husband's death, leasing the property to sons or employing them as workers. At the time of the English takeover of New Netherland in 1664, one of the important items in the "Articles of Capitulation" agreement between the Dutch and the English stated, "The Dutch here shall enjoy their own customs concerning their inheritances" (if there was no will, English common law prevailed, giving the property to the eldest male child) (O'Callaghan 1856[Vol.2]:250-53). Dutch inheritance customs were legally protected until the time of the Revolution, when the then-new state of New York adopted its own constitution (Cohen 1992:138-39). In Kinderhook itself, the Dutch system was openly acknowledged in the 1686 town charter, where it was referred to as *gavelkind* (Piwonka 1989:23).

Lambert's son Thomas inherited the portion of land that would later become Lindenwald. He built the first permanent house on the property, a stone structure on the lower "flat" near the creek, which is visible on the 1767 map of Kinderhook. A fragmentary description of this house exists in what seems to be a late nineteenth-century newspaper article, which notes that the old stone house was demolished, "greatly to the regret of Mr. Van Buren," before Van Buren purchased the property in 1839: "It was a complete specimen of the old Holland dwelling, built of stone and very heavy timber in 1715, as the large iron figures on the face of it attested."²² Thomas had three sons—William, Lambert, and Peter, in order of age—and two daughters, Catharina and Maria.

²² The article is in the collections of the Columbia County Historical Society. It is headed, "Notes by the Way" from The Amenia Times of "last Monday" (no date or year). Ruth Piwonka speculates that it was written c.1870-90, and that it may have been written by a Van Alstyne, Van Dyck, or Van Alen descendant who had moved to Amenia, NY, possibly Lawrence Van Alstyne, author of the family genealogy *Lambert Janse vanAlstyne and some of his Descendants by one of Them* (Amenia, NY: Walsh & Griffen, Printers, 1897). The article summarizes some of Kinderhook's early history.

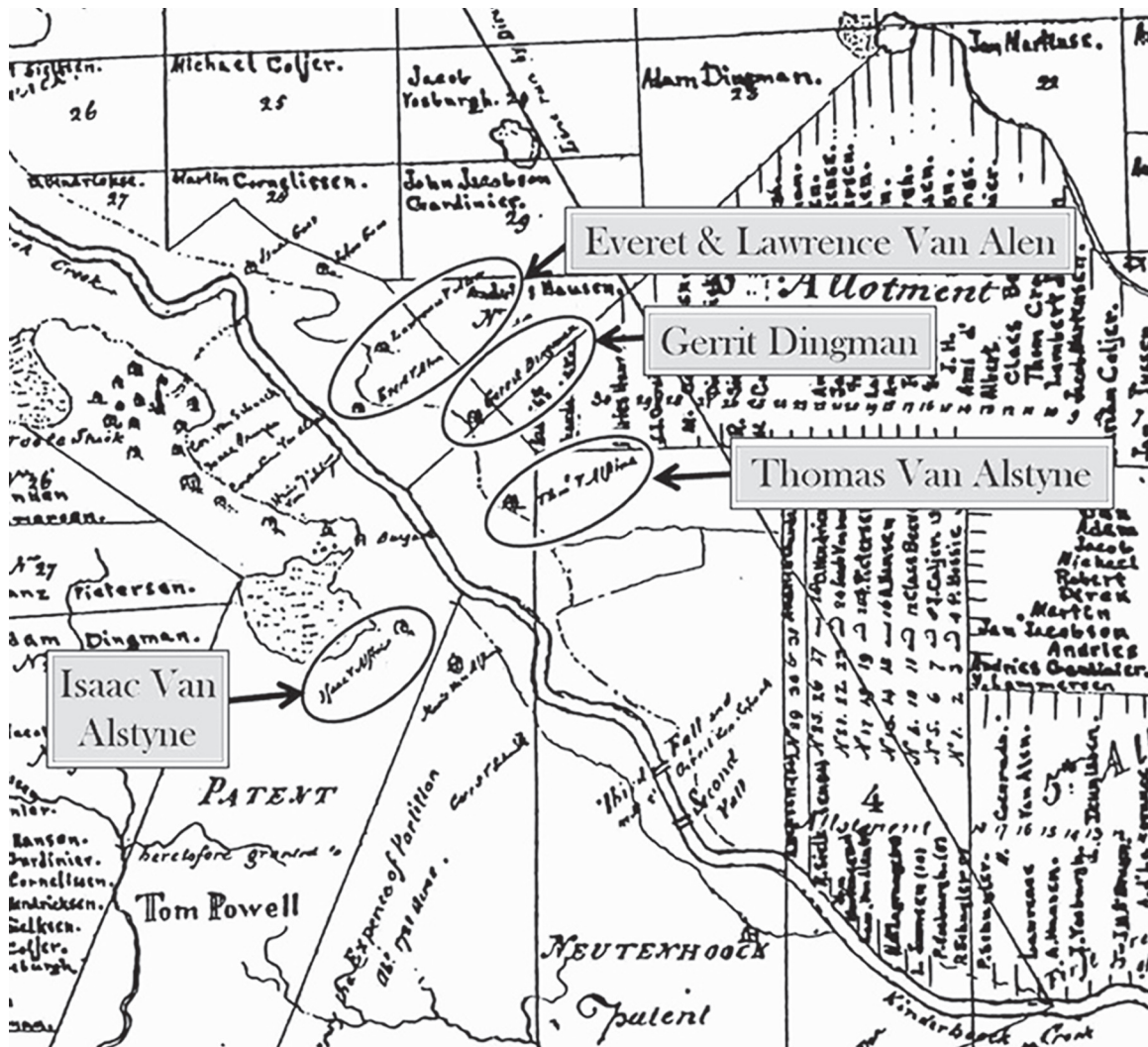


Fig. 8. Thomas van Alstyne's house appears just right of center on the east side of Kinderhook creek on this map. The map is a 1774 copy by Jeremias van Rensselaer of the 1767 map showing the division of the 1687 Kinderhook Patent. Thomas Van Alstyne's first cousin Isaac, son of Abraham Van Alstyne, is across the creek, and Gerrit Dingman and the Van Alens are just to the north. (Reproduced in Collier, *A History of Old Kinderhook*, 1914)

Thomas made a will in 1764 that gives us a particularly clear picture of how the Dutch families sought to balance the rights of all members of their families, despite the English emphasis on eldest sons. (The entire will is reproduced as Appendix D.) First, Thomas gave what sounds like a cursory nod to the English system: "I give and bequeath to my son Wiliam Van Alstyn in consideration of his right of primogeniture of being my eldest son, my large shot gun" (Van Laer 1919:193; Narrett 1992:130 reports similar instances of token bequests to eldest sons). William also received a farm in the neighboring town of Claverack, which he was already occupying, along with his father's brew kettle.

Thomas's son Lambert Thomas was already farming the Lindenwald lands, and they were given to him seemingly with no strings attached. The next son, Peter, inherited Thomas's own farmstead and all of the farm implements, along with a male slave named Lott and a nearby parcel of hickory woodland. But this inheritance was encumbered in various ways, as was also common (Bruegel 2002:25-26; Narrett 1992:145-46). First, Peter was to support his unmarried sister Maria and provide "a free dwelling" for his mother as long as she lived, along with a percentage of the income from the farm. Peter was also to pay his brother Lambert a considerable amount of money on a payment schedule set out in the will, perhaps reflecting a previous debt or the additional value that he received through the farm tools and equipment. In return, Lambert was to turn over some property that he was using "within my fence, house, orchard and meadowland" to Peter on their father's death (Van Laer 1919:195).

The daughters, Catharina and Maria, could legally inherit and own real estate, as was allowed by the Dutch until the laws were changed at the time of the Revolution. But the Van Alstyne seem to have followed a fairly common custom of having the brothers buy out the women's shares with furnishings and cash (Bruegel 2002:26; Narrett 1992:145-46). In the case of Thomas Van Alstyne's family, the eldest son, William, was required to pay a stipulated amount to the older sister, Catharina, who was already a widow, while the youngest son, Peter, paid the same amount to Maria (Lambert, in the middle, appears to have been exempted from this exchange). Thomas left each of his children an equal share in a woodland property which was presumably used as income for lumber or firewood; the three sons also received an interest in a sawmill. The amount owing to the women was to come from the income from the woodlands, or from the sons' own incomes if the woodland proved not to be sufficiently profitable. Catharina and Maria also received all of the household furnishings after their mother's death (although each sibling was to have his or her own oil portrait) as well as one female slave apiece.

The will contained various other mechanisms for balancing the interests of Thomas's children. Although William received the brew kettle, he had to compensate Lambert, Catharina, and Maria by giving them one milk cow each. The family silver was to be divided among all five siblings, "to the one no more than to the other" (Van Laer 1919:195). The will made it quite clear that anyone who complained about the division of the estate was to be cut out entirely, with that share being redistributed among the other "contented children" (Van Laer 1919:195). The Dutch farmers may have taken good care to balance various interests within a household, but the father's authority remained dominant, legally and socially (Wermuth 2001:41).

A disadvantage of partible inheritance was that particular properties tended to be divided into smaller and less economically viable segments over time as they were apportioned to several siblings. Many Dutch families worked to offset this by buying additional land for their children. This is perhaps one reason for the frequent buying and selling of smaller parcels of land among local families that can be seen in early Kinderhook deeds (Cohen 1992:140-41). And with each successive generation, the network of kinship and exchange relationships became more tightly-knit, as we will see in the final section of this chapter. The constant small and large adjustment of landholding around deaths, marriages, and other times took place within a framework of kinship and close acquaintance. “Land was not simply a commodity for these farmers,” Bruegel notes (2002:25). “[It] was a link between generations. It established relationships and did not function as commercial property from which its life-sustaining aspect as well as its capacity as a store of wealth, a reserve, or an asset could be abstracted or isolated” (2002:26). Land—especially farmland, the source of subsistence and generational continuity—had a value far beyond its monetary worth.



Fig. 9. Thomas and Maria Van Alstyne, attributed to Nehemiah Partridge, 1721, eight years after inheriting the property that would later become Lindenwald. (Collection of the New-York Historical Society)

Thomas Van Alstyne's children inherited their farms at a time of upheaval and uncertainty. The American Revolution affected Hudson Valley and New York farmers in various ways. There were shortages of food in many places in the region, prompting different local reactions. Food riots represented the disorderly end of the spectrum; at the other end, many communities formed committees to regulate prices and availability of staple foods—two responses that showed contention about the extent to which market forces should be given free rein in a time of crisis (Wermuth 2001:76-79). Many farms altered their production patterns when more of the labor burden was shouldered by women, who were not usually as physically powerful as men and who often shifted to growing corn and potatoes rather than the more demanding wheat (Hurt 1994:82). Wheat production in New York also began to decline in the Revolutionary era as a result of predators such as the Hessian fly, and perhaps due to soil depletion as well (Hurt 1994:113).

According to one interpretation, the effects of shortages, economic volatility, and a series of poor harvests late in the war and into the early post-Revolutionary period left many Hudson Valley farmers leery about change and risk and shaped their vision of the agricultural landscape as an unforgiving and unpredictable one, with severe limitations on the amount of profit or produce that could be extracted from it (Bruegel 2002:17-19). On the other hand, many farmers did quite well during the war by selling such staples as flour, bread, and beef to the military and to the general population (Hurt 1994:80). Those who did usually became much more knowledgeable about non-local commercial exchanges, including learning about the effects of fluctuating paper currency values (Wermuth 2001:84-87).

The Revolution affected colonial communities in other ways, of course, including reconfiguring social networks and relationships. People loyal to the Crown left or lost favor while those who had worked for the colonial effort often gained stature and sometimes wealth after the war was over. New York confiscated some \$2.5 million worth of real estate from Loyalists by 1782, most of which was sold to wealthy patriots, creating few new opportunities for landless or small farmers (Hurt 1994:83).

It is difficult to say where the Van Alstyne family fell in this continuum, or to know exactly under what circumstances Lambert Van Alstyne and his brother Peter ceased to own the farms they had inherited from their father. Peter, the youngest brother, appears to have left the area with his family, leaving little or no trace in the documentary record. He is known to have lived and prospered at the homestead farm through at least 1779,

but he is not found in the 1790 census for the local area or the Hudson Valley region, and there is no record of him conveying the farm to his sister and her husband or to his brothers Lambert and William. Whether he left the area because of economic reverses, the political changes of the Revolution, or some other reason, Peter is strikingly absent from the deed when Lambert, William, and their brother-in-law Lucas Goes (Catharina's second husband) transferred the deed to the Lindenwald lands in 1787 to Judge Peter Van Ness, a local Revolutionary War commander who prospered due to his war career. It is also not clear how the three men's names came to be on the deed—had they perhaps bought back a property that had been confiscated for political or economic reasons? In any case, by the end of the first decade after the Revolutionary War, the Van Alstyne period of ownership of the property had come to an end, closing the longest continuing family tenure—four generations and almost 120 years—that the farm would see in the four centuries after the Contact Period.

Case Study: The Dingman Family

Just north of Lindenwald is a mid-eighteenth century Dutch farmhouse built by members of the Dingman family, who were among the original freeholders in the Town of Kinderhook (see Fig. 8).²³ Although there is little available evidence about how the early Dingmans farmed or what they grew, other information about them offers a useful comparison with the Van Alstynes and illustrates the exceptionally close-knit set of kinship networks that were established among Kinderhook farmers in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and persevered well into the nineteenth.

Adam Dingman was born in 1631 in Haarlem, the capital of North Holland. He was the second of five children, and the only one who migrated to the New World, making the trip to New Netherland when he was in his early twenties. By the mid-1650s, he was living in Albany County, and in 1663 he was living in Greenbush, just outside Beverwyck (Albany). He was one of the original freeholders in Kinderhook, and owned several parcels of land in the town.²⁴

²³ Preservation mason Ron Moore and his wife Caryn, who own the house now, estimate that it was built between 1740 and 1760, based on paint colors, other architectural evidence, and the presence of the property on the 1744 tax lists under the name of Gerrit Dingman.

²⁴ Information about the Dingmans and Gardiniers is drawn from a variety of sources, including Collier's 1914 history of Kinderhook (pp. 50 and 90-91) and genealogical information gathered over the years by Caryn Moore, who now lives in the old Dingman house. Copies of these materials are included with the project files at Martin Van Buren NHS.

In 1668, when he was in his late thirties, Adam Dingman married a much younger woman, Aeltje Jacobsen Gardinier. Aeltje was the daughter of the strong-willed carpenter Jacob Jansen Flodder, also known as Gardinier. Gardinier and his wife were among the first Dutch settlers in the Kinderhook area, and seemingly among the most entrepreneurial; they owned a good deal of property in Kinderhook and nearby towns, and Gardinier also retained a piece of waterfront land on Manhattan Island, which he seems to have used for the shipping of goods on the river.



Fig. 10. The mid-eighteenth-century farmhouse built by members of the Dingman family, owned since the 1970s and restored by Caryn and Ron Moore.

Adam Dingman's alliance with the Gardenier family added to his own existing landholdings and status in the then-new town. By 1671, he had been appointed to the position of road-master, an important role that involved helping to establish a useable road north from Kinderhook toward Greenbush (Collier 1914:321). Although the river was still a central mode of transportation for people and goods, land transportation networks were beginning to expand. A rudimentary road system was in place by 1670,

with twice-weekly postal service by 1685, and the route of the Post Road (known as the King's Highway before the Revolution) was established through Kinderhook in 1719 (Piwonka 1989:34-35). By the late 1670s, there were three children in Adam and Aeltje's growing family (the couple eventually had seven) and Adam was serving as a county overseer, a prominent position in the town and the county. In 1683, the couple made a joint will, reflecting the Dutch colonial practice of sharing marital property. Nearly 40 years later, the almost-90-year-old Adam revised this document. In both cases, the Dingmans left their property to all of their children equally, male and female, just as Thomas Van Alstyne had done.

The families who lived near the Dingmans belonged to the same network of original settlers in the town: Hoeses,²⁵ Van Alens, Van Alstynes, Cornelissens, Van Burens, and others. Not surprisingly, these families became tightly interconnected through the marriages of their children and grandchildren, beginning with the generation of Adam and Aeltje's children. Their younger son Gerrit married one of his Gardinier first cousins, and two of their daughters married Van Alens, sons of farmer Luykas Van Alen who was probably the builder of a brick farmhouse just north of the Dingman property (Waite 2001:6). One of the Dingman daughters, Sarah, appears to have inherited her grandfather's independent streak. Collier relates a story from family tradition:

The overseer of roads was about to lay out a road through a piece of land the title to which was in dispute. Sarah was determined the road should not run as intended, and so, taking her spinning wheel, she sat herself down in the middle of the proposed roadway and began spinning, in defiance of the advancing workmen. The angry overseer shouted to his men to "run right over her," but they dared not disturb [her]...and the road remained unchanged, veracious tradition alleges. (Collier 1914:361-2)

Adam and Aeltje's son Gerrit and his wife Cornelia Gardinier seem to have built the house now occupied by Ron and Caryn Moore just north of Lindenwald; Gerrit Dingman's name is noted in this location on the 1774 copy of the Kinderhook Patent map (see Fig. 8). Their son Albertus occupied it for a time; two of his sons, Gerrit and Caspar (Casparus) lived on the property in the early nineteenth century. The repetition of given names within families reflects the way the Dutch wove the generations together through their naming practices (Cohen 1992:146-47). The oldest sons were usually named after their father's father, the oldest daughters after their mother's mother; second

²⁵The original Dutch spelling is "Goes," later Anglicized to "Hoes." It is pronounced "Hoose."

sons were named after the mother's father, and so on.²⁶ The children's middle names were patronymics—that is, all children, male and female, would carry their father's names as part of their own. For example, Jacob Martense denoted “Jacob, son of Martin,” locating everyone clearly within the family structure. Daughters, like sons, often kept this patronymic after marriage, following the community-property ethos that pooled both spouses' possessions rather than subsuming the wife in her husband's family identity. Another way that families were bound together was through the selection of godparents to represent both the paternal and maternal lineages. This was an important relationship in the mostly Dutch Reformed communities where the church served as a central focal point for social life and moral leadership.

Thus the Gerrit Dingman of the Revolutionary War period was the grandson of Adam and Aeltje's son Gerrit—like Thomas Van Alstyne on the neighboring farm, the third generation of his family to be born in America.²⁷ Gerrit and his brother Caspar bought considerable acreage from Peter Van Ness and later from his son John Van Ness, some of which was later bought back by Martin Van Buren when he was attempting to restore his new farm to something of its original size—an example of the frequent buying and selling of parcels of land among people in this tight-knit farming community, most of whom were related to one another through long and convoluted kinship ties as well as by ethnic identity.

Food and Identity on Kinderhook's Dutch Colonial Farms

The community that the Van Alstynes, the Dingmans, and their neighbors and fellow Kinderhook farmers belonged to was both intensely local and connected to urban and international markets and populations. As the eighteenth century went on, it was also part of a growing conversation about a specifically *American* identity that was taking shape in the minds of many in the colonies. These various layers of identity and belonging intersected in various ways, including through ideas and practices around land, food, and farming. James McWilliams has argued that the American colonies' abundant land and food combined with the widely shared values of self-reliance and self-determination and

²⁶ Ruth Piwonka notes that some families followed exactly the opposite pattern, with sons named after their *mother's* father and so on.

²⁷ Gerrit was christened in 1757, Caspar in 1759. While christenings sometimes took place shortly after a baby was born, they were also sometimes considerably delayed, making christening dates unreliable indicators of a person's actual birth year.

an impressive intra-regional trade network to produce, by the mid- to late-eighteenth century, a shared ideology that was able to blend self-interest with civic good (2005:298). In fact, he says, “The way [American colonists] thought about food was integral to the way they thought about politics” (2005:15). On the local level, shared occasions involving food were a way to create and reinforce social bonds, a function that was perhaps particularly important in close-knit and often fractious communities (Bruegel 2002:15). More widely, the colonists’ ability to feed themselves and to exchange good-quality food with their fellow colonists up and down the east coast was something they were prepared to defend, and something that came to be a foundational virtue in the new American republic.

Food is a central marker of ethnic identity and belonging, and the foods eaten by Kinderhook’s Dutch farm families would have reflected an inherited cuisine that had been somewhat adapted for a new time and place. The typical Dutch diet in the Netherlands included beans, salt meat, barley or rye bread, fish, bacon, and occasional game meat. The national dish was *hutsepot*, a stew with minced beef or mutton, and the evening meal was usually gruel made from left-over bread soaked in milk (Cohen 1992:166). The Dutch reliance on a basic repertoire of potatoes, vegetables, and meat was something that they were able to continue in the Hudson Valley, where most of the crops they were familiar with grew quite readily. Dutch colonists often ate soup, usually with rye bread and bacon; *ertensoep* (split-pea soup) and *bruinbonensoep* (brown-bean soup) were very common. They ate a good deal of herring and shellfish (especially mussels and clams, which were abundant in the area) with rye bread and butter, as well as *boerekeel met worst* (cabbage with sausage), *stampot* (mashed potatoes with vegetables and greens), *speculaasbrood* (spicy biscuit), fried raisin yeast bread, and apple turnovers (McWilliams 2005:182-83). Peter Kalm, traveling through the region in the 1740s, wrote detailed descriptions of Dutch meals that included breakfasts of tea (with sugar but no milk), bread, butter, radishes, and slices of dried beef or cheese; at other times, Kalm was served the previous night’s leftover gruel, mixed with buttermilk with some sugar or syrup added, for breakfast (McWilliams 2005:184). Suppers might include meat served with turnips or cabbage and accompanied by water or weak beer. Kalm was also offered a salad dressed with vinegar, and sometimes chocolate to follow the meal, but seldom the English favorites of pie or pudding (McWilliams 2005:167). Snacks included meat left from the midday meal or bread and butter with cheese.²⁸

²⁸ McWilliams notes that evidence of the persistence of Dutch foodways is fairly scanty, but he bases his conclusions on the presence of these foods in the area, the absence of any strikingly

Kalm also noted the Dutch dish called *sappaen*, a one-pot meal consisting of corn-meal porridge mixed with milk and sometimes served with meat, bread and butter, or grated cheese (Cohen 1992:167). *Sappaen* was in fact an Algonquian name, and it seems that in adopting this dish, the Dutch settlers had merged a familiar meal with one favored by the Natives they encountered in New Netherland (although the Natives used water, not milk, as the liquid). *Sappaen* suited the Dutch style of family dining; it was served and eaten in a communal dish, a habit continued in some parts of the Netherlands well into the twentieth century (Cohen 1992:168). The Dutch also readily adopted the Native pumpkins and squash. Kalm wrote that the Indians preferred squash to pumpkin, making “pudding or even pie or a kind of tart out of them” while the Dutch and English were more likely to roast halved or seeded pumpkins in the oven, or to boil them, sometimes mashing them with a little milk (McWilliams 2005:177).

Cultural and ethnic values were sometimes communicated through Dutch-American foodways. The physician Alexander Hamilton, traveling through the Hudson Valley in the 1740s, made specific mention of the protracted grace that was said before the meal—evidence of his hosts’ piety, formality, or both—and the slow pace of the dinner itself (McWilliams 2005:182). Hamilton described the neatness and pride in appearance that he found in Dutch kitchens: “They set out their cabinets and bouffets with much china. Their kitchens are likewise very clean, and there they hang earthen or delft plates and dishes all round the walls in the manner of pictures” (McWilliams 2005:198). Peter Kalm wrote that in comparison with the English, the Dutch “are more frugal when preparing food, and seldom is more seen on the table than is consumed, and sometimes hardly that”; the Dutch also drank less alcohol, although beer was a common drink at meals (Cohen 1992:167).

Food and eating related to more than purely local or specific ethnic identities, however. The processes of producing, consuming, and marketing food were woven into the ideas and aspirations that many people in colonial America held. McWilliams has argued that the colonists saw their ability to grow abundant food on their own land as foundational to their emerging identity as Americans. This identity had been shaped in part through the creation of regional cuisines and networks of food exchange among Indians, Africans, and people from throughout Europe, which had merged by the mid-

intricate cooking habits among the Dutch, Dutch settlement patterns (many people lived in relatively close quarters) which suggest close-knit communities where traditional habits would likely have continued, and the fact that the Dutch had access to regional markets where products they did not grow or gather themselves could be found (2005:183).

eighteenth century into a vigorous intra-colonial food economy that colonists were willing to defend against Britain's attempts to control what they ate and drank—for example, by taxing sugar or unloading surplus Indian tea. "In a very real sense," McWilliams says, "food was freedom" (McWilliams 2005:284)—and this was true to some extent even for the unfree and the dispossessed. Native knowledge of plants and cultivation endured and was merged in many ways with European colonists' cuisines and farming practices, while enslaved Africans—like the two slaves in Gerrit Dingman's household in 1790, or the ten who were living and working next door for Judge Peter VanNess—carved out surprising spaces for culinary survival and innovation that often influenced what their owners ate. Writing about West Indian slaves' gardens and marketing activities, Sidney Mintz echoes McWilliams: "Dealing in food was dealing in freedom at many levels" (Mintz 1996:47).

This is not to imply that colonial Americans' cuisines merged in a unified way, any more than their ideas about freedom and virtue fit neatly together. Food and eating have always been areas of social and cultural negotiation, and it is easy to imagine the opinionated Scottish doctor Alexander Hamilton waiting out a lengthy Dutch grace with the same impatience that he showed when scanning a thick Dutch reference work containing what were, to him, ridiculously outdated herbal remedies. But in many ways, these tensions are the point. That is, farming and foodways were everyday arenas in which people in colonial America expressed both belonging and dissent. And through their participation in these arenas during the first generations of European settlement in the Atlantic colonies, they gradually created an infrastructure and a set of ideas that contributed to a sense of shared national interests and identity.

Study Themes in This Chapter

Changing agricultural methods and approaches

- Dutch/English adaptation/adoption of Native crops/methods/fields
- Dutch adaptation of various land-use models familiar to them from Europe
- relatively limited productivity of land because of scarcity of fertilizer
- Middle Colonies (NY, NJ, PA, DE) combined aspects of models more dominant elsewhere in American colonies: staple crop (wheat) but not overwhelming investment in this, some slave labor but not entirely dependent on it, and balance of subsistence and market oriented farming
- significant wheat growing and exporting in Middle Colonies

Farming in a market economy

- relative self-sufficiency within limited regional networks of exchange and barter of products intended for farmers' own consumption
- varying levels of economic links among colonies and between the American colonies and global/international markets (eg. West Indies, Europe)
- increased cash exchanges during Revolution
- ambivalence about giving the market free rein in times of crisis (eg. Revolution)

The roles of policy and law in farming

- Dutch West India Co. policies encouraging settlement and agriculture
- shift from collective (Native) to quasi-feudal (manors) or individual ownership
- uneven, contested process of Europeans acquiring rights and land from Natives, with colonial courts generally supporting European ownership paradigm
- despite English legal emphasis on primogeniture, Dutch colonists still practiced partible inheritance ensuring equal division of lands among all children

CHAPTER FOUR

FARMING IN AN EMERGING MARKET SOCIETY (1787-1839)

The first century of European ownership of the Lindenwald lands reflected life in a multi-generational Dutch-American farming family. The next one was shaped by the personalities and aspirations of a series of politically ambitious and well-connected owners, as well as by a market system that had already begun to develop in the colonial period but which emerged as a central—and vigorously debated—facet of American life after the turn of the nineteenth century. New industrial types of production and the ideas and expectations that went with them also began to reshape farming practices and to offer some new markets for agricultural products. Chapter Four will follow these developments through the period of Martin Van Buren’s childhood and ascendancy to the Presidency, up to the time when Van Buren purchased Lindenwald. Because of the importance of market forces in shaping the choices made by farmers throughout the region beginning in this period, the chapter includes an extended survey of the characteristics of the new market-oriented economy that has so fundamentally shaped agricultural production and consumption in the past two centuries. In essence, the chapter lays out a context for the long history of modern industrial agriculture that has influenced farming at Lindenwald in more ways than may be immediately apparent.

The Emergence of a Market Society in Columbia County

Around 1787, Peter Van Ness began buying land from the Van Alstyne brothers who had inherited it from their father Thomas. The society in which Peter Van Ness operated, and into which Martin Van Buren was born in 1782, was still a very largely agricultural one. As late as the mid-nineteenth century, two thirds of the families in the Hudson Valley were engaged in farming, with another 15% involved in the farm economy in some way, either by combining some form of artisanal work with small-scale farming and gardening or by working in transportation and related sectors used by farmers (Bruegel 2002:8, 44).¹ People still grew a good deal of the food they ate, and the agricultural work force still consisted mainly of household labor, whether by family

¹ These figures mirror those for the country as a whole. Hurt (1994:109) reports that 90% of the American population was engaged in work relating to agriculture at the time of the Revolution, and that this was still about 80% by the turn of the nineteenth century.

members, servants, or (until the 1820s) slaves. Women did most of the domestic work but were also actively involved in exchanges of yarn, cloth, dairy products, and other goods produced on the farm; textiles, in particular, were often bartered for household articles such as furniture (Bruegel 2002:53). Most families kept gardens and orchards that supplied them with fruits and vegetables like beans, cabbage, celery, cucumbers, turnips, potatoes, and apples, in addition to growing fodder and field crops like corn.

Social life in Federal-period Kinderhook was quite close-knit, for better and worse. Martin Bruegel notes that tension and conflict, even violence, were as common as collaboration, and points to the importance of the “symbolic work” done by feasts, rituals, and other community occasions—often involving the sharing of food—as key events that mitigated the tensions and strengthened the bonds that connected people to each other (Bruegel 2002:30-31). While Kinderhook society remained stratified and hierarchical, it was also interdependent and small enough—around 2,500 people in 1825 (Piwonka 1989:25)²—that most people probably at least knew of one another, even if they did not socialize together. By 1790, people moving in from New England and elsewhere had come to outnumber the old Dutch families, but town leadership remained firmly in Dutch hands for several more decades (Piwonka 1989:30). The Dutch Reformed Church, formally organized in 1712, was the only church in the town until the 1830s, when the addition of Presbyterian, Baptist, Methodist, and Episcopal churches reflected the increasing diversity of the population (Piwonka 1989:32). Conspicuous displays of wealth and status were frowned on, even to the extent of damage being done to the offender’s property—often livestock—as a way of expressing community displeasure (Bruegel 2002:29-30).

Most Americans’ diets at the start of this period were ample but not varied. In both rural and urban settings, people ate a good deal of corn and pork, dairy and poultry products, and garden vegetables in season. Food was preserved through smoking, salting, drying, and storage in root cellars, with fresh meat eaten mainly in the late fall when pork or beef could be kept for several days without fear of spoilage and when shared community feasts as the agricultural year slowed down provided occasions for conviviality and reciprocity (Bruegel 2002:31; Hurt 1994:111). Livestock provided draft power, meat, dairy products, and wool (Bruegel 2002:51; Hurt 1994:98). Animals also provided manure, but it is debatable to what extent the Dutch farmers used it widely as a

² By 1825, the towns of Chatham, Ghent, Stuyvesant, and Stockport had been created, each carving off territory that had once been part of Kinderhook (Piwonka 1989:25). The 1825 figure thus reflects the population of the town of Kinderhook as we know it today.

fertilizer. Some observers attributed this to Dutch conservatism; for example, the French visitor LaRouchefoucauld-Liancourt saw “Dutchmen or Dutch descendants” as farmers “disinterested in changing their customs for new ones and who cultivated and labored exactly as they had done for a hundred and more years” (quoted in Piwonka 1989:40). But this pattern was not confined to the Dutch or conditioned entirely by cultural characteristics. Other northeastern farmers, too, were finding that the available farmland, soil fertility, and traditional farming methods were being stressed by a growing population and heightened expectations about the levels of prosperity to which citizens of the new nation could aspire (Bruegel 2002:10; Donahue 2004:203). Many farmers in this period were beginning to move west—to western New York State, Ohio, and the Appalachian region—in search of more abundant, affordable, and fertile land (Hurt 1994:96).

To some extent, though, the decline in farm productivity was about perception as well as reality. This perception reflected a larger ambiguity about the place of farms and farmers in the new republic. In the colonial era, farming had been the bedrock of the population and the American economy, as well as being widely associated with ideals of civic virtue and democratic equality. This was the Jeffersonian vision of yeoman farming as the civic and economic backbone of a nation built on the premise that every man should be able to own and cultivate land. Counterposed to that was the notion, famously associated with George Washington’s Treasury Secretary Alexander Hamilton, that the future of the American economy lay in industry and manufacturing. In reality, these two poles seldom appeared quite so starkly, and farmers, like others in the new republic, often veered between embracing and resisting one vision or the other, or combined them, sometimes in paradoxical ways. The development of manufacturing as an important economic sector did, however, create new dilemmas for farmers. With cities growing, industry beginning to come to the fore as an economic driver, and a focus on efficiency and rationalization in many quarters, many Americans began to see farming—particularly as practiced on a relatively small scale in the old northeastern states—as rather backward. Many farms and fields were indeed depleted by the end of the colonial period, but the *perception* of backwardness also existed, as Americans with newer ideas about the potential for tremendous—even infinite—growth and expansion began to wonder whether agriculture was pulling its weight in a modernizing and industrializing region.

In fact, the apparent decline in early republican agriculture in the northeast may be a signal of a sector that was maturing after a period of expansion. In a comparative case of farming in northern Vermont, Hal Barron points out that the farm economy in

the area he studied actually remained quite stable and productive, with farmers growing what they needed in order to survive economically and maintain their kinship ties. An aspect of the maturation of the agricultural sector is that prime farmland throughout the northeast had largely been claimed and cultivated already; even with a new emphasis on fertility and “improvement,” there were simply limits on how much land was available (Stoll 2002:91). In an era when other sectors of the economy were beginning to expand and change rapidly, this stability and limitation looked to many like stagnation—anathema to the forces of modernization that were gaining momentum (Barron 1985:329-333).

At the turn of the century, then, the Dutch-dominated agricultural society that had been established in Kinderhook was beginning to change in fundamental ways, but this was by no means a simple choice between traditional types of farming and more market-driven modern ones. These changes reflected the development of a more fully market-oriented society in which land, food, and farming were increasingly bought, sold, and operated according to the logic of monetary exchange and new types of production that emphasized standardization, efficiency, and economies of scale. Some farmers embraced these changes and helped to accelerate them, while others resisted them vigorously. Still others found themselves ambivalent, looking for strategies that would enable them to adapt to the new market conditions without losing their autonomy, livelihood, and land.

Early Farmers’ Markets

The marketing of their products was nothing new to turn-of-the-century farmers in Columbia County and other parts of the American northeast. Dutch and other colonial farmers brought with them the memory of market-farming in the Low Countries and other parts of Europe (Cohen 1992:132; Piwonka 2008:411), and much colonial agricultural production was intended for export from an early date—for example, Connecticut Valley farmers were producing tobacco for export as early as 1636 (Hurt 1994:52). Colonial farmers also began marketing their surplus food to one another quite quickly. Saturday was established as market day in New Amsterdam (New York City) in 1656, when “the people from the country bring various wares, such as meat, bacon, butter, cheese, turnips, roots, straw, and other products of the farm to this City for sale” at various locations around the growing city (Piwonka 2008:406-7; Records of New Amsterdam 1897:I/23). Cash crops were being shipped along the Hudson River by 1680 (Cohen 1992:111), and “An act for settling fairs and markets in each respective city and county throughout the Province [of New York]” was passed in 1692 and remained in

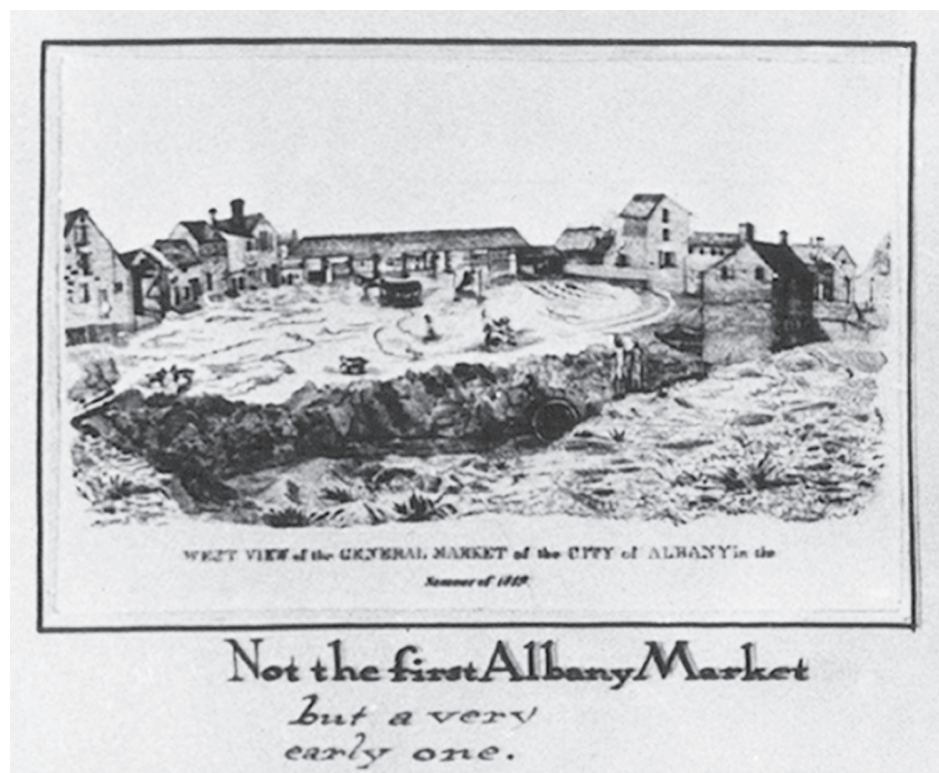


Fig. 11. Two uncredited images from a historical poster in the office of the Capital District Cooperative in Menands, New York show early markets in Albany, c. 1805 and 1819. (Capital District Cooperative, Inc.)

force until 1788 (Hedrick 1969:112). Several special pieces of legislation were passed before the Revolution enabling market fairs in Albany and elsewhere. These were usually held semi-annually under the direction of the Provincial government, with buyers and sellers each paying a toll that went toward defraying the expense of the event (Hedrick 1969:113; Piwonka 2008:406).

These early markets were places where city-dwellers with small or no gardens of their own could buy food from more rural producers, and where rural farmers who were able to grow more than they needed for their own families' use could turn some of their surplus into cash to be used for imported goods and other items they could not make or grow themselves. Increasingly, these included imported food such as coffee, salt fish, fruits, and sugar from the West Indies and other places around the globe (Hurt 1994:111). A British soldier during the Revolutionary War period left a 1777 account of market exchanges in Kinderhook itself: farmers, he wrote, brought vegetables (potatoes, beets, cabbage), poultry and dairy products (eggs, butter, chickens), apples, and cider (Piwonka 1989:39). And the French traveller LaRoche foucauld-Liancourt reported exchanges of meat, cider, potatoes, grains, butter, cheese, and corn, some of it from as far away as the Green Mountains of Vermont, at Kinderhook Landing in 1796, where, he noted, farmers were able to get better prices than in Albany's market (Piwonka 1989:40).

Characteristics of the Nineteenth-Century Market Society

As the new century got underway, the production of food and other farm products for sale in the marketplace began to accelerate. This change was linked with a range of developments that significantly affected how farmers cultivated their land and how they saw themselves in relation to American society.³ **Urban markets and centers** came to play a greater role in their decisions about what to grow and how to market it. New York City, with its explosive rate of growth (from 60,000 people in 1800 to 230,000 by 1830), loomed particularly large in the world of Columbia County farmers (Bruegel 2002:72), as it has continued to do ever since. Albany was also a significant market, and the town of Hudson, founded by entrepreneurs from New England in 1785, became an increasingly important commercial and shipping center for the county and the region, taking away some of Kinderhook's own former prominence in those functions (Bruegel 2002:57; Piwonka 1989:40).

³The following section is based largely on the work in Martin Bruegel's excellent study, *Farm, Shop, Landing: The Rise of a Market Society in the Hudson Valley, 1780-1860*, which explores this shift in great depth and focuses on many specific examples from Kinderhook and neighboring towns.

Increasingly, farmers shifted away from mixed farming with an emphasis on family subsistence and toward **specialized products grown for commercial markets** (Hurt 1994:114). Specialization in dairy farming began in the second quarter of the nineteenth century in the Hudson and Mohawk Valleys, with many of the products formerly sold and bartered on a small and local scale by farm women now sold in more distant and urban places (Cohen 1992:124; Hurt 1994:98; McMurry 1995:1-2). As the farms in western New York state began to compete in dairy production after 1820, Hudson Valley farmers turned more toward the sale of hay and perhaps also meat animals, in which their relative closeness to New York City gave them a competitive advantage (Bruegel 2002:103). This shift toward market-oriented production is reflected in the records of the merchants who shipped goods on the Hudson River. In 1801, one merchant on the west side of the river shipped produce for about 40% of his local customers, with the balance of his business being done on a more local scale. By 1824, that figure had risen to 56%, and the overall value of what was being shipped had also risen considerably in this period (Bruegel 2002:93). About a quarter of the produce from farms in the Connecticut, Hudson, Delaware, and Susquehanna river valleys was being sold and traded in markets by the 1820s (Hurt 1994:127). In addition to these connections with non-local markets, farmers also began to produce for non-food uses, as the case study on Columbia County's rye-paper industry will show at the end of this chapter (Bruegel 2002:65-66).

As the market economy expanded, prices shifted away from being set locally toward a more standardized and depersonalized calculus that was decided in more distant places. At the turn of the nineteenth century, there were still quite different circuits of exchange, each with its own pricing system. Locally, a farmer might charge more to a customer who understood that floods had limited what could be grown that season, or less to someone who was a close relative or friend, while the prices fetched in New York City or Albany were not swayed by these kinds of social considerations. In the early nineteenth century, a more unified competitive market began to affect even local transactions. For example, an 1810 city ordinance in Hudson specified that the first person wanting to purchase meat from a vendor in the public market had to be allowed to buy it, rather than the seller holding back some products for favored customers, a clear reflection of the growing expectation that everyone would be subject to the same general rules of supply and demand. The two parallel circuits had largely merged by the middle of the nineteenth century, by which time New York City prices largely determined Hudson Valley ones as well (Bruegel 2002:67-68).

The foundational economic and social changes involved in the market transition played out in **laws and policies** that sometimes favored the free operation of the market and sometimes attempted to encumber it with more social or relational concerns. Lawmakers involved in crafting these laws were operating from a range of motives. Some were trying to open economic opportunity to a broader range of participants; others were protecting the interests of the monied classes. In practice, farmers, merchants, and customers often worked out *de facto* “fair trade” agreements that took various interests into consideration. Bruegel paints a fairly positive picture of how this took place in the Hudson Valley in the early nineteenth century:

Pressure from the neighborhood—or what we might call its economic culture—kept long-distance traders inserted in networks that gauged exchange values on the basis of the effort it took to produce a good rather than on its reaction to New York City market forces. The system guaranteed farmers a secure level of income for their goods and the prospect of garnering additional monies in New York while merchants could count on recurring entrustment of farm produce. Indeed, this mutual interest generated trust which, in turn, sustained long-distance commerce within the conventions of personal relationships. . . Exchange did not amount to an individual act but took place in enduring partnerships whose particular honor code bore a great deal of likeness to those between friends. Fair business principles sanctioned some profit but prohibited caveat emptor practices. They respected an implicit notion of a “just price.” (Bruegel 2002:59-60)

More and more often, though, official policies and laws supported the *expansion* of markets, not their restriction. The 1810 Hudson ordinance is one example of a policy that supported the growing market orientation of agricultural and food production; early nineteenth-century conflicts over bread prices in New York City show the development of another.

Given the importance of bread as a staple food, many colonial and early republican governments offered consumers some protection from market fluctuations by passing laws—known as the “assize of bread”—limiting the amount of profit bakers could make. Rooted in medieval English practices, these laws were resented by early American bakers, much as contemporary laws restricting the price of milk are resented by dairy farmers who often find themselves unable to charge enough to cover their costs of production. In November of 1801, New York City’s bakers staged a one-day work stoppage that frightened consumers badly and provoked heated debates about the kinds of rights and opportunities that existed in the emerging American free-market economy.

The bakers, in alliance with grocers, farmers, and others in their chains of supply, tried to present themselves as independent and skilled artisans with a right to the honest profits of their own labor. Consumers, alarmed by the possibility of shortages and monopoly control of the food supply by the bakers, demanded government intervention to ensure that bread remained available. Others—including the growing class of bankers and those who circulated capital—saw guild and trade networks as a barrier to free and open trade. In New York City, a consortium of these men responded to the bakers' strike by forming a new corporation, the Bread Company, that aimed to provide cheaper bread to all and to circumvent the power of the artisan-bakers.

The bakers had been attempting to assert their own right to a piece of the new economy, much as tenant farmers would do later in the century. But in both cases, the small producers miscalculated, failing to understand their own lack of power within a system increasingly dominated by concentrations of capital and the unforgiving logic of efficiency and profitability. In New York City, the bakers and their allies finally managed to get the assize discontinued in 1821. But by helping to create the legal underpinnings for a more wide-open market system, they lost in the longer term. They opened themselves up to competition from much larger entities who could provide the same goods at lower prices, which eventually made it difficult or impossible for the smaller producers to stay in business (Rock 1984:184-97). This was an irony of Jacksonian politics: in emphasizing local control and fighting against centralized economic policies, lawmakers left policy vacuums that made small farmers and producers more vulnerable to large-scale economic competition and crisis (Summerhill 2005:59).

The **price of land** increased greatly as the market society became more developed. In part, the rise in prices reflected the fact that many farmers were “improving” their land to make it more productive. An 1818 visitor noted that the pine woods north of Kinderhook, situated on land once valued at a dollar an acre, had been almost entirely cleared and was now selling for \$75 to \$80 an acre (Piwonka 1989:40). But it also reflected the fact that prime farmland was no longer as readily available as it had been during the settlement era, as well as the growth of a speculative land market in which real estate was more and more often sold as a commodity. Farmers sometimes sold land in order to be able to leave a cash inheritance for their children, rather than *buying* land as a way of ensuring that all siblings would have farms of their own (Bruegel 2002:123). Nationally, farm wages were about nine dollars a month in the 1820s and thirteen dollars a month by the 1850s; given that a farmer needed between \$500 and

\$1000 to set up independently, it took at least a decade's worth of work to save enough to buy and start a farm (Hurt 1994:128).

More **intermediaries** became involved in the marketing and distribution of farm products in the Federal period. These included the merchants who operated at the river landings. These merchants had often been socially ambiguous figures—necessary for trade, yet associated with the non-local world of cities and commercial markets, which carried moral and economic risks (Bruegel 2002:28). Although this change would seem to suggest that farmers had to share more of their profits with middlemen, many farmers actually embraced the new arrangement because they were less socially obligated to the middlemen than they had been to local customers and brokers, and were thus able to charge higher prices (Bruegel 2002:96).

Bankers were another kind of intermediary whose importance increased greatly. As with traders, farmers had often been deeply suspicious of banks and bankers; now, however, the realities of doing more business outside of local areas required more access to **capital and credit**. The word “capital” itself first appeared in print in the Hudson Valley starting around 1800. By the 1840s, it had acquired its contemporary meaning: a measure of wealth that was calculated in terms of dollars rather than in relation to social relationships and considerations (Bruegel 2002:1-4). Many of the policies referred to under the shorthand term of “Jacksonian democracy,” including those of Martin Van Buren, were devoted to resisting or dismantling the growing influence of the capital-holding classes who were constructing a new kind of national economy fueled by credit and monopoly. For example, Van Buren's “independent treasury” plan, enacted in law after a difficult fight in 1840, was an attempt to sever what one radical supporter called the “corrupt alliance between Bank & State” (Cole 1984:360). That alliance, however, continued to deepen as the nineteenth century went on, a process that continued into the twentieth century as well.

Along with the new depersonalization of prices and capital, there was a realignment of **time and work patterns** to conform to the growing emphasis on systemization of schedules and products (Bruegel 2002:66). The agricultural labor force, too, was changing. Tenant farming and wage labor became more prevalent in much of the northeast (Hurt 1994:128); in Kinderhook, people of Dutch, Palatine German, English (or from New England), and Irish backgrounds alike more often worked land owned by others (Piwonka 1989:28). As farms became more geared toward the efficiency and greater predictability required for commercial production, the variable schedules suited

to family labor no longer fully answered farmers' needs (Bruegel 2002:91). At the same time, new types of farming—particularly the greater emphasis on livestock—created opportunities for year-round jobs rather than just seasonal ones (Bruegel 2002:105, 111). This was not, however, a full-scale change (Barron 1985:328). Family labor remained crucial on most farms in the northeast, and in Columbia County, the evidence suggests that many of the tenants and wage laborers were not transient outsiders, but were drawn from Dutch and other families with a long presence in the area, as we will see. What was different was that the foundational expectation of someday owning a farm of one's own was becoming more difficult to achieve in the nineteenth century. Rising land prices, the demands of a competitive marketplace, and the consolidation of prime farmland in the hands of the more prosperous farmers all combined to put land ownership out of reach for most younger and less well-capitalized people. These factors may have contributed to the perception that farming was no longer as dynamic a sector as it had once been—a perception that led to efforts to revitalize the agricultural economy almost as soon as the new nation had been established.

Foodways were changing in tandem with these other changes, although most people's diets were not yet radically different than they had been in the eighteenth century. Non-local items like coffee and sugar were among many new consumer goods that were used by the wealthy to express social status and also as a challenge to that dominant status by those who aspired to gentility (Mintz 1985). In a new "hierarchy of foodstuffs," certain meats became more desirable—beef, for example, rather than chicken or veal—while whiter and finer grains—wheat rather than corn or rye—came to be seen as more refined and civilized (Bruegel 2002:181).⁴ At the same time, even farmers themselves were beginning to buy more of their food from others, a trend that became noticeable in the 1830s and was deeply entrenched by the 1850s and 60s. The mid-Hudson Valley region, formerly a net exporter of wheat, had to begin importing more wheat than it sold by 1855, as farmers switched more and more of their fields to growing oats and hay that they could sell in New York City for the many horses that powered the city's expanding transportation systems (Bruegel 2002:79).

⁴ Sugar and caffeine also intersected interestingly with the emergent industrial economy, as mill owners recognized their utility in keeping workers more productive in repetitive tasks over long periods of time (Mintz 1985:174). Account books for Kinderhook-area factories document this pattern—for example, Nathan Wild bought \$20 worth of coffee for his workers at the Kinderhook Manufacturing Company in Valatie in 1816 (Bruegel 2002:153).

Fluctuating prices and markets (including those caused by wars and embargoes such as those of the War of 1812), concerns about actual and perceived declines in farm productivity, and new scientific ideas sparked a variety of **reform and revitalization efforts** among political, scientific, and agricultural leaders around the turn of the nineteenth century (Hurt 1994:103). Increased production on old and new fields, new and more efficient tools, a greater number of animals of healthier stock, and the resulting increase in available manure for fertilization, as well as new patterns of year-round labor organization, created a feedback loop that began to change farming greatly in this period. Educational and publishing ventures were formed to encourage farmers to restore and enhance the fertility of their soils through crop rotation and the use of manure and other fertilizers (Bruegel 2002:99; Hedrick 1969:119). Increased attention was given to plant and animal breeds, with new types of livestock like Merino sheep and Shorthorn cattle being imported early in the nineteenth century (Cohen 1992:124; Hurt 1994:103-4). Horatio Gates Spafford reflected these efforts when he wrote in his 1813 gazetteer of New York State that Kinderhook had good soil but that much of it “appears exhausted, and timber is very scarce, owing to bad management. . . But its agriculture is rapidly improving, and the use of Gypsum as a manure, with the introduction of select breeds of domestic stock, particularly sheep, have characterized a new era in agriculture, with a spirit of improvement widely diffused” (Spafford 1813:265-67).

This “spirit of improvement” found expression in a variety of ways, some of which were embraced by Martin Van Buren when he began his post-Presidential farming career at Lindenwald (Searle 2004:30). In the spirit of association that Alexis de Tocqueville saw as so characteristic of the young republic, like-minded reformers and modernizers began to gather together in organizations and societies devoted to strengthening agriculture in the region. Notable among these in New York State was the Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, Arts, and Manufactures, organized in Albany in 1791 with a membership that included some of the most illustrious and well-connected men of the state.⁵ The Society laid the groundwork for several successive groups that were eventually absorbed

⁵ Similar societies were founded in other states around this time, including the South Carolina Society for Promoting and Improving Agriculture and Other Rural Concerns, Philadelphia Society for Promoting Agriculture (1785), Burlington (New Jersey) Society for the Promotion of Agriculture and Domestic Manufactures (1790), Massachusetts Society for Promoting Agriculture (1792), and Society of Virginia for Promoting Agriculture (1811). Membership of the New York Society included financier John Jay, Columbia County politician Robert Livingston, Revolutionary War generals George Clinton and Horatio Gates, scientist, professor, and politician Samuel Latham Mitchill, and many others (Hurt 1994:103, 115).

more fully into state government with the creation of the New York State Agricultural Society in 1832 (Hedrick 1969:113). The subjects covered by the original Society reflect the wide range of questions and solutions that were being included in debates about the future of agriculture, along with the scientific experimentation of the period. Members heard presentations on cast iron plows, the use of red clover to improve poor land, maple sugar making, the best ways to feed hogs, and decay in apple trees, as well as more exotic ideas like domesticating elk and moose, introducing chamois from the Alps into New York State's mountain ranges, and manufacturing leather from porpoise skin (Hedrick 1969:115-16).

As later happened with the university-based agricultural research stations and extension services of the nineteenth and twentieth century, many farmers viewed these early reform efforts as more conceptual than practical, but this began to change with the emergence of the state fair as a forum for showcasing agricultural innovation and achievement. One of the earliest state fairs, run by the Berkshire Agricultural Society, took place just across the Massachusetts border from Columbia County in 1811 (Hurt 1994:104). At these events, which continue to be important social and professional gathering-points for farm communities today, farmers could stay up to date with new developments, such as the introduction of a patented plow with interchangeable parts, reflecting the new industrial approach to tools and production; this invention was credited to Jethro Wood of the Finger Lakes region of New York in 1814 (Hurt 1994:102). Agricultural fairs and farmers' markets also added an element of display and performance to the everyday activity of farming. Like the "model farms" of wealthy reformers and the tourist itineraries that would shortly develop, they provided stages on which farmers and non-farmers could present their visions of what food and agriculture meant in the young republic.

Another aspect of this presentation was the **agricultural press**, which expanded along with the printing industry and enabled reformers and others to reach unprecedentedly large audiences. Only a minority of farmers subscribed to these, but the number was still quite large; about 350,000 farmers, mostly in the north, read at least one agricultural periodical by 1860 (Hurt 1994:149). One of the most influential northeastern reformers was Jesse Buel, a Connecticut native and newspaper publisher who turned to politics and agricultural reform in the 1820s. Echoing Jefferson's agrarian ideals, he believed that "Agriculture is truly our nursing mother, which gives food, and growth, and wealth, and moral health and character to our country. It may be considered the

great wheel which moves all the machinery of society” (Carman 1947:xix). He created an experimental 85-acre farm just west of Albany and then disseminated his findings and ideas in publications like *The Cultivator*, a journal started in 1834, and *The Farmer’s Companion*, a popular instructional work that went into 11 editions. *The Plough-boy* was a journal published by the New York Board of Agriculture in 1819-20; the *American Agriculturalist*, another important farm journal, was started in New York City in 1842 (Hurt 1994:149).

In considering these early American agricultural reformers and innovators, it is important to question their own assertions that agriculture in the early republic was in a sad state and that the traditional methods used by earlier farmers had depleted the soil of its nutrients. As noted above and in the previous chapter, the reformers were not necessarily identifying the real root causes of farm depletion: the inability of traditional methods to satisfy the needs and desires of growth. And their solutions, while laudable and workable in many ways, often failed to address the way that enhancing productivity and efficiency were likely to encourage the expansion of market-driven farming rather than to resist or tame it. As with subsequent generations of reformers, including many in our own time, these nineteenth-century writers were part of a cycle that has often created as many problems for farmers as it solved.

Two final and interconnected aspects of the emerging market society were its **economic volatility** and its somewhat paradoxical relationship to the **political democratization** that was taking place in Jacksonian America, in which Martin Van Buren played such an important part. The free market seemingly offered opportunity for all, and much of the political agitation among small farmers, artisans, and entrepreneurs in the early republic was prompted by a desire for access to that opportunity, as we have already seen in the case of New York City’s bakers. Americans were also realizing that the flip side of opportunity was a heightened risk, and that the bursting of financial bubbles affected the lives and livelihoods of far more than just direct investors and speculators. Volatility, as Karl Marx and other political philosophers of the era pointed out, was part and parcel of a capitalist economy.

The Panic of 1819, the first major economic crisis of the new republic, brought this home to farmers and others in Columbia County and beyond. As peace came to Europe in the aftermath of the Napoleonic Wars, renewed international competition led to falling cotton prices and tightened credit in the U.S. This economic depression alarmed farmers who saw the value of their land—in which their wealth was tied up—

drop precipitously while markets for their products disappeared. In response to this economic crisis and other challenges facing farms in the eastern U.S., many agricultural reformers argued that farmers had to become more systematic and productive in their methods. An “important minority” (Stoll 2002:48) of farmers and planters turned to new farming strategies, including crop rotation, cover cropping, amendments such as gypsum and lime, and greater use of animal manure as an internally-produced form of fertilizer to revitalize depleted soil and add worth to financially-pressed farms. But these “improved” methods failed to come completely to grips with the real dilemma of farming in a market society. The reformers were searching for ways for farmers to compete and thrive in the changing economy, but in doing so, they embraced a market-oriented logic that was at the root of the changes that were already beginning to make it more difficult for small farmers to prosper.

It would take many decades for the implications of this to become clearer, but the seeds of what some have termed the “paradox of plenty” (Levenstein 1993) or “problems of plenty” (Hurt 2002) were sown in this period. Efficiency and refertilization enabled some farmers to become or remain competitive, but masked the ways in which free markets and small-scale agriculture could be fundamentally at odds. Pursued to their own ends, industrial capitalist markets foster efficient production and economies of scale that lead to abundance and thus to low prices—and this is precisely what has happened in American agriculture over the past two centuries. But these kinds of markets also lead toward consolidation, mechanization, and, in many cases, *over*production. All of these trends have had the largely unintended consequence of driving many farmers out of business and working against the ability of small, diverse farms to survive economically.

The genesis of today’s unresolved questions about the farm sector can be seen quite clearly in this period. Those questions were sharpened by other instances of volatility in the agricultural economy, including the short-lived boom and bust in sheep and wool in the early 1820s (Bruegel 2002:101; Hurt 1994:98) and the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, which created new competition with larger farms in western New York State (Cohen 1992:188; Hurt 1994:128; Wermuth 2001:120-21). Perhaps the most striking illustration of how much things had changed came with the Panic of 1837. This economic collapse, catalyzed by the Jackson administration’s demand that hard currency rather than paper money back up the land speculation boom in the American west, revealed the extent to which credit-driven expansion was already essential to American prosperity, for farmers as well as industrialists. It also showed how easily the Jacksonian

coalition of farmers and urban working men that had put Martin Van Buren in power could fracture under stress. The Jeffersonian vision of a citizenry built of independent yeoman farmers—an ideal embraced by many Jacksonian Democrats in both North and South—was already out of step with the times. Even as farmers were clamoring for more land and greater access to emerging markets, they were finding themselves caught in cycles of debt and competition that were increasingly difficult to withstand. Americans were pursuing opportunities in an expanding market economy that seemed to offer limitless growth, but they were also becoming painfully aware not only that limits existed, but also that growth itself posed a new set of problems that were difficult to grasp and respond to. For farmers, particularly, these changes were problematic. As Thomas Summerhill notes in his discussion of agrarianism in nineteenth-century New York, “historically, farming in the United States has symbolized something more than an economic exercise,” and well after the shift into commercial farming, there were still many farmers in New York State who regarded farming more as a way of life than simply as a business venture (Summerhill 2005:224).

This was the changing world into which Martin Van Buren was born in 1782. Van Buren himself built much of his early political reputation—and narrowly won his first state senate election in 1812—on the strength of his support for tenants on the Livingston Manor in the southern part of Columbia County, who were challenging the legality of the Livingston Patent.⁶ Tenant resistance was nothing new in the county; it began in the colonial period and gained momentum in the Jacksonian era, when it culminated in the “Anti-Rent War” of the late 1830s and 1840s (Cole 1984:407-9; Piwonka 1989:29). As Van Buren began his rise to power in the 1820s and 30s, he aligned himself with those who sought to expand the franchise, limit the power of banks and other credit-granting, capital-rich institutions, and create new political structures. This effort represented a varied and fluctuating set of constituencies and to some extent reflected older Jeffersonian ideals of a virtuous nation rooted in yeoman farming.

But those ideals were increasingly hard to sustain in the turbulent period of the early nineteenth century. It was becoming clear that the capital-based economy

⁶ As with much of Van Buren’s maneuvering, it is not entirely clear what proportions of political ideology, personal values, and tactical considerations motivated his actions. Some historians (for example, George Bancroft and David Ellis) have praised him as a champion of the people against the manorial elites, while others (notably Donald Cole) have argued that this is overstating the case, and that Van Buren was “a careful, correct lawyer helping those in need, and...a clever politician looking for popular support, but not...a hero endangering his career in a battle against the landlords” (Cole 1984:30).

was creating new kinds of inequalities and hierarchies, and that small farmers and businesspeople were at a severe competitive disadvantage within it. Van Buren's own political trajectory illustrates the volatility of the times. To assemble a coalition of supporters for his farm and finance policies, he courted Southern planters whose use of enslaved labor carried its own set of political and moral hazards from which there were no positions of safe isolation in the fraught political atmosphere of the antebellum years. Van Buren's own preference for maintaining a settled social order led him to side with the landlords rather than the unruly tenants in the Anti-Rent insurrections of the 1830s and 1840s, costing him the support of the small farmers whose rights he had championed two decades earlier (Cole 1984:407-9). And his administration's responses to the Panic of 1837, geared toward shoring up the essentially pre-industrial foundations of the national economy, did not answer the immediate needs of the growing numbers of urban and industrial workers, who wanted to see credit and employment opportunities expanded rather than curtailed. Van Buren rose to power in the 1810s and 1820s largely on the strength of agrarian ideals and other older American virtues, but he went out again largely because that foundation, and the political allegiances associated with it, had shifted tectonically by the 1840s.

Connections With National Power: The Van Ness and Paulding Era

The ownership of the Lindenwald lands between the 1780s and the 1830s shows the transition between the largely local, agricultural world of the early Dutch settlers and the increasingly market-oriented society, with its growing emphasis on rationalized, standardized production and its tremendous economic and political volatility. Peter Van Ness, who purchased a good deal of land from Thomas Van Alstyne's sons starting in 1780, belonged to the interconnected network of Dutch families who had by then been settled in the area for several generations. Peter's ancestor, John Van Ness, had built a farmstead along Kinderhook Creek in what is now the town of Chatham (Collier 1914:102). Peter himself was born in 1734 in Claverack, where his father's house still stands.⁷ He fought in the Revolutionary War, made a fortune in trading activities during the war, and then served in various civil and legal capacities, including as a Judge and Senator.

⁷ Collier (1914:391-92) asserts that Peter Van Ness was born in Ghent, but Ruth Piwonka notes that map and baptismal records clearly indicate the Claverack location, and suggests that Collier was mixing up two branches of the extensive Van Ness family. Peter did live in Ghent around 1779, according to the tax rolls for that year.

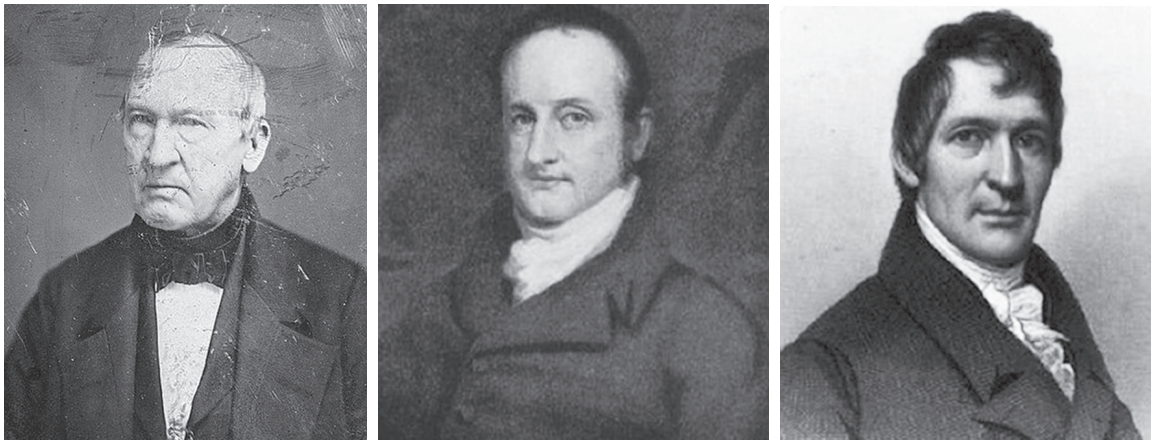


Fig. 12. The three sons of Peter Van Ness: (left to right) John Peter Van Ness (1770-1846) by Mathew Brady. (<http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3c09933>), William Peter Van Ness (1778-1826) (<http://www.findagrave.com/cgi-bin/fg.cgi?page=gr&GRid=6998562>), Cornelius Peter Van Ness (1782-1852) (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Cornelius_P_Van_Ness.jpg)

Peter Van Ness also appeared to be among the growing numbers of Dutch and other farmers in Columbia County who aspired to a prosperous lifestyle and social status that to some extent reframed the old “patroon” role as a kind of self-made republican lord of the manor, or a gentleman farmer with close ties to political and financial power.⁸ He assembled a 500-acre property, and by 1790 his household included his three sons (20-year-old John, 12-year-old William, and eight-year-old Cornelius), two women, and ten slaves. They lived in Thomas Van Alstyne’s old stone house on the lower terrace until the completion of a substantial Federal-style house in 1797 on the upper terrace near the Post Road. This house—one of a growing number of brick houses in the county at the time—was a statement about the position Peter Van Ness saw himself and his family occupying (Richards et al., 2006:21). It is not known for certain what kind of dwelling existed across the road on the 280-acre parcel that he purchased along with the 260 acres that became the Lindenwald farm. But it appears that there was a structure there, and that it was perhaps occupied by a tenant who farmed the fields east of the road (Worsfold 2009:2-7). Van Ness also owned properties elsewhere in the county which were farmed by tenants (Worsfold 2009:2). Van Ness gave his Kinderhook estate a new name—Kleinrood, or “Little Red”—and made a further statement about the family’s social standing and ambitions by having his three talented sons educated for the law rather than raised to be farmers.

⁸ Tamara Plakins Thornton has written about this role in the context of Massachusetts elites in *Cultivating Gentlemen: The Meaning of Country Life among the Boston Elite, 1785-1860* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1989).

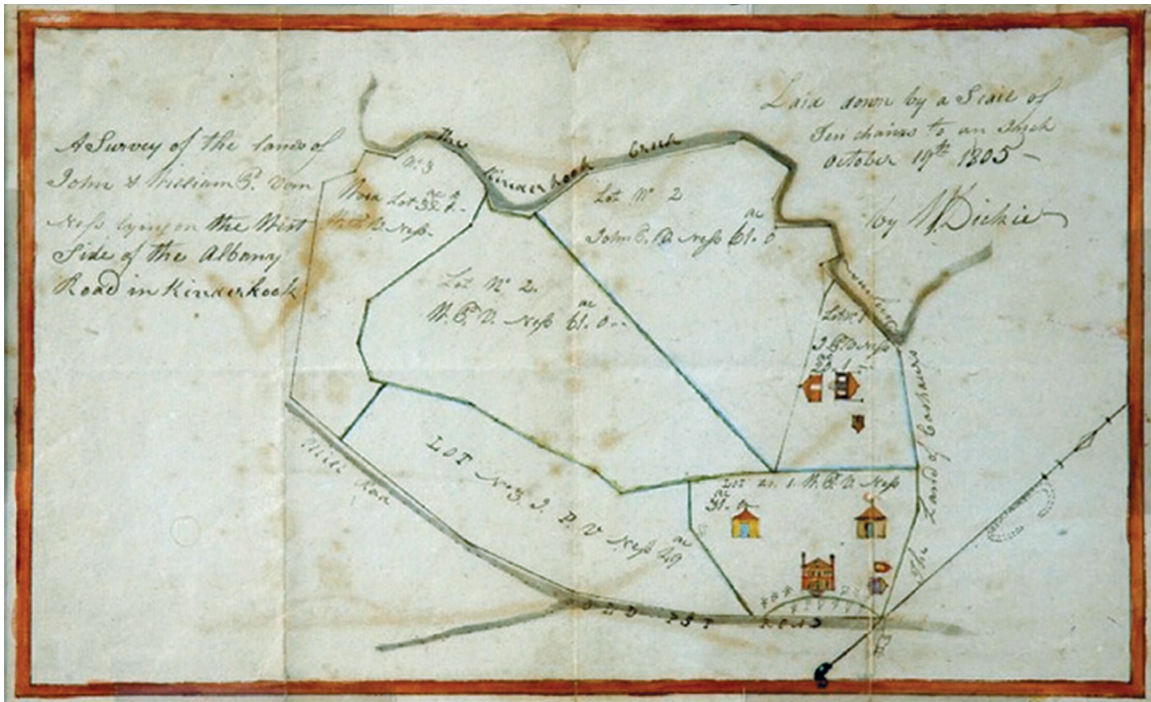


Fig. 13. 1805 map by William Dickie, "A survey of the lands of John and William Van Ness...on the West Side of the Albany Road in Kinderhook." (Martin Van Buren NHS)

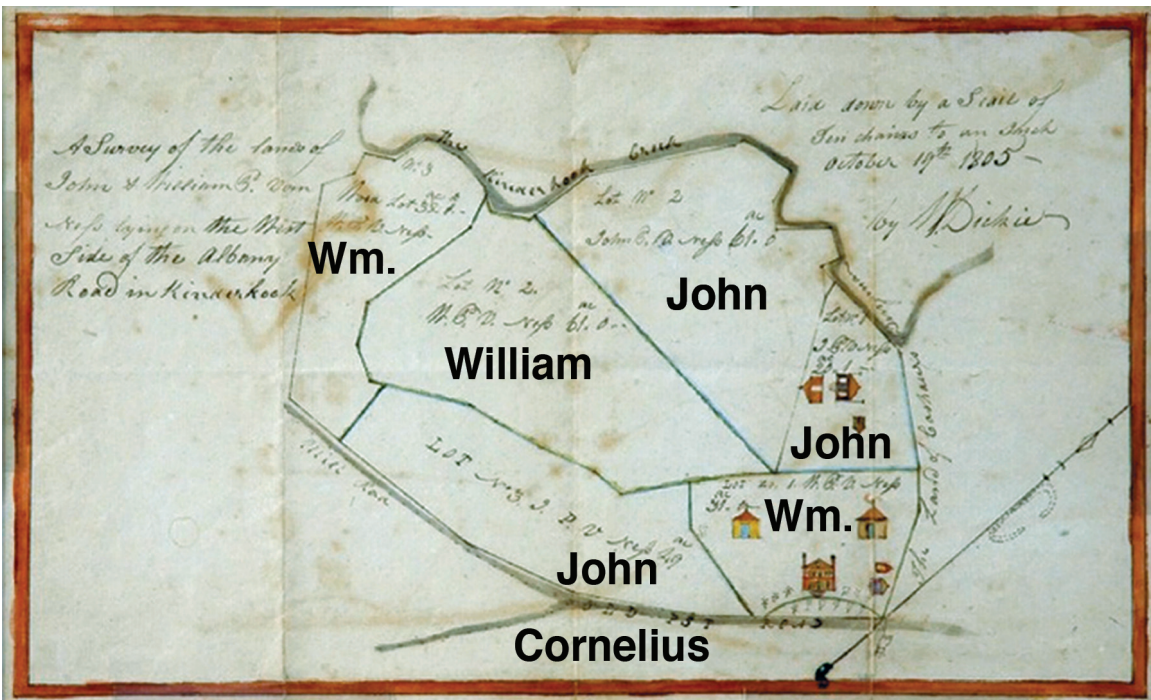


Fig. 14. Distribution of Peter Van Ness's farm among his three sons after 1804. John received the old stone farmhouse, built by Thomas Van Alstyne, on the lower terrace, William the 1797 house that became Lindenwald, and Cornelius the farm on the east side of the Post Road. Casparus Dingman's land is shown to the north (right hand side of map).

Peter Van Ness's three sons inherited his farm when he died somewhat unexpectedly in 1804 (see Figs. 13 and 14). John, the eldest, received the old Van Alstyne farmhouse and one of the fields on the lower terrace plus the 49-acre field along the road just south of the new house, for a total of about 130 acres. William, the middle son, inherited the new mansion closer to the road plus two contiguous fields, property that was about the same size as John's inheritance, while Cornelius, the youngest, was given the 280-acre farm across the road to the east (Searle 2004:15). The family's tenure in the neighborhood is still marked by the presence of a marble monument in the field behind the Lindenwald mansion, memorializing the graves of Peter Van Ness and his wife Elbertie (Fig. 15). They died in 1804 and 1806, respectively, but the stone was erected many years later, during Martin Van Buren's ownership, at the request of John Van Ness (Collier 1914:391-2).⁹

None of the three Van Ness sons, however, appeared deeply interested in farming. They were not among the class of well-to-do farmers bent on improving their farms and their social status, nor were they well-heeled reformers attempting to help reinvigorate the agricultural sector. Rather, they were all part of a circle of rising young politicians within the orbit of Thomas Jefferson's Democrat-Republican party. John, in his mid-30s when his father died, had already served as a U.S. Congressional Representative, an office he left to accept a militia commission from Jefferson. He resettled in Washington, D.C. by 1803, where he rose quickly in the military ranks and later became an alderman and later mayor of the city (Biographical Directory of the United States Congress). William, in his mid-20s, had recently graduated from Columbia University's law school and was in private law practice in Albany. He eventually rose to the federal judiciary, but in 1804, the same year he inherited his father's new mansion, his political career was badly damaged when he served as Aaron Burr's second in the infamous duel in which Burr shot Alexander Hamilton—a particularly vivid moment in the larger Jeffersonian/Hamiltonian rivalry. William appears to have found it convenient to retreat to the countryside, and inhabited the Kleinrood property until around 1810, when he moved to New York City.

⁹The monument was placed in the field in 1847 (Searle 2004:148), "Erected by their oldest son, John, in behalf of himself and other children and grand children." John himself died in 1846, so this was presumably a final wish that was honored by Martin Van Buren, who knew the family well and was then living in the house that Peter Van Ness had built. The gravestone calls Peter Van Ness "a high minded, honorable, sensible man, fearing none but God, and a distinguished and influential patriot in the most trying times: having served his country with great credit in numerous public stations, both civil and military," while Elbertie was described as "a pattern of a virtuous, affectionate, amiable, and sensible Wife & Mother."

Cornelius, who was just 22 when he inherited the property to the east of the Post Road, studied law under William's tutelage and passed the bar in 1804, but did not stay in New York state. He relocated to Vermont two years later and made a steady rise through the political ranks there, serving in various judicial and elected roles that culminated in three terms as governor of Vermont and then U.S. minister to Spain (Brooke 2010:482).



Fig. 15. Grave monument of Peter and Elbertie Van Ness in the field behind Lindenwald, placed by the Van Ness family in 1847.

The Van Ness tenure at Kleinrood inaugurated a period in which the farm was linked with economic and political power in the state, region, and most notably, the young nation itself. Wealthy New York City-dwellers were beginning to establish country residences in the city's hinterlands, including in Columbia County. This urban/

rural relationship recurs throughout the later ownerships of both Lindenwald and its neighboring farm across the Post Road, showing the interdependence of city and country as expressed through exchanges of capital, talent, and farm products. Perhaps more striking, though, is the way that these upstate farms became linked with centers of *national* political power during the nineteenth century. The Van Ness sons were tightly connected with the Jeffersonian Democratic-Republican Party, and the young Martin Van Buren quickly became embedded within this network of national power. As a young man, Van Buren campaigned for John Van Ness during the latter's Congressional run, and was rewarded by being sent to live and work in New York City with William, one of the talented young men who formed the "Little Band" around the influential Vice President Aaron Burr (Widmer 2005:29). Van Buren learned much about political strategy from these men. This circle of influential people also included literary luminaries of the day. The writer Washington Irving, tutor to William Van Ness's children, became a close friend of Van Buren, as did Irving's friend James Kirke Paulding, whose brother William was beginning to work his way into the Democratic-Republican network and eventually became a U.S. Congressman and later Mayor of New York City (Biographical Dictionary). These men were not farmers themselves, but their political actions reflected their party's underlying emphasis on the importance of agriculture rather than manufacturing as the country's main economic base, and its championship of yeoman farmer's rights (Searle 2004:26).

The Van Ness brothers' tenure at their father's Kinderhook farmlands was marked by absence and reversals of fortune. Cornelius left the area not long after inheriting the farm on the east side of the Post Road.¹⁰ William may also have managed John's part of the property for him, because John was very much resettled in Washington D.C. William seems to have embraced the life of a gentleman farmer for a time in the first decade of the century, when he came home in the wake of the Burr/Hamilton duel. He spent money liberally on the farm, breeding horses and the then-profitable Merino sheep (Platt 1982:39-41). He is known to have hired a gardener, one Richard Finck, in 1806, and ordered seeds and shrubs from New York City that year (Platt 1982:37). But the American market for Merino wool crashed with the end of Thomas Jefferson's tariff on imported European wool in 1816 (Hurt 1994:98) and William's own financial situation became

¹⁰ William may have bought out his brother, because it seems to have been William's name on the deed when that property was sold around 1820 (Worsfold 2009:5). The exchanges of property among the three brothers, and the chronology of the sale of various parcels, are not entirely clear from the deeds that have been examined to date.



Fig. 16. Left: William Paulding, Jr., 1770-1854. (Courtesy of the New York Public Library)
Right: James Kirke Paulding, 1778-1860. (Naval Historical Center, <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/pers-us/uspers-p/jk-pauld.htm>)

increasingly shaky as the decade went on. By 1810 he had moved his residence and legal practice back to the city and used Kleinrood only as a country retreat. He had taken out a mortgage on the farm, and sold off some parcels of land with road frontage as a way to raise money, but by the 1820s he remained far overextended financially, and over the course of the next decade, his landholdings in the area, like those of his brothers, were gradually liquidated.

Some of the buyers were members of other settled Dutch families who had owned property in the neighborhood for several generations. The Dingmans, just north of Kleinrood, had been purchasing land from John Van Ness starting in 1810 (Searle 2004:15), presumably expanding their farm and adding to both their frontage on the road and their holdings in the rich fields of the lower terrace.¹¹ Others who bought land from the Van Nesses may have been farmers from elsewhere in Columbia County who were expanding their landholdings, moving their base of operations, or even seeking to become landowners themselves after having farmed others' land as tenants or workers (see Pulver/Groat case study, below). Finally, the core part of the farm that would become Lindenwald was sold not to a neighbor or a farmer from elsewhere in the county, but to a wealthy and powerful political ally of William Van Ness, William Paulding, Jr., then the

¹¹ Research by park neighbor Caryn Moore indicates that land exchanges in the neighborhood during the 1820s also include transfers from the Dingmans to an A. Van Alstyne and C.P. Van Ness (possibly Cornelius?) in 1826 and Lawrence Van Buren in 1829.

Mayor of New York City and a part of the Democratic-Republican circle that the Van Nesses and Martin Van Buren belonged to.

In 1824, the farm was put up for auction when William Van Ness's financial situation became insupportable. Two years later, Van Ness himself died suddenly at the age of 48. Paulding paid \$8,000 for the estate and owned it for fifteen years, but he seems never to have had an interest in farming, living at, or even visiting the property, in large part because he was then constructing his own spectacular country retreat in his home town of Tarrytown (Searle 2004:15-16).¹² Paulding's most notable effect on the farm was the demolition of Thomas Van Alstyne's old stone house on the lower terrace, making a symbolic break with the old Dutch farm economy. But he did step in to buy the farm when its owner could no longer afford it, and this action seems to be the first of a series of such rescues in which men of means held the property for a time until a new owner could be found.

It is not known who farmed the fields during those fifteen years, or what was grown, but it seems likely that tenants were working the farm for Paulding, as they had probably been for Peter Van Ness and his sons. Peter Van Ness may have had tenant farmers on his properties in Chatham and Claverack (Worsfold 2009:17), and his will was witnessed by one Andrew Lovejoy, who was then in "tenure and occupation" of the farm intended for Van Ness's son Cornelius (Stokinger 1981:47)—that is, Lovejoy was likely farming the land across from Lindenwald under a tenancy agreement. This arrangement may well have continued after Peter's death, as Cornelius almost immediately moved to Vermont to begin his political career there. The will also mentions a John Pin who lived in "the small place...in the fork of the roads leading from Kinderhook to Claverack and from Kinderhook to Van Alstyne's mills" (Stokinger 1981:47). Peter Van Ness's household also included both servants and slaves, and he probably made use of their labor on his farmland (Searle 2004:17). By the time his sons inherited in 1804, slavery was beginning to be phased out in New York State, and tenant farming and wage labor were on the increase (Piwonka 1989:29).

Three other households that may have included tenant farmers or laborers working for the Van Nesses and/or Paulding are those of brothers Henry and Philip Waldorff and Jonathan White, who was perhaps married to the Waldorffs' sister

¹² Lyndhurst, Paulding's Gothic revival mansion, was completed in 1838 and later expanded under the ownerships of New York merchant George Merritt and railroad tycoon Jay Gould (<http://lyndhurst.wordpress.com/history/>).

Elizabeth.¹³ Census records show them residing somewhere between Kleinrood/Lindenwald and the house occupied by the Ham brothers, later owned by Seymour Magee's family and currently by Roxbury Farm. Henry Waldorph and Jonathan White are listed in the 1820 census; there is no separate entry for Philip Waldorph in that year, suggesting he was still quite young. The 1830 census shows Jonathan White living next door to Gerrit Dingman and two houses away from the Waldorpha; by 1840, Henry Waldorph had moved to Ghent, Philip to Stockport, and White to Schodack, just north of Columbia County in Rensselaer County. Evidence from the 1836 Kinderhook tax roll suggests that Jonathan White was farming for William Paulding, and the close family and perhaps marriage ties among the three men make it possible that all three, with their households, were connected with the property in the period of Paulding's largely absentee ownership.

What is significant about this shift toward tenant farming and wage labor on farms is that it shows the growing divide between farmers who owned land and those who did not. Prime farmland was no longer readily available as it had been to earlier generations, and existing farms—particularly the larger properties in the area—were becoming consolidated among the more well-to-do farmers, making land harder to attain for the young and less well-off. The phasing out of slavery, which was completed by 1827, also meant that the kinds of well-off men who had once relied on enslaved labor needed new farmworkers to cultivate their extensive farms. "Improvement" strategies brought some new land into cultivation and rejuvenated old fields, but did not generally add to the pool of saleable land that a young farmer might aspire to buy. A hundred and fifty years after European settlement in the area, there was already tight competition for good land and an increasing population of landless farmers who found themselves either working for others or contemplating relocation to the west, where new farms were still abundant.

Case Study: The Pulver/Groat Farm

It is difficult to know for certain where the Pulvers and Groats fit within the pattern of well-to-do farmers aspiring to higher status and landless ones looking for farms of their own. Around 1820, Peter and Mary Pulver bought the farm that had belonged to Cornelius Van Ness across the Post Road from Lindenwald. They kept it until 1834, when they sold it to their daughter and son-in-law, Anna and Cyrus Groat. The Groats kept

¹³ This name is also sometimes spelled Waldorf in census and other records.

the property until 1846 and then sold it to Jacob Evarts¹⁴—a quarter-century tenure that raises provocative questions about how farm life was changing in this period.¹⁵

Both the Pulvers and the Groats were Palatine families, originally from southwest Germany. Many Palatines who came to New Netherland from that region began at Livingston manor in the southeast corner of Columbia County and then moved to other locations in the county in subsequent generations (Piwonka 1989:28). Like Martin Van Buren, Peter W. Pulver was born at the time of the Revolution and lived to the Civil War period (1775-1860, in Pulver's case). Census records suggest that prior to buying the Van Ness property, Pulver and his wife Mary (née Tater) had been living just south of Kinderhook in Claverack and Ghent. Peter, already in his mid-forties, bought the farm on the Post Road with the help of a mortgage from his father (Worsfold 2009:7). This parental assistance, and the fact that there was probably only a modest farmhouse on the property at that point, suggest that the Pulvers were far from wealthy. But they seem to have had aspirations and at least some access to capital, because they were able to add a Federal-style structure of their own to mirror (if not equal) the large brick house that Peter Van Ness had built across the road two decades earlier. Current owner Bob Worsfold describes hunting everywhere on the property for some trace of an original foundation or structure before realizing that the south wing of the house itself had all the characteristics of a Dutch colonial farmhouse, similar to the Van Alen house just to the north (Worsfold 2009:3-4; on the architecture of Dutch farmhouses in general, see Blackburn et al. 2002 and Cohen 1992, especially Chapter 2; on the Van Alen house, see Waite 2001). The massive open fireplace at the south end of the structure may well have been the farmhouse's original cooking hearth, while the Federal structure added more modern facilities, built in the genteel style of the day (see Fig. 17). The reuse of the older structure suggests a certain frugality, prompted either by choice or necessity. The Pulvers were likely upwardly-mobile but at least somewhat constrained financially.

Peter and Mary Pulver had at least two children. William, who was a small boy when the family moved to Kinderhook, later lived in Ancram, in the southeastern part of Columbia County. The Pulvers' daughter Anna married another area resident of Palatine descent, Cyrus Groat, whose family had long been farmers in Ghent (Worsfold 2009:7).

¹⁴ In census and other records, this name is sometimes spelled "Everts."

¹⁵ Information about the Pulvers and Groats, unless otherwise noted, is from Robert Worsfold's *The Rest of Kleinrood: The Fortunes of an Historic Old Farm* (2009, self-published). Much of Worsfold's work in this history of his farm is based on deed searches and other work done by Ruth Piwonka.



Fig. 17. "Kinderfields" today. Its present owner, Robert Worsfold, speculates that the southernmost section, in the far right of the photograph, may have been the original tenant farmhouse, with the much grander central section added during the Pulvers' ownership of the farm. There was probably originally a door in the blank spot between the first-floor windows of the central structure. (Robert Worsfold)

In 1834, when Peter was approaching the age of 60, he sold the farm to his son-in-law. Peter himself financed a part of the sale, while a Robert Groat—perhaps Cyrus's father—may have held the rest of the mortgage, as he is listed on the deed. Cyrus appears to have been a person of some stature in the community, serving as Superintendent of the Poor for all of Columbia County at some point (Ellis 1878:223).

It is difficult to know whether the Groats were taking over a thriving farm graced by a recently-expanded modern home, or whether both couples were aspiring to a level of gentility that was becoming increasingly difficult to sustain on the proceeds of farming alone. One thing that is clear is that neither the Pulvers nor the Groats were able to purchase the property without taking on considerable debt. There was still \$13,000 owing on Cyrus Groat's mortgage when he sold the farm to Jacob Evarts in 1846, presumably a substantial proportion of the original debt (Worsfold 2009:7). Anna and Cyrus Groat had no children, and 1846 marks the end of their families' 26-year ownership of the farm on the Post Road.¹⁶ They remain shadowy but somewhat suggestive figures in the agricultural history of the neighborhood. They appear to have had deep Columbia County roots and to have achieved a certain level of social status by the 1820s and 30s.

¹⁶ A Cyrus Groat is listed as a member of the board of directors of the Columbia Agricultural and Horticultural Association in 1878, suggesting that a relative—perhaps quite a near one—continued to have an active interest in farming into the next generation or two (Ellis 1878:140).

But they were not among the wealthier Kinderhook farmers who were able to parlay their holdings into shipping or marketing interests. Nor did they likely travel in the politically-influential circles of the Van Nesses and Pauldings who were associated with the farm across the road. The limited extent to which the Pulvers were able to assert themselves architecturally, and the fact that the Groats were still considerably in debt when they left the farm, suggests that they were striving for—but not quite able to achieve—a status that reflected the new prosperity of many of the larger farmers in the county. Perhaps these two couples found themselves caught in the cycles of indebtedness and social distinction that were beginning to characterize farming in the area, in which a decreasing number of well-to-do farmers increasingly employed a growing number of landless farmers and class differences were emerging between those with access to liquid capital and those whose wealth was largely tied up in their land (Barron 1985:328; Bruegel 2002:184). The Pulvers and Groats were somewhere in between these two categories, in an ambiguous role that reflected changing positions and perceptions.

Case Study: The Rye Paper Industry in Columbia County

Acquiring one's own farm and asserting a presence as a well-to-do farmer was one way to make a statement of social status in the early nineteenth century Hudson Valley. Another route, increasingly common for ambitious early nineteenth-century Americans, was to join the world of industry, which was widely—although by no means universally—seen as the way of the future. This section will briefly examine the rye paper industry that emerged as an important new market for grain in Columbia County in the first part of the nineteenth century, using it as a way to explore changing attitudes toward manufacturing, new markets for farm products, and emerging social configurations in the county during Martin Van Buren's formative years.

Industry began to develop in Columbia County around 1810, with mill buildings and mill villages lining some stretches of Kinderhook Creek and other waterways by the middle of the century, notably in Valatie, Stuyvesant Falls, and Stockport (see Fig. 18). The initial capital that launched these ventures was usually local, supplemented by state loans, tax exemptions, and other incentives; larger-scale private investment came mostly from New York City. As in much of the northeast, the earliest factories produced textiles, but tanneries, brickyards, and paper-making mills also provided year-round work for many men, women, and children in the county. A quarter of Kinderhook's male working population was employed in industry by 1820, nearly a third by mid-century

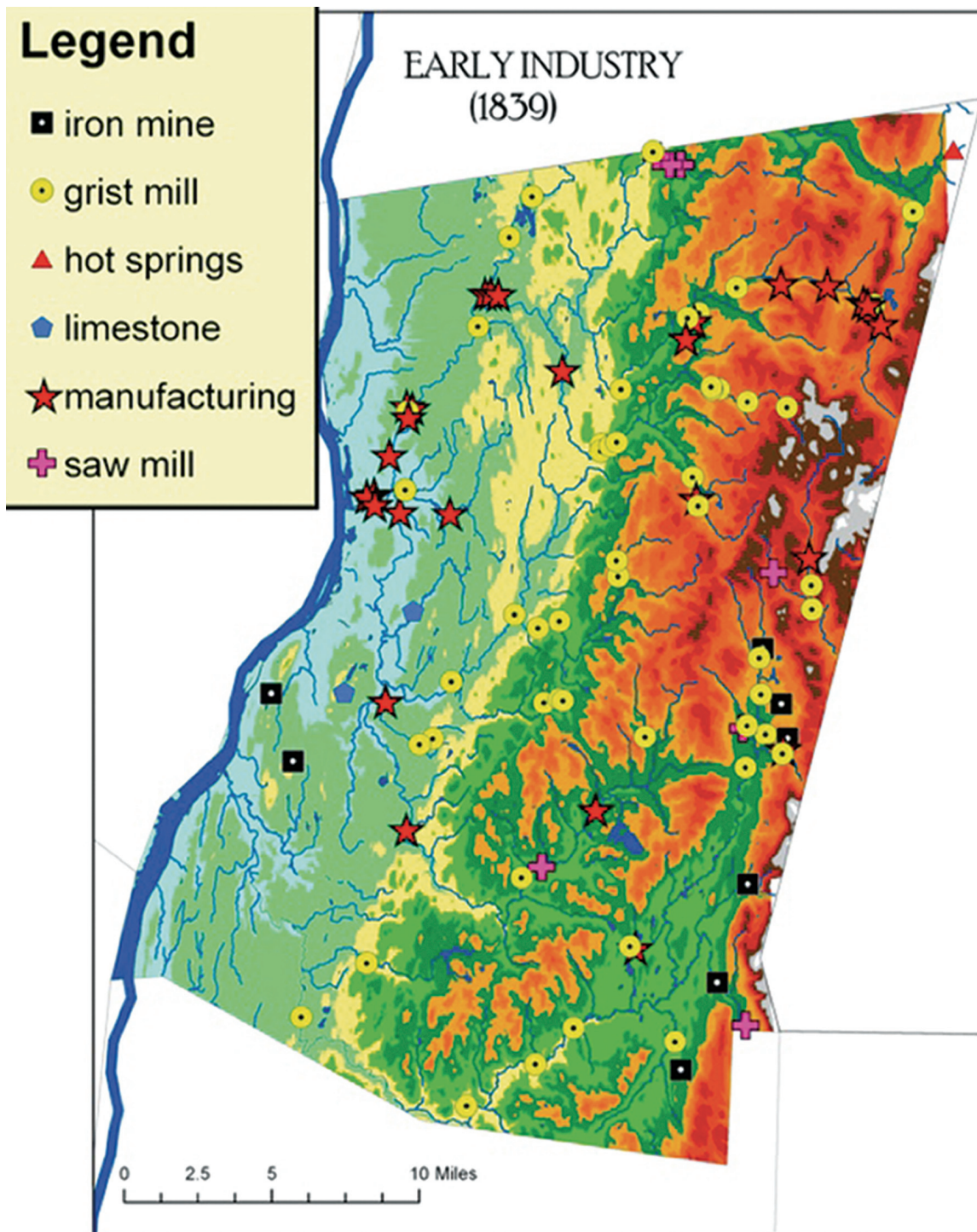


Fig. 18. By 1839, new manufacturing was appearing in Columbia County in addition to an older network of grist mills, much of it located along Kinderhook Creek and its tributaries. (Farmscape Ecology Program)

(Bruegel 2002:126, 133, 138). In many ways—the new focus on clocks and schedules, the year-round nature of employment, the connections with more national markets and networks of distribution—industry was a radical departure from the seasonal and local or regional patterns of farming and forestry. But factories and manufacturing processes also sometimes served as a new market for forestry and agricultural products: straw for brickmaking, wool for the textile mills, hemlock bark for tanning leather, and in one of Columbia County’s most significant farm/factory partnerships, rye straw for paper-making.

Prior to the early nineteenth century, most paper products were made from cloth rags that could easily be pulped, but chemical innovation led to the ability to pulp cereal grain straws such as rye.¹⁷ These were particularly useful for making wrapping papers, box-board, hatboard, and similar products, for which the growing market economy created an increasing demand (Clark 1965:395). Some small-scale mills were already producing paper from straw in Columbia County by the 1820s, but the industry received a boost with the arrival of two New England paper-makers in Chatham Four Corners in 1830. They built a factory, the Hamilton and Wright Company, on the Steinkill that year; two years later, Wright struck off on his own, converting an old saw mill on the same stream into a second rye-straw paper plant (Weeks 1916:203-4). By the end of the 1830s there were four mills in the vicinity, and by the 1840s a larger factory opened on Kinderhook Creek just over the border into Rensselaer County.

The industry continued to expand in the middle decades of the century, particularly under the auspices of Columbia County native Horace Peaslee. Like many of the other industrial entrepreneurs in the region, Peaslee was of English extraction. His father was a hatter in New Lebanon, but seems to have been among the many artisanal workers who grew at least some of their own food, because a biographical sketch of Horace notes that like many of his generation (he was born in 1807), he was “versed in every aspect of practical agriculture” and married the daughter of a well-to-do-farmer. But he seems to have chosen a different path from an early age, beginning to learn the millwright’s and machinists’ trades at seventeen and setting up a foundry and machine shop in Valatie as a young man. In 1843, he and a partner, Samuel Hanna, bought an older mill complex at Malden Bridge on the banks of Kinderhook Creek that had housed

¹⁷To a surprising extent, paper served as the fiberglass or plastic of its day: a flexible composite that could be molded into a variety of useful products ranging from small boats to railroad wheel cores. For more on the industry, see Ken Cupery, “When Paper Boats Were King” (*American Heritage*, Spring 2009, Volume 24, Issue 1, accessed online at http://www.americanheritage.com/articles/magazine/it/2009/1/2009_1_46.shtml) and John Lienhard, “Paper Railroad Wheels” (“Engines of Our Ingenuity” No. 758, accessed online at <http://www.uh.edu/engines/epi758.htm>).

a cabinet-making shop, gristmill, and sawmill. They reinforced the banks of the creek with masonry walls and replaced the old buildings with an extensive three-story brick paper mill, scale-house, tool-room, and other structures (Ellis 1878:297; see Fig. 20). Peaslee continued to expand his operations in the following decades, building the largest mill in Columbia County, a 50-acre complex in Ancram, in the late 1860s. Like the Malden Bridge mill, it produced 20 to 25 tons of wrapping paper a week, using about 30 tons of rye straw in each location (Ellis 1878:410). A late nineteenth-century chronicler praised Peaslee for his ability to ride out the ups and downs of the exciting but risky industrial economy: despite losses that amounted at times to as much as a hundred thousand dollars, “his energy and spirit have always been equal to such emergencies, and he has risen from his disasters with fresh courage, only to assert more vigorously his indomitable energy and that irrepressible persistence and enterprise for which he is noted” (Ellis 1878:297; see Fig. 19).

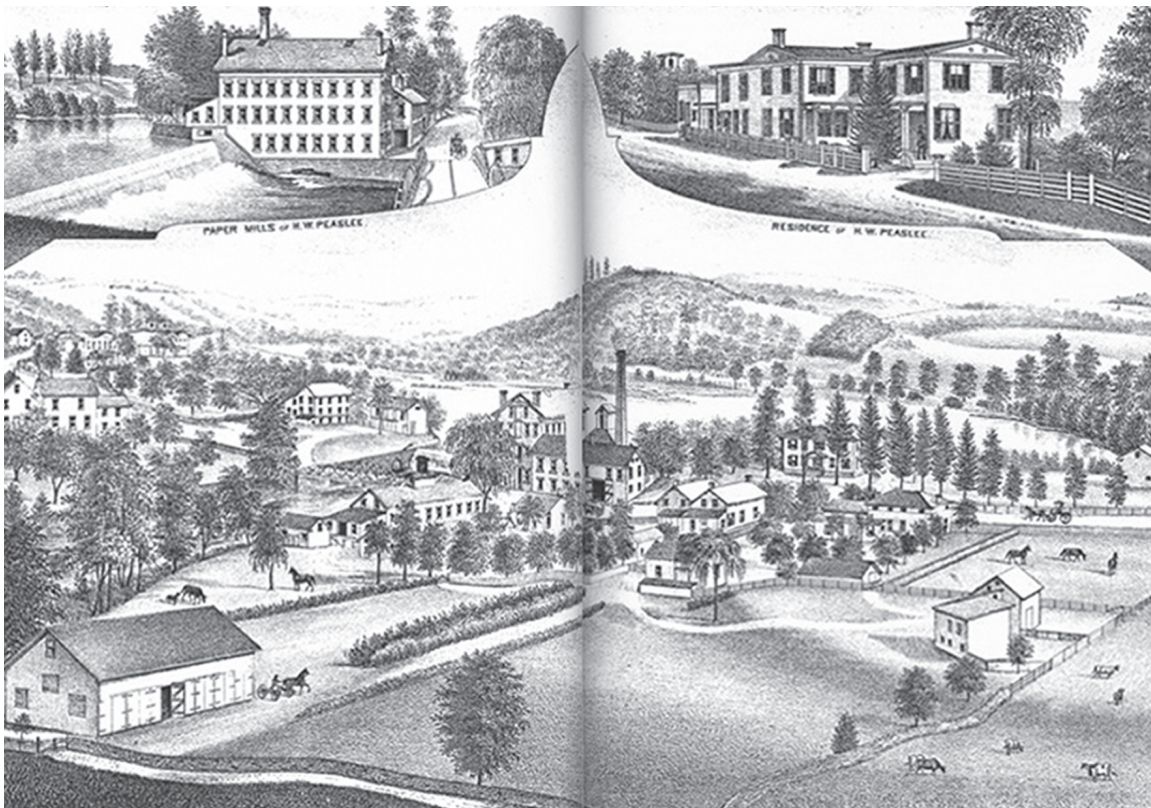


Fig. 19. This 1878 panoramic rendering of Horace Peaslee's Malden Bridge complex, located on Kinderhook Creek, shows the extensive operation that used up to 30 tons of rye straw each week in making paper products. (Ellis, *History of Columbia County*)

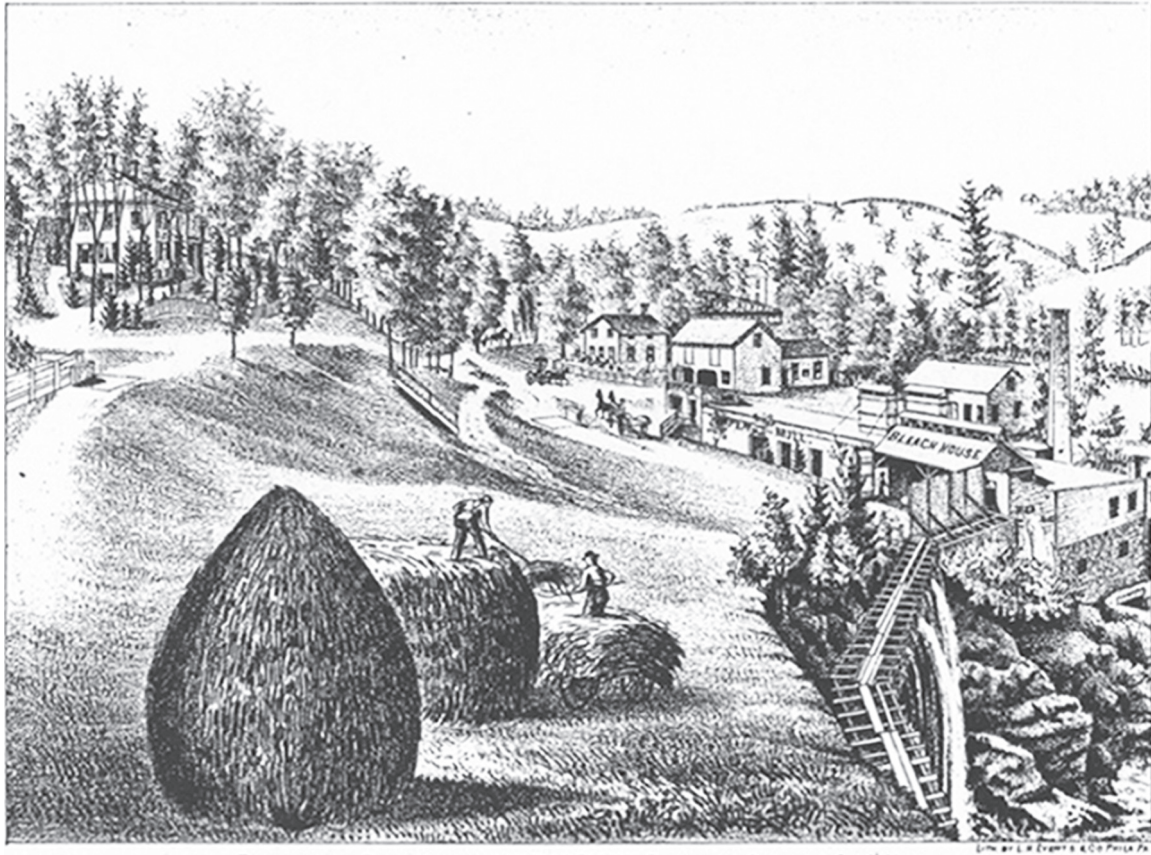


Fig. 20. Horace W. Peaslee. (Ellis, *History of Columbia County*)

We do not know for certain whether any of the farmers on or near the Lindenwald fields in this period were growing rye that was sold to paper mills, but this was certainly the case with many farmers in the county. About 10% of Columbia County land was devoted to rye in the decade between 1845 and 1855 (Bruegel 2002:101), and the mills in the county continued to operate well into the later part of the century.¹⁸ An 1878 illustration of one of these, J.W. Rossman's mill in Stockport (Fig. 21), gives a clear sense of the symbiosis between agriculture and the rye paper industry. In the foreground, two men are stacking what is presumably rye; the straw ricks are the most striking visual element in the image. Many early American manufacturing companies emphasized the pastoral settings in which their factories were located, as a way of asserting that industry and agriculture need not be at odds (Marx 1964; Wright 1989), but in this case, the relationship was a particularly close one. Industry never overwhelmed the Columbia County economy, and although the advent of an industrial society affected farming in sweeping ways, most of the local landscape did remain essentially pastoral. Industrial development produced what Martin Bruegel (2002:128) has called "a segmented world" for many people in the county and sowed the seeds for later developments in

¹⁸ According to general Farmscape Ecology Program estimates, perhaps half of all the rye grown in Columbia County in the 1860s went to the paper mills, with much of the rest being shipped to New York City as bedding for horses. By the 1870s, more of the rye straw used in Columbia County paper-making was grown to the north and west in the Mohawk Valley.

the agricultural sector that ultimately made it difficult or impossible for small farmers to compete successfully. But in this early period, it also opened opportunities for farmers seeking new outlets in a time when they found themselves challenged by non-local competition and increasingly volatile and distant markets. In practice, farming and industry were by no means neatly separated, and people in early nineteenth-century Columbia County did not necessarily see them as incompatible with one another.



RESIDENCE AND PAPER MILL OF J. W. ROSSMAN, STOCKPORT, COLUMBIA CO., N. Y.

Fig. 21. This 1878 view of J.W. Rossman's paper mill in Stockport gives a sense of the symbiosis between agriculture and the paper industry. (Ellis, *History of Columbia County*)

Study Themes in This Chapter

Changing agricultural methods and approaches

- new agricultural technologies (iron plows, etc.)
- “spirit of improvement” related to revitalizing older northeastern farms and farm economy
- competition for labor from industry, westward migration
- growth of farming organizations, publications
- more tenant and wage labor as good farmland became less available/affordable
- end of slavery in New York State, affecting farm labor pool
- shift away from subsistence farming toward more specialty and utility crops grown for urban/commercial markets

Farming in a market economy

- farm products and prices more determined by commercial markets, especially urban ones (eg. dairy, hay)
- increasing need for credit to run a successful farm
- increasing role of intermediaries (brokers, bankers)
- changes in time and work patterns: more standardized, year-round labor
- increased economic volatility
- greater absorption of Hudson Valley farms into global markets
- symbiosis of some industrial and agricultural processes (eg. rye paper industry)
- rise in land prices
- ambivalence among small farmers about opportunities vs. risk in commercial markets
- growing social stratification within farm population

The roles of policy and law in farming

- government facilitation of economic expansion and growth (eg. support for industry, charters for private corporations, standardization of time, currency, price, measurement, etc.)

- debates over extent to which government should regulate/constrain banks and capital circulation
- some government intervention in price controls for staple foods (eg. assize of bread)
- support for infrastructural changes (eg. Erie Canal, railroads, roads) facilitating increased movement of farm products and increased competition from western farms
- start of long-term links between Kinderhook and state/national political networks in Albany, New York City, Washington, D.C.

CHAPTER FIVE

MARTIN VAN BUREN AT LINDENWALD (1839-1862)

The era of Martin Van Buren's ownership of the Lindenwald estate is of course the most fully-documented to date, thanks to the various studies commissioned by the National Park Service before and since the creation of Martin Van Buren NHS in 1974. In particular, Van Buren's farming activities between 1841 and 1862 have been documented in detail in the 2004 Cultural Landscape Report. This chapter will briefly summarize the material contained in the CLR and other recent studies (Huston 2004, Richards et al. 2006) but will spend more time working to expand the context for understanding Van Buren as a farmer by exploring a range of aspects of agriculture at Lindenwald and in Columbia County in this period in more depth. After surveying Van Buren's farming itself, the chapter will present three case studies:

- Ephraim Best, another prosperous Kinderhook farmer whose activities show how the market economy was expanding in the county at this time;
- Jeremiah Hess, who worked briefly as Van Buren's farm foreman and who came from a Claverack family with deep roots in Columbia County agriculture; and
- the Alexander family, of mixed Native American and African American descent, whose small bottling business in Kinderhook shows one of the ways that traditional ecological knowledge and small-scale entrepreneurship could occupy niches within the local farm economy in nineteenth-century Columbia County.

The chapter will conclude with a short discussion of the way that visitors, artists, and others began to romanticize and idealize the pastoral and natural landscapes of the Hudson Valley. This nineteenth century response to ambivalence about urbanization, industrialization, and commercialization helped to create a new set of meanings for this rural landscape, as well as some early infrastructure for tourism and seasonal residency.

Martin Van Buren as a “Gentleman Farmer”

When Martin Van Buren was defeated in his bid for reelection to the Presidency, he came home to Kinderhook and—like many other former presidents and other politicians retiring from active political life in the early republic—devoted himself to farming. In 1839, he purchased Peter Van Ness's old farm from former New York Mayor

William Paulding, Jr., brother of Van Buren's close friend James K. Paulding. Van Buren did in fact remain involved in national politics through the 1840s, running twice more for President and participating in the tumultuous debates over slavery and the fate of the Union in that decade. But he was also a very serious farmer who saw his farm as an expression of his political and personal values. Although he had grown up in the Village of Kinderhook as the son of a tavern-keeper rather than on a farm, Van Buren shared the Jeffersonian and Jacksonian belief in farmers as the backbone of American democracy and economic health. In his autobiography, he pointed proudly to his ancestors as "all farmers, cultivating the soil themselves for a livelihood, holding respectable positions in society and cultivating unblemished characters" (Van Buren 1920:10), and in an 1849 letter to a friend, he asserted, "I would not again trust my nerves to so near an approach to one of the seats of political and Bank corruption," adding, "Why don't you decide upon becoming an honest & virtuous man & plant yourself in my neighborhood upon a good farm?" (Van Buren to Worth 1849). In returning to Kinderhook and purchasing the Kleinrood farm—soon renamed Lindenwald—Van Buren was following a pattern set by Jefferson and others, making a statement about the civic virtues of agricultural life, and reconnecting with a rural, mostly agricultural community that he knew very well (Huston 2004:94).

Some apparently saw the southeastern quadrant of Kinderhook as a potentially fashionable area for a country residence in that period (Searle 2004:31, n.76), and there are signs that it was an attractive area for well-to-do farmers, an appeal that no doubt increased when a former U.S. President took up residence there. Over the course of the 1840s, there were several changes in the immediate neighborhood of Van Buren's property. Members of the Dingman family, who had farmed the adjacent fields since the seventeenth century, appear to have been moving elsewhere by the middle of the nineteenth. In 1843, family members sold Martin Van Buren two parcels of land that they had acquired from the Van Ness brothers, and by 1850, the Dingmans had sold the northern part of their farm to the Saulpaugh family (Searle 2004:31-32). Members of the Wagoner family from Claverack were also moving to the neighborhood and buying land from the Dingmans. Others who moved to Kinderhook from elsewhere in Columbia County around this time included Ephraim Best, an enterprising farmer who was also engaged in buying and selling agricultural and other goods through the area's expanding network of trade and transportation (see case study, this chapter), and Jacob Evarts,

a well-to-do farmer from Livingston who bought the farm across the Post Road from Lindenwald from Cyrus and Anna Groat in 1846 (Worsfold 2009:6).¹

Van Buren corresponded and associated regularly with peers and acquaintances of national stature, some of whom visited Lindenwald and many of whom were also engaged in farming.² But he was also very much a part of this local circle of Kinderhook farmers. In addition to the many area ties he had formed during his early years in county and state politics, he was of course linked through kinship ties and membership in the Kinderhook Dutch Reformed Church with the families who had been in the town for almost two centuries by that time. Descendants of many of the old settler families remained in the Lindenwald neighborhood when Van Buren returned to the town. North of the Dingman properties, the old Van Alen homestead was occupied in 1840 by the family of David Van Alen, grandson of Luykas Van Alen who probably built the brick farmhouse in the early eighteenth century. David had married his cousin Mary, also a grandchild of Luykas, and the couple had eight children, six of whom were daughters. A 20-year-old grandson, John, was living in the house at the time when Martin Van Buren returned to Kinderhook, and it was John who took over the running of the farm and the maintenance of the household when David Van Alen died in 1846 (Waite 2001:7-8). On the western side of Kinderhook Creek, Van Buren's relatives the Van Alstyne's were still farming the original family homestead established nearly two hundred years earlier. Jan Martense Van Alstyne's great-great-grandson Adam (1780-1857) was an almost exact contemporary of Van Buren, and Adam's son Peter Edward, known in the family as Pete Ed, later claimed that as a young man, he had been an occasional fishing companion of the former President along the creek. The original Van Alstyne farmhouse burned down in 1840, shortly before Van Buren's return, and Adam built a large modern house, using bricks made in the family's brickyard, to replace it. He also divided his large farm into three parts, one for each of his sons; Pete Ed's portion, centered around the original house site, became known as "Sunnyside" (Wilson 1965:5-6).

¹ Information about the Dingman family in this period is from Caryn Moore's notes.

² Huston (2004:110-111) lists Joel Poinsett, Francis P. Blair, Gouverneur Kemble, John M. Niles, Henry D. Gilpin, James Kirke Paulding, Andrew Jackson, and Erastus Corning among these correspondents.



Fig. 22. The 1840 Sunnyside house built by Adam Van Alstyne, shown here in 1876. (For later views of this farmhouse, see Figs. 63 and 73). (Wilson, *Children of Sunnyside*, used by permission of Mrs. Edward Wilson)

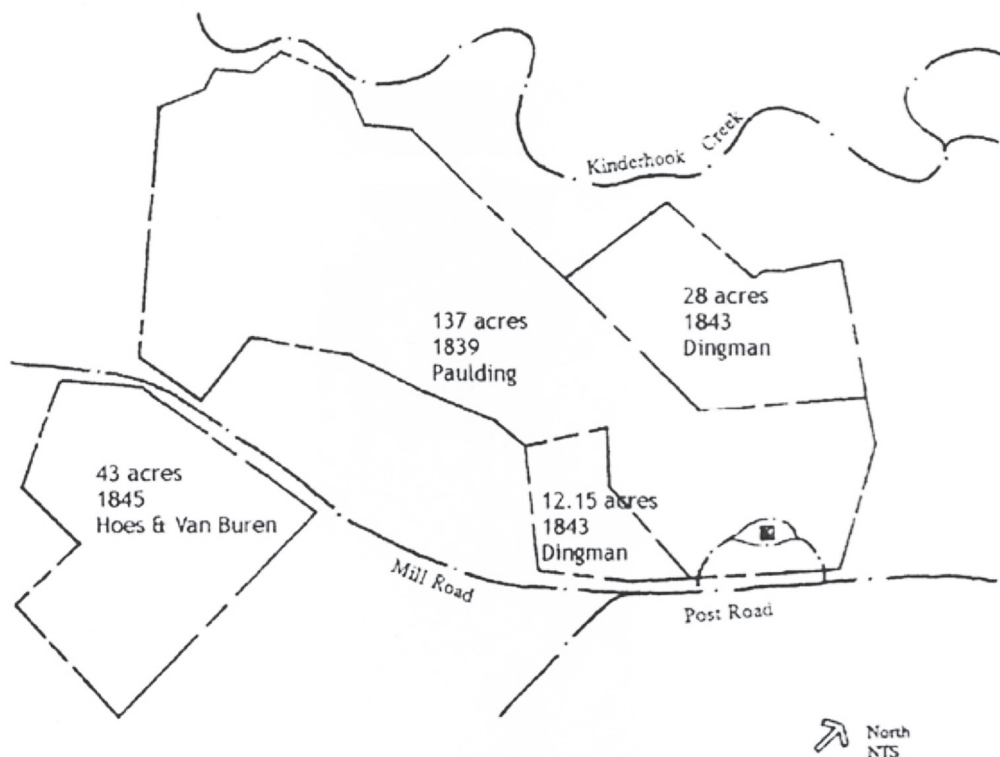


Fig. 23. Martin Van Buren's purchases in the 1840s restored the farm to approximately the size it had been during Peter Van Ness's tenure. (Searle, 2004 *Cultural Landscape Report*, Fig. 13, after a drawing by David Uschold, Fig. 6, 1995 *Cultural Landscape Report* for Martin Van Buren Historic Site)

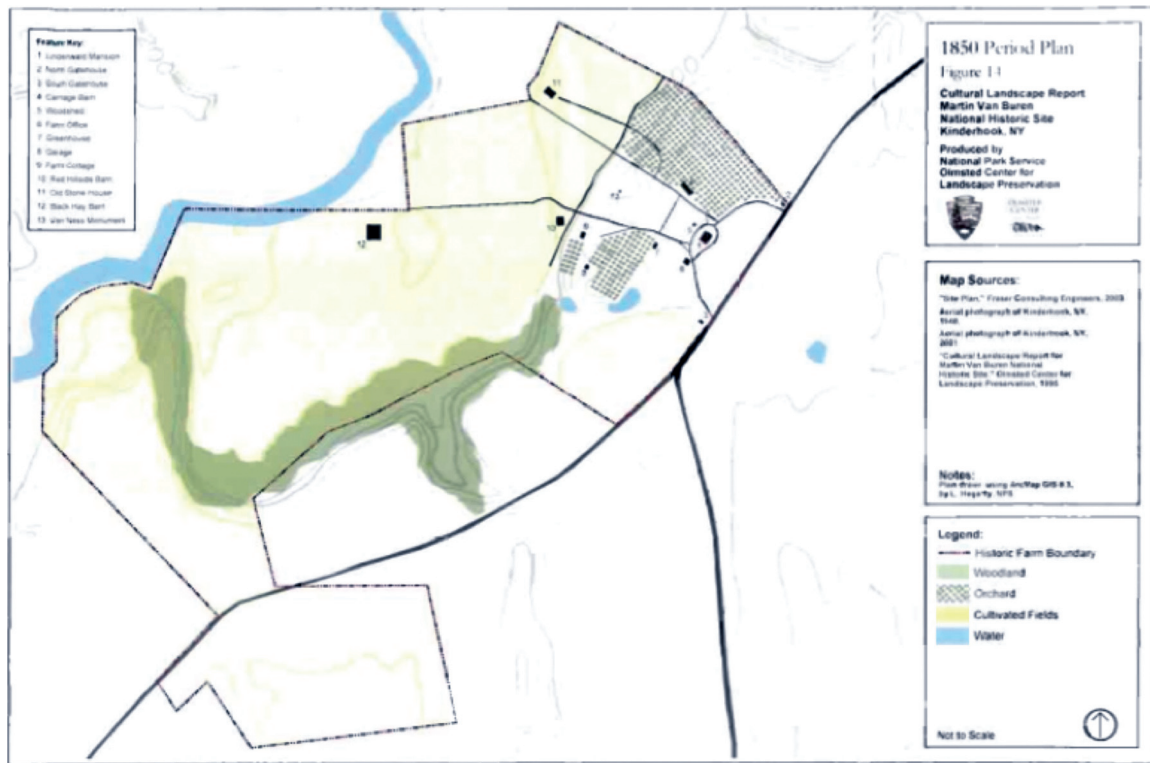


Fig. 24. By 1850, Van Buren's farm had reached its full extent, with orchards (shown as cross-hatching) north and south of the house, farm fields on the upper and lower terraces (including the 43-acre parcel across the Mill Road), and the terrace hillside left wooded. (Searle, 2004: Fig. 14)

By 1845, another land purchase—43 acres across the Post Road that had previously belonged to Van Buren's brother Lawrence and brother-in-law Peter Hoes—allowed Van Buren to restore the Kleinrood estate from a low point of 137 acres to its eventual maximum size of about 220 acres (see Figs. 23 and 24). He continued to improve his property throughout the 1840s, including the important—and, for the time period, commonplace—task of draining the lower fields so that they were more suited to growing crops (Searle 2004:32, 37-38). Van Buren grew four to six major crops a year, likely relying on variety to offset the uncertainty of a given crop in any given year.³ He reinvigorated the old Van Ness garden and grew kitchen vegetables as well as flowers and some exotic fruits (like grapes) in a greenhouse that he added in 1841 (Searle 2004:53). In addition to food used by his own household, he began to realize surpluses by the late 1840s, and to plant some crops—particularly hay and apples, but also potatoes, oats, and rye—primarily for commercial markets. He is known to have sold some of his rye—"one

³ For a chart listing the documented crops grown at Lindenwald during Van Buren's tenure, see Appendix B of Searle's 2004 Cultural Landscape Report.

of the most profitable crops we raise,” he wrote in 1840 (Searle 2004:47)—to distilleries in Baltimore; it is not known whether he also sold rye for fodder, food, or industrial uses, but he planted as much as 30 acres of it in some years, reflecting its continued utility and saleability on the farm. He grew potatoes—more than five hundred bushels’ worth in 1846—despite the ongoing potato blight in the northeastern U.S., obtaining seed potatoes from the Shakers in nearby New Lebanon and sending potatoes for seed to his friends in turn (Searle 2004:44-46). Van Buren also grew smaller or occasional amounts of more experimental or less common crops like hops, buckwheat, and wheat, as well as corn, which had shifted from its colonial-era status as a key staple food to being primarily used for animal feed (Searle 2004:46-47). Lindenwald’s orchards were one of Van Buren’s important innovations. He had planted a substantial apple and pear orchard by the mid-1840s and was somewhat ahead of other farmers in the area in selling fruit as a cash crop. He also sold young trees in an extensive nursery operation (Searle 2004:55).

The fluctuating acreage devoted to each crop suggests that he may have been practicing crop rotation as a way to renew the fertility of depleted fields. He also placed great emphasis on fertilizing his land. “Henceforth manure—manure—is the word,” he wrote in 1843 (Huston 2004:108). In addition to manure, he used leached ashes, lime, plaster of Paris, and muck from the boggy bottomlands as fertilizers—a combination of substances produced on his own farm and purchased from commercial sources (Searle 2004:49-50). The farm always included various types of animals, including both draft and riding horses, dairy cattle, a pair of oxen, pigs, poultry, goats, and a herd of about a hundred sheep through most of the 1850s. But Van Buren seems not to have been as deeply interested in breeding and livestock as in growing crops, which would have limited the amount of manure for fertilizer that was produced at Lindenwald itself. “My Farmer propensities do not lie in the cattle lines,” he wrote to Erastus Corning in 1843 (Searle 2004:38).

Although Van Buren relied almost entirely on hired labor or tenant farmers for the actual work of cultivation, there is no doubt that he was thoroughly engaged in his farming venture and quite successful at it, providing much of the food for his own household and producing surpluses and commercial crops that eventually made the farm at least somewhat profitable (James Paulding wrote to Andrew Jackson that Van Buren’s “improvements never fail to quit cost [i.e. pay for themselves], at least”) (Aderman 1962:355). Van Buren attended local and state agricultural fairs (certainly as a dignitary, but likely also in his role as an active farmer), utilized some innovative farm implements

like the sub-soil plow and hay-press, and is known to have subscribed to *The Cultivator* and other agricultural publications. But while he was a forward-looking farmer in many ways, expressing some impatience with the “dutch obstinacy” of others in his native county, he was not in the forefront of either the agricultural reform movement or the shift toward the commercialization of farming in this period (Searle 2004:30, 50-51). Some of the evidence about his farming practices suggests that like other descendants of the old Kinderhook families—notably the Van Alstynes, to whom we will return in a case study in Chapter Seven—Van Buren felt a deep sense of connection with past generations of Dutch farmers in Columbia County, even while he sought to bring his own farm up to date and to use the best of the new tools and ideas. His farm was profitable, he did grow crops to some extent for purely commercial markets, and he does not seem to have been deeply influenced by his good friend Paulding’s altruistic advice to rise above any “sordid calculations of gain” in running his farm (Searle 2004:27). But he clearly did not embrace commercial farming to the extent that other comparable farmers in the area—for example, Ephraim Best—did, and it seems possible, as Reeve Huston conjectures, that “for all its owner’s obsession with profitability, Lindenwald was more an aging gentleman’s fancy than a viable business enterprise” (2004:121). That is, like many farmers of the period and subsequently, Van Buren appears to have valued farming at least as much for the values and style of life connected with it as for its potential profitability.

In 1849, Van Buren allowed his youngest son, Smith Thompson Van Buren, to undertake an extensive renovation and modernization of the old Van Ness mansion, during which the well-known architect Richard Upjohn remade the federal farmhouse in the then-fashionable Italianate style (Richards et al. 2006:112-13). Van Buren’s decision seems not to have been prompted by any desire to make a statement about his own social status, but rather by a concern that would have resonated with any farmer worried about succession on a family farm. He was “Desirous of making more effective provisions than old Peter [Van Ness] did for keeping Lindenwald in my family,” he wrote (Van Buren to Worth 1849)—that is, he was hoping to create a farm property that subsequent generations of Van Burens would occupy and cultivate. In this, of course, he was no more successful than Peter Van Ness had been. But his concern reflects a wish for stability and continuity that show a care for the farm as a place, a home, and a way of living rather than just as a business or a source of income. And that way of living appears to have been linked not only with contemporary reform and market realities, but also with the practices of generations of Dutch farmers before him. In an 1846 letter accompanying a shipment

of seed potatoes to Paulding, he wrote, “You must be sure & not plant before **the full of the Moon** which will be about the 13th of May” (Aderman 1962:429-30, emphasis in original). The remainder of his instructions to Paulding explain the specific needs of the Carter potatoes in the shipment, but the “full of the Moon” comment invokes the older practice of planting in accordance with the phases of the moon, something with which Van Buren was perhaps familiar from his upbringing in rural Kinderhook, where his family, like most people of the time, grew much of their own food. Van Buren’s Dutch, German, and other farm employees would likely have learned to farm within the same cultural traditions. As with the eighteenth-century almanacs that had guided earlier generations of Dutch and other colonial farmers, modern science and new technologies were blended, in practice, with folk knowledge and belief.

Indeed, it seems not unlikely that Van Buren saw himself returning to and strengthening the long-standing lineage of Dutch farming that had taken root in the area a hundred and fifty years earlier. Although it did not take lasting root in Van Buren’s immediate family any more than it had in Peter Van Ness’s, it is a tradition that remained vibrant in and around Kinderhook well into the twentieth century, despite the many economic and social pressures affecting it as the American industrial and market economy became more fully developed by the mid-nineteenth century. A reality that had already become apparent among the sons of elite farmers was beginning to be an issue for others as well: farming was no longer an occupation of choice for a growing number of ambitious younger Americans, and the farm economy of the northeast was continuing to become consolidated, commercialized, and increasingly separated from the lives of urban, professional, and industrial workers and citizens. In purchasing Peter Van Ness’s old estate and restoring it to vigor and profitability, Van Buren seems not so much to have been pursuing “a quiet act of revenge” for old class-based slights, as Huston (2004:98) suggests. (Had this been his motive, would he have consented in 1847 to the relocation of Peter and Elbertie Van Ness’s graves and the placement of a sizeable monument to them in one of his fields, as shown in Fig. 15?) Rather, it seems likely that Van Buren was trying to reconnect with and perhaps to help reinvigorate a way of life that was increasingly under stress in some ways, and that offered some relief from the emerging stresses of an industrial capitalist society in others—a paradox that has not resolved itself more than a century and a half later.

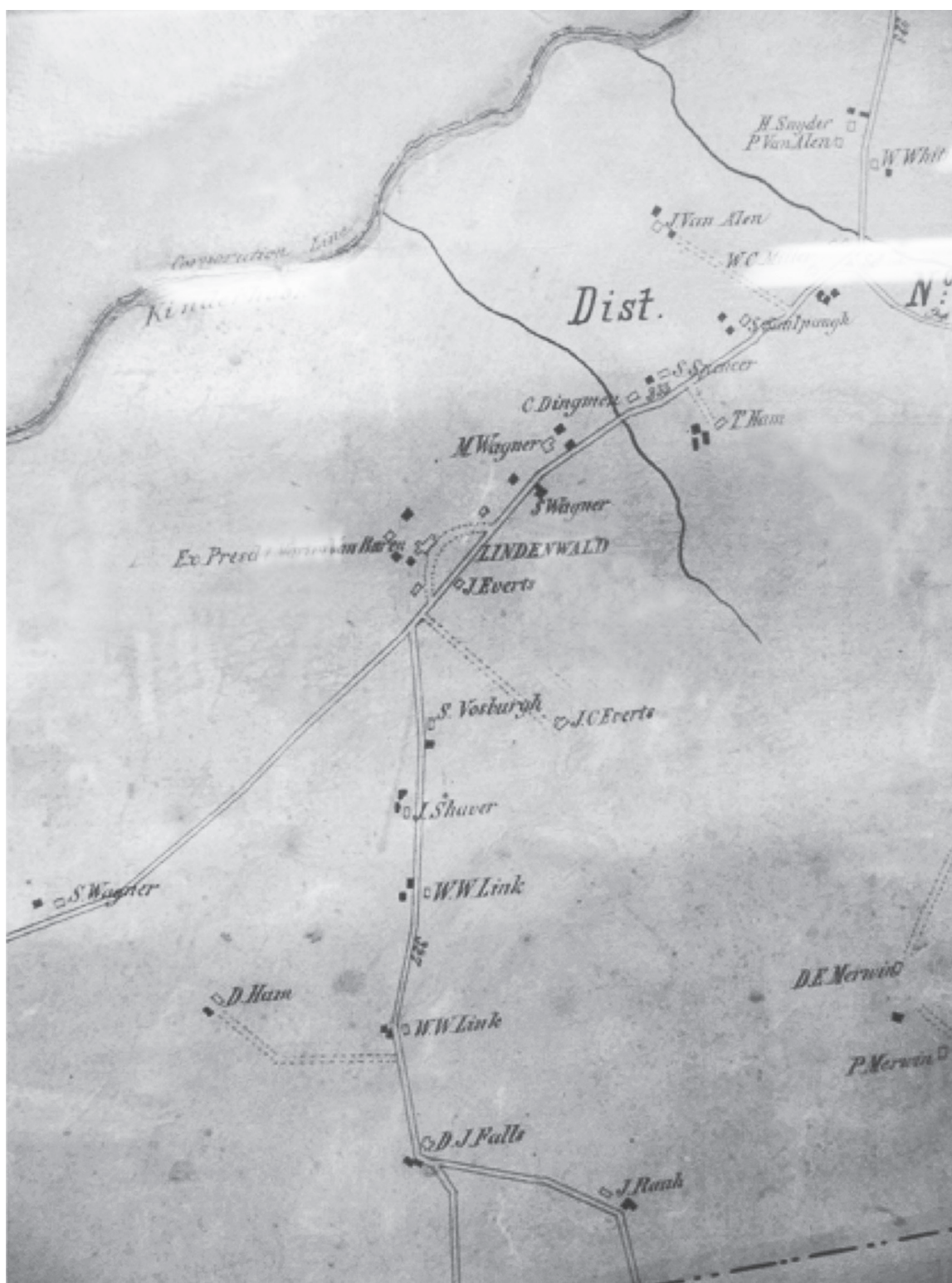


Fig. 25. Lindenwald neighborhood in 1856, during Van Buren's residence. (Newcomb and Clark, 1856. Philadelphia: Richard Clark. Detail of map of the Town of Kinderhook: photographed at Kinderhook National Bank.)

The federal government was beginning to serve as another source of support for this changing way of life. State governments had already taken an interest in the work of the agricultural societies and other farm-related projects, with New York's State Agricultural Society, founded in 1832, building on the older foundation of "improvement" groups like the Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, Arts, and Manufactures (Hedrick 1969:113). In the 1830s, there began to be interest at the federal level as well, starting at the Patent Office where commissioner Henry Leavitt Ellsworth worked to further technological innovation for farmers by approving many new designs for farm implements. Ellsworth also requested a Congressional appropriation to support the dissemination of seeds and agricultural statistics and information. This appropriation—\$1,000 in its first year—was first granted in 1839, under Van Buren's administration. Regular funding did not commence until 1847, but Ellsworth continued to issue regular agricultural bulletins. These were very popular with congressmen because they demonstrated to rural constituents—and most of the U.S. was still rural in this period—that the government was doing something to help farmers in the challenging nineteenth-century economy. By the 1850s, the Patent Office was requesting that the federal government create a full-fledged Department of Agriculture (Hurt 1994:147-48). This did not come to fruition until the Civil War era, but the groundwork for it was laid during Van Buren's own term in office, reflecting the growing conviction among many Americans that government should play a role in balancing the effects of capitalist markets on the agricultural sector.

Case Study: Ephraim Best

On an August day in 1849, Martin Van Buren sold over a ton of hay to Ephraim Best of Kinderhook. It was delivered by Isack Van Slyck, probably a Van Buren employee, and it was weighed—most likely at the scale in the center of Kinderhook—by P. S. Hoes, perhaps Van Buren's nephew Peter.⁴ With the population of New York and other cities burgeoning and urban transportation largely dependent on horses, hay had become a significant cash crop for Columbia County and other upstate New York farmers. Many who could no longer compete in the grain market with farms farther west were able to keep their farms profitable by selling hay, oats, and other feed (Searle 2004:43). Martin Van Buren was among these; Isaac Hill, a writer from *The Cultivator*, noted in 1844 that

⁴Peter S. Hoes was the son of Hannah Hoes Van Buren's brother, Peter I. Hoes (Collier 1914:380).

Van Buren kept relatively little livestock, in part because he wanted to produce hay for sale (Demaree 1974:291).

Searle speculates that Ephraim Best was a middleman who would likely have sold the hay to one of the urban markets in the region. In fact, Best was a well-to-do farmer like Van Buren—but unlike Van Buren, he seems to have embraced commercial farming much more actively, shipping and distributing agricultural and imported goods to and for his neighbors and employees as well as from his own sizeable farm just north and west of Kinderhook Village. An examination of his background and farming activities helps us to see some of the directions that Columbia County farming was taking in the period when Van Buren was farming at Lindenwald, as well as providing a useful comparison with another significant Kinderhook farm run by a Dutch farmer who was part of Van Buren's social, cultural, and economic circle.



Fig. 26. 1849 receipt, found in Martin Van Buren's correspondence, for the sale of 2,402 pounds of hay to Ephraim Best. (Searle, 2004: Fig. 16)

Ephraim P. Best was born in 1810 in Livingston, in the southwestern part of Columbia County.⁵ His family, which seems to be of Dutch origin, had been in America for about a century at that point. Best's father had a large farm in Livingston, but around

⁵ Information about Ephraim Best, except where otherwise noted, is from population and agricultural census records, Charles Best Benson's genealogy *The Family of Best in America of Holland Descent: With Copious Biographical Notes, 1700-1901* (New York: Knickerbocker Press, 1909), and from Best's own hand-written farm ledger. The latter two sources are in the collection of the Columbia County Historical Society. For this project, selected pages from the years 1849 through 1857 were transcribed into a database; pages were chosen to show a range of Best's activities, including his general sales and purchases, capital improvements to his farm and house, and employee records.

1820 he moved north to a farm on the road between Chatham and Valatie, and a few years later he purchased a larger property of about 400 acres just north of Kinderhook Village. He died in 1846, leaving the farm to 36-year-old Ephraim, the younger of two sons.

Like Van Buren, Best came from a background that combined insiderhood and outsiderhood, and that included a certain amount of privilege as well as an experience of less elite status. Best himself was not descended from Kinderhook's old founding families, but he married into that tightly interconnected kinship network (both he and his brother married women from the locally prominent Vosburgh family) and he became very much a part of the local leadership, taking prominent roles in banking, civic, and church affairs. Inheriting a 400-acre farm set him up in a substantial way, but he also built on his inheritance through his own entrepreneurial efforts. In the same decades that ex-President Martin Van Buren was working to rebuild the fertility and viability of his old farm on the Post Road, the younger Ephraim Best was expanding his own wealth through judicious exchange in the growing agricultural market economy.

Best's farming and trading activities in the 1840s and 50s seem to have been centered around the sale of products from his own large farm.⁶ In 1855, Best devoted approximately 70 acres to growing crops, another 70 to pasture, and 50 acres to growing hay—slightly more acreage than Lindenwald overall, with slightly more in hay and about twice as much in pasture. Van Buren produced 65 tons of hay that year where Best produced 40, suggesting that Van Buren's 1843 boast that he was producing a hay crop "larger than a single one of my neighbors. . .among them some of the best farmers in the county" (Van Buren to Jackson 1843b) did reflect a higher level of productivity on the Lindenwald farm. Best planted 30 acres in rye and harvested 300 bushels (Van Buren's 14 acres of rye that year yielded 200 bushels, again considerably higher per acre) but outproduced Lindenwald greatly on potatoes, producing 800 bushels from 17 acres (to Van Buren's much smaller crop of 25 bushels on 6 acres, a figure that expanded greatly when Lindenwald seems to have begun producing potatoes for commercial sale in the next few years). Like Lindenwald, the Best farm in the mid-1850s included relatively small numbers of livestock. From his small dairy herd (five cows), Best was able to produce 700 pounds of butter, another commercial item in demand in urban markets. His sheep herd was considerably larger than Van Buren's (68 sheep in 1855 as opposed

⁶ The year 1855 was chosen as a basis for comparison in this case study for two primary reasons. Agricultural and population census data for this year is available for both Best's farm and Lindenwald. As well, both Best and Van Buren had consolidated their farming operations by the mid-1850s, and so their activities in that year can be considered fairly typical for their farms.

to Lindenwald's 17) but it seems that Best, like others, discovered this to be an uncertain sector of the market. A few years earlier, he bought 50 young wethers⁷ from a wealthy neighboring farmer, Levi Milham, and carefully kept track of their increasing weight and how much it cost him to feed them over the season. When he sold them in the spring to Isaac Van Alen, he ended up losing money overall.⁸

But in general, Best's ventures appear to have been profitable. The value of his farm and stock in 1855 was listed at \$31,000 (compared with Lindenwald's \$17,800). Best shipped his goods—and perhaps those of others as well, if the 1849 receipt to Van Buren indicates a purchase made as part of a larger non-local transaction—through the traders who were becoming more essential parts of the agricultural economy by this period (Bruegel 2002:96). One of these, who appears quite frequently in Best's ledger book, was "Wendovers"—a firm run by New York City native and second-generation food dealer John Thompson Wendover (Fig. 27). Wendover's father Stephen, a wholesale grocer, moved from the city to Stockport in 1801, the year after his son's birth, and set up a business that eventually settled at Stuyvesant Landing, buying first a sloop and later a steamboat for shipping goods down the Hudson to the metropolis. John Wendover followed his father into the business at an early age, participating in weekly shipping days that one observer described as being "like a town meeting," with farmers thronging the riverside around the landing (Ellis 1878:opp.220). By 1855, Wendover himself was retiring from the business, leaving it to his two sons.



Fig. 27. John Thompson Wendover (1800-1875), proprietor of a shipping firm based at Stuyvesant Landing. (Ellis, *History of Columbia County*)

⁷ A wether is a castrated male sheep.

⁸ Ruth Piwonka speculates that Best may later have found a more lucrative market for sheep, by selling lamb skins to hatmakers.

Ephraim Best shipped oats, hay, and butter to New York City with Wendover's firm, but he also bought food from them, some of which he sold in turn to his own tenants and employees. In November of 1855 he bought a barrel of wheat flour from the company for \$10.50, an expensive item that showed the extent to which Hudson Valley farmers were now importing one crop they had once produced for themselves. Best's accounts also show purchases of fish from Wendover and others, which Best then sold. Codfish would likely have been an imported item; clams, shad, and herring were likely from closer to home. And Best frequently sold tobacco to his tenants and workers, an imported item that he perhaps bought in bulk and then re-sold. Best was not, then, exactly the commercial "middleman" that Searle surmised he was, but he was certainly transacting a good deal of business at the river landing and exchanging local and imported goods within a considerable local network that included everyone from the former President to his own day laborers.

Like other Dutch farmers in Kinderhook, Best employed workers of various racial and ethnic backgrounds. A more detailed analysis of his records could illuminate the relationships and occasional tensions and prejudices that existed among Kinderhook's different social strata in the period. Best himself clearly pegged people by origin and ethnicity: the ledger notes that he sold potatoes to a "Connecticut Yankee" in 1855 and to a "Dutchman cooper" in 1856. His tenants and workers included people from at least two of Kinderhook's African American families, the Ebos and the Lees.⁹ He also employed many Irish workers, including domestic servants. On occasion, prejudices about non-natives and non-whites come through in his notes. In 1858, he fired a maid named Joannah Geary after a short period, noting in exasperation on that on December 14 the "Irish sow [had] cleared out to a frolick" and then that the "Irish slut [was] gone for good and all." But one Irish maid, Margaret by name, worked for him for at least six years; her accounts show that she travelled frequently to Albany, perhaps to visit family members, and that she was sending money home to her family in Ireland. Family names

⁹ Best's ledger is potentially a very rich source of data about these African American farmers. Ebo (an unusual surname, potentially reflecting a connection with the Ibo people of west Africa) was Best's tenant throughout the 1840s, but at that point they seem to have had a falling-out, and the Ebo family left the area. Ruth Piwonka has traced them to western New York state, where they appear to have adopted the name Pruyn or Prine (probably they were taking the name of the family who owned them when they were enslaved) and started a new farming life as many easterners were doing in this period. Lott Lee was part of a family that had been in the area for several generations; it seems possible that the Ebo family had also been in the area for multiple generations.

also recur in the lists of his farmworkers and tenants—various Sitzers,¹⁰ Schermerhorns, and Hagadorns worked for him over time. Some of this was seasonal labor. An 1850 entry notes that Jacob Hagadorn had worked for five months at \$10 a month, and that “he promises to come here next Summer and work his time out he is to commence at the Same time he left last Summer drawing in Rye” (the bargain was sealed with a down-payment witnessed by two of Best’s other farm employees). The Hagadorns, like many other Columbia County farm families, appear to have been enticed by the possibilities of farming in the newly-opening American west, and Best notes rather plaintively in 1856 that, “Old Bill Hagadorn and Jacob and all their families left Kinderhook on Tuesday afternoon for Iowa. . . Goodbie.” But there are mentions of them again later in the ledger, and in the 1860s a John Hagadorn was living in the neighborhood near Best’s farm (Collier 1914:528), suggesting that farming in the west had not been as satisfying as the Hagadorns hoped.

Best’s financial arrangements with his tenants and farmworkers are spelled out in detail in the ledger.¹¹ In 1855, his records for three of his male workers show the range of cash and in-kind exchanges taking place. John Sitzer, an eight-month seasonal employee, was to be allowed to pasture his own cow on Best’s land “if there is any pasture” (it appears that there was). In lieu of cash wages, Sitzer received various products from Best, some produced locally (a pig from one of the Van Alstyne’s and perhaps some feed corn), some imported (salt, cod, molasses, wheat flour from Wendover’s). Entries for “a lot of grass,” “one load of pumpkins,” or quantities of rye and corn being taken to the mill suggest that this was a share-farming agreement—that is, Sitzer was growing these crops on Best’s land, taking them to be milled and sold, and then returning a share of the proceeds to Best. Sitzer, like others of Best’s employees, also seems to have hired workers himself (in January 1856, “John lost half a day looking for help for himself”) and to have done farm work that was not part of his arrangement with Best (in 1856 he also “lost ½ day threshing his oats”). Sitzer ended up with a small credit for the season’s work,

¹⁰ This is spelled variously in the ledger (Sitzor, Sitzer, Sitsor).

¹¹ An 1866 agreement between Best and another member of the Sitzer family, Philip, gives a great deal of information about the kind of arrangement a wealthy farmer might make with his farm tenants. Among other terms, Best stipulated which specific parts of the garden beds were his and which could be used by Sitzer, how many stoves Sitzer could run in the farmhouse (two), what work Philip was to do under Best’s direction, who would pay the taxes, and so on. For its possible utility in showing the details of a Columbia County farmer/tenant relationship in the period when Van Buren was farming at Lindenwald, this agreement is reproduced as Appendix E.

which Best paid to him in cash. Other workers ended up owing money at the end of the year; Daniel Davis, a year-long tenant who worked for Best for eight months (at \$13 a month) in 1855, owed slightly more than the value of his labor. James Davis, perhaps a relative of Daniel, also worked for Best that year, and came out on the credit side despite continual small expenditures to Best for tobacco, boots (and the mending of boots), a watch (and the repairing of the watch), a whip, the cost of repairing a scythe that he had damaged, seeing “a show in town,” and regular visits home and money sent to his parents. These items suggest that James was a young man living away from home for the first time, determined to enjoy himself, perhaps not exercising the most mature judgment, but a steady worker nonetheless.

Ephraim Best himself seems to have reflected many of the traditional values of the Dutch farming culture from which he came. Like Van Buren in his generation and Peter Edward Van Alstyne and his son Edward in theirs, he embraced some of the new developments taking place in agriculture, including the markets that were continuing to open up with the growth of trade to New York City and elsewhere. It is difficult to know for certain without closer investigation of his actual farming practices, but his overall orientation appears to have been essentially conservative; he was enterprising but by no means rash. The account of his character that can be gleaned from his 1883 obituary—even allowing some latitude for the language of memorialization—conveys a sense of soberness and rootedness that perhaps grounded and balanced his participation in the fast-moving commercial world that was taking shape around him:

In the relations of life he was distinguished for great practical common sense, sound judgment, and conservative action. Few were admitted unreservedly to his confidence, but in those who enjoyed that confidence he reposed implicit trust. His recollections of past events were exceedingly accurate, his knowledge of human nature extensive, and his observations on men and affairs shrewd, wise, and seasoned with a quaint humor peculiarly his own. . . . Perhaps none, now living in this vicinity, preserved the republican simplicity of life of generations ago so fully as he. He was most happy amid scenes of rural peace and quietness. His beautiful farm he loved with almost paternal fondness; its broad acres of meadow and plowland; its forests of primeval growth, almost as untouched as in his father's day of sixty years ago, were his unceasing pride and delight, where he seemed to reverently commune with nature, or with some brooding spirit of restful peace and calm. (Benson 1909:131-32)

Case Study: Jeremiah Hess

The somewhat more fragmentary history of the man who was Martin Van Buren's farm manager in 1855 shows a farmer less able to navigate the commercial currents of the mid-nineteenth century farming economy in Columbia County. Like Ephraim Best, Jeremiah Hess came from farther south in Columbia County—in this case, from Claverack. Like many of Van Buren's tenants and workers, Hess was from a Columbia County farming family.¹² The Hesses had settled in Claverack in the mid- to late-eighteenth century, so they were not among the earliest of the Dutch or German migrants.¹³ Michael Hess, of the first generation born in America, fought in the Revolutionary War (unlike his brother Jacob, a Tory sympathizer who moved to Canada during the war) and assembled a farmstead from land he purchased largely from the Van Rensselaer family. Michael and his wife Margretha had a large family, nine girls and four boys, of whom Jeremiah, born in 1804, was the youngest son. The family intermarried strikingly with the neighboring Lant (originally Landt) family; three Hess sisters, including twins, married three Lant brothers, and one of Jeremiah's brothers married a Lant sister.

What is known of Jeremiah Hess's own history raises many questions about how landless farmers were adapting to the challenges of the agricultural economy of the time.

¹² Research into some of the workers listed in Searle's 2004 Cultural Landscape Report and Huston's 2004 article "The Little Magician After the Show" showed several kinship connections with long-established county families, mostly Dutch and German.

John R. Harder, Van Buren's first farm manager when he bought the Kinderhook farm in 1839, was descended from Palatine Germans; there were connections by marriage with the Hoes family in Kinderhook, with whom the Van Burens were deeply interrelated (Harder family files, Columbia County Historical Society).

Jacob Allen Ham, a 23-year-old farm laborer at Lindenwald in 1850, was also descended from Palatine immigrant farmers who settled in Germantown in the early eighteenth century and were living on land in Livingston Manor by 1720. Allen Ham was born, like his father Jacob Tiel Ham, in Linlithgo, just north of Germantown, so it appears that the family had stayed close to the same spot for at least a century. Allen Ham had two older brothers, John Tiel and Thomas, who died young. It is not clear what happened to him after his time at Lindenwald, and whether he was able to acquire a farm of his own or perhaps return to farming land owned by his family. There were Hams in the Lindenwald neighborhood in the later nineteenth century; a T. Ham owned property just north and east of the estate in 1856 (see Fig. 25), and may perhaps have been a relative, although Ham/Hamm is a very common name in the area (Warren Hamm, "A Genealogy of the 1710 Palatine Hamms," self-published [n.d.], pp. 10, 23-24, Columbia County Historical Society).

Although there were Brodheads in Columbia County in this period, Ruth Piwonka believes that Abram Brodhead, a 25-year-old laborer at Lindenwald in 1860, was more likely connected with an early Ulster County family.

¹³ Information about the Hess family's history is principally from "The Hess Family," compiled by Ray R. Lant in 1958, and from other genealogical information shared by Marion Hess, July 28, 2010.

Married at 20, Jeremiah was himself the father of a large family, but of his nine children, only one was a boy. This may have limited his ability to develop his own farm in a time when small farmers still depended very heavily on family labor. It is not clear from the family genealogy what became of Jeremiah's only son, Jacob, but by the time the boy reached young adulthood, his parents were still bearing and raising small children, and it seems possible that well before 1855, when Jeremiah took a job managing Martin Van Buren's farm, Jacob would have left the family to start his own household on his own or—more likely, given the family's circumstances—someone else's land. Jeremiah was 51 years old when he took the job with Martin Van Buren, and presumably he was able to demonstrate a creditable level of skill and experience, gleaned from his upbringing in a well-established area farm family.¹⁴ He also seems to have had some ideas about new strategies to try at Lindenwald, particularly in terms of expanding its commercial dairy production.

The Lindenwald dairy herd grew from eight to twelve cows under Hess's management, and butter production rose from 87.5 pounds per cow to 100. Hess also appears to have added more sheep to Van Buren's herd. Huston speculates that these shifts in emphasis, while small, led to a drop in the acreage and time devoted to hay and potato production, which in turn may have affected the farm's overall profitability and prompted Van Buren to find a different manager (Huston 2004:106). In the 1860 census, Jeremiah, his wife Margaret, and their four youngest daughters had returned to Claverack—not to the family homestead, which was being farmed by other family members, but to a 10-acre property a few miles away, just outside the village of Mellenville.

Based on the available evidence, it is possible to interpret Jeremiah Hess's tenure at Lindenwald in different ways. He may have been an experienced and capable local farmer who was attempting to keep up with the times by shifting production more toward commercial dairying and sheep farming. Indeed, given his very large family of daughters, it seems possible that the family labor he was able to access disposed him to move in the direction of a type of farming where female labor was still very common (McMurry 1995:102-4). The fact that the changes put in place during his time at Lindenwald did not last may say something about his skill as a manager, his ability to read changing market conditions, or Martin Van Buren's own preferences as a landlord. We know that in other

¹⁴In the 1850 census, Jeremiah is listed as a laborer living next door to Abraham I. Jordan in Hillsdale, a farmer worth the fairly substantial sum of \$6000. The Jordans were a prominent family whose members included professional men whose circle of acquaintance included Martin Van Buren, and Ruth Piwonka speculates that this may have been the connection that led to Hess being hired at Lindenwald.

cases—for example, a brief foray into growing hop vines in the late 1840s—Van Buren was willing to experiment with a popular trend but not to continuing investing in it if it did not meet his expectations (Searle 2004:47-48). Perhaps Jeremiah Hess urged a similar experiment that Van Buren found disappointing, and the Dutch conservatism that continued to color his approach to farming, as it did Ephraim Best's, came to the fore. It may also be that Hess, as a farmer of mature years himself, wanted more latitude in decision-making than the ex-President was willing to grant him.

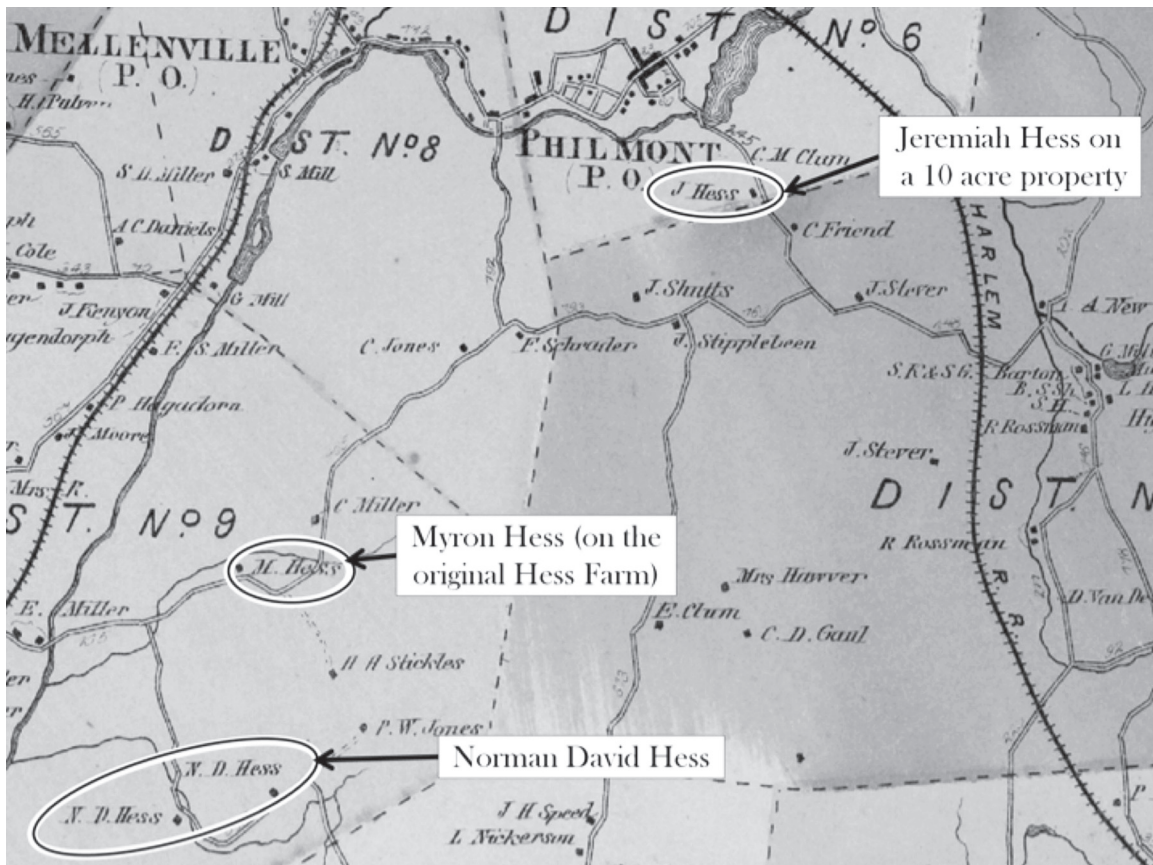


Fig. 28. The 1878 Columbia County atlas shows Jeremiah Hess living back in Claverack, on a 10-acre property a few miles from the lands his family had been farming for over a century.

It is possible to envision Jeremiah Hess as someone largely left behind by the changes in Columbia County agriculture in the mid- to late-nineteenth century—“one of the more prosperous members of a new and growing class of permanent agricultural laborers,” as Huston calls him (2004:115). But his move from Lindenwald to a relatively tiny 10-acre property near his own family home does not necessarily mean that he was a failure as a farmer. A great deal of food can be grown on 10 acres, and it may be that

Hess was continuing the long-standing pattern of combining small-scale farming, mainly for household consumption or local sale, with other kinds of labor, including working on others' farms (including the family homestead and other land being farmed by his relatives). This interpretation does not change the overall trajectory of the story—it was still a time when landless farmers were less likely to be able to afford farms of their own. But in this nineteenth-century version of the later “get big or get out” imperative, Jeremiah Hess may have chosen a third option: get small, and look for ways to combine growing food with other kinds of income. It was not a way to participate centrally in the commercializing agricultural economy, but it was a way to continue farming and producing food.

Some additional fragments of Hess family history suggest that education was valued in this particular farm family. Hess's youngest daughter Rhuamah, known as Amie, became a schoolteacher in the village of Philmont. The oldest daughter, Elizabeth, continued family tradition by marrying a man from the Lant family; her husband had grown up on a farm between Kinderhook and Valatie. Their son Jeremiah Hess Lant, born in 1855, later inherited that farm, but he also became an educator. He was a schoolteacher from young adulthood, rising to become a principal of a school in Ghent and later entering government service. But he does not seem to have given up farming, and his only child, Ray Rowe Lant, inherited the farm when Jeremiah Hess Lant died in 1923. Ray Lant, as we will see in the following chapter, joined with other area farmers in promoting Progressive Era projects such as farmer education and farm improvement designed to strengthen the county's agricultural sector in response to new changes and challenges. As in other generations, then, this farming family adapted to changing economic circumstances in flexible ways. Like their better-capitalized, more prosperous neighbors, they combined long-standing networks of association with new farm strategies and labor arrangements. And many of them, it would seem, retained a deep attachment to the county's agricultural landscapes and to the survival of farming as a way of life.

Case Study: The Alexanders and Risedorph Beverages

Just south of Kinderhook Village, a rusted sign above a stone gate announces the one-time location of Risedorph Beverages, a Kinderhook company founded during the time that Martin Van Buren was living at Lindenwald (see Fig. 29). The account of the firm in Edward Collier's town history suggests a more or less conventional tale of invention and business success, starting with the founder, George Lathrop:

In his barn he was nourishing the transplanted little seedling of the present extensive Bottling works of the Risedorph Company. Richard Alexander, whose mother was an Indian, was his efficient helper and the compounder of many new secret concoctions which obtained wide celebrity. [Alexander] largely increased the business to which he succeeded and soon removed it to its present location. (Collier 1914:504-5)

Collier neglects to mention that Richard Alexander was of African-American as well as Indian background, and his mention in passing of Alexander's mother likely masks a much more active role in what was at that time a significant part of the medicinal trade as well as the local food economy. The history of this beverage company contains tantalizing glimpses of different gendered and racial experiences of the production, processing, and marketing of food, drink, and health products in mid-nineteenth-century Columbia County.



Fig. 29. Sign for the former Risedorph Beverage Company on Broad Street (Route 9) at the south end of Kinderhook Village.

By 1860, most of the Mohican people who had once inhabited the Hudson River Valley had long since been displaced and scattered to a succession of new homes. Of course, many Natives did remain in New York and New England, usually under the radar of official narratives that tended to render them as invisible or “vanished.” Intermarriage

among Indians, African Americans, Irish, and other marginalized groups blurred racial and social categories in ways that unsettled dominant groups like the Dutch and English in places like Columbia County (Bruegel reports community unease in Kinderhook in the 1780s and 90s over a group of thieves said to be of mixed white, black, and Indian origin, whom Bruegel sees as outsider scapegoats for local mysteries or problems [2002:27]). Those categories were further challenged by the fact that many former slaves had adopted their Dutch owners' names and to some extent their culture as well (Cohen 1992:145); in Kinderhook there were black Van Alstyines, Van Alens, Van Nesses, and others. Among those participating in the county's farming economy in Martin Van Buren's time, then, were people who did not fit neatly into standard ethnic, racial, class, and other identities. The case of the Alexander family suggests that the realm of commercial agriculture and food production offered some room for people in these blurred or marginal positions to operate and perhaps to prosper.

What can be pieced together from census records and other fragmentary evidence about the Indian/African American Alexanders in and around Columbia County is that some may have come from Rhode Island, perhaps in the 1840s (they appear in the federal census beginning in 1850). Collier's history states that Mrs. Alexander was a "pure-blood Narraganset Indian" (1914:507), which is consistent with a Rhode Island origin. A possible relative, Redcrow Alexander, also known as Rebecca, is recorded in the 1850 and later censuses for Lansingburgh, just north of Troy, with family members who were born variously in Rhode Island and Canada. Meanwhile, a Richard Alexander and his family, all listed as "free blacks," are shown living in Chatham, next to Kinderhook, in 1840. Richard's wife Nancy, born in New York State around 1811, is also listed as black in the 1850 census, but it seems more likely that she was the "pure-blood" Native woman mentioned by Collier. Richard and Nancy had at least four children, including a son, Richard B. Alexander, who was born around 1846. Some of the other children can be found living with area families, presumably as servants, from their adolescent years, but young Richard appears to have remained with his parents—or rather, with his mother, as Richard Sr. is not in evidence in the 1860 census. By that time, the household had dwindled to three people: Nancy Alexander, aged 49, her son Richard, aged 14, and another small boy, Charles Gifford, aged 6.

In 1860, local businessman George Lathrop launched his beverage business, operating it first out of the barn behind his home in the village, and later in the Broad Street location. It seems likely that Richard Alexander was a promising and energetic

assistant, perhaps working to help support his widowed or separated mother, who may well have had skills and knowledge of her own to contribute to Lathrop's new enterprise. Indian herbal recipes were immensely popular in the thriving American patent-medicine industry at the time, and in many Americans' minds, the "vanished" or "vanishing" Natives were "believed to possess powerful insights about the natural world in general and herbal remedies in particular" (Hursh and Goertzen 2009:137). This was not a new association: drinks and medicines containing indigenous herbs and plants like sarsaparilla, golden ragwort (also known as life-root and "squaw-weed"), and black cohosh were widely promoted for their beneficial qualities (Stage 1979:90). Many medicinal beverages were particularly intended to help with "women's problems" (for example, symptoms of menopause); Lydia Pinkham of Massachusetts built a business empire selling a women's tonic composed of a blend of herbs (Stage 1979:32).¹⁵ Most patent-medicine dealers were men, but the example of Pinkham and others shows that there was room for women entrepreneurs here, too, particularly through their association with women's health and also, to some extent, in opposition to the male-dominated scientific medicine that was beginning to assert itself as the dominant model in this period. Medical doctors were not particularly well-respected in the mid-nineteenth century, in part because their remedies tended to emphasize invasive surgical solutions. Home-based medicine—including herbal medicine practiced by women—was often a preferred alternative (Conrad and Leiter 2008:826). It may have been particularly appealing to people like the Dutch who had their own long tradition of botanical and herbal healing (Cohen 1992:157; Piwonka 2008:412). And until the Temperance movement made significant inroads on Americans' habits later in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there was not as distinct a separation among medicinal compounds, alcoholic beverages, and everyday table drinks (including in their composition—Mrs. Pinkham's famous nostrum itself was 19% alcohol).

At some point, the energetic assistant became the proprietor of the Kinderhook beverage business, brewing "applejack and cider" among other products (Duck 1985:207) and becoming part of a thriving regional brewing economy that included

¹⁵ Pinkham's "Vegetable Compound," whose title capitalized on the enthusiasm for vegetarianism of the time, included unicorn root, life root, black cohosh, pleurisy root, and fenugreek seed, which she obtained from "local suppliers" (Stage 1979:32). Another female patent-medicine entrepreneur, Alice Morgan Person of North Carolina (1840-1913), mixed helonias, pipsissewa, prickly ash bark, queen's root, Mexican sarsaparilla, star grass, trillium—all used for medicinal purposes by the Cherokee Indians of the region—in her cure, which she advertised by means of a musical show (Hursh and Goertzen 2009:141-49).

many companies based in Hudson. An undated advertisement included in Ralph Duck's history of Kinderhook proclaims "Richard Alexander, Kinderhook, N.Y., manufacturer and bottler of Alexander's Excelsior Beer, Soda, Sarsaparilla, Ginger Ale, refiner of champagne cider, Bottled Lager Ales and Porter. Lager furnished by the keg for draught. Picnicks, Excursions &c. supplied at short notice" (Duck 1985:207). There is no direct mention of medicinal drinks, but if Nancy Alexander was supplying recipes for her son's "many new secret concoctions," it seems possible that she, like other women involved in the beverage trade at the time, was drawing on traditional indigenous knowledge of herbal ingredients, and that the Alexanders' customers—like present-day adherents of "alternative healing" practices—would have understood the implied connection between Indianness, herbal ingredients, and health.

Nancy Alexander lived in the center of Kinderhook in a small house that Edward Collier remarked on in his reminiscent stroll through his own recollections of the town as it was in the 1860s. Richard Alexander eventually sold the business to Edward Risedorph, a local man who was very much a part of the Village's social, cultural, and economic establishment, including serving as an early director of the Columbia County Historical Society. Under Risedorph's direction, the bottling company expanded in size and scope, with wagons delivering "all manner of delectable concoctions" around the greater local area (Duck reports that deliveries sometimes required a three-day wagon trip) (Duck 1985:207). Local fruit growers clearly continued to supply the business into at least the middle of the twentieth century. The deProsses, who owned Lindenwald in the early twentieth century, sold apples occasionally to Risedorph (Searle 2004:91), as did Bob Van Alstyne, who farmed some of the fields around Lindenwald in the same period. (In a June 2010 conversation, Bob reported an incident that appears to have put him off drinking cider permanently: arriving with a load of fruit to sell to Risedorph's, he witnessed another farmer bringing a manure wagon filled with apples which were unloaded straight into the vat for processing.) Risedorph's son-in-law continued the business after his death in 1944, expanding in 1961 to include a distribution county-wide business. After an expansion in the late 1970s, the company employed 14 people and became affiliated with the Genessee Brewing Company. Eventually, however, the familiar story of consolidation and expansion during that period claimed the business as a casualty. Some of its buildings still stand on the Broad Street property (Fig. 30), and the rusted sign on the gatepost marks the spot where a mixed-race entrepreneur built a business in the mid-nineteenth century.

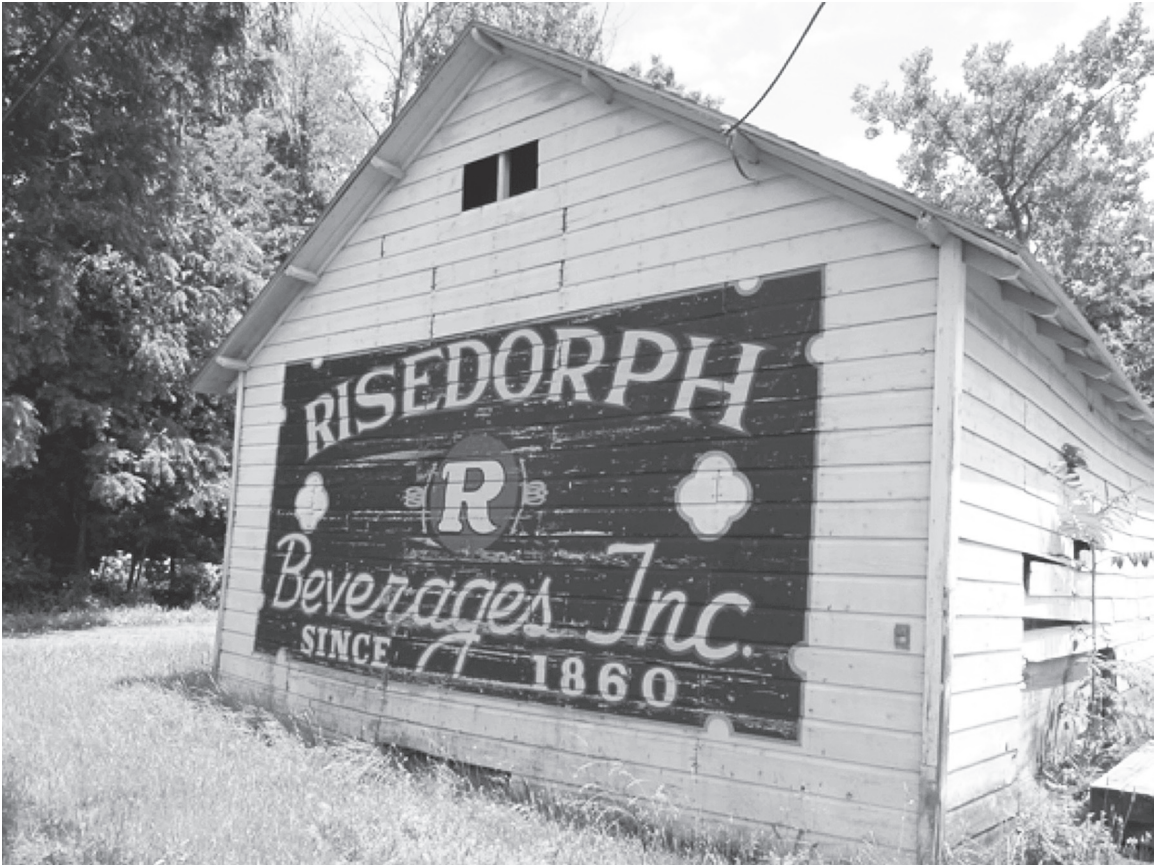


Fig. 30. Former truck shed of Risedorph Beverages, 2010.

Early Tourism in the Hudson Valley

By the mid-nineteenth-century, a domestic tourism industry was beginning to appear in the northeastern U.S. The Hudson Valley quickly became an important stop on a uniquely American “Grand Tour” that included scenic and human-made attractions like the Catskills, Niagara Falls, the Erie Canal, and industrial sights like the mills of Lowell and the coal mining country of Pennsylvania (Brown 1995:3-4; Gassan 2008; Sears 1989:4, 182ff). Paradoxically, tourism allowed people to escape or transcend the industrialized modern world even while it was still taking shape around them, using the very mechanisms that it provided: steamboats, railroads, and an expanding print and visual culture. As the U.S. became more industrialized and oriented toward commercial markets, a growing and increasingly urbanized class of Americans began to go in search of vacation experiences that would satisfy their desire for supposedly simpler and more natural landscapes, cultures, and ways of life, as well as for encounters with the marvels of the industrializing world. These experiences were not simply a means of escape

from everyday life. Just as Indian remedies signalled pastness and a certain kind of authenticity to patent medicine buyers, natural wonders like Niagara Falls, bygone battle sites like those of the Revolutionary War, and pastoral landscapes associated with the first generations of American settlers in the northeast colonies drew visitors who were trying to assemble a sense of national identity out of the complex encounters and histories of the previous two centuries.¹⁶

The Hudson Valley's tourist infrastructure began to develop quite early in the nineteenth century, spurred by the area's proximity to the growing metropolis of New York and the same transportation innovations that were changing the nature of farming in the area and beyond (Brown 1995:24). Visits to the Hudson Valley were often made by steamboat up the river. The standard itinerary emphasized natural grandeur such as the steep cliffs at West Point and the stunning views of and from the Catskill Mountains, but landscapes built and shaped by humans provided a pleasing complement or contrast (Sears 1989:53). These scenes were celebrated visually by the Hudson River School of painters, beginning with Thomas Cole in the 1820s and 1830s (Flad 2009:360). The region was also popularized by writers, including Timothy Dwight in his popular *Travels in New England and New York* (1821-22) and two of Martin Van Buren's closest friends: Washington Irving, whose stories created a mythology around Dutch American places and culture, and James Kirke Paulding, who wrote *The New Mirror for Travellers*; and *Guide to the Springs in 1828* (Brown 1995:36; Sears 1989:52-53, 60-63). Disseminated through the burgeoning print and journal realm, these stories and images reached a wide audience and helped to solidify the Hudson Valley's reputation as a place where visitors could commune with the nation's pre-industrial era and the values associated with it.

As already discussed in Chapter Four, there was a widespread perception that farming in the northeast was in decline by this period, prompted by comparisons with the ascendant industrial economy and the new expectations of a more fully market-

¹⁶ In *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999[1976]) a foundational work of tourism studies, Dean MacCannell argues that tourism is defined by its conceptual separation of the modern and the non-modern. He sees tourism as a mechanism by which modern people define themselves and their world, often by visiting their opposites and "others"—natural places, supposedly obsolete ways of life, and "primitive" or "traditional" peoples. Since the book's publication, the hugely expanded tourist industry has absorbed a much wider (even a comprehensive) range of experiences and sites, outstripping some aspects of MacCannell's analysis, but his view of tourism as a totalizing system that attempts to subsume all available places and experiences does continue to ring true. In addition to the sources cited in this section (Gassan 2008, Sears 1989), Dona Brown's *Inventing New England: Regional Tourism in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1995) provides a useful comparative study of a neighboring and equally iconic region.

oriented society. One result of this shift in perception was that farming was increasingly linked in tourists' imaginations with other past-associated activities and landscapes. A growing number of Americans saw farming through nostalgic eyes, linking it with family or cultural memories rather than experiencing it directly. This nostalgia was a significant component of Hudson Valley tourism from its earliest days. For example, James Kirke Paulding, like others, extolled the natural scenery of the valley, but also included the pastoral in his enthusiasm. The eastern shore of the river, he wrote, was "animated with all the living emblems of industry; cattle, sheep, waving fields of grain, and whistling ploughmen" (Paulding 1828:100). Similarly, Andrew Jackson Downing, an early and influential landscape gardener who lived in the Hudson Valley, wrote of the way that the area's landscapes combined nature and culture: "Neat farm-houses are profusedly scattered over the green and fertile fields, and here and there along the river is seen the beautiful and costly villa. . . But ah! the eye wanders to that glorious spectacle, the noble chain of hills which forms the boundary, the frame, the setting for this superb picture" (1835:294). Through the new ritual of following a tourist itinerary, more and more middle-class Americans could partake of the nation's physical body while finding their own place in it, often in ways that cast a rosy glow of pastness over older farm communities like Kinderhook. Early and mid-nineteenth-century farmers were not remaking their operations to conform to tourists' tastes and expectations to the extent that has happened in contemporary "agritourism"; working farms were simply one aspect of the region's overall attractiveness. But the "tourist gaze" was beginning to turn toward farms and farming, reframing their meanings and reconfiguring the relationship between those who cultivated the land and those who absorbed the sight as a picturesque leisure-time attraction.¹⁷

Historian John Sears has written that "the atmosphere of romance which Irving, Cooper, and the Hudson River School of painters had managed to cast over the Hudson Valley persisted throughout the nineteenth century" (1989:63). In fact, this aura continues to shape perceptions of Hudson Valley farmers and farming to the present day. The region's contemporary tourist infrastructure—now including Martin Van Buren NHS—still provides visitors with a way to satisfy the nostalgic urge for short-term pastoral experiences that evoke an imagined time when life was slower, simpler, and closer to the land. For many Americans, any small-scale farm seems to be a thing of yesteryear,

¹⁷ The concept of the "tourist gaze" originated with John Urry's *The Tourist Gaze: Leisure and Travel in Contemporary Societies* (London: Sage, 1990).

accounting for the sense of “implied synergy” between farming and historic sites discussed in Chapter One. This perception has intensified over time, particularly after the sweeping social and economic changes of the mid-twentieth century. But the roots of agritourism in the Hudson Valley, and the complex relationship between romantic and pragmatic visions of farming, are of very long duration, as this section has shown. The idea of the small-scale family farm as an “old time” attraction—and the development of a tourist sector to provide access to it—was already becoming established in the region before Martin Van Buren came back to Kinderhook to be a farmer in his native town.

Study Themes in This Chapter

Changing agricultural methods and approaches

- increasing focus on hay, dairy, fruit as cash crops (shifting earlier focus on wheat)
- experimentation with niche crops like hops
- reform movement that emphasized manure and other techniques as ways to improve farm management and revitalize depleted soils

Farming in a market economy

- continued extension of commercial agricultural markets, networks of trade
- increased need for capital to get into commercial farming
- growth of a landless farming class, with contestation over disparities in access to land
- development of commercial niches for small producers and processors
- blend of innovation and conservatism among many Kinderhook farmers
- agricultural reform as a response to new market expectations, reframing colonial farmers’ methods as “wasteful”
- pastoral landscapes as attractions for increasingly mobile middle classes

The roles of policy and law in farming

- emergence of federal and state support for agriculture

CHAPTER SIX

COLUMBIA COUNTY AGRICULTURE IN TRANSITION (1862-1917)

After Van Buren: 1862-1874

Martin Van Buren died in 1862. In that year, the federal government's role in American agriculture began to expand significantly, signalling a shift from a view of agriculture as the solid bulwark of the American economy to the perception, in many minds, of farming as a sector that was increasingly in need of support and assistance. By the end of the century, new scientific strategies had been widely adopted by many farmers, leading to a prosperous but somewhat illusory "golden age" for farming by the early twentieth century (Hurt 1994:221). The operation of Lindenwald itself continued to be shaped by the property's connections with politically ambitious figures, particularly in the ten-year period of short-term and absentee ownerships following Van Buren's death. But the story of this farm in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries also reflected regional and national agricultural trends. The mix of farmers in the neighborhood included long-settled Dutch farm families, aspiring middle-class farmers, landless farm laborers, and—particularly in the early twentieth century—new immigrants who were able to establish a toehold on some of the older properties in and around Kinderhook. This chapter will examine these overlapping networks of people within the context of changing agricultural practices and ideas.

Van Buren, like Peter Van Ness before him, failed in his desire to ensure long-term family continuity at his farm. He bequeathed the property to his three surviving sons, Abraham, John, and Smith Thompson, who seem to have left the current farm manager, Isaac Collins, in place to run the operation (Searle 2004:73). The Civil War period, with the demands of a large army to satisfy, was a profitable one for northern farms; average New York farm values rose more than 20% during the 1860s (Hurt 1994:164).¹ John Van Buren bought out his brothers in May of 1863 and lived at the farm briefly with his daughter Anna. But he quickly realized that he could not maintain his father's level of hands-on involvement and management and that living in Kinderhook, no matter how profitable the farm might be, was a detriment to his New-York-City-based law practice.

¹ The average New York farm value in 1860 was \$4,452, which rose to \$5,668 in 1870 (Hurt 1994:164).

He appears to have maintained some interest in farming in the area, and when his law partner John Burnham was seeking property on which to realize his wife Catherine's vision of a farm-based refuge for troubled boys from the city, the connection with John Van Buren may have led them to the 580-acre former Shaker farm in Canaan that they turned into the Berkshire Industrial Farm.² But John Van Buren himself was not interested in being a gentleman farmer.

In April 1864, John negotiated a new one-year lease with Isaac Collins, but almost immediately, he sold the property to wealthy New York stockbroker Leonard Jerome. Jerome suffered a financial reversal—one of several during his lifetime—in 1867, and seems to have sold Lindenwald in an effort to liquidate his assets quickly. The buyer, George Wilder, is listed on the deed as being “of Kinderhook”; he too was a short-term owner, selling the farm in 1873 to two distant relatives of Martin Van Buren, James Van Alstyne and another John Van Buren. These two men held the property for five months and then sold it to the Wagoner family who had been farming land around Lindenwald for several decades (Searle 2004:73)



Fig. 31. Martin Van Buren's son John, photographed by Mathew Brady c. 1855. (Library of Congress, <http://loc.gov/pictures/resource/cwpbh.02326>)

² Initially known as the Burnham Industrial Farm, the Berkshire Industrial Farm operated for many years as a working farm imparting agricultural skills and a strong work ethic to the resident boys. As noted in the following chapter, it is still in existence, although no longer as a farm operation. Information about the history of the farm is from its website (http://www.berkshirefarm.org/about_us/History_of_Berkshire_Farm_Center_67_pg.htm).

Through the Van Ness and Van Buren families, Lindenwald was already closely connected with political networks in Albany, New York, and Washington, D.C., and of course Albany and New York were important markets for the food produced in the Hudson Valley. But the short tenures of Leonard Jerome and George Wilder point toward a link to another urban center—Rochester—and perhaps to a more radical set of political connections.



Fig. 32. Leonard Jerome, owner of Lindenwald from 1864 to 1873. (Henry Clew, "Twenty Eight Years in Wall Street," <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:LeonardJerome.jpg>)

The son and grandson of farmers, Jerome was born in 1818 on a farm in Pompey, New York, just southeast of Syracuse, although his grandfather's farm had been in the Berkshire Mountains of Massachusetts. Like the Van Ness and Van Buren sons, he made the transition from a farming background to law, studying at Union College in Schenectady and then setting up practice with his uncle, a judge, in Rochester. Along with his brother, Jerome founded "a strong Whig journal" called the *Native American* that operated until the mid-1850s. He eventually shifted his base of operations to New York City, where he became known for flamboyance in his financial and personal dealings. There is no evidence that he ever visited Lindenwald; his tastes ran more to sport (he and his good friend William Vanderbilt were particularly avid yachtsmen and horse racing aficionados) and the arts, including opera, rather than to rural life. His three daughters

all married British men, two of them titled lords; his daughter Jennie and her husband, Lord Randolph Churchill, became the parents of Winston Churchill (Burrows and Wallace 1999:961; New York Times 1891).

Jerome was not a long-term figure in the history of Lindenwald. But the Rochester connection, especially in light of the background of the next owner, George Wilder, seems suggestive. Although Wilder may indeed have been living in Kinderhook at the time when he purchased the farm, he was actually a native of Massachusetts. His family had been community leaders in the small north-central Massachusetts town of Ashburnham since the colonial era; Abel Wilder (1786-1864), who appears to have been either George's father or his uncle, was a doctor and prominent citizen of Blackstone, near Worcester.³ Abel grew up in Ashburnham, where he was "brought up to hard work on the farm" before being apprenticed to a shoemaker; as a young adult, he "set himself to acquire an education" and attended medical school at Dartmouth College, supporting himself by teaching school on the side (Hurd 1889:622). He was a Massachusetts state senator when he died in 1864 while visiting "his son in New York," according to his obituary.

It is not clear who the "son in New York" was, but the possibilities are deeply intriguing, as they link George Wilder and post-Van-Buren Lindenwald with the more radical edges of the abolition movement of the period. Abel and his wife Fanny had at least three sons, two of whom lived some of their lives in Rochester and gained considerable public and political stature, even notoriety. One of them, Carter Wilder (1828-1875), was a merchant who moved from Massachusetts to Rochester and became extremely active in the anti-slavery, free-soil movement, for which Rochester was an important center. After the 1854 Kansas-Nebraska Act allowed residents of new states to decide by vote whether to enter the Union as a slave state or a free state, easterners of both persuasions flocked to the west to swell the numbers on their side of the issue. Carter Wilder was one of these emigrants. He moved to the then-new settlement of Leavenworth, Kansas in 1857, the year after John Brown and his sons had been involved in violent clashes with slave-state supporters at Pottawotamie and Osawatamie. Two years later, Carter Wilder was a delegate to the Osawatamie Convention at which the

³ Unless otherwise noted, information about the Wilder family is drawn from the U.S. decennial census. As discussed below, it is not completely clear that Abel Wilder was George's father; George was living in Abel's house in 1850, but may have been related in some other way. It is also not clear whether George Wilder had any previous family connections with the Kinderhook area. An Asaph Wilder was among the proprietors of the Kinderhook Inn during this period (Collier 1914:388), and may possibly have been a relation.

Republican Party was established in Kansas. In 1860, he served as chair of the Republican National Convention which nominated Abraham Lincoln, placing Wilder in a key role during the events leading to Southern secession and the Civil War. During the war itself, he served as captain in a Kansas brigade for a year, and was then elected as a Congressional Representative for a Kansas district between 1863 and 1865. At the end of the war, he returned to Rochester, continuing to attend Republican conventions as a delegate until the 1870s. He also became a newspaper publisher, operating the *Rochester Morning and Evening Express* until 1868. In 1872, he was elected mayor of Rochester, but he left the post a year later, seemingly because of ill health. He traveled west to San Francisco for health reasons, and died there in 1875 (Biographical Directory).

One inspiration for Carter Wilder in entering the newspaper business may have been his younger brother Daniel Webster Wilder (1832-1911), whose involvement with abolitionism in Kansas was just as noteworthy. He attended Harvard, where he was a good friend of Franklin B. Sanborn, later one of the “Secret Six” who funded John Brown’s raid on Harpers Ferry. Daniel studied law, and in 1857, the same year that he was admitted to the bar, he moved, like his brother, to Kansas. Also like his brother, he was involved in the founding of the Kansas Republican Party in 1859. Daniel’s main tool for activism, though, was not law but journalism. He worked for a number of abolitionist newspapers in Kansas and also in Missouri, where he was indicted in 1861 for advocating abolition in what was then a slave state. During the war, he was appointed Surveyor-General for Kansas and Nebraska. He returned briefly to Rochester after the war, serving as editor of his brother’s paper, the *Evening Express*. Presumably it was in this interim period, when both Daniel and Abel were living in New York state, that their father visited them and died. By 1868, Daniel was back in Kansas, where he lived out the rest of his life as an editor, writer (his *Annals of Kansas*, a history of the state, was published in 1875), and public servant, in posts ranging from State Auditor to Superintendent of Insurance (Connelly 1916).

It is intriguing to consider how George Wilder and his six-year ownership of Lindenwald fit within this network of politicians, stockbrokers, abolitionists, and journalists. First, the Rochester connection seems suggestive. Leonard Jerome started his law career there and was also a Rochester newspaperman, like both Carter and Daniel Wilder. As a Whig, Jerome would clearly have been politically at odds with Martin Van Buren’s Democratic Party. But it seems possible that there may have been overlapping connections among the Jerome and Wilder families in Rochester. Given that many anti-

slavery politicians from both the Whigs and the Democrats found common ground in the Free Soil Party in the late 1840s and 1850s, it is also possible to envision some social or political connection between the Van Burens (Martin had run for President in 1848 for the Free Soil Party, nominated by his son John), the Wilders (very likely Whigs, given the naming of Daniel Webster Wilder after a revered New England Whig leader, but clearly among the anti-slavery wing of the party, many of whom bolted to the Free Soilers and later the Republicans), and perhaps the Jeromes. Perhaps Leonard Jerome bought Lindenwald from John Van Buren as a favor to a political friend, in much the same way that William Paulding, Jr. bought it from William Van Ness earlier in the century. Then, when Jerome needed to sell it quickly, perhaps the same network of associates identified George Wilder as a potential buyer.

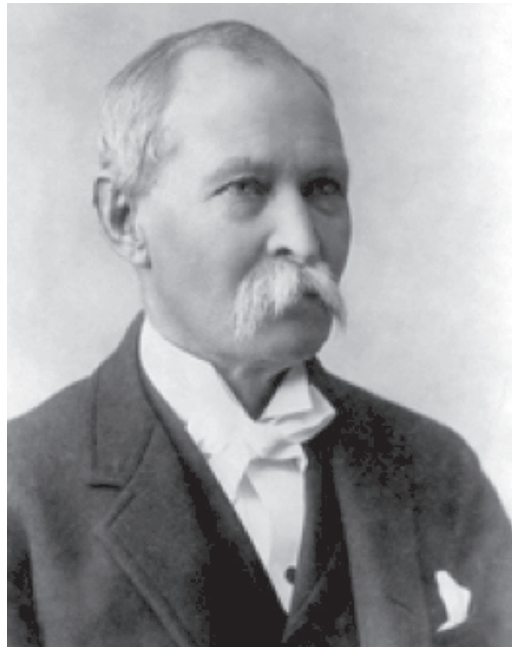


Fig. 33. Daniel Webster Wilder, probably a brother of Lindenwald owner George Wilder (Kansas Historical Society, <http://www.kshs.org/research/topics/kansasnewspapers/Wilderbio.htm>)

This does not fully answer the questions about who George Wilder was. The census does not make clear whether he was in fact a brother to Carter and Daniel Webster Wilder, or their cousin.⁴ However, he was clearly a part of a family with a radically

⁴ The 1850 census shows Abel and Fanny Wilder living in Blackstone, Massachusetts, with a number of other family members: David (age 36), Chloe (33), Albert (12), Foster (10) (presumably David was Abel and Fanny's son, Chloe was his wife, and Albert and Foster were their sons), Abigail (24), Maria (20), and Daniel W. (17). George (29) is listed *after* the younger son Daniel, making it possible that George was in fact a nephew or other relative living with Abel's family, rather than a son.

abolitionist bent. In the 1850 census, he is listed as a merchant. Research for this study was not able to locate him in the 1860 census; by 1870 he was living in Kinderhook and farming at Lindenwald. In that year, he was married to a woman named Urania, who had probably been married before, because the surname of the five children living with the couple was Arnold, not Wilder.⁵ His elderly mother, Fanny, also lived with the family in Kinderhook. George Wilder was clearly fairly prosperous, if he was able to afford the then-desirable estate of Lindenwald. The 1870 agricultural census shows him farming 200 improved acres, with the value of the farm as \$23,000. This was a considerably lower value than ten years before, when it was valued (under Isaac Collins' name, since he was considered to be the farmer on the property) at \$40,000, but it was still a substantial farm for the area. Wilder paid out \$1,700 in wages in 1870. Like Jeremiah Hess, Martin Van Buren's farm manager, Wilder's own family consisted mostly of young daughters, so he had no male family labor to draw on if he had been inclined to do so. He kept seven horses and 10 milk cows (almost the same number as Van Buren had kept ten years before) plus eight other cattle, but the sheep herd had disappeared from Lindenwald by that point. The value of the livestock—\$3,000—was still considerable, which may reflect the expanded cattle herd. Wilder grew rye, Indian corn, oats, and barley, and a small amount of buckwheat, as well as 700 bushels of Irish potatoes. He realized \$300 in income from the orchard, somewhat more than had been listed a decade earlier, so Van Buren's fruit trees must have been continuing to produce well. Wilder also produced a ton of butter and 200 tons of hay in 1870—both marketable products that would have accounted for a good deal of the farm's \$5,000 income that year. Given his previous and subsequent career as a merchant, it may be that George Wilder, like Ephraim Best, was a farmer who was adept at pursuing commercial opportunities. It also appears that he was continuing in the same basic growing patterns that Martin Van Buren had established in the previous two decades.

The timing of Wilder's sudden sale of Lindenwald to two well-to-do local relatives of Van Buren in late 1873 suggests that he may have been one of the many agricultural

⁵ Collating names and data from the 1870 and later censuses, the children seem to have been Geneva (18), Carie (perhaps Cora, 16), Mortimer (13), Hattie (11), and Lilian (9). In 1870, two New York-born domestic servants, Christine Knoblon and a woman named Margaret, also lived with the Wilders at Lindenwald. The 1900 census notes that George and Urania Wilder were married in 1868, which does suggest that the children, all born before that date, were Urania's from a previous marriage. The oldest two children were born in Rhode Island, the middle one in Illinois, and the youngest two in Massachusetts, suggesting that Urania's first marriage had been a somewhat peripatetic one. Urania herself is shown as being a native of Massachusetts.

victims of the Panic of 1873. As with the Panic of 1837 that de-railed Van Buren's Presidency, this was precipitated by the collapse of a speculative bubble, this time in railroads. The sudden tightening of the money supply in late 1873 was devastating to those—like farmers—who relied heavily on credit (Glasner 1997). And as had happened when William Van Ness went bankrupt in 1824 and again when Leonard Jerome had to sell suddenly in 1867, it seems that people from within the Van Buren network of social, familial, and political contacts stepped forward to purchase the farm and hold it until another buyer could be found. This took only a short time in 1873: five months after Wilder sold the estate, the neighboring Wagoner family bought it.

George Wilder and his family appear to have followed the path of many easterners in search of greater prosperity. By 1880 they were living in Denver, Colorado, where Wilder, at the age of 60, was once again listed in the census as a merchant. At the turn of the twentieth century, George and Urania, then nearly 80, were still in Denver, living with three of their adult daughters and a Swedish domestic servant. It is tempting to see George Wilder as comparable to Van Buren's farm manager Jeremiah Hess: a modestly ambitious man of mature years with a family of young daughters, from a well-placed, well-connected family, who struggled within the changing nineteenth century agricultural economy. For both, the management or ownership of Lindenwald seems to have been just beyond what they could maintain, perhaps reflecting the unforgiving economic realities of operating what was then a sizeable farm in an ever-more commercialized and debt-driven farm system.

The federal government was increasingly involved in helping farmers to negotiate those difficulties in the post-Civil War era. Somewhat ironically, it was the secession of the largely agricultural Southern states that allowed the U.S. government to enact land- and farm-related measures that many had been proposing for some time before the war. Three landmark pieces of federal legislation were passed in 1862, the year of Martin Van Buren's death (Hurt 1994:187-92):

- the Homestead Act, which allowed American citizens to claim 160-acre sections for free in exchange for settling and "improving" the land;
- the establishment of a federal Department of Agriculture, something Southern politicians had been opposing for many years because of fears of federal interference in farmers' autonomy; and
- the Morrill Land-Grant College Act to create state agricultural colleges, also an idea blocked by southerners since the 1850s.

Each of these changes, intended to support farmers and the agricultural sector, had the kind of paradoxical effects characteristic of changes in the American farm economy. By the 1870s and 80s, much of the best land on the plains had been claimed by homesteaders, opening opportunity for many who moved there but accelerating the cycle of competition-driven decline for eastern farms (Hurt 1994:187-88). The USDA, which was elevated to cabinet status by 1889, initially focused on increasing yield and efficiency through scientific research and education on nutrition and chemical or pharmaceutical control of pests and diseases (Olmstead and Rhode 2008:14-16). In the 1880s, a public backlash against the use of animal byproducts in the butter substitute oleomargarine led to new USDA attention to food processing and adulteration, part of a shift toward precisely the kind of federal regulation of farming and food that southern agrarianists had feared. The USDA also quickly became involved in improving roads and other transportation systems as a way of helping farmers get their products to market. By the end of the century, the Department of Agriculture had become one of the largest and most important federal government agencies (Hurt 1994:192). Its functions were supported in many ways by the research and teaching of the land-grant colleges, supplemented by a system of agricultural experiment stations established in 1887. New tools and technologies—for example, mechanical grain planters and hardened cast-iron plow by the 1860s—also continued to make farming more efficient and productive. But at the same time, more efficient production continued to drive prices downward, while economies of scale on newer, larger farms in the west posed growing challenges for smaller, older eastern farms (Hurt 1994:189-96). George Wilder seems to have lost the Lindenwald farm in one of the steepest dips in the late nineteenth century economy, but this was part of an overall trend that was making it ever more difficult to stay profitable on a farm like this one. Federal support for farming was helping to create an educational and economic infrastructure that tended to privilege better-capitalized farmers who could afford the new scientific innovations in breeding and technology. As time went on, this had the unintended consequence of undercutting the long-term stability, viability, and number of smaller and mixed farms.

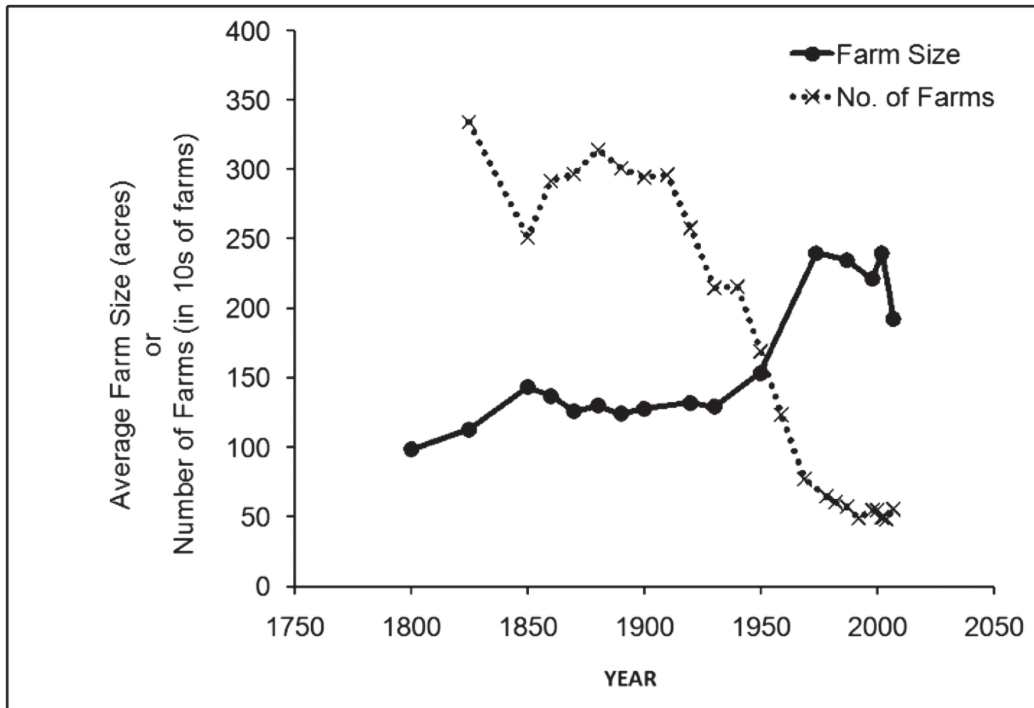


Table A. Average farm size (in acres) and number of farms in Columbia County, 1800-present. (Farmscape Ecology Program)

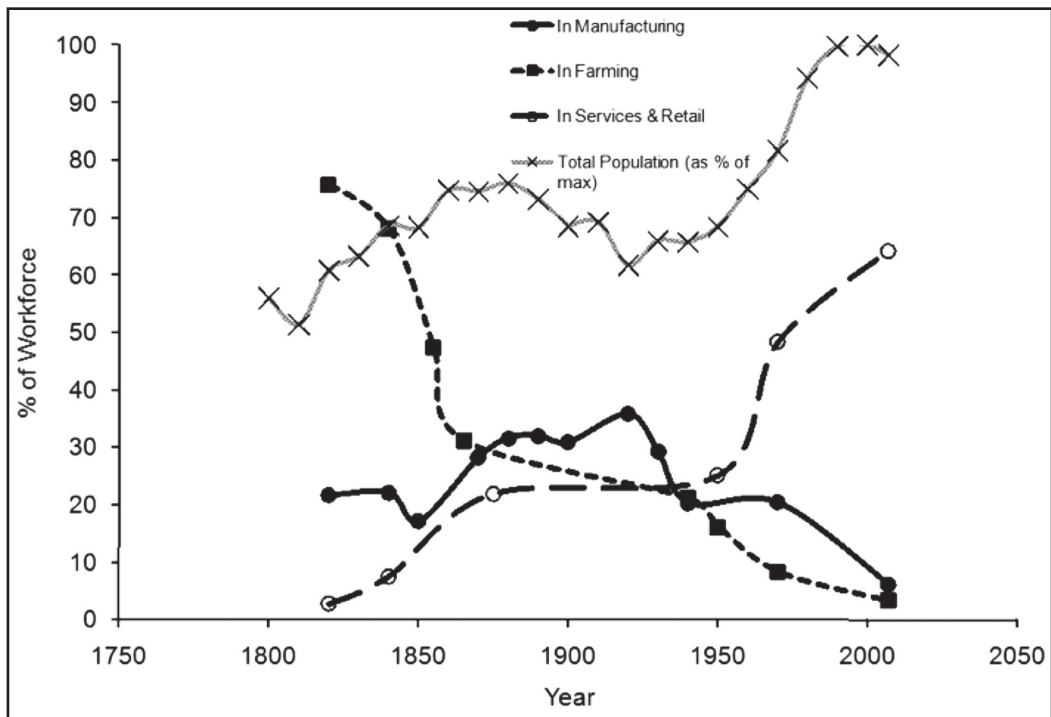


Table B. Farmers and farm laborers as a percentage of the overall Columbia County workforce, 1800-present. (Farmscape Ecology Program)

The Wagoner Era, 1874-1917

By the time the Wagoner family acquired the Lindenwald estate, Columbia County farm ownership had become much more concentrated among a smaller number of families who were able to amass and maintain the amount of capital and credit needed to survive in the commercial farm economy. The Wagoners' tenure at Lindenwald shows the continued processes of concentration, changing family patterns, and declining economic viability facing those who sought to keep the older Kinderhook farms profitable as family enterprises. At the start of this period, the Wagoners seemed to be replicating the area pattern of creating a number of adjacent farm parcels that could be worked with family labor and some hired help, a strategy for staying afloat in what was then a depressed agricultural market. By the early twentieth century, despite an upturn in the overall economy, the Wagoner family had dwindled in size, leaving some members still working pieces of the property but in a much more piecemeal way.

The Wagoners appear to have moved to Kinderhook from Claverack, where an Adam Wagoner (born in 1780) and his wife Margaret (or "Griety") farmed with their several sons and daughters.⁶ The recurrence of the same first names in each generation of the family suggests that they were following established Dutch naming patterns, which extended into later generations: the senior Adam Wagoner had at least two grandsons named Adam. The family appears to have been quite a prosperous one. In 1850, Adam and Griety's property was valued at \$14,000—not in the same class as Lindenwald or Ephraim Best's farm, but still substantial. Levi, the oldest of the sons, seems to have started his own smaller farm in Hillsdale by 1850, but some of his siblings made a more ambitious move. A daughter, Anna, married a well-to-do farmer named Levi Milham, a neighbor of Ephraim Best on the Kinderhook/ Stuyvesant line. Milham's farm was valued at \$17,000 in 1850. In 1858, the couple built an ornate brick home topped by a cupola (Fig. 34), very clearly making the same statement about upper-class taste and status that Smith Thompson Van Buren's renovation of Lindenwald had made in the same decade (Collier 1914:528). By 1870, the farm was worth \$26,600 and the personal property of this "thrifty farmer" (Collier 1914:528) was valued at \$7,000, putting the Milhams firmly within Columbia County's elite landowner class.

⁶ Except where otherwise noted, information about the Wagoner family is drawn from census records and from notes provided by Caryn Moore.



Fig. 34. Residence of Levi and Anna (née Wagoner) Milham, built in Stuyvesant, just over the Kinderhook line, in 1858. (Ellis, *History of Columbia County*)

It appears that Adam and Griety's two youngest sons, Erastus and Sylvester, had similar aspirations for themselves and their own children. By 1860, both had resettled in Kinderhook. They purchased various properties from the Dingman and Van Alstyne families in the neighborhood of Lindenwald and began to assemble a sort of family compound of farms that they presumably worked themselves with family and hired labor (Stokinger 1981:94-95).⁷ But their households were demographically quite different from the large farm families that had been typical in earlier generations. The 1860 census shows the household of Erastus, the elder of the two brothers at 44, being made up of his wife Hannah (42), their two sons Adam (15) and Freeman (9), and a female domestic servant. Nearby is the household of Sylvester (then 41 years old), his wife Sarah (38), their only daughter Adelaide (11), Sylvester's older brother Freeman (51), and a female domestic servant; Sylvester and Sarah's only son Elmer was not yet born. It is difficult to say what precise combination of circumstances accounted for the significant drop in family size over this and subsequent generations, but the difference between Adam and

⁷ It is not exactly clear when the Wagoners began to buy property in the neighborhood. The 1856 map shows an "M. Wagner" on the west side of Old Post Road between Lindenwald and the "C. Dingman" property, while an "S. Wagner" lives immediately across the road. By 1860, the census lists the households of Erastus and Sylvester Wagoner as noted above. The 1873 map shows "S. Wagoner" and "E. Wagoner" living immediately north of George Wilder at Lindenwald, and S. Wagoner also owning a piece of property south of the mansion.

Griety's large family and their younger sons' much smaller ones seems telling. Erastus and Sylvester were not raising large families of sons and daughters who could be expected to provide much of the labor needed to keep the farms profitable; rather, it seems that they, like their brother-in-law on the other side of Kinderhook, aspired to gentleman-farmer status, and that acquiring and consolidating the properties around Lindenwald provided the means to do that. The makeup of the Wagoner families also reflected the fact that Kinderhook's population in this period was "a distinctly aging one" by the later decades of the nineteenth century, a trend that reflected the move away from farming and large farm families for many people (Piwonka 1989:31).

By 1860, Erastus's farm in Kinderhook was valued at \$12,000 and Sylvester's at \$14,500. Ten years later, when George Wilder was farming the Lindenwald property, Erastus had just 73 acres under cultivation, with the property still valued at \$12,000. Erastus kept three horses, two dozen sheep, and a small dairy herd that produced a considerable amount of butter for sale. He grew rye, Indian corn, oats, buckwheat, peas, beans, and Irish potatoes, as well as orchard products and hay—a total of \$2,200 worth of goods, which was proportionate to Wilder's output on the larger farm. But where Wilder seems to have been financially unable to withstand the Panic of 1873, the Wagoner brothers rode out the storm and managed to acquire 185 acres of the Lindenwald estate when those holding the title were once again looking for a solvent buyer who could assume the remainder of Wilder's mortgage.

The Lindenwald purchase expanded the Wagoner family holdings in the neighborhood to several hundred acres (Stokinger [1981:94-95] speculates it may have been as much as 500 acres). By this time, Erastus and Sylvester both had sons who appear to have shared their parents' aspirations to middle-class farming status. Erastus's two sons, Adam (29) and Freeman (23), were on the 1874 deed with their father and uncle (Sylvester's son Elmer was just 12 at the time). It seems that at first, the Lindenwald mansion was used as a shared residence, so presumably some of the Wagoners continued living in the old Dingman house while others moved into the larger residence (Stokinger 1981:94-95).

Collier's 1914 history describes Adam Wagoner as "one of our thrifty farmers" (1914:378), a term that seems to signify good management and profitability. Adam married a woman named Elizabeth (or Elisabeth) Ostrom, known as Libbie (Fig. 35); the couple had only one child, a son who died young.⁸ They lived in the mansion with Adam's

⁸ Searle (2004:79) mentions Adam's wife as "Lucy Van Alstyne Wagoner," but this is not correct.



Fig. 35 Adam and Libbie (Ostrom) Wagoner, n.d. (Martin Van Buren NHS)

unmarried brother Freeman, who was, according to a 1977 interview with the brothers' niece Hazel Wagoner Whitbeck, mentally ill and who was eventually admitted to a long-term care facility in Poughkeepsie. Adam's farming activities were presumably carried out largely by hired labor—for example, the Adriance and Cantine families. Charles and Mary Adriance lived in the around the turn of the twentieth century; Charles, then 23, is listed as a farm laborer in the 1905 county census. The Cantines are known to have lived in the north gatehouse at Lindenwald around the same time, and to have worked as laborers and caretakers for Elmer Wagoner and later for the Shephert family who owned

the old Dingman house after 1914.⁹ The Cantines later purchased the small house just north of the Dingman house, living there with their large family of eleven children after 1940.¹⁰ Polish and other immigrant laborers were also beginning to work for area farmers in this period, as will be seen in the final section of this chapter.

The Wagoners' aspirations to gentleman-farmer status were expressed in other ways, notably through the construction of a new home between the Lindenwald mansion and the old Dingman home sometime in the mid-nineteenth century.¹¹ This house (Figs. 36 and 37), labeled "Myrtlelawn" in one family photo album, is much more modest than either Lindenwald or the ornate brick home built by Sylvester and Erastus's brother-in-law Levi Milham (Fig. 34), but it still asserts a solid sense of prosperity and gentility. A photo taken around 1908 (Fig. 37) shows Elmer Wagoner, Erastus's only son, with family members in front of a neatly-kept white picket fence and carefully-trimmed trees. The barn, in the background (also seen in Fig. 38), is sided with decorative shingles and implies that while this was a working farm, its owners were concerned with appearance as well as efficiency.



Fig. 36. The house ("Myrtlelawn") and barn built by one of the Wagoners, probably Sylvester, c. 1856.

⁹ Information about the Cantine family is drawn from census records, from Caryn Moore's notes (including information supplied by her neighbor Seymour Magee), and newspaper clippings in Caryn Moore's files. In his 1977 notes from interviews with local people knowledgeable about Lindenwald, MAVA historian Bill Jackson notes that the Cantines lived in the north gatehouse. Jackson may have obtained this information from Seymour Magee. The fact that Mrs. Cantine's maiden name was Adriance suggests a close connection between these two families who supplied farm labor in the area around the turn of the twentieth century. It is not known whether there was any relationship between this Cantine family and those who were in-laws of Martin Van Buren.

¹⁰ Information about this property transfer is found in Caryn Moore's files.

¹¹ Caryn Moore's notes indicated that it was built by Sylvester Wagoner in 1856.

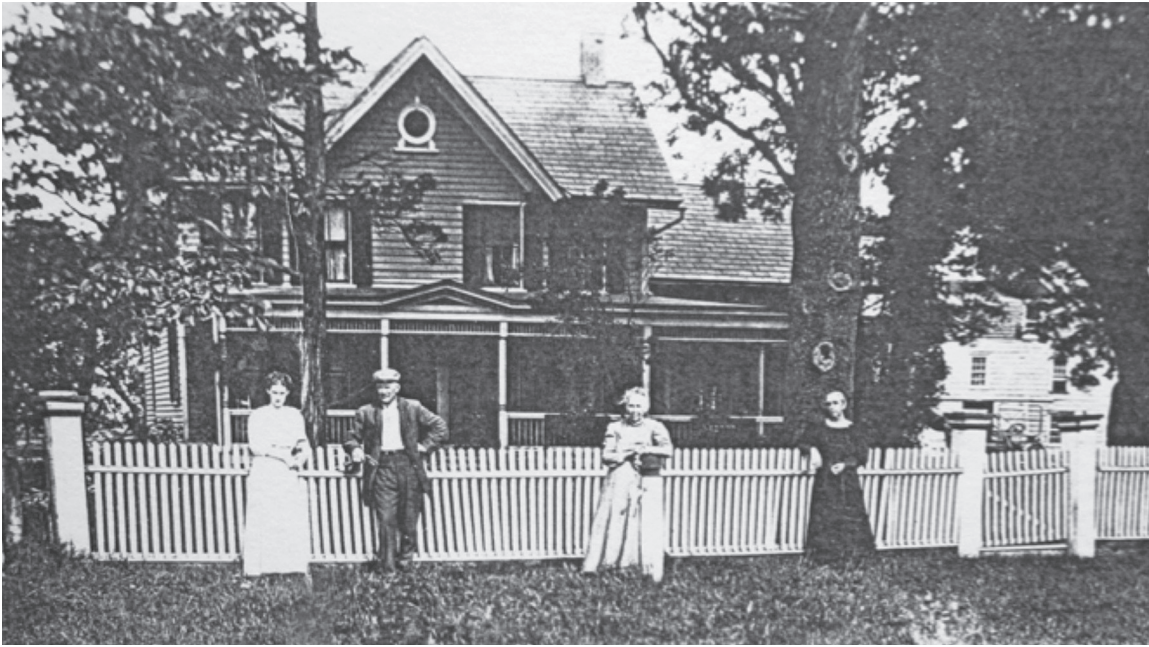


Fig. 37. Members of the Wagoner family in front of their home, "Myrtlelawn," next door to the Lindenwald mansion. A caption accompanying the photo notes that it was taken before 1908 and shows, from left to right, Hazel Wagoner (later Whitbeck), Elmer S. Wagoner, "G.G." (perhaps greatgrandmother Wagoner, Elmer's mother Sarah), and Ella (Snyder) Wagoner, Elmer's wife. (courtesy of Caryn Moore; photo originally provided by Elmer and Ella's granddaughter, Beatrice Shufelt)

The Wagoner family cultivated the land at and around Lindenwald for nearly 60 years. Only a small amount of new evidence about their farming activities was uncovered for this study, but it seems to confirm that they were following many, if not most, of the older patterns established by earlier generations of farmers in their family and others. A pair of 1912 receipts from the Catskill & New York Steamboat Company in Stockport, shows that Elmer was selling bales of hay and rye straw, probably for shipment to the city (see Appendix G). At some point, Elmer was also dealing in farming equipment; an undated handbill advertises him as the local agent for a steel sulky cultivator manufactured by an Illinois firm. A key factor for the Wagoners may have been that they were among the Columbia County farm families who had not produced large families who could carry on their farms, or whose sons were more likely to choose non-farming occupations, making them largely dependent on hired labor and on indirect sources of farm income like the sale of equipment. This may also have been true of the Milham family who had built their grandiose mansion only a generation earlier. After Levi Milham died, his unmarried daughters moved to a house in Kinderhook Village and his son preferred living in a smaller home nearby, leaving the ornate farm mansion vacant for several years (Collier 1914:528).

In the immediate neighborhood of Lindenwald, there were also several families who fell into this category. Across the road, the farm owned by Jacob Evarts in Van Buren's time had been sold in 1861 to Henry I. Dunspaugh, who appears to have been part of the older network of farm families in the area. Dunspaugh married Jane Groat, a cousin of the Cyrus Groat who had owned the property in the early nineteenth century. But although they had a large family including many boys, none of their children carried on at the farm on Old Post Road (Groat 1986; Worsfold 2009:8). Like Adam and Libbie, Elmer and Ella Wagoner, they represented an aging generation of full-time farmers who were not being succeeded on the land by members of their own families.



Fig. 38. The barn behind the Wagoner house next door to Lindenwald, from a Wagoner family album in Caryn Moore's collection. It is not clear who "Charlie" is, or whether the horses are indeed "pets" or—more likely—working farm animals. (courtesy of Caryn Moore)

Just north of the Wagoner properties, some of the Dingman lands had been purchased around 1850 by the Saulpaugh family.¹² Relatives of the Saulpaughs, the Magees, acquired the farm by around the turn of the twentieth century, and they show

¹² This purchase is noted in Caryn Moore's chronology of the properties.

another trend in farming in this time period: the increasing combination of farming with other occupations. William Magee, known as “Squire,” seems to have been a somewhat complex character who was both a working farmer and a professional man.¹³ A lawyer who carried out various official roles in Kinderhook (Collier 1914:297), he also seems to have cultivated his own land; a family photograph taken around 1908 (Fig.39) shows a man who may be Squire Magee wearing overalls and proudly standing with two horses or mules, probably draft animals used on the farm. At a slight distance, William’s wife Julia, three young women, and an infant son, Seymour (born 1908), form a somewhat separate grouping. Finally, to the far side, a young African American woman, perhaps a domestic servant, stands by herself. The women, including the servant girl, are all neatly and formally dressed, in contrast to the man’s working clothes, but his pose—showing off the two animals whose muscle power constituted a key asset on the farm—also speaks of care and pride in this small farming operation and well-kept domestic establishment. With a house in the village as well as a farm property, the Magees appear to have blended farming and other occupations, as was the case for a growing number of farmers as the twentieth century went on (Hurt 1994:299).

Slightly to the north of the Magee farm, the old Van Alen farmstead had fallen into the same slow cycle of decline that appears to have affected the Wagoners. By the later decades of the nineteenth century, the Van Alen farm was occupied by several aging siblings, mostly daughters of David Van Alen who had been operating the farm when Martin Van Buren returned to Kinderhook. One of these sisters, Helena, was thought to be the model for the character of Katrina Van Tassel in Washington Irving’s *Legends of Sleepy Hollow* (Waite 2001:8)—an instance of the old Dutch farm culture becoming “traditionalized” and turned into a cultural artifact. Some family members had made a move away from farming, and a Van Alen in-law—Curtis Hoag, an industrialist who founded the Kinderhook Knitting Company and other successful ventures—held the mortgage on the farm for some time (Collier 1914:343, Waite 2001:10-11). When the last Van Alen sister died in 1884, the mortgaged farm passed to a young descendant, Marie

¹³ William Magee was born in 1856 in New York, of Scottish parents. He is listed as single and living in Kinderhook Village in the 1900 census, with “justice” as his occupation. In the 1910 and 1915 censuses, the family’s address was given as Hudson Street in Kinderhook, suggesting that they lived sometimes in the Village and sometimes at the farm. In the 1915 census, William’s occupation is listed as “Farm Laborer.” In the 1920 census, they are shown at the farm property and William is listed as “Farmer.” His wife Julia (Raup) Magee, twenty years his junior, had come from an area farm family.

(“Ritie”) Van Alen Herrick, who lived there for many years with her husband William Herrick and their children. But it seems that the Van Alen descendants themselves were not working the land at this point; the 1890 mortgage to Curtis Hoag noted that a William Fish was then farming the property (Waite 2001:10).

By the later years of the Wagoners’ tenure in the Lindenwald neighborhood, then, the farming sector had become more fragmented into small part-time farmers like Squire Magee, non-farming descendants of older farm families like the Van Alens, agricultural laborers like the Cantines, and those who were still farming but aging and increasingly giving up the land, like the Wagoners. There were still some large landholders who worked and supervised their own farms and also some younger farmers finding ways to enter the farm economy, and we can see two examples of these from the Van Alstyne family who had owned most of the fields around Lindenwald in the first generations of Dutch settlement in the area.



Fig. 39. The Magee family on their farm, approximately 1908. A man who is likely William “Squire” Magee proudly holds two draft animals at left; in the center, Julia (Raup) Magee holds her infant son Seymour. (courtesy of Mary Kilcer-Kennett)

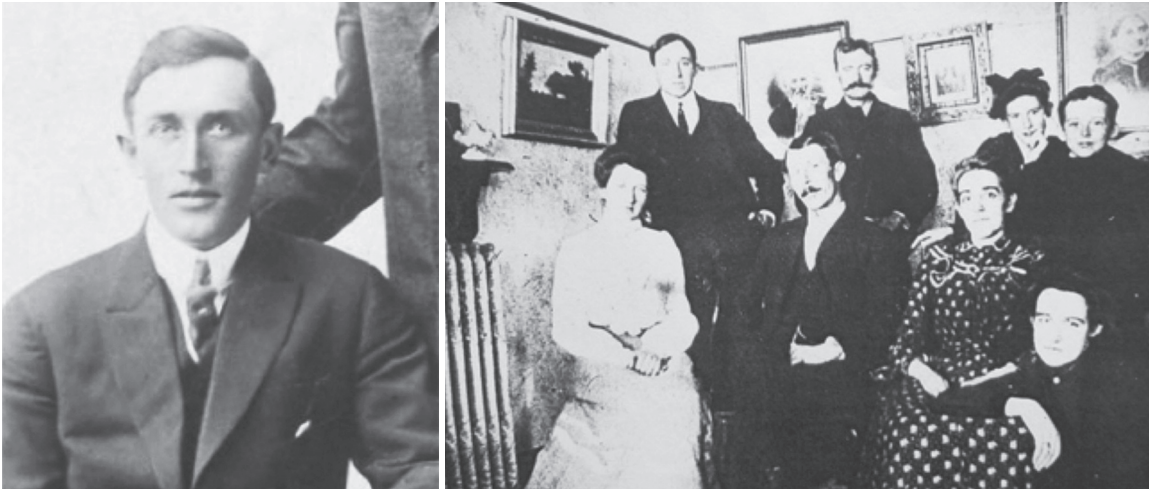


Fig. 40. Left: Lewis Van Alstyne as a young man (with permission of Robert and Dorothy Van Alstyne with assistance from Patricia Van Alstyne). Right: Lewis Van Alstyne with his in-laws, the Wagoner family (top, left to right, Henry Snyder, Elmer Wagoner, Hazel Wagoner Whitbeck, unidentified [possibly Hazel's son], front, left to right, unidentified, Lew Van Alstyne, Ella (Snyder) Wagoner, Imogene Wagoner Van Alstyne) (courtesy of Caryn Moore)

By this period, there were many branches of Van Alstynes descended from the common seventeenth-century ancestors Jan Martense and Dirckje. One of these descendants, Frank Bion Van Alstyne, was a farmer who apparently merited the adjectives “thrifty and successful” in Collier’s 1914 history (Collier 1914:506). In addition to his own farm in Kinderhook, Frank B. Van Alstyne seems to have farmed for others, including absentee landowners; a 1905 letter from St. Louis, in the possession of Frank’s grandson Bob, asks Frank to continue farming “the Manton farm...since you have done so well and will continue to I am sure.” One of Frank B.’s sons, Lewis Van Alstyne, married Elmer and Ella Wagoner’s daughter Imogene, and for many years he farmed the fields around the Wagoner properties on Old Post Road. Lew and Imogene lived in the Victorian house next to Lindenwald for a time, and then bought their own farm on Muitzeskill Road (Route 25) north and west of Kinderhook Village in Stuyvesant, where they grew corn and hay, among other crops. Lew Van Alstyne’s apparent success as a farmer shows that it was still possible for a young man to acquire farmland of his own, in this case building on experience and connections gained from his family and his wife’s. The farm on Muitzeskill Road where this segment of the Van Alstyne family eventually settled was about the same size as Lindenwald—210 acres during the tenure of Lew’s son, Bob. Like Squire Magee, Lew Van Alstyne did most of his own farming, and although he managed to remain competitive in the changing agricultural economy, his was a more modest establishment than that of his Wagoner in-laws.

Case Study: The Van Alstyne of Sunnyside in Farming's "Golden Age"

Across Kinderhook Creek, a more affluent branch of the Van Alstyne family continued to farm the original homestead. Members of this branch, descended from Jan and Dirckje's son Abraham, were among a group of agricultural leaders in Columbia County promoting farm reform and education projects beginning in the second half of the nineteenth century. Like earlier agricultural reformers, they were motivated largely by concern about the loss of youthful farmers and the waning of entrepreneurial energy on older northeastern farms. Also like the earlier reformers, they advocated for the use of new ideas about soil fertility and efficient production and management. But by the post-Civil War period, and particularly during the Progressive Era around the turn of the twentieth century, these goals were linked to newer government policies and scientific innovations ideas that sought to make farmers less vulnerable to weather and disease and to help them ride out the uncertainties of the market (Hurt 1994:222) . In partnership with government agencies and educational institutions, farmers like the Van Alstyne of Sunnyside hoped to create a more resilient farm economy that would keep farmers on the land. Paradoxically, though, this contributed to the cycle of accelerated production that created surpluses, lowered prices, and resulted in the eventual loss of more and more Columbia County farms and farm families later in the twentieth century. It also initiated a pattern of mechanization and importing of nutrients which gradually made farmers more dependent on distant resources and debt financing. For a time in the 1890s and early twentieth century, though, the older and newer methods seemed in balance, and agricultural prices allowed farmers to recoup their costs of production, contributing what has been seen by some as a "golden age" of farming in the region (Hurt 1994:221-22).

Peter Edward ("Pete Ed") Van Alstyne, who had fished in Kinderhook Creek alongside Martin Van Buren as a young man, had been cultivating the old Van Alstyne farmstead at least since his father's death in 1857. Often in ill health, Pete Ed received more education than his brothers who were farming the neighboring two Van Alstyne farms, and he was apparently interested in using the latest farming methods on his land (Wilson 1965:2, 25). He had his own son Edward educated at a classical school and then at Union College, but when Pete Ed died in 1876, Edward, then in his teens, came home to take over the family farm.¹⁴ Like his father, Edward adopted "advanced" methods of

¹⁴ In her memoir, Elisabeth Van Alstyne Wilson notes that her father was called home to take over the family farm at 16, but the date of Pete Ed's death on a family tree found in the Columbia

farm management and production. With his wife Sarah, a former schoolteacher from another old Kinderhook Dutch farm family, Edward represented a new generation of progressive farmers who put their faith in scientific discoveries and in the power of education, science, and business to make old farms competitive in a changing market.



Fig. 41. Left to right, Peter Edward ("Pete Ed") Van Alstyne (1830-1876), his son Edward (1858-1918), and Edward's wife Sarah Elisabeth (Pruyn) Van Alstyne (1856-1916). (Wilson, *Children of Sunnyside*, used by permission of Mrs. Edward Wilson)

Edward and Sarah's oldest daughter, Elisabeth (born in 1881; see Fig. 42), left a detailed and affectionate memoir of her childhood at Sunnyside, describing the farm's products, day-to-day life, and people and providing an unusual account of life on one Columbia County farm around the turn of the twentieth century. Elisabeth recalled that although some nearby farmers used oxen for farm work, Edward kept horses—two pairs, along with a pair of mules and sometimes a utility horse bought specifically to pull the rake at haying time—as the main draft power for the farm. There were also sheep, pigs, and a substantial herd of dairy cows that came to assume greater importance in the Sunnyside operation over time, mirroring the trend toward dairying in the region overall (Wilson 1965:31-37). Elisabeth reports that the pigs were one of the farm's most profitable animals. After slaughtering some for the family's own use, they sometimes sold as many as 20 or 30 to dealers or butchers, which brought in enough money to pay the annual taxes on the farm (Wilson 1965:38-40). Pigs were also useful as a way to use up some of the surplus milk when the dairy herd was enlarged, as they could be fattened

County Historical Society files indicates that Edward would have been 18 at this time. Elisabeth does not describe her grandfather's "advanced" farming methods, only those of her father.

on milk. Edward usually had a herd of about 30 sheep, which grew to 60 or 70 when the lambs were born in the spring. He “loved his sheep more than any of his other animals,” his daughter reports. He went out to the barn every night during lambing season and agonized, like all farmers with sheep herds, over occasional dog attacks (Wilson 1965:43). Spring lambs were another profitable product of the farm, with the earliest being sold to the Manhattan Hotel in New York City for an “extra good” price (about \$10 apiece) at Easter time, carefully dressed, sewn up in cheesecloth, and shipped by express train to the city (Wilson 1965:46). The farm also kept chickens and ducks, and Sarah tried her hand at raising turkeys, discovering to her annoyance that she had to get up very early if she wanted to pick ripe chestnuts before the turkeys found them (Wilson 1965:47).



Fig. 42. Elisabeth Van Alstyne Wilson, whose 1965 memoir, *Children of Sunnyside*, gives a detailed portrait of farm life and foodways at an old Dutch American farm in Kinderhook at the turn of the twentieth century. (Wilson, *Children of Sunnyside*, used by permission of Mrs. Edward Wilson)

Hay, corn, and rye continued to be important crops for sale and farm feed as they had been in earlier periods, with the harvesting gradually becoming more mechanized during Elisabeth’s youth. Much of Sunnyside’s rye crop was sold to the county rye paper mills, including Rossman’s mill in nearby Stockport (see Fig. 21, Chapter Four), where it was made into butcher paper for wrapping meat, among other products (Wilson 1965:58-59).

Sunnyside's orchards also produced commercial crops. Pete Ed had been among the first in the area to sell apples to distant markets—as far afield as England—and Edward continued to sell fruit to New York, Boston, and other urban markets. Elisabeth notes that her father was “ahead of the usual thought” in insisting that his workers set the apples very carefully into the shipping barrels, handling them “as if each one were an egg” (Wilson 1965:48). The farm had Newtown Pippin, Baldwin, Russet, Greening, Spitzenberg, Spies, Jonathan, and some Lady apple trees; the orchards also produced pears and plums. “Drops” and substandard apples were sold to a local cider mill—perhaps Risedorph's, just north of the farm—and six to eight barrels were kept every year for the family's use. In Elisabeth's earliest memory, the trees were sprayed just once at the start of each season, to discourage tent caterpillars, but by the 1920s, there were three sprays each year, using some of the homemade or commercial chemical pesticides that Edward and others promoted through the Grange and Farmers' Institutes. Lime-sulphur and lead arsenate were popular compounds; a 1912 Farmers' Institute program from Kinderhook includes recipes for the two pesticides, which members of the Kinderhook Pomological Association, another local farmers' organization in which Edward was active, mixed and sold (Duck 1985:204).



Fig. 43. Apple-picking at Sunnyside, undated, showing men packing apples (gently, per Edward Van Alstyne's directions) for shipping to urban markets. (Wilson, *Children of Sunnyside*, used by permission of Mrs. Edward Wilson)

Elisabeth's memoir gives us a detailed account of the foodways at a Dutch-American farm in turn-of-the-twentieth-century Kinderhook, enabling us to see that even in a family that was determined to be *au courant* with modern farming methods and markets, little had actually changed over the past century in terms of how local people themselves ate. Edward, she wrote, "believed if you lived on a farm you should have all these good things on your table and live off the farm" (Wilson 1965:16). The family ate meat, fruit, vegetables, and grains that they had grown themselves.¹⁵ Much of the processing of food was also done by family members, with some hired help. Hog butchering, for instance, took place every year the week after Thanksgiving, and involved everyone including the children. "Every bit of meat was used," Elisabeth wrote, listing ham, bacon, sausages, lard, knuckles, ears, and other products. Sarah Van Alstyne, her daughters, and their hired workers made vinegar, preserves, and butter (with extra sold at the local store), and picked wild nuts and mushrooms. Sarah was also noted for her homemade ice cream, made with the farm's cream; ice came from the ice-houses along the Hudson River, and was delivered every other day. In addition to smoking and preserving food on ice, the family had a root cellar for storing vegetables. Elisabeth's memoir lovingly describes breakfasts of cereal, fried potatoes, bacon, scrambled eggs, creamed smoked beef or codfish, and boiled salt mackeral with creamed potatoes. Like most farm families, they ate breakfast early, with dinner at noon and supper at five. As a well-connected and prominent area family, they entertained often. Elisabeth notes that Sunnyside's menus when there was company often included

hot sweet biscuits, cold boiled ham sliced very thin, or escalloped oysters, (about 30 cents a quart), or broiled chicken, broiled shad, deviled clams-on-the-half-shell. The potatoes would be either creamed or Saratoga potatoes, now called potato chips. There would be pickled peaches, spiced crab-apples or plums, and the dessert would be canned fruit with cake or ice cream. The cake was usually sponge cake, or a layer cake with the most delicious filling made of thick sour cream, sweetened and thickened with walnuts. The beverage was tea or coffee. (Wilson 1965:27)

Some of the neighbors and peers who were guests at Sunnyside were also among the Van Alstynes' customers for farm products. Remarking that the family had one local customer who bought four pounds of butter each week, Elisabeth added, "We often went

¹⁵ In addition to the foods already listed, Elisabeth's memoir mentions potatoes, celery, salsify, asparagus, rhubarb, sweet and sour cherries, strawberries, raspberries, plums, pears, peaches, quinces, small amounts of buckwheat, and pumpkins (mostly for pig feed) among the products of the Sunnyside farm.

to this same house as dinner or party guests, but then we went to the front door” (Wilson 1965:47).

There were few imported or industrialized foods on the Van Alstyne’s table, and most of those were the same items that Ephraim Best had been importing half a century earlier. The family bought sugar and flour by the barrel, tea and coffee, large bags of oatmeal, and five-pound boxes of soda crackers, all from New York City (Wilson 1965:80). They also purchased the first commercial cereals to come on the market, including Shredded Wheat, invented in the 1890s by an enterprising machinist (Walton n.d.); Edward referred to this dismissively as “hay.” Edward also brought cheese back from the dairy building at the State Fair in Schenectady each year, supplementing the “pot cheese” and “mouse-trap cheese” made on the farm.

Elisabeth’s memoir also proudly notes her father’s involvement in agricultural education and reform at the regional and state level, but her account reflects the limitations of her childhood understanding of the extent of the work Edward was actually doing. His activities were part of the growing network of governmental and cooperative organizations dedicated to strengthening the region’s farm economy. These included post-Civil War projects like the U.S. Department of Agriculture (established in 1862) and the land-grant colleges (1862) with their experiment stations (1887) and extension programs (1914). There were also non-governmental organizations like the Patrons of Husbandry (also known as the Grange, founded in 1867), as well as public/private projects like the Country Life Movement (1908), sponsored by Theodore Roosevelt’s administration to improve the quality of rural life, and the business-oriented American Farm Bureau (1919).

Often building on the foundations of earlier associations like the federal-period agricultural societies, these nineteenth and early twentieth century programs and agencies worked to address a wide range of concerns and had differing types of relationships with government. All, in various ways, responded to the reality that the U.S. was becoming a much more urbanized and industrialized society, and that increased efficiency and surplus production, along with growing farmer indebtedness and the shrinking farm labor pool shown in Table B, was making it more difficult for farms—particularly small ones—to survive economically. By the 1880s, some groups—for example, the southern wing of the Farmers’ Alliance and the Populists or People’s Party—were beginning to demand some form of government price stabilization measures (Hurt 1994:206-13). The more moderate Grange, initially a secret fraternal society, first tried to strengthen farm culture

by improving social and educational opportunities for farm families. It later expanded into cooperative buying and marketing ventures and political advocacy, a hotly-debated direction that subsided, by the early twentieth century, back into a more educational and social mission (Hurt 1994:203-5). Others—like the Farmers’ Institutes that Edward Van Alstyne worked for—allied themselves with both government and higher education, putting their faith in scientific rationality as a way to elevate the social status, economic viability, and material comfort of farm life.

In the 1870s, when Edward Van Alstyne took over his family’s farm, there was little state infrastructure dedicated to farmers’ concerns. As in many states, farmers tended to view the work of New York’s land-grant agricultural college, the New York State College of Agriculture at Ithaca (later Cornell University), as irrelevant to the realities of farming (Hurt 1994:193; Witter 1909:45). A professor who had come to Cornell from Iowa, along with some of his faculty colleagues, a sympathetic journalist, and a network of people considered to be “public spirited, progressive farmers of the state,” sought to change that by importing a “farmers’ institute” model that had earlier been established in Iowa (Witter 1909:46). A gathering of 85 people in Ithaca in 1885 laid the groundwork for New York’s program. They met at Cornell to hear the university’s president make a “Plea for Scientific Agriculture” and to consider such topics as silage (then a new farm technique), Jersey and Holstein cows, beekeeping, and “Brains and Manners on the Farm,” a talk that addressed the public perception of farmers as socially and educationally backward (Hedrick 1933:427-28). A crucial outcome of the meeting was the suggestion that New York State should establish a Board of Agriculture. This was accomplished in 1893, when an existing state Dairy Commission was expanded to a Department of Agriculture (Hedrick 1933:425).¹⁶

The State Agricultural Society worked with Cornell in the early years to run a series of Farmers’ Institutes—beginning with three each winter—in different regions of the state. The program grew quickly. By 1910-11, there were nearly 350 institutes being held each year, attended by more than 125,000 people; in addition, there were six beekeeping institutes that year, cooperative meetings with several other state agricultural associations, and numerous sessions in the public schools that reached more than 30,000 students. Education was a core concern; much of the perceived “backwardness” of

¹⁶ This was in turn replaced by the Department of Farms and Markets in 1917. A commissioner of Farms and Markets was appointed to oversee the somewhat fragmented operations of this department in 1921, and in 1926, the name of the agency was changed to the Department of Agriculture and Markets (Hedrick 1933:425).

farming was connected to the sense that rural schools emphasized only the “three R’s” and were out of touch with more recent scientific methods and discoveries that could bring farm children more fully into the modern world while also benefitting their family’s farm operations. Better education, these Progressive Era reformers believed, would help to elevate the status of farmers in American society and strengthen agriculture as an economic sector. An arrangement with the state Education Department furnished speakers on rural school improvement at nearly every Farmers’ Institute (Witter 1909:52). One 1900 speaker expressed her hope that “the work of ‘tilling the soil’ will soon be recognized as one of the most honorable, as we all know it is the most needful of our industries. And our boys can stay on the farm in honor, comfort and prosperity” (McCarthy 1900:348). The organization made concerted efforts to reach out not only to youth but also to farm women, hosting women’s institute meetings and including a note on all Institute programs encouraging women to attend.

Edward Van Alstyne appears to have become involved in the Farmers’ Institutes quite early; by the turn of the century, he was working as a “conductor” (a sort of circuit-rider; see Fig. 44), and near the end of his life, in the 1910s, he was the director of the entire state program.¹⁷ As a conductor, he organized and led local institutes throughout eastern New York State, often speaking on topics relating to dairy farming, orchards, silage, and soil fertility. Among the other conductors and assistant conductors for his district were people from other old area farm families. These included Ray Lant, the great-grandson of the Jeremiah Hess who was Martin Van Buren’s farm manager for a time sixty years earlier. Van Alstyne and Lant led an Institute together in East Chatham in January of 1910, at which Van Alstyne spoke on combatting the San Jose Scale on apples and on “Economical Feeding”; two years later, the two men were again working together in East Chatham, with Van Alstyne talking about bovine tuberculosis and “Three Reasons for Using the Silo.”

¹⁷ Unless otherwise noted, information about Edward Van Alstyne’s work for the Farmers’ Institutes comes from the program’s annual reports, collected at the New York State Library. In a 1910 talk, Van Alstyne noted that he had been “in this work for twenty years or more” (1909-1910 report). He seems to have taken a leave of absence in 1907; the director at the time remarked that “We all miss him in the work, but we trust that his heart is with us in it” (1907 report). In her memoir, Edward’s daughter Elisabeth reports that he directed the program from 1909 to 1918, the year he died, and that he had presented lectures at Institutes as early as 1889. A statement by the New York Commissioner of Agriculture on Edward’s death in 1918 noted that he had been a Farmers’ Institute lecturer since 1889 and director of the Bureau of Farmers’ Institutes since 1912 (“Edward Van Alstyne to be buried today,” Jan. 21, 1918).



Fig. 44. Farmers' Institute workers, 1899. Edward Van Alstyne, then in his early 40s, is the bearded man at top center. (New York State Library, Manuscripts and Special Collections)

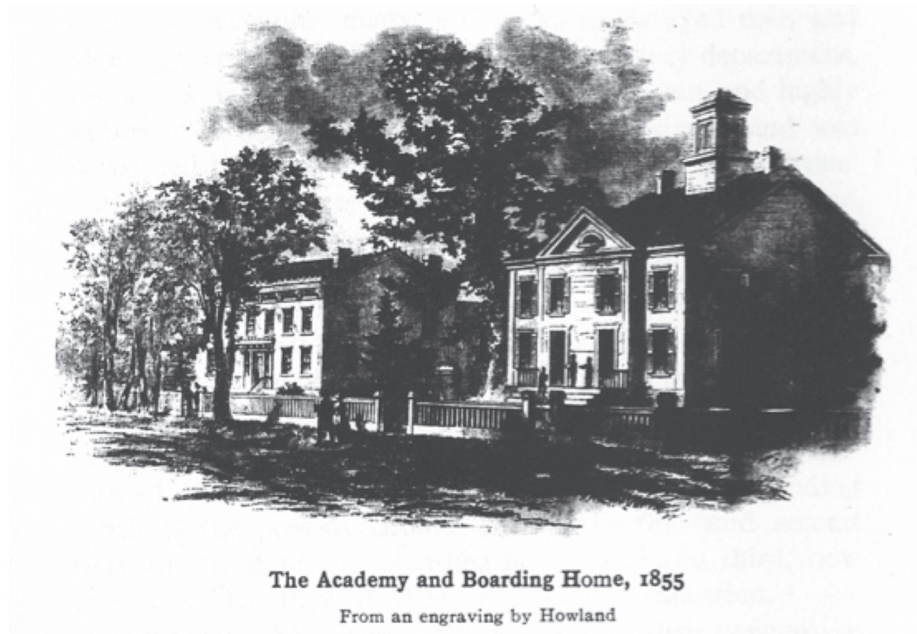


Fig. 45. Kinderhook Academy, built 1836 and purchased by the Lindenwald Grange in 1909. (Collier, *A History of Old Kinderhook*)

Farmers' Institutes were held throughout Columbia County, including at least one in Kinderhook in many years (see Appendix F for a partial list of dates and places). Based on a survey of Institute programs, Kinderhook appears to have served as the county center for the program for a short time in the first decade of the century, perhaps

reflecting Edward Van Alstyne's presence there and his efforts to establish this program in his home county. By the mid-1910s, a regular circuit of towns and host sites through the county had been established, reaching from New Lebanon to Linlithgo. The Kinderhook meetings were held at the Grange Hall, reflecting a collaborative relationship between the state-sponsored Farmers' Institutes and the local Grange—named Lindenwald Grange in an obvious reference to the farm of Kinderhook's most famous native son.¹⁸ In 1909, the Grange bought the 1836 building on Albany Street that had once housed the Kinderhook Academy (Fig. 45), and met there until around 1975 (Collier 1914:288; Duck 1989:64).¹⁹ Edward Van Alstyne was one of the founding members of the Lindenwald Grange and also served as the Master of the County Grange for a number of years (Wilson 1965:25).

Many Farmers' Institute programs focused on the idea of regenerating local farms and farm culture, reflecting the sense that there had been a decline which had to be countered with new approaches and attitudes. A 1915 institute in Livingston, south of Hudson, included presentations on "Building Up the Old Farm" and "The Neglected Apple Orchard," as well as a fairly standard piece on "Rural Problems." Van Alstyne's own solutions to these problems included strengthening connections among farmers, finding ways to regenerate depleted soils (like Martin Van Buren, Edward was a great proponent of manure), the adoption of modern dairy methods, and the pursuit of orcharding as a commercial venture. He created programs called Rural Life Days and the Rural Church program while he worked for the Farmers' Institutes, combining traditional networks of sociability and farm culture with public events designed to highlight rural accomplishments and community (Wilson 1965:25).

Edward also used his own experiences at Sunnyside as a case study in his Farmers' Institute talks, extolling the benefits of techniques that he had tried, such as

¹⁸ Ruth Piwonka reports that there is no apparent reference to the Lindenwald Grange in the main local history sources before 1909, the year that the chapter purchased the former Academy building. The Grange sold the building around 1975 to the local Elks Club. In 1978 it became a private residential property.

¹⁹ A newspaper article dated 1965 (but with no newspaper title or place given) in the "Agriculture" file of the Columbia County outlines the history of the Grange in Columbia County. It states that the first Grange in the county was organized in Greenport in 1875, followed by short-lived organizations in Germantown and Clermont. After a hiatus that corresponded with a national decline in Grange membership (Hurt 2002:205), new Granges were founded in Austerlitz and Canaan (1896), New Lebanon (1898), and Chatham (1901). The article lists 16 active Granges in 1965: Austerlitz, Canaan, New Lebanon, Chatham, Old Chatham, Hillsdale, Claverake, Copake, Ancram, Lindenwald, Livingston Manor, East Chatham, Johnstown, West Ghent, Mellenville, and Elizaville.

breeding cattle using improved bloodlines, improving pasturage techniques and seeds, and the new method of storing feed in silos. Silage, he said in 1902, was “the sheet-anchor of the dairyman,” which could, if properly managed, enable a year-round dairy operation (Van Alstyne 1902:65); he built one of the first silos in Columbia County in 1884 (Van Alstyne 1914:6).²⁰ He spoke of soil as “the foundation of all agricultural work” (Van Alstyne 1910:131), advocating the addition of humus as a way to keep the soil moist when growing potatoes (Van Alstyne 1909:147) and describing his methods of plowing under manure in his corn fields in the fall, then planting corn with a hand planter on a three-foot-square grid pattern. Just before the corn sprouted, he used a mechanical cultivator to apply a commercial fertilizer, showing the briefly-harmonious blend of hand- or muscle-powered labor, traditional methods of cultivation, and new industrialized and scientific products and methods characteristic of this transitional period in American farming (Van Alstyne 1902:65).



Fig. 46. The dairy house at Sunnyside, built over a spring.

²⁰ The first silo was built in the U.S. in the 1870s, and by the 1880s farmers throughout the dairy regions of the northeast states and Canada were adopting them. Olmstead and Rhode report that there were more than 7,000 silos in the U.S. by 1889, which had increased to more than 400,000 by 1918 (2008:347-48).

Dairying was particularly changed by the new farming techniques of the early twentieth century, and Edward was determined to make Sunnyside a modern dairy showplace (Olmstead and Rhode 2008:331; Wilson 1965:93). He was one of the first farmers in the Kinderhook area to have a purebred Guernsey herd, reflecting the shift toward pedigreed cattle that took place starting in the northeastern U.S. in the 1880s and 1890s (Wilson 1965:37).²¹ Once his dairy herd reached 40 cows, he installed a milking machine and built a dairy house over a spring on the side of the hill south of the main house (Fig. 46). This facility housed a power churn and pasteurization equipment operated by a full-time dairyman, and enabled Edward to turn Sunnyside into a small-scale processing plant. The Van Alstynes bought milk from smaller area farms and sold milk, cream, butter, and cottage cheese to various markets: in Kinderhook, to a grocery in Hudson, to outlets as far away as Yonkers, and to Gardeniers Ice Cream Company in Stottville, as well as to a few private customers (Wilson 1965:46-47). Dairy farmers had shipped their products via refrigerated railroad cars since the 1880s (DuPuis 2002:67), but Edward Van Alstyne was clearly taking advantage of the introduction of the expansion of commercial cold storage facilities around 1900 and motor trucking around 1910. These innovations extended urban milksheds even further and created markets for new perishable products like ice cream (Olmstead and Rhode 2008:350). Van Alstyne was also a proponent of scientific testing, including the Babcock test, developed in the 1890s to determine the fat content of milk, which contributed to the increasing standardization of dairy products (Herreid 1942; Van Alstyne 1902:61).

Edward Van Alstyne's reputation as a progressive dairy farmer was perhaps most fully realized at the 1901 Pan American Exposition in Buffalo, where he was in charge of New York State's dairy exhibit. Bemoaning farmers' practice of selling cheese and other dairy products made from low-fat milk, and responding to recent Canadian incursions into domestic and exported cheese markets, Van Alstyne and other scientific farm reformers in New York State spotlighted the benefits of up-to-date methods and approaches, resulting in many awards for New York butter and cheese. The official report of the New York exhibit organizers stressed the importance of letting go of older ways of doing things:

²¹ There were about 90,000 registered purebred dairy cows in the U.S. in 1885, 273,000 by 1895, and almost 900,000 by the early 1920s. Holstein-Friesians became the dominant breed after a period in which Guernsey, Jersey, Ayshire, Brown Swiss, Dutch Belted, Red Polled, and Milking Shorthorns (descendants of the Durham cattle popular in the earlier nineteenth century) were preferred by many farmers (Olmstead and Rhode 2008:337-39).

Time has made fixed habits which are hard to remove and replace with new and better methods. Unlike other mammoth business enterprises, where the very latest and best methods are employed for perfection in goods and economy in manufacture, the dairymen seem to be hard to convince that the causes which produce effects are not worth their time to study. They seem to think that scientific research is intended for college professors to teach to boys, and the results not to be employed in agriculture. Be that as it may, the young men who are attending the various dairy schools of our country are going out among the people who are most interested and are successfully crowding out the old and imperfect methods of the past. (Frankfort 1902:144)

Elisabeth and one of her young sisters went to the “Pan” for a week but appear to have been more impressed by unfamiliar sights—Geronimo being paraded around the fairgrounds by American soldiers, Clara Barton and her corps of Red Cross nurses, the showing of the film “The Johnstown Flood”—than by the model dairy exhibit her father had helped to assemble (even the assassination of President William McKinley at the Exposition fails to rate a mention in her memoir) (Wilson 1965:131).



Fig. 47. The Model Dairy Building at the 1901 Pan American Exposition in Buffalo, supervised by Edward Van Alstyne. (“Doing the Pan,” http://panam1901.org/dairy_bldg/model_dairy.htm)

But Edward Van Alstyne was not a single-minded modernizer determined to “crowd out” everything about the past. In 1914, he wrote a history of his family’s farms, delivering it in slightly modified form as a speech at the 250th anniversary celebration of Sunnyside and Orchard Home Farms three years later. His words on that occasion conveyed his deep sense of place and his feeling of responsibility to the land where eight

generations of his family had farmed. A lifelong pillar of the Kinderhook Dutch Reformed Church, Edward framed this connection in moral and spiritual terms, referring to “an old book of agriculture and philosophy as well as morals”—the Christian Bible—as the source of his understanding of his own stewardship of the farm. In a gathering of 75 family members, friends, and special business associates, Edward and his children placed a memorial sundial at the center of the garden created by his wife Sarah, who had died the previous year. Edward began his speech with a Biblical quotation:

‘And Isaac digged again the wells which Abram, his father, had digged—and he called them by the names his father had called them.’ It suggests continuity of thought, action and occupancy; pride in the accomplishments of those who have pioneered the way. In it, too, is the thought and far reaching affect [sic] of the old task repeated again and again... The lessons for us to-day are many and obvious. To those of my generation here there is doubtless uppermost the thought that for us well digging has passed and that we have not digged them deeper and made them more abiding. Yet, thank God, we can without egotism, and with some pardonable pride point to the testimony of these verdant fields, that as did our fathers into those labours we have entered, so have we redigged their wells and new ones also, as evidenced in these fields and trees bearing fruit after their kind, as well as more and better flocks and herds; and in this gathering today we are remembering the old names. (Van Alstyne 1917:1)

In 1917, it was possible to feel that the old and new could be reconciled in American agriculture. New methods and technologies had enabled many farmers to produce more and higher-quality products that provided a comfortable living for their families. Urban markets were expanding rapidly, but older local and regional networks of production and supply also remained in place to a very large extent, as can be seen in the variety of venues in which Sunnyside’s dairy and other products were marketed. Some of the most back-breaking farm labor, like milking and threshing, was beginning to be mechanized, but in an era when the internal combustion engine had not yet become dominant, there was still a central role for human and hand labor. Steam engines had been around since the 1860s and were in fairly wide use in the large farms of the American west by the 1890s, but on older northeastern farms and in cities throughout the U.S., horses remained the primary draft power, limiting the scope of the machinery that could be pulled or powered and also creating continued regional markets for hay and oats (Hurt 1994:201-2). The problems of surplus production were beginning to bedevil farmers in some parts of the country, and some agriculturalists—for example,

George Washington Carver, who was distressed to see impoverished southern farmers growing cotton rather than food crops—echoed earlier agrarian warnings that over-commercialization of agriculture carried dangers for farmers and for the country as a whole (Hurt 1994:254). But these were not yet crises for the majority of American farmers, making it possible for progressive reformers like Edward Van Alstyne to maintain their faith in scientific progress and competitive markets as ways to support long-term stewardship of their family's farms. Local farmers without Van Alstyne's resources or faith in modern progress were already being left behind in this new market; the Wagoners and Van Alens of Old Post Road may fit this category. But in the garden of Sunnyside in 1917, it must have seemed as though much of the old agricultural infrastructure of Columbia County from Van Buren's day and before had been successfully regenerated and that the old farms could remain on a stable footing by judiciously adopting new ways while remembering and respecting the old ones.

Farming on Display in the Progressive Era

In Elisabeth Van Alstyne Wilson's memoir, we can glimpse many of the ways that farmers were displaying their products, methods, and the values associated with them in the decades around the turn of the twentieth century. In general, these modes of display reflected the widespread Progressive Era faith that tradition and modernity could coexist within the agricultural sector, as well as progressive reformers' emphasis on education and publicity as tactics for improving society. But the emergence of farm tourism in many parts of the northeast foreshadowed a split that was already developing between working farms attempting to keep up with the changes of the industrial capitalist economy and those that were moving more into the realm of touristic or educational display. This split continued to widen as the twentieth century went on, with motorized vehicles—tractors, trucks, and private automobiles—paradoxically contributing to both the continued mechanization and industrialization of farming and the expansion of a tourist infrastructure that allowed for nostalgic visiting of farm landscapes. This section of the chapter will examine a range of display strategies adopted by farmers in this period.

Agricultural and other types of fairs and expositions continued to be important venues for showcasing new technologies, breeds, and local and regional products. Farmers like the Van Alstynes attended not only large-scale events like the Pan-American Exposition but local fairs as well; Elisabeth notes that the Columbia County Fair held

in late summer was always a favorite family trip (1965:63). In addition to these special events, many farmers continued to present their operations as models of successful agricultural practices, just as wealthy gentleman farmers and reformers had done in Van Buren's day and earlier. During the Progressive Era, these "model farms" tended to embrace the kinds of scientific and mechanical discoveries described in the Sunnyside case study: milking machines, silage, improved breeding stock, chemical pesticides, and so on. At Sunnyside itself, visitors often arrived wanting to look around the farm, reflecting its local and county reputation as a forward-looking operation (Wilson 1965:93). (Elisabeth reports that when Edward himself was too busy to give people a tour, he would delegate this task to his youngest daughter.) Not far away, in Cooperstown, the farm of James Fenimore Cooper, whose novels had helped to create an aura of romance around the history of the Hudson and Mohawk River Valleys, was bought in the 1870s by the well-to-do Clark family. In 1918, Edward Severin Clark transformed the property into a state-of-the-art dairy farm housed in a Colonial Revival style complex. In northern Vermont, New York businessman William Seward Webb and his wife Eliza Vanderbilt Webb created Shelburne Farms from a patchwork of 30 small farm properties in 1886; by the turn of the twentieth century they were operating it as a 3,800-acre model agricultural estate. On a smaller scale, Vermont lawyer and conservationist Frederick Billings built on the foundation of a farm previously owned by pioneering conservationist George Perkins Marsh. By the 1890s, Billings had created an award-winning dairy herd, as well as re-foresting land that had been cleared in earlier decades of more destructive farming practices.

Other model farms were to be found among groups who *rejected* modernization and mechanization, or adopted them more selectively, often within the framework of religious beliefs and values. The Shakers were one such group who farmed in communities around New England; their New Lebanon community in Columbia County came to incorporate 6,000 acres and 100 buildings. Already well-established by Martin Van Buren's time (he bought seed potatoes from them in the 1840s), they continued to be visited by those who were curious about the radically communitarian sect and its agricultural and craft skills. Elisabeth Van Alstyne Wilson recalled her family stopping to see the New Lebanon Shaker village one June day, and noted, "We were all very much interested in what we saw" (Wilson 1965:63). Farther afield, Amish and Mennonite farms held a similar fascination for many late nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century visitors, farmers and non-farmers alike, often intersecting with a new interest in cultural

conservation, collection of material objects, and what would today be termed heritage or cultural tourism.²²



Fig. 48. The immense North Barn of the Shaker village in New Lebanon, photographed as part of the Historic American Buildings Survey in 1931. The barn is currently being restored by the Shaker Museum and Library. (Library of Congress)

²² There is a considerable literature on nostalgic and touristic approaches to Amish and Pennsylvania German cultures. For some sources, see Russell A. Kazal, *Becoming Old Stock: The Paradox of German-American Identity* (Princeton University Press, 2004), Donald B. Kraybill and Marc A. Olshan, eds., *The Amish Struggle with Modernity* (University Press of New England, 1994), and David Weaver-Zercher, *The Amish in American Imagination* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001). Information on the other “model farms” in these two paragraphs is from the websites of the various historic sites that have preserved these farms. It appears from preliminary Farmscape Ecology Program research that the Shakers in New Lebanon offered some type of farm-stay boarding arrangement for summer visitors during the late nineteenth and perhaps early twentieth centuries, a topic that would be well worth investigation as a way of understanding how tourism has been used to display and promote different modes of farming in Columbia County. On Shaker tourism in general, see “Shaker Tourism and the Rhetorical Experience of the Aesthetic” by Gregory Clark in *Rhetorical Landscapes in America: Variations on a Theme* from Kenneth Burke (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina Press, 2004, pp. 50-68), and recent work by Cornell historian R. Laurence Moore.

The growing interest in visiting farms for recreational or aesthetic rather than practical reasons also created a new market for farm vacations, a leisure-time activity that became increasingly important in older farming areas in this period. Whereas earlier tourists in the Hudson Valley saw agriculture as just one component of pleasingly historic and scenic landscapes, by the 1890s farms and farm landscapes were becoming attractions in and of themselves in many parts of the eastern U.S. as many people sought out what Warren Belasco has called “private pastoralism” (1979:63). This is one form of farm display that is not mentioned in *Children of Sunnyside*, and there appears to be little scholarly study thus far of farm vacationing in the Hudson Valley.²³ But because of its growing importance in both shaping and reflecting how agriculture was perceived throughout the northeast during this period, it is worth a brief discussion here, drawing on comparative material from nearby New England.

There were elements of touristic display at model farms like Sunnyside, Shelburne Farms, and the Shaker villages, but most small farms lacked the capital or ambition to create the kinds of projects that would have made them stops on the itinerary of those interested in up-to-date or innovative farming methods. However, small family farms *did* have a resource that was increasingly attractive to urban dwellers: an association with the kind of small-scale community and wholesome rural lifestyle that more and more Americans felt distanced from, and thus nostalgic toward. Particularly in areas where both industry and farming were in decline due to intensified competition in the national and global economies, many farmers began to open their doors to summer boarders as a way to earn extra income. In her account of farm vacationing in northern New England, Dona Brown notes that it was mostly farm women who took on the responsibility for visitors, continuing a long tradition of women bringing additional money into the farm through market-oriented activities (1994:161-62). These efforts were supported by farmers’ organizations and state agencies; for example, in Vermont, the first state tourism campaigns were run by the Board of Agriculture (Brown 1994:143). Tourism promoters

²³ Recent oral history projects by the Farmscape Ecology Program of Hawthorne Valley Farm in Ghent have documented stories of summer boarders and other types of farm tourism in Columbia County in the early decades of the twentieth century. These interviews may provide a basis to build on in further study of this topic. Annual Reports of the New York State Department of Agriculture in the early years of the twentieth century are another source of data, since these list farms for sale and include numerous references to farms’ suitability for summer boarders (for example, a 33-acre farm in Broome County in 1913 was described as “Nice place for city boarders, plenty of maple shade”) (*Twenty-First Report of the Department of Agriculture, Part II, For the Year Ending September 30, 1913*, Albany, J.B. Lyon Company, 1914, p. 135).

offered helpful suggestions for attracting and entertaining vacationers, and for negotiating the many gaps between what visitors expected and the realities of actual farm life. These included differences in taste when it came to food and furnishing and tensions between visitors' desire to "play farmer" and farmers' need to get their daily work done (Brown 1994:156-61, 164). As time went on, small farms that catered to tourists often ended up shifting their production from a smaller number of commercial crops to a more diversified mix, reflecting tourists' tastes and preconceptions about "real" farm life as something closer to an old-style subsistence enterprise rather than a highly efficient commercial one (Brown 1994:144-45). Soaking in the pastoral scenery and slower pace of life on a one- or two-week vacation, tourists were able to view small-scale farming as something outside or apart from the competitiveness and volatility of capitalist markets (Brown 1994:5, 156, 167). This escapist fantasy was aided by the fact that farming methods—especially on smaller family farms—were not yet radically different from those of the earlier nineteenth century.

Farmers, on the other hand, saw tourism as just one among many strategies that they could use to stay afloat in that same capitalist economy, adopting tourism as a way to provide much-needed income and add value to farm food and products. In addition, tourism became a useful platform for asserting that the idea that farming *transcended* the marketplace. In part, this was a philosophical statement. By accenting a "homey" atmosphere, showcasing the positive qualities of traditional rural life, and offering a varied and healthful diet, farm vacation hosts defended the social and civic value of their work as well as its importance in the regional economy, just as rural reformers did. This type of display was also a pragmatic tool, linked with longstanding attempts to ensure farm succession and generational continuity within an increasingly beleaguered way of life (Brown 1994:147). The promotion of farm tourism thus dovetailed very neatly with other efforts to strengthen and revitalize rural life in the Progressive Era, including those of state agricultural agencies. For instance, a New York State Farmers' Institute speaker in 1902-3 echoed the rhetoric of tourism promotion when she argued that the salvation of rural culture lay in cultivating family life (seen, like catering to tourists, to be women's work) rather than merely pursuing profit:

[I]t sometimes seems that the more zealous we women have been to grasp and save the almighty dollar, the more anxious have they seemed to slip away [sic]. So let us pause and see if life on the farm has not something better for us than the pursuit of that elusive dollar. . . The boys and girls have left the farm because it was so barren of beauty and sentiment. . . (Wells 1903:56-7)

The kinds of improvements and amenities provided for tourists could equally be touted as ways to make rural life more appealing to farmers' sons and daughters, while the tourists themselves added a more cosmopolitan note to the countryside and brought a wider range of experiences and views to farm families.

Although some strategies of the tourism promoters overlapped with those of progressive farm reformers like Edward Van Alstyne, at bottom the two approaches were very different. Van Alstyne and his cohort believed that past and present could be reconciled through a forward-looking embrace of scientific research and new technologies, while tourism depended to a large extent on visitors' sense of small-scale farm life as something already essentially past. As the twentieth century went on, the flaws of farm tourism as a strategy for long-term farm survival were exposed. It became clear that instead of evading or reinventing the logic of the market, farm tourism actually created a new kind of product within it, one that extended the reach of the market into realms of rural life—family relationships, domestic life, place-attachments to specific landscapes—that had not previously been for sale, without doing anything to challenge the trends toward mechanization and commodification that were making it difficult for small farmers to survive. But for a time, as Dona Brown, notes, “The double-edged rhetoric of farm nostalgia seemed to make everybody happy” (1994:167). In the ongoing struggle to maintain small-scale farming as a way of life and to bring the commercial, social, and spiritual aspects of agriculture into a workable balance, some Progressive Era farmers were able to use popular nostalgia about farming as one strategy for keeping themselves going.

Case Study: Polish Farmers Around Lindenwald

Various kinds of cultural “others” appear between the lines of Elisabeth Van Alstyne Wilson’s memoir, illustrating how the longstanding diversity among the county’s farmers and farmworkers continued into the Progressive Era. There was an African-American maid, essentially a mail-order servant recruited through a blind inquiry to several post offices in Virginia, and the “old colored woman [who] came down from town every year and stayed for a week [during hog-butcherer season] to help Mamma,” who tried, unsuccessfully, to convince the Van Alstyne children that fried pigs’ tails were a delicacy (Wilson 1965:41, 100). A former slave known as “Coty’s Jake” lived “down the road” in a one-room shack, where he survived by hunting, trapping, fishing, and occasionally selling items like skunk oil, which Sarah Van Alstyne rubbed on her

children's chests when they had colds (Wilson 1965:148). Jewish "pack peddlers" and kosher butchers from Hudson came to the farm, including one who always stayed to dinner so he could talk about books with Edward, and another who always said, on leaving, "Jakie from Hudson, three weeks ago, I come again" (Wilson 1965:149-50).

There were also various immigrants and migrant laborers, including some whom Edward hired in New York City when local help was not available. "Some of the best men ever to work for us were the foreigners, many of them Poles," Elizabeth noted. "Their descendants are now some of the best farmers and citizens around the country." These Polish farm workers included both men and women. Edward came back from the city once with a woman who was "strong and as good a worker on the farm as most men" (Wilson 1965:53). Nor were they all from outside the area. At the turn of the century, a number of Polish families settled in Kinderhook, Stuyvesant, and Stuyvesant Falls including several in the immediate neighborhood of Lindenwald and Sunnyside. Their farming experiences, as both landowners and farm laborers, reveal a rather different side of Columbia County's agricultural economy in this period.

Poles had been coming to the U.S. in fairly large numbers since the 1870s, seeking land and work outside their occupied homeland. The first large wave of immigrants came from the territory occupied by Prussia, and included many artisans, industrial workers, and urban dwellers who settled largely in the industrial centers of the midwest and northeast. Most of those who arrived later were peasants and small land-owners who were no longer able to support themselves by farming in the poorer Russian- and Austrian-controlled regions; these later arrivals also gravitated to industrial cities and mining communities (Bukowczyk 1987:15, 21). But for many Poles, land ownership was central to identity and community status (Pula 1995:17) and most had first-hand memories and experience of growing at least some of their own food. These experiences were ingrained in Polish folk culture; for example, the various traditional dishes for a Polish Christmas Eve supper were supposed to represent the five sources of the family's food—field, garden, orchard, woods, and waters (Obidinski and Zand 1987:62). A small percentage of the first wave of Polish immigrants seems to have come to America with the determination to be farmers.²⁴ Most of these went immediately to the midwest, particularly the upper midwestern states like Wisconsin. But some who moved initially

²⁴ Polish American historiography has been dominated by studies of these cities, industries, and mining communities, often focusing on how those from rural and peasant backgrounds adapted to their new settings, leaving a gap in the historical understanding of the smaller but still significant number of Poles who became farmers in America (Kolinski 1995:49-52).

to industrial cities in the northeast later found ways to rent, lease, and eventually own their own farms, particularly in the Connecticut River Valley (Bukowczyk 1987:19-20; Kolinski 1995:23-24, 46-49). And a handful settled in other places, like northwestern Columbia County.

To a very large extent, these Polish farmers in both the midwest and northeast were from Posnan, an important urban trade center in Poland since the medieval period (Kolinski 1995:36, 38). This was the case with the Columbia County Poles, although there are aspects of their story that also seem anomalous. According to John Bryfonski, grandson of one of the Polish immigrant couples, the first family to arrive in the Kinderhook area from Posnan were the Blochs. As in the case of many immigrant communities, this first family communicated with others at home, encouraging them to migrate, and several more who had been farmers in the countryside around Posnan—the Bogarskis, Bryfonskis, Czajkowskis, Nawrockis, Nowaks, Turczynskis, and others—moved to the area by around 1900. They were unusual in settling immediately on farms after entering through New York City, and doubly unusual in that they found ways to mix farming and industrial work within the industrialized pockets of rural Columbia County, working in textiles, brick-making, and other factories. Like Polish farmers in New England, they seem to have combined working on other area farms with renting, buying, and leasing their own farmland (Kolinski 1995:47). Census data for the period show many Polish families in which some family members—often the father and some of the sons—were farmers while others—often including unmarried daughters—worked in textile or other mills. For example, in 1915, members of the Nowak family of Old Post Road seem mostly to have been engaged in farming; the father, Joseph (48) and two of his sons (aged 17 and 21) are listed as farmer and farmworkers, respectively. Ten years later, Joseph was still farming, perhaps along with a grown son, George, but Joseph Jr. (25) was working as a mason's helper, and Veronica (16) was an inspector in a mill.

Elisabeth Van Alstyne Wilson reports that Sunnyside Farm hired many Polish workers from the neighborhood, with mixed results that hint at some of the class and ethnic tensions between older established landowners and these recently-arrived farmworkers. Elisabeth reports various incidents of Polish workers stealing from her father or trying to take home some of the produce they had picked in his fields. After a long day of potato harvesting, one woman, known as “Bloody Mary” because she was the one who caught the pigs’ blood in a pan during butchering, stacked one bushel inside another to disguise the fact that she had hidden some potatoes in the lower bushel for

her own use. But the woman appears to have been a regular worker at Sunnyside, doing some cleaning and washing and showing Elisabeth another trick: how to put a pan of rising dough between two feather ticks, which held the warmth after a person had gotten out of bed in the morning. An older Polish man who lived just north of Sunnyside “would steal anything he could lay his hands on,” according to Elisabeth. After Edward had the man jailed for stealing planks from a bridge on the farm, the man’s wife took to praying loudly whenever Edward passed by, asking God to strike him lame in both legs (he was already lame in one) (Wilson 1965:51-53). Elisabeth acknowledged that Sunnyside’s ample supplies of grain were tempting to poorer farmers with livestock to feed. What she did not note, and perhaps did not recognize, was that to the Polish immigrants, the Van Alstynes and other large landowners were probably being cast in the social role of *szlachta*, or nobility, a position that Poles would have understood very clearly as including obligations to the less-prosperous farmers in the area. The Polish *szlachta* were similar to the English landed gentry in that they ranged from quite small landholders to immensely wealthy aristocratic families. And in both cases, they constituted a higher-status class that exerted some check on the power of royal and national elites, while serving as local “squires” who leased land to tenant farmers, provided local leadership, and acted as an interface between peasant farmers and larger political and economic entities (Lukowski and Zawadski 2006:9-11, 61). This meeting-ground was filled with tension and negotiation, as it had been for the early Dutch patroons and their tenant farmers, and it is easy to imagine the Van Alstynes’ Polish neighbors similarly seeing Edward Van Alstyne and other affluent landowners as both a resource for smaller farmers and elite power-holders who needed to be cut down to size. Perhaps “Bloody Mary” saw her purloined potatoes as an informal benefit for her hard work and a way to remind Edward of his more-than-financial responsibilities to those who labored in his fields.

The histories of two Lindenwald-area Polish farm families show two different directions that these immigrants’ lives in rural America took. The Bryfonskis, who came to the U.S. from Posnan around 1898, bought a small farm just south of Lindenwald sometime between 1900 and 1905.²⁵ In the 1905 census, the father, John (or Johan), is listed as a farmer, along with his wife Rose. A daughter, Lottie, worked in a knitting mill that year, and their younger children—some born in Europe, some in the U.S.—were still in school. Catholic Churches were a crucial center of identity and community for Poles,

²⁵ Unless otherwise noted, information about the Bryfonski family is drawn from census records and from a July 16, 2010 telephone interview with John Bryfonski.

and although those in the Kinderhook area were not numerous enough to found a parish of their own, the Polish families formed a substantial and close-knit minority population within the parishes of St. Mary's Catholic Church in Stuyvesant Falls and St. John the Baptist in Valatie, where they socialized and where many of their sons and daughters married one another.²⁶ It seems that the Bryfonskis, like other Polish families in the area, were farming largely to provide food for themselves, along with doing some moderate-scale market gardening. Tredwell Burch, whose family bought the Bryfonski farm around 1930, remembered that, "They had fruit trees in the front, instead of a lawn they had cherry trees and pear trees and everything, all over the place, and berries."

In 1915, John, then 54 years old, was still farming; his son Bill (19) was also listed as a farmworker, although it is not clear whether he was working solely on his family's farm or others' as well. An older son, Anthony, had already moved away to New York City to become a teamster, and Bill, like many young Polish men in the U.S., went away to serve in the military during World War I and did not return to farming after the war. John Bryfonski senior died in his 50s, and his grandson speculates that the loss of the family's most experienced farmer, coupled with the small size of the family farm, the trends that were making it more difficult for small farms to survive economically, and the availability of steadier jobs in other sectors, probably determined that younger generations of Bryfonskis would not continue trying to farm. Tredwell Burch recalled that family members would "go out and be carpenters all winter and get seed money, then lose their shirt during the summer, and then they'd start over again during the winter." By 1925, Rose was still living on the farm with five of the children: Michael (24), who worked in a local brickyard, Celia (19), a winder in a mill, John (18) and Lewis (16), listed as farmers, and George (12), who was still in school. Ten years later, they had moved into a house in the town of Stuyvesant Falls, having sold their land to the Burches. Farming created a brief window of opportunity for them to establish themselves in the area, but the generation after immigration found that farming did not provide a route to the prosperity and security they hoped for, and they quickly shifted to other kinds of labor.

²⁶ There was a Polish parish in Hudson, founded sometime around the turn of the century. It may be that Poles in Kinderhook, Stuyvesant, and Stuyvesant Falls would have visited that church for larger community celebrations.

The Czajkowski family also came to the U.S. from Posnan sometime in the 1890s.²⁷ Peter Czajkowski (1877-1939), one of three or four brothers, settled with his wife Anna Cross (1883-1958) in Livingston, then moved north to West Ghent and eventually, by the 1920s or 30s, to a 100-acre farm on Muitzeskill Road in Stuyvesant, near the northwestern corner of Columbia County. The farm included an apple orchard, and the family grew corn, hay, and wheat as well as vegetables, and raised cows, pigs, and chickens. Peter and Anna had 13 children; Edward, the oldest son, worked on the farm until he married, after which he took a job in a Valatie textile mill and then worked in factories in Albany. Most of the siblings, like those in the Bryfonski family, made the decision to follow other modes of living and working (as Peter and Anna's granddaughter Sally Jung recalled in a 2010 interview for this project, "All the boys helped [on the farm] until they grew up and got out of that! They didn't want anything more to do with that—enough already!") The second oldest, Raymond (1904-1985), was able to turn his farming skills and entrepreneurial acumen into a very successful business that involved farming a good deal of land around the northwestern quadrant of the county, buying and selling real estate, and providing harvesting and other services and equipment to other area farmers. We will encounter Ray Czajkowski again in the following chapter, showing how some local farmers were able to survive as the twentieth century went on by embracing the more mechanized and commercialized modes of farming that were continuing to eclipse smaller mixed farms in this period.

²⁷ Unless otherwise noted, information about the Czajkowski family is drawn from census records, an interview with Sally (Czajkowski) Jung, and family genealogical data compiled by Sally Jung and her cousin Leo Czajkowski.

Study Themes in This Chapter

Changing agricultural methods and approaches

- increasing dominance of scientific agriculture
- start of industrial food processing
- continuing importance of expositions (eg. 1901 Pan American Exposition in Buffalo) as showcases, educational forums
- rise of specialized dairy (including turn to silage, new cattle breeds, cold storage, etc.)
- balance of older and newer farm methods around turn of twentieth century
- some return to more mixed farming and regionally specialized products on smaller farms that catered to tourists

Farming in a market economy

- continued westward movement of farmers
- increasingly expensive to buy land
- farmers attempting to reconcile faith in progress with new realities of surplus production, higher indebtedness, continued decline in individual and local autonomy
- international competition in commercial markets (eg. Canadian cheese as competition for New York State)
- growth of farm tourism in northeast, based on marketable association of small family farms with health, community, non-commercial values and ways of life

The roles of policy and law in farming

- growth of federal and state support for agriculture (USDA, land-grant colleges, Farmers' Institutes, research support, agricultural extension programs)
- government investment in scientific agriculture
- northeastern states' support for farm tourism initiatives, linked with broader efforts to keep farms viable and younger farmers on the land

CHAPTER SEVEN

ADAPTATION AND ALTERNATIVES (1917-1973)

The years around the First World War were a watershed for American agriculture, particularly in the northeast. As during previous wars, mobilization for World War I boosted demand and prices for agricultural products, capping off what appeared to many as a “golden age” for farmers around the turn of the twentieth century. But once the war ended, renewed international competition and the continuing consequences of domestic over-production pushed American farmers into a depression that predated the more general depression of the 1930s (Hurt 1994:221, 263). And in 1920, the U.S. reached an important demographic milestone: for the first time, more people lived in urban than in rural places (Hurt 1994:268). Farmers were now a statistical minority, struggling to assert their importance against the growing power of urban and professional segments of society. Processed foods, on the one hand, and the romanticization of rural and agricultural landscapes, on the other, became more widespread as Americans continued to become more and more disconnected from the daily realities of food production. World War II represented another important turning point, with the nation’s expanded industrial capacity and more global economic and political reach reshaping American expectations and ways of living in profound ways. At the same time, various forms of backlash, resistance, and agricultural alternatives continued to appear, creating the foundation for a broader reenvisioning of food and farming that gained visibility in the later twentieth century. The changes that the commercialization of agriculture had set in motion in the early nineteenth century accelerated tremendously in this period, particularly after World War II, but as had been the case from the beginning, they were by no means uncontested or unchallenged.

This chapter will begin with a general overview of some of the ways that American farmers and their allies responded to these changes, focusing on the work of farmers’ organizations, the expanded role of the federal government in regulating production and pricing, the rise of a new generation of agrarian reformers, and the growth of both preservationism and new types of display and tourism relating to farming and farm landscapes. Returning to the specific lands at and around Lindenwald, the chapter will then follow the Birney and deProse families at Van Buren’s estate as well as a number of small commercial farmers in the area.

Responses to the Market: Policy, Alternatives, Preservation

Throughout the middle decades of the twentieth century, many Columbia County farmers, including some who were pursuing specialized commercial farming, recognized the economic, social, and environmental dilemmas inherent in producing food as an industrial commodity product. As the century went on, there were also increasing worries about the safety of the chemical fertilizers and pesticides that had been developed in the research laboratories of the agricultural schools and elsewhere. The lead arsenate that Edward Van Alstyne and his fellow farmers had gathered enthusiastically to make was quite quickly discovered to leave a dangerous residue on fruit, but it was still used until around 1950, because nothing as effective was found until DDT came on the market in 1947 (Peryea 1998). By the early 1960s, of course, the dangers of DDT itself began to be well-known. Even aside from environmental and health concerns, though, chemical pesticide and fertilizer use could be another problem masquerading as a solution for farmers: it made them more dependent on imported nutrients and other “inputs” while increasing surplus production, driving down prices, and reducing the number of farms and farmers overall, further weakening the social fabric and regional infrastructures of farming as an inherited, learned way of life (Hurt 1994:325).

Farmers and their allies responded to the paradoxes of industrial agriculture in a number of ways over the course of the twentieth century. As we will see in the case study at the end of this chapter, farmers’ organizations continued to provide a network of support and education, increasingly drawing on the resources of federal and state government. The long debate over who should control food prices, availability, and quality—questions dating back to the earliest days of the market economy—reached a new stage during the agricultural depression of the 1920s and 1930s. As the market foundered and the problems of overproduction became clearer, farmers became more willing (if not always happy) to accept an expanded role for the federal government in regulating the supply and pricing of agricultural commodities (Hurt 1994:268). Manufacturers, consumers, and many policy-makers continued to urge that farming be made *more* efficient and productive as a way of lowering the American cost of living and making U.S. farmers more competitive in international markets (DuPuis 2002:71). But federal farm policies of the Depression years—for example, the Agricultural Adjustment Act of 1933, which put crop quotas and other marketing controls in place—remained in force for much of the remainder of the century as a way to cushion the effects of the continuing cycle of expansion, consolidation, and competition for those farmers who were

able to remain on the land (Hurt 1994:287). As the century went on, federal policy also increasingly addressed the health and safety concerns of chemical pesticides and fertilizers, although this area of regulation was—and remains—an area of contention as well.

A quite different response arose from a new generation of agrarian reformers and intellectuals who laid the groundwork for much of the present-day “alternative” agricultural sector. Among the earliest of these was Rudolf Steiner (1861-1925), an Austrian mystic, educator, and philosopher who had been propounding an ambitious program for moral, spiritual, and social renewal since the 1890s. Steiner’s philosophy was built largely on the foundation of earlier nineteenth-century German Romantic artists and thinkers, like Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, who were concerned about how modern urbanism and industrialism were fragmenting the realms of human and spiritual experience and alienating individuals from their labor, from one another, and from their physical environments (Ullrich 1994:1-2). By the 1920s, Steiner’s own efforts to reunite spirit, mind, body, and environment had generated a wide range of organizations, projects, and schools of thought, including the spiritual philosophy known as anthroposophy, the Waldorf educational system, the Camphill movement in special education, and the “movement art” of eurythmy.

In 1924, the year before his death, Steiner was invited to give a series of eight lectures on agriculture in Silesia, then in German-occupied Poland, for a group of farmers who were troubled by the decline in soil and livestock fertility after the use of chemical fertilizers. They hoped that Steiner could point them toward a different approach (Moore 1997). Steiner’s lectures laid out the principles of what became biodynamic agriculture: the earth—and the individual farm—was a holistic, living organism whose ecology reflected that of the entire cosmos and whose operations could only be fully understood by farmers who took a radically holistic view of all aspects of their farms, from the biological to the social and economic. An important facet of this approach was its avoidance of imported nutrients; Steiner thought a farm should be a closed, self-supporting loop, able to regenerate itself through its own functioning. In many ways, he was harking back to the Austrian peasant farmers he had known during his rural boyhood, whom he saw as holding “a kind of cultural philosophy” about farming that made them more deeply knowledgeable about their farms than modern scientists were (Moore 1997). Rather than advocating a simplistic return to pre-modern society or agriculture, though, Steiner was fully “progressive” in envisioning a synthesis of scientific and spiritual knowledge that he saw as representing a more sophisticated mode of human

thought and living. Steiner's ideas about agriculture appealed to a minority of farmers who were already rejecting the industrial model of farming that was increasingly the norm in both Europe and North America, an idea that had particular resonance after the industrialized slaughter of World War I. Just nine years after Steiner's lectures, his follower Ehrenfried Pfeiffer visited Spring Valley, New York to consult with a group of anthroposophist farmers there, and New York State quickly became a key center for biodynamic agriculture in the U.S. (Threefold Educational Center).

Steiner's adherents were by no means the only ones looking for workable alternatives to industrial agriculture, although they were among the earliest. Some of the others also looked to peasant farmers as a model for small-scale food production, much as Thomas Jefferson had done a hundred and fifty years earlier.¹ One of these was Albert Howard (1873-1947), a British agronomist deeply influenced by eastern spiritualities and peasant farm practices from India, where he worked for thirty years. Howard's ideas about soil regeneration, closed-loop farming, and the importance of compost became cornerstones of the organic agriculture movement, which gained in visibility in the U.S. when it was championed by J.I. Rodale (1898-1971). Rodale, the son of a Lower East Side grocer, bought a farm in Emmaus, Pennsylvania in 1940 so that he could experiment with Howard's ideas. He also started a magazine, first named *Organic Farming* and then *Organic Gardening and Farming* when it became clear that there were not enough farmers interested in the new (or rediscovered) methods to keep the publication afloat financially. Small-scale farmers and gardeners constituted the bulk of its readership until the late 1960s, when many Americans embraced the "back to the land" and "whole food" movements. J.I. Rodale and his son Robert, along with writers like Wendell Berry and Francis Moore Lappé and other publications like the *Whole Earth Catalog*, became countercultural icons in this era (Belasco 1993:70-75; Levenstein 1993:160-64).

The growth of the organic farming and food movement was a direct response to the sweeping changes in American food production and processing in the twentieth century. Particularly after World War II, industrial farming made food increasingly cheap and plentiful, while the emergence of the supermarket and the fast food franchise recreated regional and national networks of food supply and consumption. Chemical

¹ Warren Belasco (1989:69-70) points out that intellectual fascination with decentralized agrarian societies has a long history, pre-dating Jefferson. Particularly but not exclusively during the nineteenth century, reformers, social scientists, and others were drawn to the idea of tight-knit, *gemeinschaft* (or community-oriented) social formations, often in reaction to their own anxieties about the rapidly-changing modern world.

and packaging innovations created an entirely new world of products, including frozen foods and highly refined and processed items (Levenstein 1993:109-10). But as this system of production and supply became more entrenched, it created new problems for both producers and consumers. Farmers, as we have already seen, found themselves increasingly relegated to the role of supplying an industrial raw material for a declining number of ever-larger and more consolidated food-processing companies, while consumers periodically became alarmed about the effects of what they were eating, particularly fats, sugars, and the residues of pesticides like DDT (Levenstein 1993:16-19, 135-36, 177-81). What Belasco calls the “counter-cuisine” of the 1960s and 1970s reacted against these trends by emphasizing peasant cuisines in the same way that agrarian reformers valorized peasant farming, creating internal contradictions in what was (and remains) still a largely middle-class movement (Belasco 1993:4, 44; Levenstein 1993:165). If there was a Jeffersonian quality to much of the organic food movement, it could also be very reminiscent of Jacksonian rhetoric about the dangers of concentrated capital: as Harvey Levenstein notes, “The essence of the New Left critique of modern American society harked back to one of the original appeals of modern liberalism—the attack on the large corporation as an undemocratic, socially irresponsible force corrupting American society” (1993:178). Some proponents of organic farming envisioned a Jeffersonian nation of small independent farms and businesses, while others took a more directly anti-capitalist approach. As with questions about agriculture in general, there were almost as many points of view as there were participants in the debate (Belasco 1993:76).

Concern about the loss of farms, farmland, and farm skills, along with the growing divide between people with first-hand experience of farming and those without it, contributed to a third set of changes arising in the realms of historic preservation, tourism, and conservation. Each of these sectors contains its own complex contradictions and tensions—for example, the tension between utilitarianism and “wilderness” approaches within the conservation movement (Wallach 1991), or the problem of tourist sites becoming so popular that visitors overwhelm the natural or historic attractions they have come to see (Chambers 2000, especially Chapters Two and Three). There is not space here for a full exploration of their many intersecting strands in the middle decades of the twentieth century, but some consideration of these developments is important because of the ways that they have helped shape the interlocking fields within which Martin Van Buren NHS was created and in which it continues to operate.

The tourist industry continued to develop into an increasingly important economic sector and a way for Americans to experience their vast nation in all its complexity. National parks and other historic and scenic sites were of course an important part of this development. The creation of the national park system in 1916 marked a new era of domestic tourism that was at first focused on natural wonders but later on more explicitly historic sites as well.² Farm vacations remained popular until the 1920s and 1930s, and received a powerful boost from the popularization of the car in the first three decades of the twentieth century (Schaffer 2001:130-68). Regional automobile touring was particularly popular during the Depression, when Americans responded to general feelings of deprivation by using their cars even more than they had previously (McCarthy 2007:96).

But by the middle of the century, automobile tourists were seeking out the new motor cabins and motels along the nation's growing highway system rather than boarding at family farms (Belasco 1979, especially Chapter Six). The added value of a small working farm's "old time" ambience was no longer enough to make up the difference in its profit margin. Farms were less and less able to compete if they remained small in size, relied heavily on muscle rather than mechanical power, or sold their products primarily in the local area or the immediate region. Increasing governmental regulation in response to health and safety concerns—for example, the 1924 requirement that all milk be pasteurized—also meant that farmers needed additional capital and equipment to meet new standards (DePuis 2002:81). A few latter-day "gentleman farmers"—like journalist and screenwriter Louis Bromfield, who started a grass-based farm at Malabar Farm in Ohio in 1938—could afford to showcase non-industrial methods as a statement about what they thought was wrong with modern industrial agriculture. But although Malabar and other "alternative" farms, including those in the organic and biodynamic realms, very often invoked peasant, indigenous, and traditional farming techniques, they still represented only a tiny fringe of the food sector, and they had not yet begun to mobilize notions of "heritage" as part of their marketing of their products. By the middle of the twentieth century, a much larger gap had opened between "real" farms—those that were

² The NPS's shift into historic preservation and interpretation is well documented by Mackintosh 1986 and Denise Meringolo, *Museums, Monuments, and Parks: Toward a Genealogy of Public History* (University of Massachusetts Press, in press), while the creation and expansion of the overall system is chronicled in Barry Mackintosh, *The National Parks: Shaping the System* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1991), Harlan D. Unrau and G. Frank Williss, *Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s* (Denver Service Center, National Park Service, 1983), and many other sources.

actually attempting to survive in current agricultural markets—and those embracing older methods and the values that had historically been associated with them (Stoll 2002:212).

As this gap widened, more historic sites dedicated to farming appeared on the commemorative landscape, helping to reinforce the association of small-scale farming with the past. Historic farms and rural villages, often underwritten by the well-to-do just as many model farms had been, became increasingly popular; Henry Ford's Greenfield Village in Dearborn, Michigan was created in 1929, and pharmaceutical magnate Eli Lilly's Conner Prairie in Indiana in 1934. Some of the older model or alternative farms themselves were themselves shifting out of active agricultural production and becoming sites of representation or recreation. Edward Severin Clark's 1918 model dairy farm in Cooperstown was transformed into the Farmers' Museum in 1944, while at Shelburne Farms, the descendants of William Seward and Lila Vanderbilt Webb struggled for several decades to find a viable direction for the massive model estate, finally reconfiguring it in 1972 as a non-profit organization dedicated to conservation education. Shaker colonies throughout the northeast were also dwindling in size in this period, due to economic pressures and the lack of new converts to their celibate lifestyle, and many of their villages were preserved as tourist sites. The Mount Lebanon Shaker Village, which had supplied Martin Van Buren with seed potatoes in the nineteenth century, ceased to be active by 1947. Area Shaker enthusiasts turned it into a museum in 1960; its north barn, shown in Fig. 48, became a National Historic Landmark in 1965. Hancock Shaker Village, just over the Massachusetts border from Columbia county, became a museum in 1961.³

Concurrently, widespread interest in "living history" sparked the creation of many new and reinvented farm museums and villages around the U.S. A recurring interest in old skills and products spurred craft revivals in the 1930s and the 1960s-70s, along with the development of a booming market in antiques starting just after the turn of the century. But the living history trend that caught on by the 1960s and 1970s promised a more holistic or immersive experience of the past, often serving a complex mix of motives that ranged from pure game-playing and escapism to serious historical inquiry and research. In Massachusetts, Old Sturbridge Village opened as a living history village in 1946, with Plimoth Plantation following in the next year; older sites like Conner Prairie and Colonial Williamsburg increasingly adopted "first-person" costumed interpretation

³ As in previous chapters, information about these specific historic sites and farms is from their websites unless otherwise noted.

as well.⁴ Within the National Park Service, some parks incorporated living history farms as an aspect of their interpretation as early as the 1930s, and the practice became more commonplace within the system when NPS George Hartzog strongly promoted it during his 1964-1970 tenure. Hartzog saw the creation of living history farms at national parks as a way to overcome a style of interpretation that he saw as leading to “dead and embalmed” sites. Living historical farms, he wrote, were “entirely consistent with our emphasis on trying to interpret the peaceful and inspirationally creative contributions of this country to the field of history, to complement the great emphasis that has been placed so far on birthplaces and battlefields” (Hartzog 1966, quoted in Mackintosh 1986). Living history farms around the U.S. joined together in 1970 to form the Association of Living Historical Farms and Agricultural Museums (ALHFAM), which is still active today (Anderson 1983:38-39).

Living history sites became popular by offering what is now often termed “edutourism” or “edutainment”—accessible, hands-on learning experiences that combine discovery with leisure. Just as with contemporary forms of agritourism, their appeal comes largely from the general public’s growing lack of familiarity with the ways of life they depicted, particularly rural life. And while the intent of the interpreters is usually

⁴ There is an extensive and growing literature on these kinds of commemorative and past-oriented projects. For some sources on craft revivalism and antiques, see Jane Becker, *Selling Tradition: Appalachia and the Construction of an American Folk, 1930-1940* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), Briann Greenfield, *Out of the Attic: Inventing Antiques in Twentieth Century New England* (Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2009), and David Whisnant, *All that is Native and Fine: The Politics of Culture in an American Region* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1983). On living history and open air museum sites, see Richard Handler and Eric Gable, *The New History in an Old Museum: Creating the Past at Colonial Williamsburg* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1997), Scott Magelssen, *Living History Museums: Undoing History through Performance* (Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press, 2007), Sten Rentzhog, *Open Air Museums: The History and Future of a Visionary Idea* (Östersund: Jamtli Förlag, 2007), and Stephen Eddy Snow, *Performing the Pilgrims: A Study of Ethnohistorical Role-Playing at Plimoth Plantation* (Jackson, MS: University of Mississippi Press). On perceptions and policies relating to “living history” in the National Park Service, see Mackintosh 1986, particularly chapter 3.

Information about the various living history sites, organizations, and historic villages listed here comes from their respective websites and from Anderson 1983:37-57. Anderson, like many who have written on the topic, traces the living history village phenomenon to Skansen, a Swedish village assembled by folklorist and linguist Artur Hazelius in 1891 (Anderson 1983:17-21); other scholars have also noted that the large-scale expositions of the period, like the 1901 Pan American Exposition in Buffalo described in the previous chapter of this report, also served as prototypes in some important ways. Bella Dicks (2003:43-44) links the nineteenth-century development of photography and other visual technologies with the public’s search for more “authentic” and “immersive” environments in which to experience a sense of past realities.

to preserve and share skills, knowledge, and places from the past, the fact that such sites *are* framed as past has tended to relegate them to the realm of the obsolete in the minds of audiences. Even though muscle power and hand labor were still to be found on many small-scale farms well into the twentieth century, these have not been depicted at farm museums and living history sites as aspects of the modern, but as remnants of a receding past that was increasingly distant from visitors' own lives, particularly in the highly urbanized northeast. It is this distance that continues to create the "implied synergy" between farming and historic sites, discussed in Chapter One. For many Americans, all farming seems to be something past or at least distant, but small-scale family farms are particularly remote in time and experience, and any representation of this type of farming thus takes on a nostalgic hue when it is encountered at a historic site.

The development of the American conservation movement during the twentieth century further reinforced this separation. A conservation ethos had begun to emerge in the late nineteenth century, prompted by concerns about the environmental, economic, and social effects of industrial capitalism and the practices associated with it—including agricultural practices. Conservationists gained tremendous ground, literally and metaphorically, during the Depression years, when federal and state governments institutionalized conservation goals and utilized workers from the Civilian Conservation Corps and other New Deal programs to create parks and reserves throughout the country. Many of these included former farm properties that were judged to be "submarginal." This approach to conservation took land out of cultivation, based on the argument that it had been "farmed out" or was not fertile enough in the first place to be productive at the level required to succeed in the ever more competitive and consolidated agricultural sector. Not everyone agreed with the federal government's assessment—one critic wrote in 1939 that "Little, if any, of the land in the Great Plains is 'submarginal' in the sense that it is not adapted to agriculture of some type under proper conditions of tenure and size of holdings" (Gray 1939:123)—but amid the economic stresses of the Depression years, many farmers had no other good options but to accept the federal offers of purchase.⁵

⁵ For a case study of dissent over the "submarginal" designation in a neighboring state, see Sara M. Gregg, "Can We 'Trust Uncle Sam'? Vermont and the Submarginal Lands Project, 1934-1936," *Vermont History* 69 (Winter/Spring 2001):201-221. For a study of one national park created in this way, see Leah Glaser, "Administrative History of Hopewell Furnace National Historic Site, Elverson, PA" (Washington: National Park Service and Organization of American Historians, 2005, especially pp. 14-16). On the relationship of the NPS to New Deal programs overall, see Harlan D. Unrau and G. Frank Williss, *Expansion of the National Park Service in the 1930s* (Denver Service Center, National Park Service, 1983).

As with the early nineteenth century perception of the decline of agriculture in the old northeast, changes in the ever-expanding commercial markets prompted a negative reassessment of farms and farming methods that were not necessarily obsolete, but were definitely more appropriate for smaller-scale production and marketing.

Early to mid-twentieth century conservation practices, then, focused more on repairing the perceived damage from farming and other human exploitation rather than maintaining older farms or farm practices themselves. The following chapter will show how more holistic approaches to conservation developed later in the century, based on concepts like “cultural landscapes” and “ecology” that incorporated social as well as “natural” and built aspects of preserved places. But by the time those tools began to be generally used in conservation and preservation, the gap between past and present farming techniques, and between real and represented farms, was already deep and wide.

Lindenwald as a Part-Time Farm, 1917-1930

The broader changes taking place in American agriculture affected the farm at Lindenwald in indirect but important ways, beginning with its sale to a wealthy New York family who farmed more as an avocation than as a way of life. By 1917, Adam Wagoner was in his 70s. His only brother, Freeman, was institutionalized, and Adam and his wife Libbie had no living children. Next door, his widowed cousin Elmer continued to live at “Myrtlelawn,” the nineteenth-century home that the Wagoners had built, but Elmer’s daughter Imogene and son-in-law Lew Van Alstyne and their young family had moved away from the old Dingman house next door. Lew had been farming all of the Dingman/Wagoner/Lindenwald fields for some time, the sole younger farmer still working these properties. But it appears that he and his wife, like many farmers, were in search of land of his own, and by 1917, they bought a farm of about 200 acres on Muitzeskill Road in Stuyvesant, just north and west of Kinderhook Village, where Lew and Imogene raised their young family (Collier 1914:71). It is not clear whether Lew continued to farm the Lindenwald and surrounding fields by 1917; given the distances involved, it seems unlikely.

Once again, then, Lindenwald was looking for a buyer. This was not the first time that it would be purchased by someone from outside the county—William Paulding and George Wilder had been outsiders, too—but it was the first time that outsiders did not come from within the circle of political and social acquaintance surrounding the Van Burens and other old area families. It was also the first time that the new owners did not want—or, in the beginning, need—to have the farm functioning as a viable operation. The

purchaser was Dr. Bascom Birney of Yonkers, and the circumstances of the sale reflect the way that Columbia County's real estate market was beginning to shift toward second home-owners, often from New York City. In 1914, Adam and Libbie Wagoner sold the old Dingman house to Walter and Helen Sheppert; Sheppert was a stockbroker from the city.⁶ Birney was a friend who came to visit with his wife Grace and two daughters, Marion and Clementine, who were about the same age as the Shepperts' teenaged daughter. The Shepperts noted that Martin Van Buren's old farm was for sale and open for viewing, and Birney went to see it with the thought of buying it and then re-selling it as a speculation—"That's what he did then," his grandson Bill deProse noted in a 2010 interview. "But Grace, his wife, she wanted to keep it." So the Birneys ended up first spending vacations at the property and then moving there in 1919 (Searle 2004:85). The Birneys had the money to travel widely, and Lindenwald was just one base among many (Clementine's favorite pet as a young woman was a monkey brought back from a family trip to Cuba, and when she was sent to a private high school in Georgia, the family moved there for the winter so that Grace would not be lonely for her daughter).



Fig. 49. Bascom and Grace Birney. (Martin Van Buren NHS, deProse collection)

⁶ Variations on the spelling of this name (Shepert/Sheppert/Sheppard) appear in records and documents relating to the property and the family. Information about the 1914 sale is from Caryn Moore's files; information about the family's relationship with the Birneys is from these files and from interviews with William deProse and Jeanne deProse Akers.



Fig. 50. Marion and Clementine Birney on the front steps of Lindenwald, probably early 1920s. (Martin Van Buren NHS, deProsse collection)

Both Bascom and Grace Birney came from well-to-do and multi-talented Midwestern families. The grandson of an Irish immigrant, Bascom was born in Illinois in 1858.⁷ His grandson Bill recalls that Bascom owned a convalescent home in Illinois, and a 1933 *New York Times* article notes that he was the former chief surgeon of the Chicago, Milwaukee & St. Paul Railroad, although Bill's sister Jeanne deProsse Akers noted that her grandfather "mainly clipped coupons"—that is, he was wealthy enough that he was able to live off his investments and properties. Bascom's wife Grace, née Blanchard, was one of five daughters of a socially prominent family, also in Illinois, according to her granddaughter. Bascom and his brother Charles both married Blanchard daughters and the two couples remained close for many years, traveling extensively together and visiting one another in Bradenton, Florida, where Charles bought property around 1900, and at Lindenwald and elsewhere (Jeanne heard that her Uncle Charlie helped Bascom to put a slate roof on the mansion at some point). Before Bascom married Grace Blanchard, though, he had had another wife and family, of whom his daughter Clementine was

⁷ The Birney family tree was accessed online at <http://www3.sympatico.ca/ken.birney/john-hugh.htm> on July 14, 2010. The site appears to be non-functional as of October 21, 2010.

unaware until she was in her late teens. Grace died of cancer in 1922, and Bascom embarked on a series of marital and financial adventures and midadventures that ultimately left Lindenwald in Clementine's hands. The outlines of these escapades are murky, but they seem to involve an acquisitive third wife (whose marriage to Birney may have been annulled more than once), an attempt to shelter his property and considerable stock holdings by transferring them to his daughters, the 1930 arrest of his daughter Marion in San Francisco on a charge of absconding with her father's fortune, and Bascom's secret marriage in 1933, when he was 76, to a public speaking teacher who was, according to the *New York Times*, the "daughter of a prominent Southern family." When he died in 1940, his body was brought back to Lindenwald, where it "laid in state" in the front hallway, according to his granddaughter.⁸ By the time the dust had settled after his misadventures in the 1930s, Clementine was left holding the deed to the Lindenwald property, while Marion had relocated permanently to California.⁹

Farming was in no way a full-time interest or occupation for Bascom Birney, but he does appear to have embraced it at least to some extent. Bill deProse noted, "My grandfather had a lot of money, and when he bought Lindenwald in 1917, he bought a Fordson tractor, everything you could think of that would go with it. Three types of harrows, hay loaders, tedders [hay rakes], all kinds of stuff." The Schneck family seems to have performed much of the farm work around Lindenwald and to have lived in the farm cottage behind the mansion; the 1925 state census lists the U.S.-born Lewis Schneck (46) and his Canadian wife Mary (44), along with their nephew Walter Coleman, aged 11. While Bascom Birney essentially dabbled at farming, though, his daughter Marion seems to have taken it up with far greater enthusiasm and perhaps a good deal of knowledge. "I don't think he was the farmer," his granddaughter Jeanne deProse Akers notes. "It was Marion who really liked to farm there. . . . He was just a landed gentry, he

⁸ Bascom Birney's adventures of the 1930s can be deduced from two short *New York Times* articles. "Miss Birney Surrenders; Faces Court on \$63,000 Bond Theft Charge in San Francisco" appeared on June 10, 1930, and "Dr. Bascom Birney Weds; Surgeon, 76, Is Married to Virginia Girl on Coast" appeared on Nov. 2, 1933 on p. 25 of the Social News section. Jeanne and Bill deProse's recollections in 2010 interviews confirm the outlines of these stories and add a few additional details. The 1930 article identifies the eldest Birney daughter as "Miriam," but Jeanne and Bill deProse confirm her name was Marion.

⁹ In 1922, the deed to the Lindenwald property was transferred into Marion's name, and she held it for several years before it was transferred to Clementine around 1930. The details of and reasons for these transfers remain unclear, but it seems likely that they were related to Bascom's marital and financial difficulties.

didn't really get in there and get his hands dirty. But Marion did." Both Marion (born in 1900) and Clementine (born 1903) were unusually self-confident and forward-looking young women who seemed to embody the ideal of the so-called "new woman" of the early twentieth century (Patterson 2005). Both girls apparently attended Yale University, studying law and fine art;¹⁰ Marion eventually became a landscape artist, working for the Municipal Park Commission and later contributing to the creation of Golden Gate Park in San Francisco. According to Marion's niece and nephew, she also studied botany and other agriculture-related topics, and may have served as a "farmerette"—perhaps in one of the government-sponsored farm programs—during World War I.¹¹ A photo taken sometime after 1917 shows Bascom and Marion riding the family's then-new Fordson tractor during haying, with various other farm laborers riding behind on the hay wagon and a second horse-drawn hay rake, reflecting the persistence of muscle-power on the farm even after the dawn of the tractor age (Fig. 51).

¹⁰ Although Yale did not admit women as undergraduates until 1969, some women studied as graduate students as early as 1876 (<http://www.yale.edu/about/history.html>). Jeanne and Bill deProse were not sure on what basis the sisters enrolled in classes at Yale.

¹¹ Bill deProse noted that his aunt Marion studied farming and botany "somewhere along the way" between New York and her eventual home in San Francisco. His sister Jeanne said that Marion "was a farmerette during World War I, and...she did [that] at Cornell." Bill inherited some of her books on chicken farming "and all that jazz" which he recently passed along to Marion's son.

In terms of Marion's possible involvement in a government-sponsored farm labor program during the First World War, it is not clear what this might have been. There was a Farm Cadet program in Columbia County, as in other parts of the country, but research at the State Archives turned up only two students at the high school in Valatie who were enrolled in it, and none from Kinderhook schools. Marion Birney's name does not appear in these records. The two Farm Cadets from Valatie were Neva Clawson, who worked for her father on his farm doing general tasks and helping with housework, haying, and other work, and Roy Edward Cunningham, who worked for a Kinderhook farmer named C.E. Clapp under the supervision of farm foreman John Keil. Cunningham wrote a detailed narrative of his experiences as a final report in December 1918, noting how he had driven horses, helped to cultivate "the finest and best corn in our section" of the county, and worked in the farm's "fine young orchards" of apple, cherry, pear, peach, currant, and gooseberry trees and bushes, which had been sprayed three or four times a season with lead arsenate and other products to keep pests and blight away. At the end of his service, Keil offered the young man steady work on the farm. But despite his sense that working there had helped the country, taught him something, and been good for his health, Cunningham took a job in a munitions plant which offered higher pay, following the continued shift away from agricultural work in this period. See "Enlistment papers and reports of the New York State Boys' *Working Reserve* (Farm Cadet Program), 1918 New York. Education Dept. Division of Agricultural and Industrial Education. A 3112-77, Box 2. New York State Archives.



Fig. 51. The Birney family and helpers haying, c. 1917-1922; Bascom Birney, his daughter Marion, and possibly one of the Schneck family are riding on the Fordson tractor, with men who are probably hired laborers, possibly including Lewis Schneck, on the hay wagon and horse-drawn wagon behind it. (Martin Van Buren NHS, deProsse collection)

With the Birney family, then, and particularly with Marion and her sister Clementine, we can see the movement of professional people, part-time farmers, city-dwellers, and those with an interest in the fields of art, design, and social service, onto one of Columbia County's older farm properties. Around the neighborhood, some other farms that had been owned by Dutch and other area families for many generations were also passing into other ownerships as the twentieth century went on. At the heavily-mortgaged Van Alen homestead north of Lindenwald, Maria "Ritie" Van Alen Herrick continued to live with her children, including her son Daniel Webster Herrick and his young wife Edith (Fig. 52). Ritie died in 1935, and the foreclosure proceedings that the family had been fighting off for many years resumed, ending in a public auction in 1938. Another Van Alen descendant bought the house and surrounding 100 acres, but not because he wanted to farm it. William "Sammy" Van Alen was a Philadelphia-based architect with an interest in historic preservation, and his purchase of the property was out of concern for saving a "most unusual" representative of a colonial Dutch farmhouse (Waite 2001:13-15; see Fig. 53). It took many years of effort and negotiation by preservationists and others before the fate of the house was finally decided; it was

eventually purchased by the Columbia County Historical Society and opened as a house museum in 1968 (Waite 2001:37). It stands today as an exceptional architectural example of the early Dutch period, but it has long since been separated from the county's working farm economy.



Fig. 52. Daniel Webster Herrick and his wife Edith (later Stanley), probably in the 1910s. Herrick died in 1917. (courtesy of Caryn Moore)

Across the Old Post Road from Lindenwald, Henry and Jane Dunspaugh sold the farm they had bought from Jacob Evarts nearly sixty years earlier, but in this case it went back into the ownership of one of Kinderhook's oldest families—the Hoeses, who were interrelated many times over to the Van Burens, Van Alens, and others. Ernest P. Hoes, who bought the property in 1919, was a New York lawyer and the son of a local history buff who had had a deep interest in colonial Dutch history and heritage.¹² Ernest Hoes lived in Yonkers, and it is tempting to speculate that he may have had some connection

¹² According to his *New York Times* obituary, Pierre Van Buren Hoes (1844-1904), Ernest Hoes's father, was a member of the Holland Society and the Yonkers Historical Society. He trained for law but never practiced. He wrote for newspapers and was working on a history of Kinderhook when he died there in 1904.

there with Bascom and Grace Birney and/or Walter and Helen Sheppert (perhaps that is how one or both couples came to be familiar with Kinderhook). Hoes renamed the Dunspaugh farm *De Bouwerie* (*bouwerie* or *bouwerij* is Dutch for “farm”) and made many improvements to the property, drilling a new well in 1920, and building a new barn and a substantial addition on the north side of the house in 1921 (see Fig. 17 in Chapter Four). He also shifted the farm’s production very largely into apple-growing.



Fig. 53. The Luykas Van Alen house in April 1934, shortly before the last resident Van Alen descendant died. Source: Historic American Buildings Survey, Survey No. HABS NY-6102. Library of Congress Call No. HABS NY,11-KINHO,1-1. (Library of Congress, “Built in America” collection)

When Ernest Hoes died, his widow held the deed for some years. It was eventually inherited by their two sons, John and Peter (Ernest clearly continued the old Dutch naming system, christening his son Peter Van Buren Hoes after his own paternal grandfather). John sold his half to his brother and moved to Cooperstown; Peter continued to run the farm until 1955. He undertook more renovations to the old farmhouse, hiring an architect who was knowledgeable about Dutch colonial buildings and incorporating elements of Greek Revival style. He also appears to have had a proprietary attitude toward the neighborhood’s history, including that of Lindenwald; Jeanne deProsse Akers recalled him arriving unannounced at their home to give someone a tour, perhaps considering that as a descendant of the old Kinderhook Dutch families he had a kind of family interest in Van Buren’s mansion. Like the deProsses and most

other area farmers, Peter Hoes was a member of the local Grange. He continued to farm *De Bouwerie* as an orchard, selling the fruit mostly to New York City. “Their farm was all apples,” Bill deProse recalled in a 2010 interview.

That field out front, I don’t recall them ever planting anything that was on the rise between 9H and the house other than hay. I worked for him one year picking apples. . . And one day I was picking real fast, and two of them, he and the guy [who] worked with him . . . and the two of them came walking down the path where I had been picking and discovered it was me, [and] we had a little discussion about me grabbing the apples and pulling them too hard and too tight, and [they were] bruised and they couldn’t sell them.

During the Second World War, with labor scarce, Hoes enlisted members of his extended family, including their children, to help harvest his apples; his niece Katrina, John’s daughter, recalled helping out with the 1943 harvest (Worsfold 2009:8-13).

Across Kinderhook Creek, members of the Van Alstyne family also continued to farm their land, although as the century went on, they, too, sold their property to others. Edward Van Alstyne died in 1918, leaving Sunnyside to his son James, who moved with his wife and children from Kinderhook Village to the farm. James in turn left it to his children, who continued to farm it into the 1960s with the help of day laborers and farmworkers who lived in the estate’s old tenant farmhouses. The day-workers included Seymour Magee, who still owned the farm just north of the old Dingman properties. According to Mary and Dorothy Kennett, whose family bought the property in 1965, Seymour and another local man named Bill Sweet did “a million jobs” on the farm, including machine and building maintenance, woodworking, groundskeeping, gardening, taking care of animals—“just upkeep—[fixing] anything that could break!” Seymour no longer farmed his own property after his parents died, but rented it to other farmers. He seems to have worked for other farms besides Sunnyside; Bob Van Alstyne, son of Lew and Imogene (Wagoner) Van Alstyne, recalls him working at the Leggett farm in Kinderhook. Mostly, though, according to Bob, Seymour “just roamed the countryside” taking photographs and searching for Indian artifacts. Tom Kilcer, who farms the Sunnyside fields today, speculates that Seymour simply did not have the capital to upgrade his own farming equipment to the point where his farm could remain profitable:

He had very old, old equipment. Most of his equipment was antique. The small engine club got a lot of his equipment [when he died] simply because it was antique already. I mean, these tractors were 1930s, something like

that. And that would have been when his father was still alive that he had gotten that.

Like others from the area's older farming economy, Seymour Magee remained connected to agriculture but in a more and more tenuous and part-time way.

The deProsses at Lindenwald: Farming From Necessity, 1930-1946

Lindenwald was vacant in the latter part of the 1920s. Bascom Birney was living elsewhere with his new wife, Marion had moved to California, and Clementine, who met a young man named Bill deProsse while attending high school in Hudson briefly, had married him in 1925 and moved to New Jersey. DeProsse came from a family of professionals and educators. His father Victor, a German architect and son of a classical musician, had emigrated to the U.S. and married a free-spirited teacher who left New York State to work in San Francisco. Victor worked for the U.S. government as a project manager for new post office construction, and his children were raised in places that reflected his travels: Biloxi, Mississippi, then Hartford, Connecticut, and finally Hudson, where Victor decided he had had enough traveling (and perhaps enough of inspecting others' architectural designs, as he set up his own architecture office in Hudson).¹³

Bill deProsse studied engineering at Brown University and seemed on course to follow a professional career—certainly he was not intending to be a farmer, even temporarily. After he and Clementine married, the couple moved to New Jersey, where Bill had gotten a job with a paint company, and where their daughter Jeanne was born. A second job took the family to Providence, Rhode Island, where their son Bill was born, but then the Depression intervened, and things “dried up for them in Providence,” according to Bill, Jr. “They decided to give up and move lock stock and barrel,” Bill, Jr. recalls. “They had sixty dollars and a Model T Ford!” It appears that Clementine's sister Marion was still holding the deed to Lindenwald, but around 1930 it was transferred to Clementine, who decided that the old farm represented her family's best refuge in economic hard times.

For full-time farmers, the depression had already been underway for a decade, and by the early 1930s, many agricultural commodity prices were in free-fall (Hurt

¹³ For a description of the work Victor did in Hudson, see Larry Gobrecht, “National Register of Historic Places nomination, U.S. Post Office — Hudson” (November 1986) (accessed online at http://www.oprhp.state.ny.us/hpimaging/hp_view.asp?GroupView=1465). Other information about the deProsse family is from 2010 interviews with Bill deProsse and Jeanne deProsse Akers.

1994:287).¹⁴ But the very collapse of much of the farm economy also appears to have created small opportunities for some in Columbia County who were trying to acquire land or to find a way to grow food for their families and for small-scale local sale. In a sense, the Depression of the 1930s seems to have temporarily re-regionalized and re-localized agriculture, even while, paradoxically, it prompted federal farm policies that led to the expansion of large-scale commercial farming, as we will see later in this chapter. For the deProsses, farming at Lindenwald was something they did out of necessity, and it appears that while they were able to keep body and soul together in the 1930s and into the 1940s, they were never very successful at it. “They were not lucky farmers, to say the least,” Bill, Jr. remarks. Bob Van Alstyne, whose father Lew had been farming the adjacent fields in the early part of the century, refers to what they did as “poor farming.” Bill, Jr. remembers, “Father was not a farmer, and it was tough. And while he had every piece of equipment imaginable [thanks to Bascom Birney’s earlier purchases]. . . it was difficult for my father to get it all nailed down. . . He did pretty well, though.” Jeanne deProsse Akers recalls,

Dad and Mom did farm, and that was really something for both of them, because neither my father nor my mother had ever really farmed. Mom had been born with a silver spoon in her mouth and there was always plenty of help, you know, and she never really had to do anything. She didn’t know how to cook when they first got married. But Dad was pretty handy.

One thing that helped the deProsses was a network of neighbors who were more knowledgeable about farming. The Engels, who had a farm two or three miles south on 9H, were longtime friends dating back to Clementine’s high school days in Hudson. Another family, the Gansens, moved into one of the gatehouses for a time when Mr. Gansen lost his job as a mechanic in Kinderhook, perhaps providing some additional know-how to help with the running of the farm. The very size of the mansion was a resource that the deProsses shared in straitened circumstances: “If someone in the family was having a rough time,” Bill, Jr. remembers, “they moved in with us.” Labor was bartered in various ways: friends and relatives living for free in the gatehouse or other parts of the property could help on the farm, while Bill, Jr. remembers his father helping to sweep out the local grocery store as a way to pay for the staples the family couldn’t produce for themselves. Clementine also found other sources of income, including

¹⁴ Cotton and hogs sold for 3 cents a pound in 1932, wheat for 12 cents a bushel, cattle for \$4.14 hundredweight on some American markets (Hurt 1994:287).

providing foster care for orphans from Hudson, using the mansion as a convalescent home, and working as a seamstress, cook, governess, and nurse (Searle 2004:89). They also sometimes rented fields to other farmers, particularly after they stopped actively farming themselves by the 1940s; during the 1930s, they even rented the black hay barn to moonshiners (Searle 2004:88).

The deProsses' farming activities at Lindenwald are already documented in detail in Searle's Cultural Landscape Report (2004: 85-106). For their own use and for local sale, the deProsses grew market vegetables like cauliflower, melons, potatoes, cabbages, and corn. They also grew hay on the upper field next to the carriage barn. Martin Van Buren's orchards had ceased to be very productive by this time, but Bill Sr. and his father Victor, who lived with the family for two or three years, would roam that corner of the property and pick up windfalls to sell to Risedorph's Bottling Company in Kinderhook. (Victor, a marksman, liked to hunt rabbits and birds in the old orchard, sometimes in the company of the deProsses' neighbor Seymour Magee.) Bill deProsse, Sr. did plant some peach trees in the field south of the mansion. Out of both conviction and necessity, the deProsses fertilized their soil using essentially the same methods that Martin Van Buren had used a century earlier. Bill, Jr. notes, "I know that we never used anything but manure, because number one, we couldn't afford it, and number two, it worked fine. And I suspect that it had been working fine for generations, because the earth was doing well... We had the whole set-up for that. Had a barn and a door to throw it out of and a manure-spreader down below." The deProsses belonged to the local Grange and Bill, Jr. occasionally worked for neighboring farmers, like Peter Hoes across the Old Post Road.

But the deProsses' time as farmers was temporary, and it ended when Bill, Sr. was able to get an engineering job in Albany. Once the deProsses stopped farming themselves, they leased the fields to local farmers Ray and Ed Meyer, who bought 166 acres—most of Van Buren's farm fields—from the family in 1946. The deProsses continued to live in the mansion until 1952, when Bill, Jr. went away to the Korean War and Jeanne married another Korean War veteran, Ned Akers. Clementine closed up the house in 1952 and moved to California, where she ran a church home for orphans. She and Bill, Sr. returned in 1955, but only briefly; in 1957, they sold the house and its 12.8 acre lot to Ken Campbell, a retired car dealer from Putnam County, New York. Campbell lived in the mansion until 1974, when Martin Van Buren National Historic Site was created.

Embracing the Market: Small Commercial Farmers

It may have been that the deProsses' neighbor Seymour Magee resisted going into debt to buy the new technologies and materials available to farmers as the twentieth century went on. But others in the area opted to try to keep up with those changes. This section will explore some of the options that farmers and farmworkers had within the changing farm economy of the middle decades of the century.

The tractor was one of the most important of the new innovations. Until it became widely available, the amount of work that could be done on a farm was limited by the draft power of horses and other animals (Olmstead and Rhode 2008:384). The great majority of American farms still relied on horses until around 1920, but the advent of Henry Ford's Fordson tractor in 1917 offered farmers the first widely-used, lightweight draft machine powered by an internal combustion engine. The advent of mass vehicle production lowered the price of the Fordson to \$750, although this still put it out of reach of many smaller farmers, in addition to the fact that it was too unwieldy for smaller fields. For those who could afford it and who were willing to take out fences and hedgerows to accommodate the new equipment, labor became considerably lighter, and the many costs and land requirements associated with keeping draft horses (each of which required the output of about five acres for fodder each year) also dropped. When International Harvester's even lighter, more all-purpose Farmall tractor came along in 1924, small truck and dairy farms had a vehicle more suited to their needs (Hurt 1994:244-48).

Other inventions of the early twentieth century simultaneously increased farmers' yields, shifted their labor patterns, and increased the amount of capital that was required in order to begin and continue farming on a profitable scale. The "advanced" dairying methods that Edward Van Alstyne had advocated through the Farmers' Institutes—purebred cattle, silage, cold storage, milking machines and pasteurization—were becoming requirements for farmers who wanted to sell to urban markets through the growing numbers of intermediary processors and wholesalers (DuPuis 2002:82; Olmstead and Rhode 2008:345-46, 351). Other new machinery also began to be seen as essential on farms that were trying to remain competitive and economically viable. With the advent of new food processing techniques and the adoption of silage as a method of storing animal feed over the winter, corn—a native crop that had been much less widely grown than oats, rye, and hay since the early nineteenth century—began to come to the fore again on northeastern farms (Olmstead and Rhode 2008:64-65). This was not the same corn that the Indians or the Dutch colonists had grown, however. By 1917, research

stemming from the land-grant college and agricultural experiment-station system had led to cross-breeding techniques that produced highly productive hybrid corn varieties that became available in the 1920s and widely used by the following decade (Hurt 1994:253). New chemical pesticides, herbicides, and fertilizers also came on the market, further increasing yields. While these innovations lightened farmers' load in many ways, they did not necessarily decrease the amount of farm labor needed, but altered and in some ways actually increased it—for example, by adding construction and maintenance costs for barns and silos, or by making dairying a year-round operation rather than a seasonal one whose demands could fit within the other duties of the farm women who had been principally responsible for it (Olmstead and Rhode 2008:331-32). Overall, farm labor requirements rose during this period (Olmstead and Rhode 2008:352), while the number of farms in the region began to drop precipitously, leaving those that were the most heavily capitalized and specialized (Hurt 1994:299; see Tables A and B in Chapter Six).

Some farmers around Lindenwald pursued this path into modernized, industrialized, highly commercialized farming. Among these were Bob Van Alstyne, Lew and Imogene's son, and his wife Dorothy. Bob grew up on Arrow Farm, the Stuyvesant farm purchased by his father sometime after the turn of the century, and learned to farm from his father. A family photo probably taken in the 1920s shows Lew working a field with a team of horses with one of his children wielding a hand tool alongside (Fig. 54), while a slightly later photo (Fig. 55) shows an adolescent Bob working in one of the farm's fields.



Fig. 54. Lew Van Alstyne and two of his young children work the fields at Arrow Farm in Stuyvesant, probably in the 1920s. (Permission of Robert and Dorothy Van Alstyne with assistance from Patricia Van Alstyne)



Fig. 55. Bob Van Alstyne cultivates a field at Arrow Farm, Stuyvesant, probably in the 1930s. (Permission of Robert and Dorothy Van Alstyne with assistance from Patricia Van Alstyne)

Just as Lew Van Alstyne had to purchase his farm rather than inheriting it from his family, Bob had to buy Arrow Farm—from his own father, a point he remarked on in a June 2010 interview.¹⁵ Like the bottomlands around Lindenwald, the fields on Muitzeskill Road were rich with Indian artifacts, giving the Van Alstyne farm its name (Pat Van Alstyne, Bob's daughter, recalled riding on the tractor with her father as a small child and seeing him stop very suddenly to pluck an arrowhead out of the soil). Arrow Farm focused mostly on grain crops, dairy, and beef cattle for much of Bob's tenure there, with some other livestock like pigs. He had a dairy herd of about 20 cows, and sold his milk to a small dairy operation in nearby Chatham, which sent a truck out each day for the cans of milk. Until about 1970, Bob also grew apples at an adjacent orchard that he also bought. He sold the fruit in a wide variety of places, including Risedorph's Bottling in Kinderhook, the Beechnut Company (makers of baby food and juice, among other

¹⁵ According to Pat Van Alstyne, her grandfather Lew remarried after his wife Imogene's death and moved with his second wife into a house in Valatie, where he died after suffering a stroke. Information about the Van Alstyne family and farm is from informal interviews with Bob and Pat Van Alstyne in June 2010, documented in fieldnotes.

products) in Canajoharie, Hudson Cold Storage, and outlets in western Massachusetts. Bob cut down the fruit orchard around 1970 and sold the trees for wood because, in his words, “it didn’t pay.” He also leased other nearby fields for growing corn and hay to feed his animals and farmed some of the Wagoner family fields owned by his sister Bea Shufelt on Old Post Road after the death of their grandfather Elmer Wagoner. In general, he was able to make what he termed a “pretty good living” from the farm.

Bob Van Alstyne’s closest friend among the local farmers was Ray Meyer, who had a reputation of being one of the most energetic and hard-working of commercial farmers around Kinderhook (he was “intense,” according to Kinderhook farmer Carl Williams, who worked for Meyer as a young man—“If you worked for him, you had to be sharp and really produce”). Born in Valatie, Meyer and his brothers bought, sold, and cultivated farmland around the Kinderhook area, and Ray also worked as a mechanic, general contractor, and developer. The Meyer brothers focused on a fairly small range of commercial vegetable crops, mostly sweet corn and potatoes, but also some market vegetables including cabbages, peppers, tomatoes, cucumbers, melons, and squash. At the peak of their production, with a total of four farms being cultivated, they had as much as 1,500 acres devoted to sweet corn alone (Searle 2004:107).

The Meyer brothers farmed in a way that maximized their production through mechanization, chemical pesticides (including DDT, Atrazine, and Chlordane), and imported nutrients, but they also achieved an impressive level of efficiency through sheer physical labor and stamina, as well as through their ability to turn their hands to many kinds of work, from construction to equipment repair. Pat Van Alstyne, Bob’s daughter, recalled a year when most farmers lost their apple crop when a late spring frost killed the blossoms, but Ray and his brothers laboriously hand-sprayed all of their trees to create a coating of ice that protected the blossoms and gave them the only apple harvest in the area that fall. Pat also said that Ray used to take his produce to various outlets, in search of the best price. One of these was the Capital District Coop in Menands, described in the case study at the end of this chapter; Meyer told researchers in 2002 that he also sold to supermarkets in Albany and Troy and to other places “up and down the east coast,” including to military camps as far away as Florida.¹⁶

¹⁶ This interview was conducted by Margaret C. Brown and Llerena Searle on May 6, 2002, very shortly before Ray’s death on July 11 of that year. A transcript is in the park files. Subsequent direct quotes from Ray Meyer in this report are from this interview.



Fig. 56. Arrow Farm on Muitzeskill Road in Stuyvesant, northwest of Kinderhook, owned by Lew and then Bob Van Alstyne for most of the 20th century; the trailers (later replaced by mobile homes) occupied by seasonal farmworkers are visible at lower center. (Permission of Robert and Dorothy Van Alstyne with assistance from Patricia Van Alstyne)

This “intense” work ethic had a high cost to the family: one brother was killed while driving a truck full of produce to New York City, and Ray’s brother Ed died in a tractor accident, which apparently influenced his sons’ decision not to follow in his footsteps as a farmer. In an interview shortly before he died, Ray Meyer himself seemed to acknowledge—in a somewhat indirect way—that the kind of farming he practiced also carried environmental costs. After asserting, rather defiantly, “I’m still living” despite his use of DDT and other products, he went on to note:

They say that DDT used to hurt you. I used to spit it out... You’d inhale so much, your mouth would get all cotton from it... The DDT did something to the young. Now since they stopped using DDT there’s a lot of crows around now. Never used to be a crow around. Now you see flocks of them. They claim it did something to the shell of the egg.

He also touched indirectly on some of the other consequences of highly mechanized and industrialized farming: “With the modern equipment and the technique today, and the hybrid seed, it’s overproduction,” he told interviewers. Like many commercial farmers, he did not deeply question the assumptions about efficiency that were making it difficult

for farmers to prosper, but on some level, he seemed aware of the contradictions in this approach to agriculture.

Starting in the 1940s, the Meyers' farming operations incorporated the fields at Lindenwald. The old Dutch field patterns, which had been in place for well over two centuries, were too small to accommodate the larger equipment that the Meyers used; as Ray put it, "The fields were small and those hedges had them all broke up. Today it's all big equipment." Over the years that he farmed the Lindenwald lands, Ray dug up the hedges and also burned down or otherwise demolished many of the older farm structures, such as the black hay barn on the lower terrace and the red carriage barn complex behind the farm cottage. The larger machines that this accommodated were expensive to buy, but for farmers with the capital to invest and the know-how to maintain them, this was a way to save on labor costs. As Ray put it in the 2002 interview, this way of farming was a "Lot less work. You can do it alone. You can really raise the whole crop alone, picking and all, with the big machines they have today." He noted that it took him just two days to harvest his entire crop of feed corn by himself.

The Meyers' approach to cultivating the Lindenwald soil was quite different from those who had farmed it previously. It could not have been more different from the "poor farming" done by the deProsse family, and the deProsses were in many ways dismayed by the changes, which "wreaked havoc on the outbuildings and the topography as we knew it," as Bill deProsse, Jr. noted in 1993 (Searle 2004:107). The deProsses had a sense of the importance of the history of the site, including its farm fields, and they were troubled by the erasure of that history through the consolidation of the smaller fields and the demolition of the older outbuildings. Bill reiterated this view in 2010:

I thought it was kind of a shame... We had, like I say, all the equipment, we had the big barns there, and the red barn down the bottom of the hill was a giant barn with hay-lofts and cows and all the machinery was kept in there. And that was a big barn. And as soon as Meyer bought it they burned it down. And they burned down the carriage barn, leveled that. And that to me was history. I didn't like it! They were strictly growing corn and selling it in New York.

A third farmer around Kinderhook who followed this direction in farming was Ray Czajkowski, son of Peter and Anna Czajkowski who had settled in Stuyvesant in the 1890s.¹⁷ The Czajowski farm was next to the Van Alstyne's Arrow Farm on Muitzeskill

¹⁷ As in Chapter Six, unless otherwise noted, information about the Czajkowski family is drawn from census records, a 2010 interview with Sally (Czajkowski) Jung, and family genealogical data compiled by Sally Jung and her cousin Leo Czajkowski.

Road in Stuyvesant. Peter and Anna had several sons, but only Ray went into full-time farming. Born in 1904, he was about 20 years older than Ray Meyer and Bob Van Alstyne, and over the course of his years as an active farmer, he appears to have shifted from Van Alstyne's modestly-scaled mixed farming toward Meyer's high-production, capital-intensive approach. Sally (Czajkowski) Jung recalls that during her childhood on the farm on Muitzeskill Road, her parents raised chickens, pigs, and cows (whom he referred to as "his girls"). Ray sold and delivered hay and straw to racetracks in Saratoga and elsewhere, and had a thriving market in sweet corn in New York City, where he sold to wholesalers who in turn supplied grocery stores, restaurants, and other outlets (in later years, the wholesale companies would send a refrigerated truck to Kinderhook to pick up a load of corn, saving Czajkowski the long drive to the city). As with apple-picking, the corn harvest involved large numbers of people, including family members. In Sally Jung's recollection, "The men would pick it, the ladies would pack it. . . And Daddy always insisted on three or four extra ears just in case there's a bug in one."



Fig. 57. This photo from the 1960s or 1970s shows one of the Lindenwald fields during Ray Meyer's tenure, with a spraying rig and silo in the background. (Permission of Robert and Dorothy Van Alstyne with assistance from Patricia Van Alstyne)

In the early years, Czajkowski farmed using horses, preferring them to machines even after a horrific experience in which a team of young horses ran away while he was

tangled in the harness. But he seems to have recognized machinery as the way of the future, and he began buying specialized equipment that most area farmers did not have. His daughter Sally described how he hired himself and his crew out to other farms:

He did the farming for other farmers with the cutting of hay and straw and whatnot. And he had a threshing machine, a big monstrous thing, and a baler to bale hay. And he had the tractors and the horses, first it was horses, and he would go to the farmer's place with his men and do all the work. So he did that for years...



Fig. 58. The large barn at "The Gables" in the 1950s. (Courtesy of Sally Jung)

Czajkowski turned the capital that he was able to accrue in this way into buying more land, some to farm, some as speculation. As the century went on, he, like Ray Meyer, bought and sold a great deal of real estate in and around Kinderhook. One of these was the large farm known as "The Gables" on Route 9 just south of Kinderhook Village. This was originally a Van Alstyne farm that was owned by a group of non-local couples from New York City and Kansas in the early twentieth century, but in the late 1930s, it was subdivided, with Czajkowski buying most of the farmland and a number of the buildings, including the large barn (Duck 1985:100; see Fig. 58). The Czajkowskis moved there from Muitzeskill Road at that point, and Ray built a number of new houses on the property for his full-time farm workers, as well as a new house for his own family. Unlike

some buyers of the old Dutch farms, who were attracted to the grand structures built by previous generations, these descendants of Polish immigrants appeared more comfortable in more modest dwellings; Sally Jung reports, “We didn’t live in that huge house. That was much too big. Mother didn’t want anything to do with that.” The Gables property included an orchard, but like Bob Van Alstyne, Ray Czajkowski eventually concluded that raising apples was too labor-intensive. “Too much expense involved and too much work. Summer, fall, and winter,” his daughter Sally remembers. Deciding that he could do better using the land for hay, corn, and other commercial crops, Ray took out the trees in the early 1950s; an additional benefit, from Sally’s perspective, was that the farmland could accommodate a landing strip once she learned to fly an airplane in 1952.



Fig. 59. Left: Ray Czajkowski and his wife Cecilia (née Molinski) in the 1960s. Right: Sally Czajkowski with the Gables Farm truck in 1951. (Courtesy of Sally Jung)

In addition to whatever family labor they could enlist for seasonal work like haying, harvesting corn, and picking apples, small commercial farmers like Van Alstyne, Meyer, and Czajkowski hired a variety of other kinds of workers. Ray Czajkowski had at least two men working for him full-time for many years, doing general farm work as well as carpentry and other jobs as needed. But by the middle of the twentieth century, the agricultural cycle of higher capital costs, fewer farms, and smaller farm families was making farm labor increasingly scarce, and like many area farmers, all three farmers

hired seasonal migrant labor from outside the county, often from the American South. Bob Van Alstyne hired a regular crew of about half a dozen African-American men from North Carolina each fall. Led by their foreman, Walt Best, they lived in trailers that Bob put on the property for that purpose (see Fig. 56). Ray Meyer and his brother Ed hired about 10 workers at harvest time, housing them in a four-unit apartment building he constructed (Fig. 60 shows a crew of African-American workers harvesting squash for the Meyer brothers around 1950). Sally Jung remembers a crew of about five African-American men who came from New York City to work on her father's corn harvest in the 1940s: "They were excellent workers. And one guy was the head of the group. And they listened to him, whatever he said. So they came up every year. And this one year they came up and the boss wasn't there, so Dad wanted to know what happened to him. He got stabbed. It was very discouraging." It seems possible that these black farmworkers may have been people from rural Southern backgrounds, many of whom had been forced out of farming by New Deal policies that favored more capital-intensive farming (almost invariably dominated by whites) and who had moved to Northern or Southern cities (Hurt 1994:332). The men shown in Fig. 60 include both squash-pickers in coveralls and more sharply-dressed men loading the trailer, perhaps reflecting a combination of rural and urban backgrounds and sensibilities. For these workers, as for more recent seasonal and migrant farm laborers from the Caribbean and Central America, short-term labor on northern farms was a way to supplement other family income while making use of their agricultural skills and perhaps remaining connected to farming as a familiar way of life.



Fig. 60. African-American migrant workers harvesting squash for the Meyer brothers around 1950. (*Hudson Register Star*)

Twentieth-century farms in the Kinderhook area also offered a kind of low-rent housing or short-term employment for more marginal workers, often immigrants and local African Americans (like “Coty’s Jake” whom Elisabeth Van Alstyne mentioned in her memoir) as well as those from nearby correctional and other state facilities. At Arrow Farm, there was a “hermit” named Vince, a Portuguese man who spoke little English and who may have come from one of the seacoast cities of Massachusetts. He “came with the farm,” Pat Van Alstyne recalled, and lived in a small house north of the main farmhouse. He did odd jobs for Bob, and Dorothy, Bob’s wife, occasionally took him shopping to the local supermarket, since he had no car.

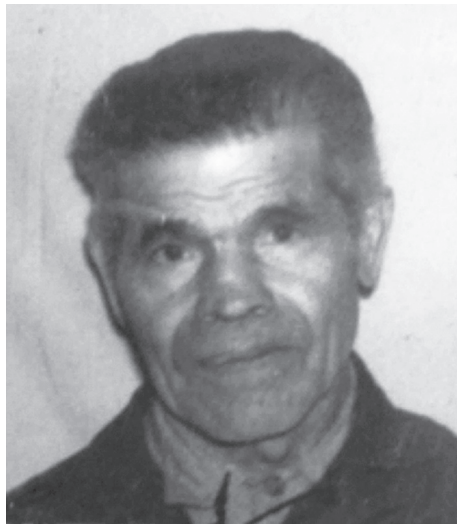


Fig. 61. Vincent Martin, the “hermit” who lived on the Arrow Farm property. (Permission of Robert and Dorothy Van Alstyne with assistance from Patricia Van Alstyne)

Many farms in the area also employed young men from the State Farm in Valatie, built in the 1910s as a mental health facility (Piwonka 1989:33). Housed in a Spanish-Mission-style compound that still stands today, State Farm workers were hired out to local farmers by the day, with sometimes uneven results. Bill deProsse, Clementine’s son, recalled some experiences at Lindenwald with day laborers from the State Farm:

One year Father was trying to grow peaches in that field that’s just south of Lindenwald on the edge of the road there, and he was digging holes for planting, and somehow he passed out. And he came to, might have been sunstroke or something, and the farm boy was sitting there. My Father says, “Call somebody!” And he says, “I didn’t think you wanted to talk to anybody!”

DeProse also recalled a local farm woman who was murdered by a State Farm worker, and another young man who, on hearing that one of his friends from the facility had been killed while at work on a nearby farm, mused, “I wonder who’s going to get his bike?”

The Berkshire Industrial Farm in Canaan, founded in the 1880s by John Van Buren’s law partner and his wife, was a somewhat similar reform/social service farm in another corner of Columbia County that continued to operate—with private rather than public funding—throughout most of the twentieth century. The 1925 county census shows that there were about 100 adolescent boys in residence at the farm, which provided much of its own food in addition to teaching farming skills and supporting the overall institution and its workers. Known as the Berkshire Farm for Boys between 1959 and 1974, the organization found that by the 1960s, “economic factors and new regulations” made it impossible to continue operating as an economically self-sustaining farm (Berkshire Farm Center History). It shifted its focus purely to social services and continues today under the name Berkshire Farm Center and Services for Youth. The active farming component of its work appears to have been a casualty of the same changes that other area farms were facing, and which contributed to the ongoing decline in the number of farms and farm workers in the county overall as the century went on, as shown in Table B.

The Decline of Small Mixed Farms

The growing importation and transience of farm labor reflected the split, first noticeable since the mid-nineteenth-century, between those who were able to acquire and keep farmland and those who were not. As with much else about farming, it was a self-perpetuating cycle: smaller farm families and more children taking up non-farm work meant greater dependence on non-local and non-family labor, which in turn necessitated more machinery—and the debt required to buy it—so that the dwindling number of full-time farmers could work with fewer full-time helpers. And more debt and capital requirements made it ever-more difficult for younger or poorer farmers to buy and work land.

Evidence of these trends can be seen in the stories of some of the smaller farmers around Lindenwald who did not want—or weren’t able—to follow the more commercialized path of farmers like Ray Meyer and Ray Czajkowski. In these stories, we can see that there *were* still people getting into farming in Columbia County during the Depression and later decades, but once in, they generally faced the same stark choice

to “get big or get out.” Some also chose the “get small” option apparently embraced by Jeremiah Hess when confronted by a similar challenge in the mid-nineteenth century. By the 1960s and 1970s, there were many people in the area who had chosen to become gardeners rather than farmers, reflecting the ongoing decline in small farming while in some ways anticipating the backlash that would soon create an alternative infrastructure for those who resisted its loss.

Ray Czajkowski was by no means the only Polish-American farmer in the Kinderhook area by the mid-twentieth century, but most of the immigrant families had moved on to other kinds of work by then. The family who bought the Bryfonski farm just south of Lindenwald included Tredwell Burch’s father, who had started out as a fisherman in Long Island and moved to Taghkanic in Columbia County intending to be a vegetable farmer. But as Tredwell recalls, “West Taghkanic was no place for vegetables. Rocks and whatever.” He turned the Bryfonski farm into a small dairy and vegetable operation, and also worked in various cotton and paper mills in the area to make enough money to get by, like many farmers who were increasingly supplementing their agricultural income with other jobs (Hurt 1994:299). “We used to think my father was lazy because he’d be sleeping during the day,” Tredwell said. “But when you stop to think of it, he’d work all night in the mill, come home and get a little sleep and then go to the market with a load of corn or whatever, then go to work again at night.” Tredwell and his brothers supplied much of the labor: “We had 20 cows, we’d get up in the morning and each milk 10, then go to school. So we had to come home and milk the cows and feed them and get wood in and you name it, we did it. Make hay, loose hay, in the summer.” The Burches sold liquid milk in half-cans that they cooled in their well until the delivery truck from Van’s Dairy came to pick them up for sale in Hudson. Selling vegetables was a less certain market, particularly because the Burches tended to be behind other farms with their crops: “We had carrots, cabbage, lettuce, turnips, and no irrigation, so we were competing against [farmers who did], so when we had nice tomatoes, everybody else was done with tomatoes, so we’d have to take less money or bring them back home, feed them to the pigs.” The family also raised chickens and ducks, most of which they sold directly to customers in Stuyvesant Falls, and they bartered some farm products for staples like sugar and flour at local stores.

By the time he was 17, Tredwell had decided that full-time work on a small, struggling farm was not for him. “I got tired of milking cows,” he says. To his father’s disappointment, he took a job with a farm equipment business in Valatie. At that point,

his father added a milking machine to keep the dairy operation going and tried to buy a bigger property in the hope that Tredwell would change his mind and remain on the farm. Tredwell was adamant, but his two brothers continued to work there until the 1990s, when they closed the business.

Tredwell Burch's wife Margaret came from another small area farm run by newcomers to Columbia County. Her parents were immigrants who came from economically-depressed Germany in the 1920s. Her father's family had run a nursery in Germany, so he was familiar with plants and growing. He took a job as a chauffeur for a wealthy lawyer in Copake, who often entertained at a restaurant in Valatie. While the lawyer and his friends were dining, Margaret's father drove the car around in search of farms for sale, eventually finding a 150-acre property in Stuyvesant. He started out with a mixed farm, selling his produce in the downtown Albany farmer's market, but later specialized in chickens and eggs which he sold to wholesalers as well as individual buyers. Apparently he was a man who loved a good argument, and according to his son-in-law Tredwell, he tried to convince his fellow farmers that greater efficiency in production would inevitably result in lowered prices that would make it difficult or impossible for many small farmers to stay in business:

There was a farm called the Leiser Farm on the Muitzeskill Road, and they kept getting bigger. And her father went over and...said, "You're killing yourselves, because the bigger you get—" "Yeah, but look at the price of the milk! If we put on 20 more cows—" He says, "Yeah, but the price of milk's going to come down, because you're flooding the market with it." And he was right.

The Burches shared the growing concern about chemical pesticides. Margaret describes her response to Ed Meyer's spraying of the fields around the Burch home:

Margaret: I had a nice garden, and Ed had sprayed weed killer on the potatoes to kill the potato vines. I came home and my garden—it had drifted over and it killed everything in my garden. I mean, it was burnt. Well, I was fuming. And I knew where Ed was working, it was on the field 'way up on [Route] 9, up near where the Golden Harvest farm is, the fruit stand. He was in the field, and being a farm girl I was fuming. I got out of my car and I walked 'way in the middle of the field to confront him. And I said to him what had happened. And he knew I was mad. Well, do you know, he stopped, he came right down and looked at my garden. And he was just—he didn't know what to say. He said, "I can say I'm so sorry so many times," but he said, "What do you want?" I said, "I just want you to pay for what I lost." So we made up a list, we went to Brosen's Farm Stand which is now Samascott's Farm Stand

on 9 going from Kinderhook to Valatie, and got prices and we kind of figured it out and I submitted a bill.

Tredwell: And he told us, “Don’t you eat any of that.”

Margaret: “Don’t you eat any of it.” Because you know, I had peppers and I had cucumbers and tomatoes—I mean, everything was growing so good. It broke my heart to have to pull everything up and throw it away. . . You know, I thought he was kind of a heartless man, but. . .he just felt so terrible, and when he walked away, “Oh,” he says, “I know,” he says, “that’s not going to make it right” . . .

Interviewer: Is that something that was worrying to you, to have had that so close?

Tredwell: Well, we didn’t like it. Because the spray would come over, you could smell it. It would drift all over the yard, from the airplane.

Margaret: Well, yeah, we did worry about it, because, you know, our children were small.

Across the Old Post Road from Lindenwald, Peter Hoes, the son of Ernest who had bought that farm in 1919, seems to have decided by the early 1950s that he could no longer make a living selling apples. He undertook renovations to the house, particularly the dilapidated original southern wing, and sold the property in 1955 to Albion Eckert, the owner of a fuel oil company in Albany. Eckert stayed for 15 years, until 1969; he cut down the apple orchard, renamed the place “Sleepy Hollow Farm,” invoking the folkloric Dutch-American past popularized by Washington Irving, and kept a small herd of 30 Ayrshire cows there (Worsfold 2009:10-14).

The former Dingman property—the nineteenth-century home just north of Lindenwald, the old Dingman farmstead next to that, and the small house a little farther north—continued to reflect the changes in the neighborhood as the century went on.¹⁸ Elmer Wagoner lived in the nineteenth-century house until his death in 1940, after which it was occupied by some of his heirs—including, for a time, Lew and Imogene Van Alstyne and their young family—before being sold to newcomers to the area later in the century. The small house was part of the Wagoner estate that passed to Imogene and Hazel on Elmer’s death; they sold it in 1940 to the Cantine family, who had farmed for

¹⁸ Information about these transactions is from Caryn Moore’s files. More work could be done to clarify these specific inheritances and occupancies.

the Wagoners at Lindenwald and elsewhere for several decades and who had perhaps been living in the house as tenants before purchasing it. The Cantines also served as caretakers for the old Dingman house during the years that it was owned by the Shepperts of Yonkers (1914-1927); the Cantines are listed as occupants of that house in the 1920 federal census.

In 1927, the Shepperts sold the old house, and it came back by a somewhat circuitous set of connections into the hands of someone related to the Van Alens, one of the oldest farming families in the neighborhood. The new owners were Pierson (Perry) Stanley and his wife Edith, who had previously been married to Van Alen descendant Daniel Webster Herrick (see Figs. 52 and 62) and had perhaps lived at the Van Alen house during that time. She appears to have been an entrepreneurial and somewhat eccentric woman who apparently combined small-scale farming with other enterprises. She sold insurance through her own company, Grange Insurance, the name of which implies that she may have specialized in insuring farmers' properties; Bill deProsse recalled that he bought his car insurance policy from her. She grew a very large garden behind the Dingman house, including berry bushes and asparagus plants, and may have sold produce locally. She also kept chickens in two chicken coops, and sold both the birds and their eggs. Bill deProsse remembered that his family bought chickens and eggs from her when they didn't have any of their own. When Caryn and Ron Moore bought the Dingman house in the 1970s, they found a list still tacked to the cellar door showing Edith's egg sales and customers. Evidence in the house and the yard showed that Edith also kept bees and had an early chest freezer for preserving food, in addition to doing a good deal of canning.

In all, the garden remnants and the 11 small and large out-buildings on the old Dingman property suggest that Edith, like some others in the area, was growing food on a scale that helped to feed her own family and provided a little extra income through local sales—a model reminiscent of the pre-market society that had existed in the area, where it had often been women's entrepreneurial activities in dairying, textiles, and poultry-keeping that had supplied a household's cash income. The big difference, of course, was that there was no longer a primary farm property around which these small-scale activities were organized, and no longer a sizeable farm family who would provide labor and expect to inherit or acquire a similar household for themselves one day. It is difficult to know whether Edith Stanley had hopes of expanding her small-scale operation, or whether, like the deProsses at neighboring Lindenwald, she was pursuing it purely out of necessity. It is also hard to know whether she was drawing on knowledge of farming

from her own family background, or whether, like the deProsses, she was learning as she went along. In any case, she appears to represent an example of the way that some long-established Columbia County farms and farm families were devolving, by the middle of the twentieth century, into part-time, recreational, small-scale, or hobby farms. Edith herself became increasingly eccentric as she aged, filling the house and yard, and then a second house in Valatie, with items she had bought at auctions. When she died in 1974, the Dingman farmstead was badly decayed and overgrown.



Fig. 62. Edith Stanley and an unidentified child, perhaps George, her son by her second marriage, in front of the barn at the old Dingman farmstead, probably c.1927 when the Stanleys bought the property. (courtesy of Caryn Moore)

Across Kinderhook Creek, the descendants of Edward Van Alstyne were coming to the same conclusion as Peter Hoes, Tredwell Burch, the Bryfonskis, and other former farmers: full-time farming no longer provided the kind of life they wanted to lead. Edward's grandchildren, the sons and daughters of his son James, owned the property by the mid-twentieth century.¹⁹ They sold their dairy herd by the early 1960s, and in 1965 they sold the property to the Kennett family, ending nine generations of Van Alstyne

¹⁹ Information about the Kennetts, Kilcers, and contemporary Van Alstynes is from a July 2010 interview with Dorothy Kennett, Mary Kilcer Kennett, and Tom Kilcer.

tenure on that land. The Kennetts provide another example of a well-to-do family from outside the area with connections to the arts world as well as, in this case, the horse-breeding and riding world. Earl Kennett was a blind jazz pianist who built a reputation in Manhattan starting in the 1930s; his wife was the daughter of a West Texas rancher who went to a conservatory in California to study harp and met Earl through musical connections. Although the couple lived in New York City for a time, they decided to raise their three children in a more rural setting, and bought several farm properties north of the city, moving a little farther out each time in search of affordable land.



Fig. 63. Sunnyside Farm in 1963, the year that Edward Van Alstyne's descendants sold their dairy herd. (Dorothy Kennett)

Sunnyside offered enough room—210 acres—to satisfy Mrs. Kennett's longing for land, along with enough working neighboring farms to lease and work the fields that the Kennetts did not need for their own family use. Once their twin daughters began to grow up, the Kennetts added a horse operation that came to include breeding and training dressage and race horses. Earl Kennett renovated the big dairy barn, which had been rebuilt in the 1930s following a disastrous hay fire, as a state-of-the-art recording studio, which city musicians frequently used. His wife and daughters cultivated an enormous garden where they grew food for the family as well as maintaining a flock of sheep and

chickens. Like Lindenwald and many other farms in the U.S., Sunnyside had become a part-time farming operation.²⁰ Full-time farmers were working some of its fields, but the farm's owners were not attempting to make the entire property economically-viable as a purely agricultural venture. This was by no means an entirely new phenomenon—as these chapters have shown, farming has always been carried on in a variety of ways, often in combination with other sources of income—but it does reflect the overall trend toward fewer and larger American farms in the twentieth century, along with a smaller percentage of the nation's population making a full-time living as farmers.



Fig. 64. Twin sisters Mary Kennett Kilcer and Dorothy Kennett look at the 1917 sundial placed in the Sunnyside garden on the occasion of the farm's 250th anniversary.

The small farming activities and large gardens at Sunnyside, the old Dingman property, and elsewhere show the continuation of food growing at a household and very local scale, often by people with farming somewhere in their family backgrounds. Leo Czajkowski, one of Ray's nephews, recalled his aunt Dorothy as one of the Czajkowski

²⁰ Hurt (1994:331) reports that by the 1990s, more than half of American farms were grossing less than \$20,000, meaning that more farmers were taking jobs off the farm to make ends meet, a trend that had started many decades earlier.

siblings “who did not take to farm life” and who worked for many years in a Hudson match factory. Yet even after she moved to a house on the outskirts of Hudson, she continued to cultivate produce for herself and others. As Leo wrote in a 2007 family recollection, “Seems that the ‘farmer-girl’ never completely left her, as she always had an ample supply of vegetables fresh from the garden, all large, juicy and delicious, that she almost forced on you to take home with you.”²¹ The realities of commercial agriculture were winnowing out those who could or would try to make a living from farming, but aspects of farming as a way of life persisted in the everyday practices of many people in Columbia County even as the agricultural economy changed around them.

Case Study: The Capital District Coop in Menands

Farmers themselves continued to create organizations and support structures throughout the twentieth century, sometimes independently and sometimes in cooperation with government agencies. Nationally, the 4H Club, a program intended to foster innovative thinking among farm youth, was founded in 1918, while the Farm Bureau, formed in 1919, worked closely with railroads, banks, the business community, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture to advance a somewhat more conservative vision of American farming (Hurt 1994:159, 263). In Columbia County, Grange organizations continued to operate at local and county levels, along with the long-standing Columbia County Fair and Agricultural Society. In Kinderhook itself, besides the Lindenwald Grange there was the Kinderhook Pomological Association (KPA), founded in 1910 by Edward Van Alstyne and a number of other leaders in the farming community. The KPA grew from “a 20-member scholastic and educational organization” to a 170-stockholder cooperative by the 1950s, following a strategy that farmers had historically used as a way to pool their resources and support their interests (Duck 1985:204).²²

²¹ This document is included in the project files.

²² The Grange, for instance, served very largely as a cooperative organization in its first incarnation in the 1860s and 1870s. Using the Rochdale model developed in England, in which members bought stock which was used to fund collective ventures, Grange coops were established to sell farm machinery, food, clothes, and other items. Farmers’ products were also sometimes marketed cooperatively through the Grange. One reason for the Grange’s rapid expansion in this period was farmers’ sense that it gave them a way to sidestep merchants and bankers who were perceived as profiting unfairly from farmers, but most of these enterprises were short-lived and the reorganized Grange that emerged after the 1870s, including in Kinderhook, was more focused on social and educational activities (Hurt 1994:203-5).

Another cooperative venture that served many of the farmers discussed in this chapter was the Capital District Cooperative, commonly known as the Menands Farmers Market, just north of Albany.²³ There had been many incarnations of Albany's public markets, beginning before the Revolution (see Fig. 11 in Chapter Four), but by the 1920s, with the region's agricultural economy struggling, many farmers became increasingly dissatisfied with the facilities and management of the main market held in the center of the city (Fig. 65). According to Margaret Burch, whose father often took chickens and produce to sell there, the vendors were mostly small-scale producers, rather than larger commercial farmers, and Tim Stanton, who currently sells at the Menands market, recalled his grandfather telling him that competition for space was fierce.



Fig. 65. The downtown farmers' market in Albany in 1934. (Knickerbocker Press, August 26, 1934, courtesy of Capital District Cooperative, Inc.)

A group of farmers formed a committee in the late 1920s to explore ideas for a more farmer-friendly market. They enlisted funding and support from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets, which helped to produce a feasibility study and then a design for the proposal that emerged from the study: the creation of a regional, rather than a city-specific, market where farmers from around the Capital

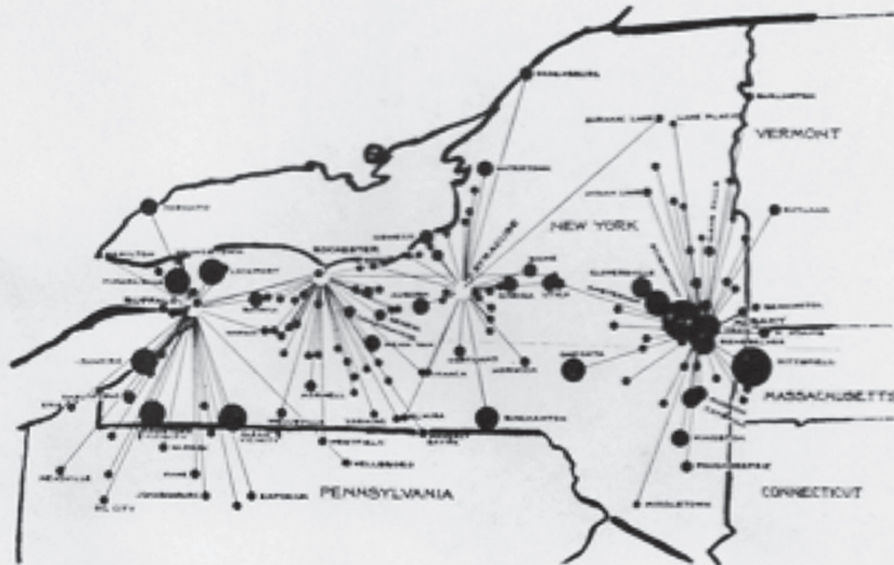
²³ Unless otherwise noted, information about the Menands Farmers Market is from telephone interviews with General Manager Fred Cole and former manager Bill Brizzell, conversations with farmers at the market on June 23, 2010, and formal and informal interviews with Tredwell and Margaret Burch, Bill deProsse, Sally Jung, and Bob and Pat Van Alstyne. All interviews are transcribed or documented in fieldnotes.

District could retail and wholesale their products. According to former market manager Bill Brizzell, the plan was conceived as a very serious economic redevelopment project to benefit the entire region, and once the market was constructed, in 1933-34, its instant success confirmed that the planners had correctly identified a need among area farmers. An undated map (Fig. 66) reflects the size and centrality of the market within the network of regional food distribution.

Ray Czajkowski, Ray Meyer, Bob Van Alstyne, Tredwell Burch's family, and the deProsses all sold goods at the Menands Farmers' Market in the 1930s and later. Margaret Burch recalls that you went to Menands "if you had a lot of stuff to sell," so smaller producers like her father stayed at the downtown market, reflecting the Menands market's character as a site oriented toward more serious commercial farming. People like the deProsses seem to have found it difficult to compete there; Bill deProse remembered his parents taking a load of cauliflower to Menands and being unable to sell it, so they dumped it in the river on the way home. "It was probably the Depression, and things were cheap to buy, the seeds and so on," he said, "but everything they grew, everybody in the neighborhood grew, and there just was a glut on the market." Ray Meyer, with his larger-scale operation, sold to brokers and wholesalers in Menands and also at the downtown Albany Market, according to his friend Bob Van Alstyne. Ray Czajkowski sold at Menands early in his farming career; later, as we have seen, dealers sent their trucks to him rather than him having to deliver produce himself. But his daughter Sally Jung recalls that he occasionally drove his mother, Anna, to Menands to sell produce that she continued to grow on the family's original farm property. The Menands Farmers Market, then, appeared to be an attempt to find a middle way between increasingly large-scale commodity farming and small-scale farming at a time when the agricultural market was continuing to push farmers to "get big or get out." (Another reason to go to Menands was so that family members could shop at the immense Montgomery Wards store, known to many as "Monkey Wards," just south of the market; Sally Jung and several other interviewees spoke about their memories of outings to shop for clothes and other goods while their fathers were selling at the market.)

The market and the coop continue to operate today, although in quite different circumstances. The market, which was in the midst of farmers' fields when it began, has seen the development, decline, and now redevelopment of a suburban retail strip all around it (the eight-story, million-square-foot Montgomery Wards building is now the "Riverview Center," a mixed-use development [Wood 2004]). The coop still rents

Regional Distribution of Perishable Produce from Albany, Syracuse, Rochester and Buffalo



INTERCITY TRUCKING OF FRUITS AND VEGETABLES FROM ALBANY, BUFFALO, ROCHESTER AND SYRACUSE

The smallest dots represent a range from \$4,000 to \$100,000 in amount of business; the largest dots \$800,000; the others, amounts in proportion to their size.
(Graph taken from Cornell Univ. Agr. Exp. Sta. Bull. 525)

The above map shows that produce from the Albany Market is distributed over a larger region than any other upstate market.

In addition to the distribution shown above a large amount of produce is trucked to the smaller New England and New York City.

Fig. 66. This undated handbill publicizing the Menands Farmers Market makes a case for the importance of Albany/Capital District in distribution of perishable produce in and around New York State. The text notes that produce from Albany also reached smaller New England cities and New York City. (Capital District Cooperative, Inc.)

permanent warehouse and commercial space in the buildings around the edges of their property to small businesses, but where these were all food-related in previous decades, the mix now includes other types of companies: a gym, an audio/video company, a commercial trucking school. From a high of 540 coop members in the 1930s, there are now just 140, reflecting the greatly diminished number of farms in the area overall (see Table B). Three mornings a week between 5:30 and 7:30 a.m., farmers still park their trucks in the open space of the big parking lot and set out their wares (anyone can buy a permit to sell at Menands by the day, but only coop members can buy an annual stall permit). Rather than selling to wholesalers, brokers, and stores, though, as happened in the years before supermarkets began to dominate retail food sales, the farmers now sell largely to one another as a way of supplementing the offerings that they sell at their own farmstands. There has been a recent decision to expand the original nine-county geographic area for members to 14 counties plus some territory in neighboring Vermont, Massachusetts, and Connecticut, in an effort to broaden the variety of goods being exchanged.



Fig. 67. Menands Farmers Market in 1934. The administration building is at center left; the immense Montgomery Wards store can be seen on the horizon at right. (Capital District Cooperative, Inc.)

Perhaps the most noticeable change is that the Menands market has been working to connect with the more recent trend of holding city- and town-specific farmers' markets—ironically, the model that the regionally-oriented coop was created to move

beyond. Every Saturday, the coop hosts a retail market that is family- and fun-oriented, with special events, festivals, and activities to boost attendance. Perhaps because Menands is along a suburban roadway rather than in a city or town center, this market has not grown particularly large, but organizers feel it has infused some new energy into one aspect of the coop's work. In general, the Menands Farmers Market remains quite separate from the growing "sustainable" and organic farm network, reflecting the fact that most of the farmers who regularly sell there have long-standing (sometimes multi-generational) ties to the area's older farm economy, and to the kinds of small to mid-sized commercial farms that we have already seen in the examples of Ray Czajkowski and Ray Meyer in Columbia County.



Fig. 68. Main building of the Capital District Cooperative, home of the Menands Farmers Market, in June 2010, with iconic McCormick Farmall tractor at front entrance.

These farms and farmers continue to rethink issues of geographic scale, product marketability, and types of support that are available to keep them in business. One older farmer at Menands interviewed for this study in June 2010 noted that he now farmed just 10 acres and sold mostly garden plants, having had to sell his family's former land when suburban development around Albany pressed so close that the taxes became prohibitive.

Former coop manager Bill Brizzell, a third-generation farmer and coop member, left farming for a career in municipal planning and then returned to growing via a greenhouse business, combining the skills of white-collar and agricultural work. In these fluctuations, we can see the continued pattern of change and adaptation that characterizes agriculture as a whole, along with the determination of farmers in the Hudson Valley to maintain long-standing regional and local systems of production and distribution even as food supply becomes increasingly national and even global.

Study Themes in This Chapter

Changing agricultural methods and approaches

- intensification of industrial and commercial agriculture, particularly after World War II
- increasingly important role of food processing companies
- tractors (1917), trucks, and other mechanized farm vehicles and equipment
- hybrid seeds (1917 for corn)
- rise of grain-fed rather than grass-fed dairy
- increased use of chemical pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers
- emergence of alternative agricultural models (Steiner, Howard, Rodale)
- more part-time farmers

Farming in a market economy

- agricultural depression preceded general depression, starting in 1920s
- growing divide between commercial farmers and hobby/recreational/part-time farmers (two categories previously less distinct)
- some return to countryside by urban people during the Depression
- some small-scale production and marketing by members of former farm families

The roles of policy and law in farming

- farmer demands for government regulation of prices and surpluses leads to government-regulated price controls etc. starting in 1930s
- new standards in sanitation, particularly for dairy farms, leading to greater government on-farm inspections and regulations which contributed to decline in smaller farms unable to keep up with new requirements and equipment
- state government working on regional solutions to farmers' problems – Menands Farmers Market as a state/farmer collaboration

CHAPTER EIGHT

“A LOT OF WAYS TO KEEP A FARM GOING” (1974-2010)

In the period since the establishment of Martin Van Buren National Historic Site, Columbia County’s agricultural sector has mirrored the trends in New York State and the U.S. overall. The industrialized farming methods and commodity markets that have developed since Martin Van Buren’s time remain dominant in many ways. But within the past two decades, there have been signs of changing food habits among a significant and growing number of Americans, suggesting that various forms of resistance and reinvention that arose in response to industrialized farming may be moving closer to the mainstream. After more than a century of decline, numbers of farms and farmers are actually increasing again in some parts of the U.S., including the northeast. The newer farms tend to be smaller in terms of size and sales, reflecting a different farming ethos and set of markets—direct sales, restaurants, and smaller networks of exchange. Many newer and older farms are also beginning to re-mobilize ideas about “heritage” and tradition in ways that range from the nostalgic to the political, perhaps narrowing the gap that opened up in the second half of the twentieth century between “real” agriculture and farming for display, education, or recreation. As in previous eras of American civic life, the growing, selling, and consumption of food continue to provoke spirited public discussions about the meanings of health, food, land ownership, and economic exchange.

This chapter will encapsulate some of those positions, meanings, and experiences through a series of case studies focusing on a range of farms and farmers. It will begin by tracing the transition of Lindenwald from a private residence surrounded by a commercial farm to a historic site surrounded by a mixed set of farm and non-farm neighbors, including a working biodynamic farm. This section will also explore the continued divergence—and more recently, the beginnings of a convergence—of contemporary working farms and representations of traditional or old-fashioned ones. Rather than continuing with a chronological approach, the nine subsequent short case studies will update the stories of some specific farms encountered throughout the report as well as exploring a number of additional farms that illustrate different approaches and issues in present-day agriculture in Columbia County.

New Convergences at Lindenwald, 1974-Present

After a long series of attempts to preserve Lindenwald as a historic site, successful legislation was finally introduced in 1972, and Martin Van Buren National Historic Site was created in 1974.¹ At this time, Van Buren's farmland was nearly all owned and being cultivated by Ray Meyer, who also operated various small businesses on the property and had built a small housing development on the field south of the mansion and east of the main road (Searle 2004:112).² The aging Ken Campbell was still living in the mansion he bought from the deProsse/Akers family in 1957, but he moved to the South Gatehouse under an agreement negotiated when he sold the property to the NPS, and lived there until shortly before his death in 1981 (Searle 2004:108). In this early phase of its existence, the park was essentially a historic house museum surrounded by commercial farming and residences. But a closer examination of both the intentions of those involved in establishing it and some of the key trends within conservation and preservation in the period shows that the founding of the park was part of a broader, still-emerging vision for protecting the rural and agricultural character of this part of the Hudson Valley.

The language in the legislation establishing Martin Van Buren NHS emphasized not only Van Buren's historical importance, but also the contribution that the park would make toward preserving "the scenic Hudson River Valley," a wider goal supported by groups concerned with environmental and economic problems in the valley (West 2000:9). In a 1972 hearing by the Senate committee considering the bill, one Senator asked NPS officials whether it was really necessary to acquire ownerships or easements for 42 acres around the mansion. NPS Director George Hartzog responded that all of the surrounding land was zoned as agricultural land, and that the Park Service wanted "to protect the visual integrity and prevent adverse use along this highway"—a clear expression of the importance of the farmscape in preserving and interpreting Martin Van Buren's tenure at Lindenwald, and a reflection of concern about increased housing development and traffic on the Old Post Road (West 2000:9).

¹ The earliest attempts took place in the first decade of the twentieth century, followed by a stronger movement in the late 1920s which resulted in the formation of the Association for the Preservation of Lindenwald. This group and its successors experienced a series of successes and setbacks between the 1930s and 1960s, correlated both with changing views of Van Buren and changing political alliances; the awarding of National Historic Landmark status in 1961 was a key victory in the preservation campaign. See West n.d. and the park's Administrative History, in process.

² On the map in Fig. 23, this is shown as "43 acres, 1845, Hoes and Van Buren."

The desire to do more than merely preserve the house itself reflects trends within preservation, interpretation, and conservation in this period. Whether to preserve a larger natural or cultural system or to provide a more realistic and lively experience of the past for visitors, the older model of bounded, discrete sites, parks, and preserves had shifted decisively by the 1970s toward more holistic, inclusive, and multifaceted environments. The living history settings discussed in the previous chapter remained highly popular in the later twentieth century, although the decline in public funding and other factors after the 1980s made these personnel-intensive environments prohibitively expensive to maintain. Preservationists and others were increasingly thinking in terms of historic districts, "cultural landscapes" and other concepts that made room for present-day human lives and interactions within places designated as historically or environmentally significant. Within the National Park Service, heritage areas and corridors were being formed in both rural and urban areas, as well as "partnership parks" with multiple layers of ownership and stewardship. Cuyahoga Valley National Recreation Area (later Cuyahoga Valley National Park), created in 1974, and Ebey's Landing National Historical Reserve (1978) are two examples of the new type of park model that included a good deal of farmland. Another important National Park Service project that brought together conservation history and practice with agricultural history and working farmscapes is Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller National Historic Park, created in 1992. This multi-layered park preserves the long history of conservationism at the site, including the nineteenth century pioneer George Perkins Marsh, "model farmer" Frederick Billings and his descendants, and the later Rockefeller family members who owned the property and deeded it to the National Park Service. Through the incorporation of Billings Farm and Museum, a working dairy farm with a dual agricultural/ educational mission, Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller NHP also engages with contemporary agricultural practice and markets in an indirect but active way.

During the final decades of the twentieth century, the land conservation movement as a whole was shifting to broader conceptions of environment, ecology, and bioregionalism as ways of conceptualizing the units that they were conserving, and new models like the land trust were emerging as tools for protecting land. First appearing around 1960 but gaining momentum in the Reagan/Bush years of the 1980s and early 1990s, the land trust movement responded to the sense that earlier gains made by conservationists were being eroded by growing populations, development, and

pollutants, and that government was no longer stepping in as a counterbalancing force. The new conservationists created locally- and regionally-based private organizations that used market and legal methods—buying land and attaching conservation and other easements—as a way of preserving open space, habitat areas, and farmland (Brewer 2003:32-40).³ The Open Space Institute, founded in 1964, has emphasized the protection of agricultural land in the Hudson River Valley, among other places; the Columbia Land Conservancy, founded in 1986, has also been an important participant in this effort. Other regional conservation and environmentalist efforts, like the Riverkeeper organization founded in the 1960s to protect the quality of water in the Hudson River, were shaped by the activist and countercultural sensibilities of many of the social movements of the period. Martin Van Buren NHS, then, was created as a stand-alone Presidential mansion but within a time and a set of preservationist and conservationist movements that were increasingly striving to protect larger-scale landscapes and associated activities, including farming and farmscapes.

A series of convergences around the turn of the twenty-first century brought the stand-alone site more fully into the growing network of preserved and protected agricultural land. During the first 25 years of the park's existence, Ray Meyer continued to farm the fields around the mansion, operating a retail farmstand on the property in the mid- to late 1980s and various other small businesses as well as renting space and buildings to the NPS and others. But by the 1990s, his health was failing. His farming had become focused entirely on the less labor-intensive growing of potatoes and a little corn (Searle 2004:112-13) and in later years, he had leased most of his fields to his nephew and other area farmers. Meyer had rebuffed overtures from one farm land trust, and his own construction of a housing development on former farmland showed that he was not averse to seeing the farm property turned into building lots. Concerned by the possibility of the historic character of the neighborhood being radically changed, Michael Henderson, Superintendent of Martin Van Buren NHS from 1994 to 1999, worked to link the park with other ongoing local efforts—notably at the Columbia Land Conservancy—to help maintain the area's agricultural character in perpetuity. Henderson entered into conversation with a number of area land trusts in search of partnerships that would help

³ The Land Trust Alliance, a national umbrella organization, counted 350,000 members in 1986, 800,000 in 1990, and around a million in 1998. Other environmental organizations like the Audubon Society and the Sierra Club also saw huge increases in membership in this period (Brewer 2003:37).

to keep the fields of Van Buren's farm and its neighborhood in cultivation. In early 2000, Ray Meyer agreed to sell 126 acres between the mansion and the creek—the majority of Martin Van Buren's mid-nineteenth-century farm—to one of those organizations, the Open Space Institute (Searle 2002:108).⁴ OSI did not want to keep or manage the land—its interest was primarily in seeing it protected from development and kept in active farm use. And while the park wanted to see the Lindenwald mansion reconnected with its historic farm fields, it was also not looking to become actively involved in farming. The solution seemed to be to identify another partner or partners who would cultivate the land.

Around the same time, as described in more detail in the case study later in this chapter, Roxbury Farm, a large Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farm in nearby Claverack, was in the process of seeking a new location, and was interested in Van Buren's fields. A series of land purchases and collaborations in 1999 and 2000 resulted in Roxbury Farm shifting its operations to Kinderhook and beginning to cultivate (or, in the case of much of the property where toxic pesticides had been used, to remediate) the fields around Lindenwald. Over the next several years, Roxbury also purchased and leased additional fields to the north, south, and east of Lindenwald, eventually expanding the land it was cultivating in the neighborhood to 300 acres.⁵ During this period, the park was working to build support for a legislative expansion of its boundary. In 2009, legislation was passed that turned the park from a 39-acre parcel surrounding the mansion to more than 200 acres. This expansion reunited most of the farmland that Martin Van Buren had purchased during his own nineteenth-century project of reassembling the Van Ness farm he had known as a young man.⁶ Typical of newer "partnership parks" and other "public/private" types of conservation and preservation, the majority of the property

⁴ Henderson also worked with the Columbia Land Conservancy and other organizations to propose the creation of a historic corridor along Kinderhook Creek from the mills at Valatie to the Stuyvesant Falls bridge and mill, but this broader plan met with significant opposition in the area and was withdrawn.

⁵ In addition to the sources consulted about the park's 2009 boundary expansion, this and subsequent discussions of Roxbury Farm's land purchases and leases is based on interviews and email correspondence with Jean-Paul Courtens and park staff, as well as on a 2009 OSI press release, "OSI Protects a Scenic and Working Farm Adjacent to Historic Lindenwald," accessed online at http://www.osiny.org/site/PageServer?pagename=PressRelease_12_17_09.

⁶ The initial 1974 purchase from Ken Campbell was for 12.8 acres; by the 1990s, the park included 38.6 acres, including 20.3 acres owned outright by the NPS and another 18.3 acres protected by conservation easements (Searle 2004:108).

within the new park boundary is in private hands, but subject to easements that protect its agricultural use and historical character. The stand-alone Presidential mansion had become part of a working agricultural landscape again.⁷

And it had done so at a particularly vibrant time for public discussion about food and farming in the northeastern U.S. and far beyond. That discussion had never been entirely dormant, but by the start of the twenty-first century, various strands of critique, activism, and alternative practice were coalescing into a diffuse and vocal movement centered around the "relocalization" of food supply and exchange. Just as in previous periods when contention about farming and food has become a high-profile issue in American life, this movement has been interwoven with broader political, economic, social, and spiritual issues. Present debates center around very long-standing questions: how to keep farms profitable and farmers on the land, how to balance farmers' costs of production with affordable consumer prices, how to ensure access to healthful food (including the ever-thorny question of defining what is "healthful"), what the government's role should be in policy, education, and regulation of food markets, and how to configure and understand the relationship between local, regional, national, and—increasingly—global networks of food production and exchange. Concerns about pollution, energy use, labor practices, and animal rights have all inflected the current public discourse, with terms like "locavore," "food miles," "carbon footprint," "slow food," and "sustainability" coming into widespread usage over the past decade. The spread of interest and concern about food and farming issues can be measured in the tremendous increase in the number of farmers' markets (see Table C) and Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms, as detailed later in this chapter. It can also be seen in the recent reversal of a long-term trend of declining numbers of farms and farmers in many parts of the U.S. The nation, state, and county actually gained farms between the 2002 and 2007 agricultural censuses; Columbia County saw a 7% increase in the total number of its farms between 1997 and 2002, with another 11% increase (representing 56 new farms) between 2002 and 2007.⁸ In terms of U.S. agriculture as a whole, these

⁷ Information about the purchase of land from Ray Meyer and the 2009 park boundary expansion was gathered from the draft Administrative History of Martin Van Buren NHS by Suzanne Julin, conversations with knowledgeable people at the park and Roxbury Farm, and email correspondence between park staff and former park Superintendent Michael Henderson.

⁸ In the 2002 agricultural census, there were 498 farms in Columbia County, with a total of 119,718 acres, an average size of 240 acres, and a median size of 127 acres. In 2007, there were 554 farms

gains are tiny (northeastern farms represent less than 7% of U.S. farms and a fraction of the nation’s overall agricultural production). But they are enormously suggestive of the increasing vigor and complexity of smaller-scale, “alternative” modes of growing and marketing food, and of the number of farmers and others who are working to reconnect production and consumption in more direct ways.⁹

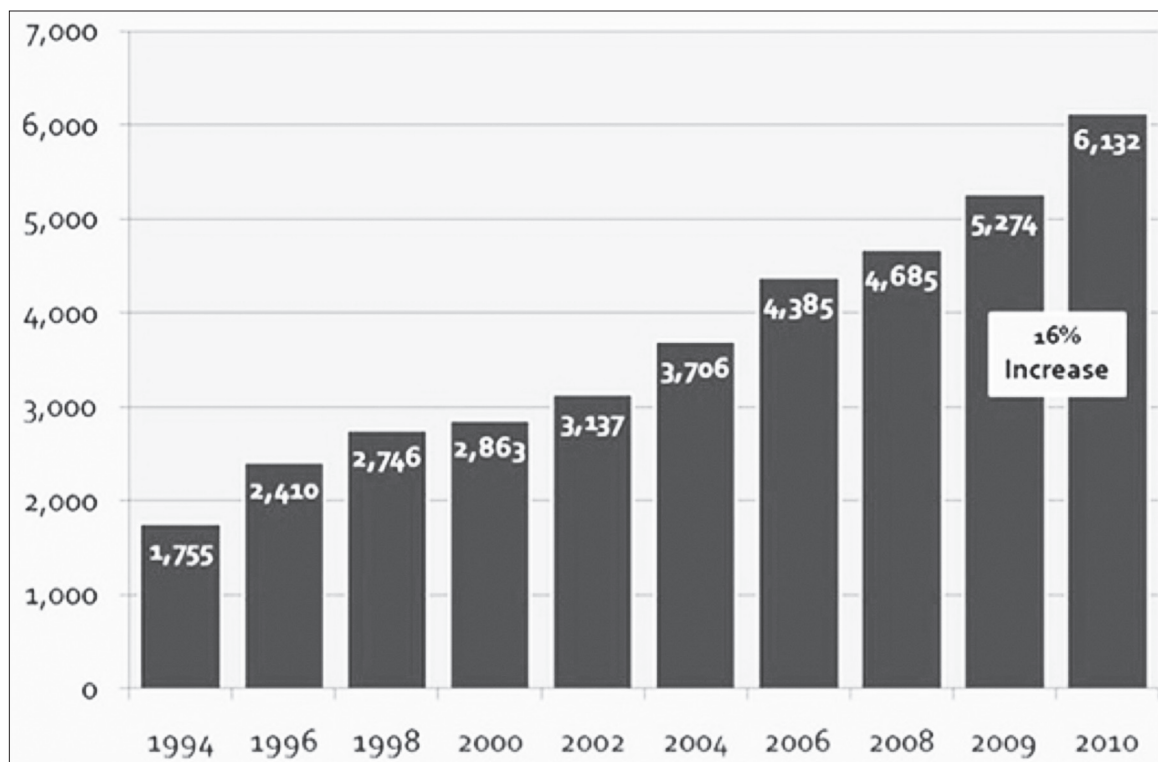


Table C. Increase in the number of farmers’ markets in the U.S., 1994-2010. Nearly 900 of the 6,132 markets in 2010 operated in winter, in cold-weather states as well as warm. (U.S. Department of Agriculture, Marketing Services Division, <http://www.ams.usda.gov/AMSV1.0/farmersmarkets>)

on slightly fewer overall acres—106,574—and a slightly smaller average (192) and median (91) size, suggesting that many of the new farms are small CSA or specialty-production operations of the kind that is typical of many “local food” and CSA producers. Overall, the U.S. saw a 4% increase in the number of farms, with most of the growth coming from smaller farms and younger farmers. (U.S. 2007 Census of Agriculture, “Farm Numbers” bulletin, p. 3)

⁹ This kind of reframing appears in many sectors of food production in the Hudson Valley. In dairy, perhaps the most beleaguered type of farm at present, some farmers have found alternatives to the bulk selling model. Hawthorne Valley Farm operates a substantial cheese-making facility, and a group of farmers from southern Columbia and northern Dutchess Counties have formed a non-profit dairy cooperative that emphasizes minimally-processed milk sold within a fairly small regional network of outlets (<http://www.hudsonvalleyfresh.com/about-hudson-valley-fresh.html>). A campaign to make raw milk (“real milk,” to some among its adherents) more available also has a presence in the valley, as it does nationally (<http://www.realmilk.com/happening.html>).

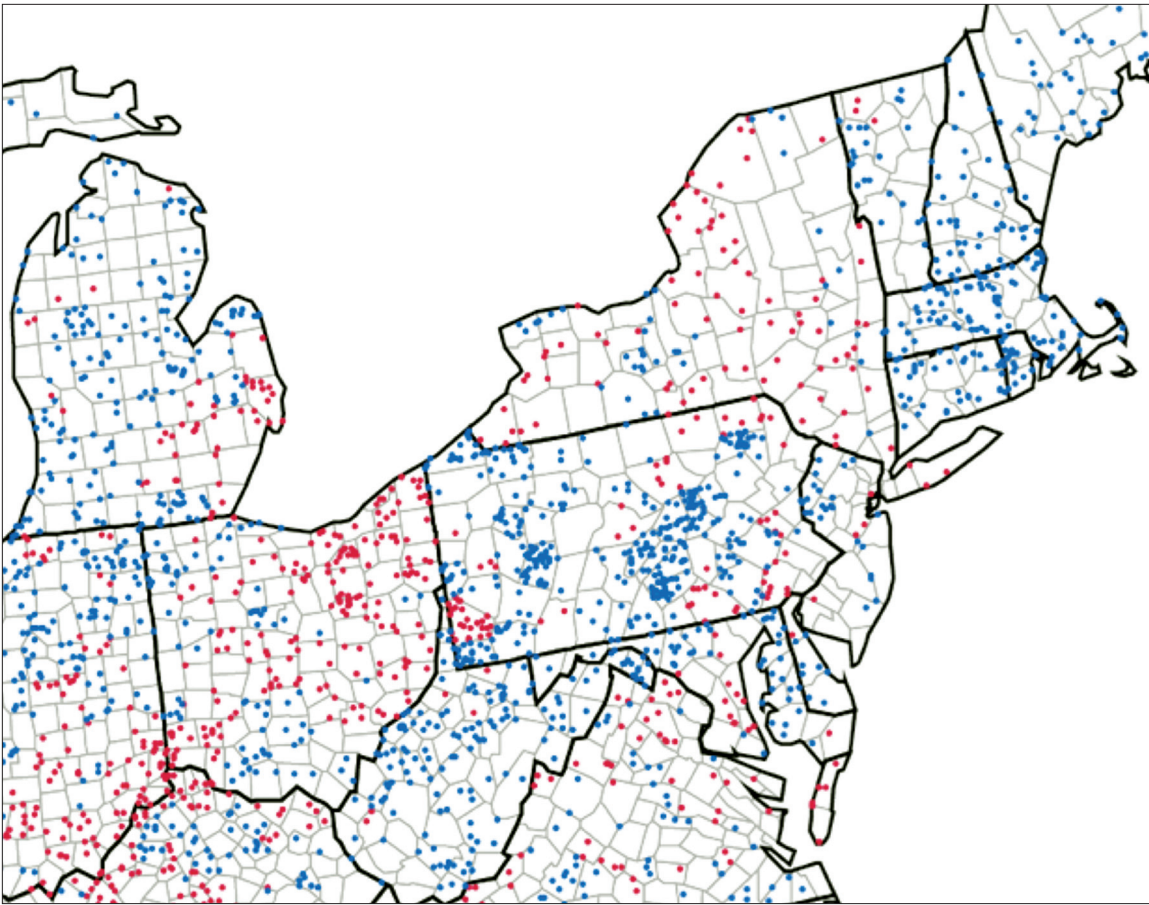


Fig. 69. After a long period of steady decline in the number of farms throughout the U.S., the five years preceding the 2007 agricultural census show an increase in many places around the northeast; blue dots represent an increase of 20 farms, red dots a decrease of 20. (National Agricultural Statistics Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, http://www.agcensus.usda.gov/Publications/2007/Online_Highlights/Ag_Atlas_Maps/Farms/index.asp)

An important aspect of the resurgence of support for smaller-scale, less industrialized farming is the role of education, publicity, and marketing. As with earlier movements toward revitalizing farming and farm life, educational projects, press, and other media have played an important role in raising questions and promoting new ideas. In many ways, the current dialogue about relocalization builds on the previous generation of “back to the land” and organic farming and eating, and some familiar names like the Rodale Institute, Wendell Berry, and Francis Moore Lappé are still prominent. More recent influential figures include high-profile farmers like “Farmer John” Peterson of Angelic Organics in Illinois and Joel Salazar of Polyface Farm in Virginia, celebrity “locavore” chefs like Alice Waters of Chez Panisse in Berkeley, California, and bestselling

writers like Michael Pollan, whose work has arguably been as important in raising awareness about food and farming issues as Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* was in the early twentieth century or Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* during the 1960s.¹⁰

In addition to the more conventional modes of publication and publicity, though, ideas about tradition and heritage are coming into play in the local food movement—an aspect of contemporary civic culture that touches on Martin Van Buren NHS's emerging role as a public interface for the history and practice of agriculture in the Lindenwald neighborhood and Columbia County. The radical split between historical and contemporary types of farming, which seemed deeply entrenched by the second half of the twentieth century, is beginning to close again, with historical knowledge and a sense of "pastness" being woven back into the way many working farms present themselves and the way non-farmers experience them. As with the farm tourism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, motives and perceptions range from the sentimental to the sharply political (this chapter will present examples of both). Small-scale farmers and their supporters are making use of history and heritage in multiple ways: to educate and cultivate customers, to add value to their products, to learn from the farming histories of their land, and to argue for their own importance in maintaining habitats, cultural continuity, and local or regional food supply.¹¹ At the same time, farm preservation and marketing efforts are becoming increasingly reintegrated with educational, social service,

¹⁰ Pollan's best-known books are probably *The Omnivore's Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals* (New York: Penguin, 2006) and *In Defense of Food: An Eater's Manifesto* (New York: Penguin, 2008). Also influential in the public dialogue about food and farming are Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation: The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (New York: Harper, 2001), Barbara Kingsolver, *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle: A Year of Food Life* (with Steven L. Hopp and Camille Kingsolver, New York: HarperCollins, 2007), and Jonathan Safran Foer, *Eating Animals* (New York: Little, Brown, 2009). There has also been a proliferation of documentary films about food production, including *Supersize Me* (2004), *The Real Dirt on Farmer John* (2005), *King Corn* (2008), and *Food, Inc.* (2009).

¹¹ The proliferation of interest in "heirloom" and "heritage" varieties and breeds is one example of this expanded use of history and heritage by farmers. The marketing rhetoric of nearly any direct-marketing farm or organization also shows how a sense of "pastness" is being mobilized for present-day purposes: for example, the mission of Hudson Valley Fresh includes "preserving the agricultural heritage of the Hudson River Valley" (<http://www.hudsonvalleyfresh.com/about-hudson-valley-fresh.html>), while the 2011 homepage for Golden Harvest Farms in Valatie shows sepia-tone images of the current farm family in historical costume, integrated into a backdrop of a historical photograph of apple-pickers and packers (<http://goldenharvestfarms.com/>). See Appendix I for a reproduction of this image.

and arts projects in ways that resemble Progressive Era efforts to strengthen the appeal of rural life by cultivating it in a holistic way.¹²

As noted in Chapter One of this report, there are many obvious areas of synergy between historic farm sites and the mobilization of history and heritage by working farms and farmers. The preservation of knowledge, buildings, and landscapes from the past is potentially of great interest and practical use to farmers, while the interpretive skills of those at historic sites can be a welcome resource for farmers whose primary attention is taken up with the absorbing work of growing food rather than educating and entertaining visitors. Many of the historic farms and national parks mentioned earlier in these chapters have developed and are developing collaborative farming and farm-education projects. The Billings Farm and Museum within Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller NHP has reinvigorated its long-standing Jersey cattle breeding and dairy operation, and the national park's focus on conservation includes discussion of Vermont's active agricultural landscape. Like Cuyahoga Valley National Park, Minute Man NHP in eastern Massachusetts leases many of its farm fields to area farmers, and the park is also a key partner in Battle Road Farms, an emerging venture that incorporates farmer education and small farm business incubation, reestablishment of farming activities in a heavily suburbanized area, education for students and consumers, and approximate restoration

¹² There are many local and regional examples of these kinds of projects. The Farm-Based Education Association, whose offices are based at Minute Man NHS in Concord, Massachusetts, has supported links between schools with working farms since its founding in 2006 (see <http://www.farmbasededucation.org/>). "Farm-to-school" food initiatives and school gardening projects are also proliferating in the region and beyond. The Food and Nutrition Services of the USDA supports a "Farm to School" program as part of its "Know Your Farmer, Know Your Food" initiative (see <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/f2s/>), while the National Farm to School Network, launched in 2007 by a coalition of groups concerned with health, social justice, and urban planning, has a regional presence throughout the U.S. through a network of agencies (see <http://www.farmentoschool.org/>). The overlap of farming, education, culture, and commerce can be seen at Kinderhook's Katchkie Farm, just northeast of Lindenwald on Fischer Road, which is owned by a New York City catering company called Great Performances. The farm supplies organic produce and artisanal food products for catered events, farmers' markets, and several Great Performances cafés while also contributing to a city CSA and hosting an educational non-profit center that educates children about farming and food (see <http://katchkiefarm.com/about-our-farm/gp/>). In Copake, south of Lindenwald in Columbia County, Camphill Village combines biodynamic agriculture and social service to adults with disabilities through its seed company, a CSA, and other activities (see <http://www.camphillvillage.org/node/3>). There are many other examples of the proliferation and integration of projects involving local food from the past decade or two, far too numerous to mention here.

of various aspects of the 1775 landscape on which the park's mission is based.¹³ Vermont's Shelburne Farms is involved in a range of market-oriented activities alongside its core educational and recreational mission; in addition to its working dairy herd, it has participated in projects like the Grass Energy Collective, which has experimented with the production of grass pellets as a biofuel for heating (Graham 2006). The role of historic sites and national parks in these ventures is similar to that of land trusts: the non-profits are the actual owners or holders of the land, providing short- or long-term resources and access to farmers and others who share many of the non-profits' goals and values and who could not afford to buy prime farmland on their own. The historic sites also offer a space for serious reflection by members of the public and perhaps for farmers as well—something that is difficult to come by in the press of a busy farm season. For example, Marsh-Billings-Rockefeller NHP's 2011 summer ranger tours include programs on ecospirituality and the development of the conservation ethos—both topics linked with the park's core purposes that also connect in reflective and place-grounded ways with much broader contemporary questions and movements.

At the same time, the legacy of the conceptual and economic separations of working farms and historic sites in the mid- to late twentieth century has also placed the two on different sides of the same fence, even where more holistic or wide-ranging preservation tools like partnership parks, heritage areas, or cultural landscape designations are in place. Research for this study suggests that new partnerships between "historic" and "working" farms are just beginning to develop, and that partners have had to negotiate—as they are doing at Martin Van Buren NHS—the different and sometimes conflicting goals of preservation, public education, and active participation in farm production and marketing. These partnerships also have to contend with the complications of the "implied synergy" between older farm methods and historic sites—that is, with public perceptions of older farm methods and landscapes as sites of nostalgia

¹³ Information about Battle Road Farms was gathered from a June 13, 2010 telephone interview with Leslie Obleschuk, Minute Man NHP Chief of Interpretation and Education, and a June 17, 2010 personal interview with Brian Donahue, president of the Battle Road Farms board of directors and a farmer and scholar with a long-time interest and involvement in this historic farmscape and others in the area. Battle Road Farms' mission is "to preserve the area's rich agricultural history while offering new perspectives on how today's farm relates to the environment, our food systems and our community"—a clear statement of the "triple bottom line" of social, environmental, and economic goals typically espoused by those involved in the local food movement (<http://www.battleroadfarms.org/>).

and "pastness," rather than as dynamic aspects of present-day farming. The final chapter will make recommendations for ways that these tensions might be negotiated at Martin Van Buren NHS.

Chapter Eight will continue by surveying a range of different types of farms in the contemporary farm economy of Columbia County, each illustrating how the themes, questions, and specific histories in the previous chapters are working themselves out in the early twenty-first century. These farms are all located in Kinderhook or nearby towns (see Fig. 70, below):

- Sunnyside (Kinderhook)
- Dingman farmstead/Moore residence (Kinderhook)
- Kinderfields (Kinderhook)
- Wil-Roc Farm (Kinderhook)
- Hess farm (Claverack)
- Roxbury Farm (Kinderhook)
- Love Apple Farm (Ghent)
- Little Seed Farm (Chatham)
- Harrier Fields Farm (Stuyvesant)

Sunnyside (Kinderhook)

The Kennett family at Sunnyside continues to run the old farm as a horse breeding and training business (named Dot-Mar Stables after the two Kennett daughters, Dorothy and Mary), although it is currently largely inactive and Dorothy describes herself as "semi-retired." Horse farming has been a fairly significant part of the Columbia County farm mix at various times, particularly in the early 1980s when New York thoroughbred breeding was widespread to the point of market saturation.¹⁴ In one of the ongoing connections with Dutch culture and agriculture that continue to appear in the history of Columbia County farming, Dorothy spent many years breeding and training Dutch Warmbloods, a breed from the Netherlands that became very popular for use in dressage. The Netherlands remains an important center for dressage, and the Kennett

¹⁴ Information about horse farming in Columbia County is from a June 3, 2010 interview with Steve Hadcock of the Cornell Cooperative Extension and from a July 8, 2010 interview with Dorothy Kennett, Tom Kilcer, and Mary Kennett Kilcer.

sisters still occasionally organize summer workshops led by a visiting Dutch riding instructor from Georgia.

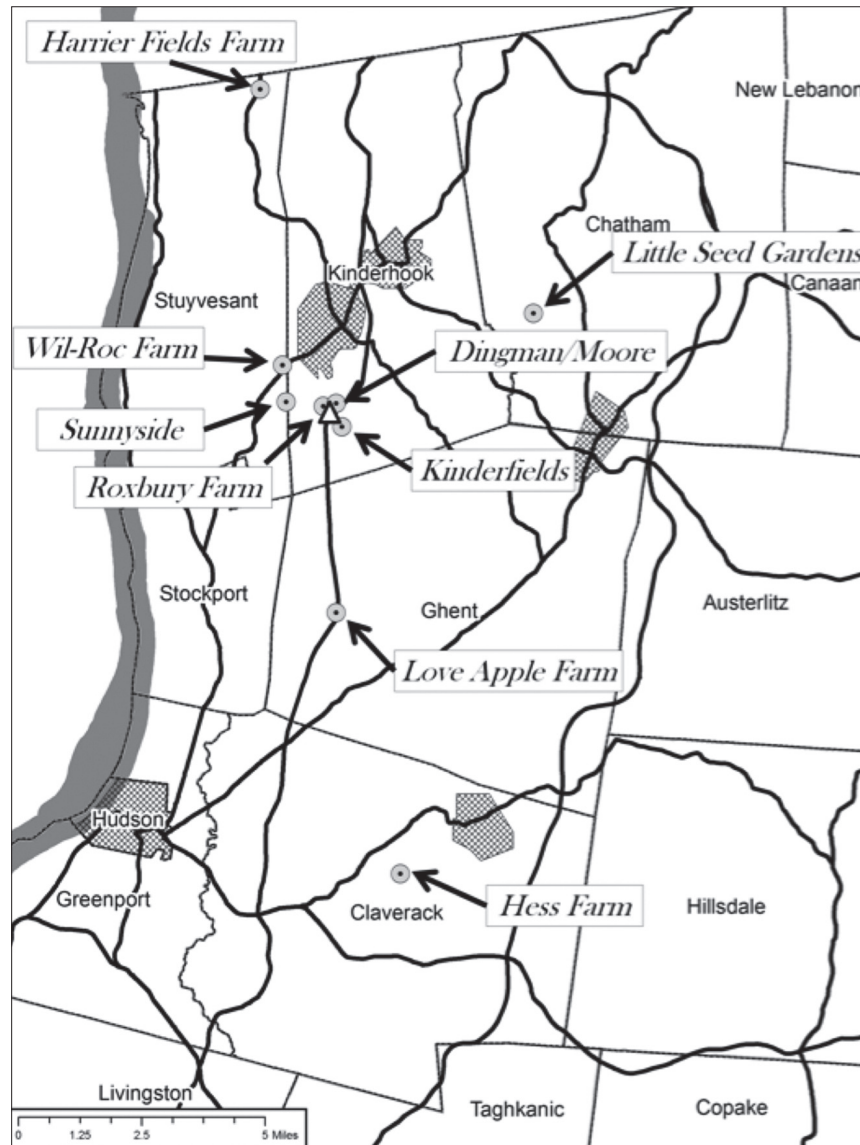


Fig. 70. Locations of the farms and properties discussed in this chapter. Lindenwald is indicated by a triangle at the center of the Roxbury/Kinderfields/Dingman properties.

In 1975, Mary Kennett married Tom Kilcer. The Kilcers were newcomers to Columbia County agriculture in the years following World War II; they were also new to farming itself when they bought a small farm in nearby Stottville in 1951. The overall number of farms continued its precipitous decline in that period—New York State lost nearly half of its total farms between 1900 and 1950 (see Table A)—but there were still

people entering the field, prefiguring the "back to the land" trend of the 1960s and 70s. Tom's father was an engineer in New York, but in Tom's words, "He didn't like working in the city, and he wanted to go into either lobster fishing or farming, and my mother said no way in hell he was going out on a boat, so he went into farming! And they had five boys, so that made labor a little easier." Tom made good on his father's desire to work on the water by completing a college degree in fisheries before going on to a later degree in agronomy. He worked for the Cooperative Extension in Rensselaer County, blending education, research, and farming in much the same way that his predecessor at Sunnyside, Edward Van Alstyne, had done decades earlier; he is still a consultant for the Columbia County agricultural research station as well as consulting on a free-lance basis.

In addition, Tom and Mary continue to cultivate some of the Sunnyside fields themselves, mainly growing hay; they also lease some of the land to other area farmers, including Carl Williams of nearby Wil-Roc Farm. They experimented with growing market vegetables in the early 1980s, particularly sweet potatoes, which were not widely grown by others in the area. But then they decided "the kids were growing up and we could only spend time with them once, so we stopped that and raised kids."

In his capacity as a consultant, Tom has seen the effects of the cycle of consolidation, smaller farm families, and increasing competition on area farms. He notes, "I remember in the 80s there was a lot of farmers that were in their mid to upper 60s, and eventually, if you don't have another generation, there's no one left to work it. That's one of the difficulties of farm transitions. Probably happened ever since Lindenwald, it's always been an issue. Transitions, it's tough." The Kilcer farm in Stottville was one of those that did not see a long-term succession to a new generation. It has gone out of business as a dairy farm, and the Kilcer brother who still lives there "just makes a little hay," in Tom's words. Another brother moved the active dairy farm operation to another property in Genoa, farther upstate in the Finger Lakes district of New York. He has a neighboring farmer grow all the fodder crops he needs and concentrates his own efforts on milking his 120 cows using a state-of-the-art robotic system that has enabled him to reduce his labor costs and remain at least somewhat financially viable.

Tom and Mary's own three daughters seem unlikely to go into farming. On the other hand, the Kilcers are cautiously optimistic about the recent growth in smaller mixed farms that are often being run by new farmers. Tom points out, "That's typical of what you would have had in the 1900s, 1930s, when there was a lot of vegetable farms

that sold in the local food chain," to which Mary adds that this mode of farming and marketing "is more natural, you know, instead of relying on always imported food, which is not natural." The couple point out that there are "a lot of ways to keep a farm going," including adjusting to the changes in speciality fields like horse breeding and training, finding new markets for traditional products like wool in emerging niches like the network of handspinners and weavers, or pursuing innovations like biofuels, which may offer small farmers a way to convert crops to fuel, perhaps using itinerant processors who will travel from farm to farm as Ray Czajkowski did with his harvesters and threshers in the mid-twentieth century, or as Carl Williams does today (see Wil-Roc Farm, below).

The Kennett and Kilcer families grew very close to Seymour Magee, who worked full-time for them starting in the mid-1970s (see Fig. 71). With his antiquated farm equipment, he was no longer able to make his own family's farm on Old Post Road profitable, and so he rented those fields to others and sold his labor and skills to better-capitalized neighboring farms. As he grew older, the "new" families at Sunnyside took care of him, and when he died in 1992, he was living at Tom and Mary's home. A letter to the editor of a local paper eulogized him in ways reminiscent of Ephraim Best's obituary, noting his deep knowledge of the area and his unpretentious way of life:

Seymour loved his land, woods, and home. He appeared completely satisfied and at peace with his unassuming lifestyle. He was impeccably honest and honorable. Unfortunately, he has taken with him a knowledge of the history of Kinderhook which will never be retrieved... Seymour was the ultimate outdoorsman, marksman, farmer and public servant. He lived in true harmony with the earth. (Simonsen 1992)

Seymour represented an older generation of Columbia County farmers who were dwindling in numbers as the twentieth century came to a close. Few people from the older area families were still farming; the last member of the Van Alstyne family to cultivate land from the original homestead was Elizabeth K. Van Alstyne, known as "E.K." or "Lizzie." The Van Alstyne land had been divided into three sections during the nineteenth century, with Sunnyside and neighboring Orchard Home on the eastern side of Route 9 and the third farm just to the west. It was this third property that Lizzie inherited. She was actually born at the Gables Farm that was purchased in the 1930s by Ray Czajkowski, but she grew up in the grand home on the third Van Alstyne farm. In her young adulthood, she attended Barnard College and worked for a New York City publishing company, at Macy's, and elsewhere, but when her mother died, in 1951, she

came back to Columbia County to help her father, who was at that time farming part-time while also selling real estate. The family's three-story mansion, like the others built by this branch of the Van Alstyne in the early nineteenth century, had originally been a showplace, but by the 1970s, it was a rundown dwelling for the aging woman who lived there nearly without heat. In a 1976 *New York Times* article on the farm, Lizzie noted that her farm operation was not a modern one, and that manure was still shoveled and cows milked by hand. But she also made it clear that she was continuing to farm because she believed it was essential to maintain a working agricultural economy. "People just don't understand farmers and farmers' problems," she told the *Times* reporter. "And one of these days, they're going to have to worry about how to get enough to eat" (Faber 1976:35). Lizzie farmed until she was in her 80s, assisted toward the end by a younger man named John Little. The dairy barn burned in 1977, and Little rebuilt it; in the early 1980s, the farm had two dozen Holstein and other cows, with ambitions to double the size of the herd (Aronson 1981:67). But it appears that these plans died with Lizzie, who became the last member of this branch of the Van Alstyne to farm the family's land.



Fig. 71. Seymour Magee at Lindenwald, undated (possibly in the 1970s when he shared his knowledge of the property and the neighborhood with park historian Bill Jackson). (Mary Kennett Kilcer)



Fig. 72. Elizabeth K. ("E.K." or "Lizzie") Van Alstyne on her farm in 1976, aged 70. (*New York Times* Jan. 28, 1976)



Fig. 73. The main house at Sunnyside in 2010.

Dingman Farmstead (Kinderhook)

By the 1970s, Edith Stanley, who owned the old Dingman home north of Lindenwald, had become, like Lizzie Van Alstyne, an elderly and somewhat eccentric woman who represented a living tie to Kinderhook's old Dutch families and farms. And like Lizzie, Edith did not have the resources to maintain the mid-eighteenth-century house (see Fig. 10) and its many outbuildings. When she died in 1974, the property was so dilapidated that the realtor who showed it to a young woman tried to turn around and drive away as soon as it came into view. But the prospective customer, Caryn Moore, was enchanted by the old house and huge yard. She and her husband Ron were searching for a restoration project; Ron, who had been a history major in college and had recently gotten out of the Coast Guard, was working as a preservation woodworker and builder, and the nearly-ruined Dingman house presented an enticing challenge to his skills and the young couple's determination.

While they do not consider their renovation complete yet, the Moores have substantially restored the house, many of the outbuildings, and the grounds over the past 35 years. They started by clearing out Edith Stanley's accumulation of objects in the house and smaller buildings (Fig. 74) and shoring up decayed walls and foundations, eventually rebuilding and refinishing virtually everything. Some outbuildings were too rotten to save; the Moores have added some others, including relocating Ken Campbell's small antique shop, a building clearly made from recycled materials that was being dismantled by the National Park Service after the park was created.

A particularly striking feature of the property today is its extensive gardens. Caryn Moore notes that her own grandmother was an avid gardener, and that Ron's grandmother grew or raised virtually all of her own food, including grains and meat, and sold eggs in the same kind of small food business that Edith Stanley pursued. The Moores, and particularly Caryn, cleared Edith's overgrown gardens, saving and transplanting some plants that she discovered there, and created a series of ornamental and food garden plots, including rebuilding the "long walk," a geometric pattern of low fences and stone walkways that the Wagoners had added to the south side of the house. The gardens give a sense of what the property looked like when the Wagoners, the last family to occupy this house as part of a working farm, lived there and made it a showcase for their own aspirations to prosperous gentility. Like the Van Alen house not far north on 9H, the old Dingman property today has been rescued from decay and beautifully restored, but it has also been detached from the agricultural context within which it was built.



Fig. 74. The barn at the old Dingman property, likely dating to the Wagoner occupancy, was all but a ruin when Caryn and Ron Moore bought the property in the 1970s. (courtesy of Caryn Moore)



Fig. 75. Part of the "long walk," with pergola, to the south of the present-day Moore house.

Kinderfields (Kinderhook)

Albion Eckert, who bought the farm across from Lindenwald from the Hoes family in 1955, was the last in a long line of Dutch or German farmers in this location (Worsfold 2009:13-14). When Eckert sold the property in 1969, it went through a series of short-term ownerships by people from outside the county who used it primarily as a vacation home or country retreat. Michael Blase, who owned it from 1969-1974, was an Albany doctor who kept a few horses at the farm; he sold it to Anthony and Jean Pizzirusso, who also seem to have been horse-owners¹⁵ and who sold it in turn to Edward and Rosalind Hernandez in 1980. The Hernandezes kept it only five years, although at first it appeared to answer their hopes of finding a beautiful farm where they could keep and ride their horses. Edward, a psychiatrist who was originally from Spain, had met Rosalind while in practice in London; both were equestrians, and moved to the U.S. in search of their dream farm. They kept five horses at the property, grew hay to feed them, and may have been responsible for the network of horse trails through the woods on the ridge east of the house. The climate proved too cold for the couple, however, and they moved south to Virginia (Worsfold 2009:14).

After a two-year ownership by a couple named Chew, the farm was bought in 1987 by Frank and Pat Schwaab, Morgan horse breeders from Westchester, New York. The Schwaabs undertook quite extensive renovations to the house, barns, fences, and grounds, including building a state-of-the-art eight-stall stable building with stained-glass windows and a 60 by 100 foot indoor riding arena. Just as these improvements were finished, however, the couple returned to Westchester for unknown reasons (Worsfold 2009:15). It may be that the Kinderhook farm was more enjoyable as a short-term challenge rather than a long-term home for the Schwaabs.

The owners between 1992 and 1998 replicated some of the patterns of connection between this rural Hudson Valley neighborhood and seats of power in New York and Washington, D.C. Mark Helprin was a well-known author who was active in Republican Party circles, including as a foreign policy advisor and speechwriter for Senator and Presidential aspirant Robert Dole. Raised in Hudson, Helprin had always wanted a farm in the Hudson Valley. He moved there with his wife, mother, and two daughters in 1992,

¹⁵ A 1978 letter in the park's files indicates a Long Island address for the Pizzirusso family at a riding academy, suggesting that they, like the Hernandezes, were serious equestrians. File L1425, Adjacent Lands Study Land Acquisition, Esmt #1. MAVA files.

changing the name from Sleepy Hollow Farm (its name since 1955) to North Star Farm. The Helprins also undertook major renovation, including reinforcing and reconfiguring some of the basic structure and turning a 1921 barn built by Ernest Hoes into a two-bedroom apartment and a multi-room writing studio. The main driveway that led down to Route 9H was blocked with an earthen berm and the main entranceway relocated to Old Post Road, to the south; Bob Worsfold speculates that this may have been done because Old Post Road was "clearly a more elegant and prestigious address" (Worsfold 2009:16-17). Helprin leased some of the fields to Carl Williams of Wil-Roc Farm, who grows fodder crops on many fields in the area, but apparently asked that Williams not use commercial fertilizers, out of environmental concerns.

However, rural life did not seem to suit the Helprins after all, and when they sold the farm 1998 to the current owners, Bob and Quintina Worsfold, the renovations were still incomplete. The Worsfolds renamed the property "Kinderfields" and made good use of the stables and other horse facilities built by previous owners but not used by the Helprins. Born in New Jersey in the 1920s, Bob Worsfold is the son of a British immigrant who came to the U.S., like Margaret Burch's father, in search of opportunity during Europe's post-World-War-I economic doldrums. Bob completed college on the G.I. Bill after serving in World War II and worked his way up in the pharmaceutical business, eventually becoming the CEO of Estée Lauder International. After retirement, he and Tina went in search of horse farms in the northeast; they are currently active in the local riding scene, including the Old Chatham Hunt Club, an organization that faithfully reproduces the British model of keeping a pack of dogs (beagles, in this case) and holding periodic fox hunts to which members bring their own horses. Bob has also been a very active member of the Friends of Lindenwald and has been involved in land preservation and other projects at and around the national park (including the placement of a statue of Martin Van Buren in the center of Kinderhook several years ago).

Bob has energetically cleared the edges of fields that were beginning to be grown over with brush, and he continues to lease about 160 acres of the 200-acre farm to Carl Williams to grow soy, corn, and hay. Unlike Mark Helprin, Bob believes that commercial fertilizers and pesticides are necessary to keep the fields fully productive, although he acknowledges some uneasiness about them as well. His larger concern is that the county's farm fields remain in agricultural production, something that he sees as threatened by the tastes and preferences of many newcomers who dislike the

realities of modern farming and who thus, ironically, threaten the continuation of the pastoral character that attracted them to the area in the first place. Unlike landowners who let their old fields revert to forest or refuse to lease them to farmers, Bob feels a sense of responsibility for seeing that his historic farm is cultivated. "This is a working farm," he wrote in his 2009 history of his property. "It can be tidy, but it will never be a manufactured showplace as in suburbia" (Worsfold 2009:19). Himself a newcomer from suburbia, Bob is both typical in his interest in history, heritage, and the preservation of the county's rural landscape and somewhat unusual in his tolerance for the practices of modern industrial agriculture, which he sees as necessary to maintaining the landscape he wants to see preserved.

Wil-Roc Farm (Kinderhook)

Any researcher exploring present-day farming in the northwestern quadrant of Columbia County quite quickly hears the name Carl Williams.¹⁶ Carl cultivates about 1,600 acres of land in the area, including a good deal in the immediate Lindenwald area. His farm, Wil-Roc, owns about 640 acres; the rest is leased from other property owners who are not farming full-time (or at all), including Bob Worsfold, the Kennetts and Kilcers at Sunnyside, and the Bortugnos south of Lindenwald. The Williams family moved to Kinderhook from Danbury, Connecticut in the late 1950s. A multi-generational farming family, they were finding themselves priced out of what was then a rapidly expanding suburban real estate market. They found more affordable farmland along Route 9 just south of Kinderhook Village, purchasing one of the area's older farms just as Ray Czajkowski had done with the neighboring Gables Farm sometime earlier.

Like Czajkowski, the Williamses followed the conventional model of industrialized agriculture, building up a family dairy farm that has pursued the ever-receding goal of profitability in a time of state-imposed price controls on milk and over-production stemming from farmers' own attempts to produce enough to break even. The farm currently has about 600 cows, large by Columbia County standards (see Table D) but considerably smaller than the 3,000 or more cows common on western New York State dairy farms or the even larger operations in the American West and Midwest. The cows are housed in a confined feeding area and fed from silage (hay, corn, soy, and alfalfa)

¹⁶ Information about the Williams family and Wil-Roc Farm is primarily drawn from an informal interview with Carl Williams on March 25, 2010, and from interviews with Tredwell and Margaret Burch and Tom Kilcer.

grown on the fields owned and leased by the Williamses. Wil-Roc Farm belongs to Dairy Farmers of America, a national cooperative with 18,000 members, including more than 1,500 in the northeast. Although the number of dairy farmers in the region is plunging precipitously (Columbia County lost 19% of its dairy farms in the five years between the 2002 and 2007 agricultural censuses alone), production remains high—members of this one cooperative alone produce almost three billion pounds of milk annually.¹⁷ Wil-Roc's milk is sold mainly to distributors and food processing companies in the Boston area who sell it in liquid form as well as making it into cheese, ice cream, and other products.¹⁸



Fig. 76. Wil-Roc Farm, a conventional dairy farm on Route 9 just south of Kinderhook Village, was purchased by the Williams family of Connecticut in 1958.

Carl has invested in sizeable machines and equipment with which he is able to cultivate a large amount of land. Like Ray Czajkowski, he keeps his own farming operation solvent in part by contracting out his labor and equipment to others who

¹⁷ Information about Dairy Farmers of America is from the coop's website (www.dfamilk.com/) and from interviews with Carl Williams and Tom Kilcer.

¹⁸ According to the DFA website, companies who buy milk from Dairy Farmers of America in the Boston area include Breyer's, Dean Foods, Great Lakes Cheese, Farmland Dairies, HP Hood, Hershey Foods, Kraft, Leprino, and Sorrento Cheese.

cannot grow fodder crops as cost-effectively. Tredwell Burch noted that his own family used to work many small pieces of land, as the deProsses did at Lindenwald, but with Carl Williams' 12-foot wide mower, "He wouldn't even touch [a smaller parcel] because he'd go twice, he'd be done with it. So he wouldn't bother." Industrial farming practices thus continue to shape some Columbia County land to fit highly-productive methods and equipment, ranging from cultivating and harvesting machinery to the pesticides and fertilizers they are able to apply.

Table D: Columbia County farms with milk cows, 2007				
# milk cows per farm	# of farms in category	% of CC dairy farms	average # cows/farm	total # cows
1-9	8	16%	5	37
10-19	4	8%	13	51
20-49	6	12%	no data	no data
50-99	8	16%	68	543
100-199	15	29%	127	1902
200-499	8	26%	329	2635
500+	2	4%	no data	no data
TOTAL	51	100+	-	-
(% Total is larger than 100% because of rounding) Source: 2007 New York State Agricultural Census, p. 343				

Table D. Columbia County farms with milk cows, 2007. (USDA 2007 New York State Agricultural Census, p. 343)

Carl Williams perceives economic, social, and philosophical tensions between industrial farmers like himself and some of the new residents and "sustainable agriculture" farmers who own and cultivate Columbia County farmland. He feels that many people who have moved to the area in search of second homes or a more rural lifestyle "have no clue what today's agriculture is," meaning that their romanticized notions about bucolic agricultural landscapes sit uneasily with tractor noise, manure smells, and other realities of farming. For this reason, he is somewhat skeptical about land trust and preservation efforts designed to protect agricultural land, because the kinds of people involved in those efforts are usually not themselves farmers and do not necessarily understand the pressures of contemporary agriculture. He also points to tensions with newer farmers within the "sustainable" fold, whom he perceives as having an unfair advantage because their size, methods, and upscale customer base helps them gain access to a different, more immediate source of capital (as with CSA farming) and to

protected lands that are not accessible to conventional farmers like himself. At bottom in this debate, of course, is a differing set of values, linked to a large extent with class experience and identity. Carl Williams speaks for the "mainstream" voices in American agriculture who vigorously defend high levels of production and efficiency and argue that today's "alternatives" cannot ensure the abundant, low-cost food that Americans have become accustomed to. In these views, he is carrying on the approach that was followed by Ray Meyer, Ray Czajkowski, and other Columbia County commercial farmers of the previous generation.

At the same time, Wil-Roc Farm finds itself caught in the same cycle of indebtedness, competitive pressure, and over-production that farmers have been experiencing—and trying to escape—since Martin Van Buren's time. According to the market logic that the farm operates within, the only route to profitability (and thus survival for the farm) is to continue to cut labor costs, cultivate more land, and produce more food. But that option has proven to be a dead end for many area dairy farmers; during the short time period when this study was being conducted, two other dairy farms near Wil-Roc, the Bortugno farm immediately south of Lindenwald and the Gumaer Farm in Stuyvesant Falls, went out of business.¹⁹ Carl himself acknowledges that the situation that dairy farmers find themselves in as a result of following this inexorable logic is "pretty crazy." His three children, one of whom is currently attending Cornell University, all intend to follow the family business and to keep this farm running for at least another generation; "It's in the blood," Carl said when asked what motivates people to continue farming in the face of so many obstacles.

Hess Farm (Claverack)

Another area family that has continued in the dairy business despite those obstacles are the Hesses of Claverack. The eighteenth-century farmstead where Jeremiah Hess grew up is still in operation as a twenty-first century dairy farm, run by Marion Hess, her three sons and daughter-in-law.²⁰ Marion's late husband Ken, who died in 2002, was a direct descendant of the farm's founder, Michael Hess. Marion herself grew up

¹⁹ One of the Bortugno sons is now selling flowers and vegetables at area farmer's markets, representing another swing of the pendulum back toward small-scale market farming for this farm.

²⁰ Information about the contemporary Hess farm was gathered primarily through a July 28, 2010 conversation with Marion Hess.

in a nearby farmhouse, the daughter of a farmer who worked at "Talavera," a large estate on Route 9H that is still a working fruit farm (see Phillips 2001 for a history of this farm). When Ken and Marion were first married, the Hess Farm was more of a mixed operation, with just 32 cows and also sheep and chickens. When Ken and his brother took over the business, they moved into specialized dairying, following the trend of the mid- to late-twentieth century.



Fig. 77. The Hess homestead in Claverack.

But unlike the Williams family at Wil-Roc Farm, the Hesses concluded after several decades that "getting big" was not necessarily the best solution for keeping their farm afloat. With several hundred animals, for example, they were required to build a run-off pit for manure, but this was tremendously expensive, and the government mandated the construction and maintenance of the pit but did not supply any funding to help with its costs. The 245-acre Hess Farm also sits on hilly land, much of which is not suitable for growing crops, so the additional cattle meant that the Hesses had to lease additional farmland—always at a premium in this part of the county—to keep the animals fed. Looking ahead, the Hesses decided that rather than continue trying to expand, they would scale back their production to a level that seemed manageable and at least marginally profitable. They determined that 300 cows was the level at which they

could operate the farm using family labor, and they currently maintain that number of cows, making them one of very few multi-generational Columbia County families still cultivating their original farmstead in the difficult agricultural markets of the twenty-first century. Theirs is a conventional dairy farm, but they have chosen not to follow conventional market logic, and have thus far managed to continue a more than two-century family history of farming this land.

Roxbury Farm (Kinderhook)

On Friday afternoons between June and December, cars turn onto the gravel section of Old Post Road just north of Lindenwald and onto the property once owned by Seymour Magee and his family. In the barn behind the former Magee house, the visitors pick up vegetables from bins and baskets, reading from a posted list (Fig. 78) to determine what to take. Each week, similar scenes take place at 15 other pick-up locations in Columbia County, the Capital District, and New York City, distributing food to a total of about 1,200 families who have paid about \$500 for their share of the produce from Roxbury Farm, a large CSA (Community Supported Agriculture) operation that now cultivates many of the fields on Martin Van Buren's farm and its neighbors. The case studies above show farmers and landowners responding to changing market conditions through largely conventional methods—selling up, scaling back, “getting big.” With Roxbury Farm and others practicing “sustainable” agriculture within an emerging alternative paradigm for farming, we see a response that is both new and in some ways reminiscent of much older patterns of growing, using, and exchanging food and land, while overlapping with some of the practices and characteristics of industrial agriculture. Understanding the genesis of this current use of the Lindenwald fields requires pulling together a number of strands: biodynamic agriculture, the CSA movement, the emergence of land trusts as a preservation tool, and the personal stories of the Roxbury farmers.

Like Wil-Roc, Roxbury Farm began elsewhere—in this case, quite near the Hess Farm in Claverack. It was started in 1989 by Jean-Paul Courtens, a Dutch immigrant who came to the U.S. after completing a four-year course in biodynamic agriculture at the Warmonderhof, a vocational school in central Holland. Jean-Paul's family background included both artists and farmers; one set of great-grandparents emigrated first to Argentina and then to Minnesota in search of land where they could run a vegetable farm but ended up returning to Holland (“Minnesota was basically too cold for them”).

Jean-Paul himself intended to become an artist, then an art therapist, but quickly realized "that was absolutely not what I should have done. . . [I] took my bicycle and started travelling in south Wales and Ireland, and since I had no money, ended up working on farms by default, and realized that I found my passion." This passion was fueled initially by the convergence of a recent agricultural movement and an older one: WWOOFing (Willing Workers on Organic Farms, founded in 1971 by a London woman who matched volunteers in search of a rural experience with farmers in need of labor [Guardian 2006]) and Rudolf Steiner's biodynamic agriculture, which as we have seen emerged in northern Europe after World War I among farmers concerned about the consequences of industrial farming for soil fertility and animal health. Jean-Paul found the holistic, non-reductionist approach of anthroposophy deeply congenial to his own way of approaching the world, and embraced the Warmonderhof's combination of skills-based training and education in spiritual science. When he arrived in the U.S., he remained within the biodynamic network, working at the Hawthorne Valley Farm in Ghent as a vegetable grower.

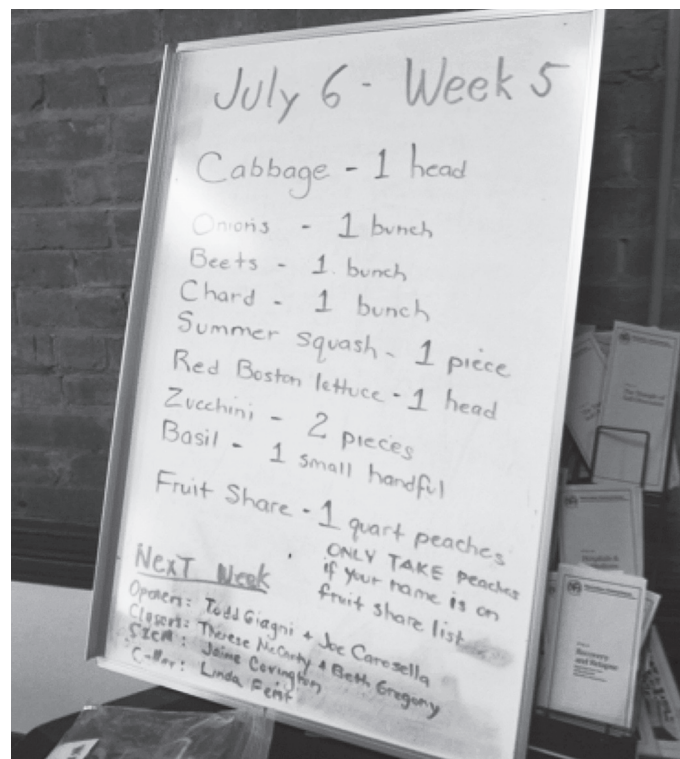


Fig. 78. A sign at the Schenectady pick-up location for Roxbury Farm's CSA tells shareholders what is in their share for that week.

Biodynamic farming and anthroposophy were already well-established on a small scale in the U.S., with the movement historically centered around New York City and the Hudson Valley. Hawthorne Valley had been a node in that network since 1972, when a group of teachers, farmers, and artisans from New York City bought an old dairy farm in Harlemville (a hamlet within the town of Ghent) as a place to connect urban Waldorf School students with the processes of growing food and acting as stewards for a piece of land (Hawthorne Valley Farm 2007). In a 2010 interview, Rachel Schneider, one of those early Waldorf teachers, recalls her recognition of the way that education, agriculture, and anthroposophy converged in that experience, all within the burgeoning "back to the land" movement and critique of modern industrial agriculture of the early 1970s:

My experiences turned my world upside down, because some of the children that were to my point of view the most troubled that I was working with became shining stars when they were asked to be out of doors, asked to take on real work, asked to take on meaningful work that served others, and at the same time were able to exercise their whole being—their thinking, their feeling, and their wills. And that kind of engagement made a huge deep impression on me about the relationship between education and agriculture for the development of healthy human beings.

"Community Supported Agriculture" emerged from within this small and closeknit network of biodynamic farmers. Those who developed this model of farming were influenced primarily by Steiner's thought but also by E.F. Schumacher's "small is beautiful" approach and by other attempts to return to smaller-scale, more reciprocal modes of farming, such as "subscription farming" in the U.S. and Chile's cooperative farming movement of the early 1970s (itself a reflection of the very long-standing use of the cooperative model by farmers in many parts of the world) (DeMuth 1993; McFadden 2004; Wilson College 2010). These and other strands came together in the mid-1980s on two New England farms: Temple-Wilton Community Farm in New Hampshire and Indian Line Farm in South Egremont, Massachusetts, just over the state border from Columbia County.²¹ Farmers there included several of German, Swiss, and Dutch background. Robyn Van En, who owned Indian Line Farm, began by selling shares of her 1986 apple

²¹ Although some histories of CSA have pointed to the previous emergence of the teikei movement in Japan, started in the mid-1960s by women who were concerned about the effects of pesticides in food, it appears that American CSA was much more influenced by European (and particularly biodynamic) ideas, and that its early practitioners became aware of teikei only after they had begun to develop their own model (McFadden 2004).

harvest, and expanded to a larger selection of fruit and vegetables the following year. Van En was an important popularizer of the CSA concept. In a 1995 article, she noted that there were at least 500 CSA farms in the U.S. (Van En 1995); by 2007, the first year in which the U.S. Department of Agriculture census took note of the category, there were more than 12,000. This explosive growth reflects the CSA model's adaptability to many of the goals of the resurgent organic food movement and the newer "eat local" trend that emerged around the turn of the new century. The 2007 agricultural census counted 364 CSA farms in New York State, and a 2010 online listing (LocalHarvest.org) shows 441, suggesting that as a model and an idea, CSA continues to expand. CSA farms, often quite small in size, are responsible for much of the increase that has been seen in the overall number of farms in some parts of the country, including in the northeast (see Fig. 69).

While CSA has been practiced in a variety of ways, the core principle remains the same in all: farmers and consumers enter into a direct relationship with one another in which consumers collectively pay to cover the farm's production costs and in return receive a share of what is produced. In essence, this model circumvents virtually all of the intermediary layers of distribution, processing, and financing that have developed in the agricultural sector since the early industrial age. Although many CSA farms (including Roxbury Farm) make use of industrial technologies like tractors and computers, they remove themselves to some extent from the banking and marketing structures within which many "conventional" farmers continue to struggle. The concept has spread far beyond the biodynamic network, but Steiner's underlying principle of an "associative economy" based on mutuality informs all CSAs. In the words of Hawthorne Valley Farm's Educator Coordinator, Rachel Schneider, "[CSA] asks the consumer to have more interest in the farmer than in themselves. And it asks the farmer to have more interest in the consumer than in himself. [O]ur entire economic system is based on self-interest, and the CSA model is asking to reverse that thought." Based on communitarian values and a rejection of the social, economic, and environmental fragmentation inherent in approaching agriculture as an industrial process and food as a commodity product, CSA farmers create an alternative market structure that in many ways resembles the smaller-scale, relationship-based types of exchange predominant in the Hudson Valley until the late nineteenth century. CSA, then, is an important facet of the current attempt to reshape relationships between agricultural producers and consumers. Where CSA differs from things like conventional farmers' markets and farmstands is in sharing the financial

risks of farming more equally between farmers and their customers, creating a direct economic relationship very different from those of other direct markets.

Roxbury Farm was an important early adopter of CSA, and it is now one of the largest CSA farms in the country.²² In 1990, the second year of the farm's operation in Claverack, Jean-Paul was approached by group of anthroposophists in New York City who wanted to create a relationship with a farmer. Roxbury's CSA began the next year with 30 member households who picked up their weekly shares at one of New York's "greenmarkets."²³ That same year, a group from the Committee for Peace and Justice of the Albany Catholic Diocese contacted the farm about establishing a similar relationship—this time within the framework of a Christian concern about environmental stewardship—that led to the formation of a delivery center in the Capital District. A Columbia County naturopathic doctor served as the nucleus for a third delivery point. All three sites grew rapidly: Roxbury Farm CSA had 400 members by 1993 and 650 by 1997. Jean-Paul became a well-known speaker and trainer on CSA farming, and created an apprenticeship program known as CRAFT (Collaborative Regional Alliance for Farmers Training) that has since expanded into California, Pennsylvania, the upper Midwest, and Canada.

Changes in Jean-Paul's personal circumstances threatened the long-term stability of the farm and the CSA in 1999. Faced with the end of the lease on the land in Claverack, farmer and shareholders worked to find a solution, aided by Equity Trust, a Massachusetts organization that challenges purely market-oriented conceptions of land tenure. Drawing on many of the same spiritual, social, and political values that have motivated many CSA farmers and shareholders, Equity Trust founder Chuck Matthei argued, "Property can never be wholly private or wholly public, but must be seen as a partnership between the individual and the community" (Matthei 1993)—an idea that he saw as particularly relevant for farmland because of farming's crucial role in sustaining societies. This kind of layered ownership, reflecting a sense of property as involving

²² One of the few comparably-sized CSAs is the 1,200-shareholder Angelic Organics near Chicago, founded in 1990 by John Peterson, also a biodynamic farmer. Farm Fresh to You in Capay, California claims a 6,000-household membership.

Unless otherwise noted, information about the development of Roxbury Farm is from the farm's website (a "history" page, accessed on February 3, 2010, is no longer available) and from interviews with Jody Bollyut, Jean-Paul Courtens, and founding shareholder Dick Shirey.

²³ This network of farmers' markets was founded in 1976 and has grown to encompass more than 50 locations in the city, selling produce and other food from 200 farmers and fishermen (<http://www.grownyc.org/greenmarket>).

an interlocking bundle of interests and rights, has become increasingly common for CSAs, which tend to involve younger farmers who seldom inherit farms or have access to the capital needed to purchase prime farmland outright.²⁴ Land trusts have been an important facet of this kind of farmland access and protection.

Already an enthusiastic supporter of CSA, Chuck Matthei offered to help fund the purchase of a new farm for Roxbury; a capital campaign by shareholders supplied the balance. Jean-Paul hoped to be able to buy Ray Meyer's fields around Lindenwald, but discovered that Meyer had already agreed to sell the 126 acres to the Open Space Institute. As noted in the first section of this chapter, however, OSI was not interested in becoming actively involved in agriculture, and it responded positively to Jean-Paul's overtures about gaining access to good farmland in the Lindenwald neighborhood. OSI helped to facilitate a number of transactions that enabled the farm's move to Kinderhook and its subsequent expansion. OSI leased (and shortly sold) most of the 126-acre Meyer parcel to Roxbury Farm, as well as buying the development rights to the old Magee farm north of Lindenwald, which infused enough capital to make the Equity Trust/Roxbury Farm purchase of that land possible.²⁵ The years of farming with chemical pesticides and fertilizers by Ray Meyer and others had made much of the Lindenwald farmland unuseable from a biodynamic and organic standpoint, something the farm is still in the process of remediating. But Roxbury was able to continue its operations almost uninterrupted, and the new location enabled the farm to keep expanding its customer base from about 600 members in 2000 to 950 six years later and about 1,200 in 2010.

The relationship of the farm, the national park, and their land trust partners in that decade shows both the areas of compatibility and some of the points of tension in the increasingly widespread alliance among land trusts, historic sites, and working farms. Roxbury Farm helps to preserve the agricultural and historical landscape that is a core interest for both the NPS and the land trusts, but it also offers more specific benefits because of its biodynamic methods and philosophy. These are in keeping with environmentalist concerns—broadly shared by OSI and the NPS—about the effects of

²⁴ After the unexpected death of CSA pioneer Robyn Van En in 1997, her Indian Line Farm in South Egremont, Massachusetts was purchased by a community land trust in partnership with the E.F. Schumacher Society and the Nature Conservancy, an international conservation organization. This partnership has been seen as a template for other such collaborations and layered models of farmland ownership (McFadden 2004).

²⁵ Equity Trust holds the title on that land, while Roxbury Farm has a 99-year lease for its use.

chemical pesticides and fertilizers on soil, water, and human health. The biodynamic approach also creates striking similarities with the social and economic landscapes of farming in Martin Van Buren's day. Roxbury is a mixed farm reminiscent of Columbia County agriculture before the early twentieth century, quite different from contemporary commercial farms that specialize in a few commodity products, and also different from CSAs that grow mainly or exclusively vegetables. Roxbury views its animals—cows, sheep, pigs, and chickens—as a crucial component of its operations because they provide manure for fertilizer and thus strengthen the farm's internal nutrient cycle—a key part of Rudolf Steiner's vision of how each farm should function as a holistic living organism. And in its orientation to local and regional food networks, it reflects many of the agricultural and social patterns of Martin Van Buren's era. This is not a living history farm, with all the baggage of nostalgic separation from the real farming economy, but a working contemporary operation attempting to reinvigorate—and to a large extent reinvent—small-scale agricultural economy and production. The fact that Roxbury's founder is himself Dutch adds one more layer of resonance to the farm's connection with a national park that preserves the home of a Dutch-American President and farmer.

At the same time, there are some divergences of philosophy and motivation in the park/farm/land trust collaboration, and these have made themselves clear at Lindenwald in the past decade, particularly since the 2009 park boundary expansion. The differing imperatives of historic preservation, public land management, and working agriculture have made themselves felt in recent planning discussions and negotiations at the park, particularly in an ongoing General Management Plan process and a series of discussions among the three partners (the national park, the farm, and the Open Space Institute) involved in co-stewardship of the majority of the Lindenwald lands. A core issue has been a 25-acre parcel of land that was part of the original 126-acre Meyer property that the Open Space Institute purchased in 2000. This piece of land held the only existing set of farm buildings where Roxbury Farm could immediately establish its operations; the buildings included a nineteenth-century farmworker cottage (currently used for farmworker housing) and a number of greenhouses and cinder block structures that Meyer built in the 1950s. From the park's point of view, the buildings were problematic because most were built after the park's period of significance, they were in fairly close visual proximity to the Lindenwald mansion, and they were not in compliance with NPS safety and other standards. The farm initially hoped to be able to occupy the buildings

indefinitely, but the arrangement worked out between OSI and the park was that the 25-acre parcel would be sold outright to the NPS in the event of a boundary expansion, with an extendable short-term lease to the farm. The idea of a shared campus of new buildings that would serve the operational needs of both the farm and the park (whose administration facilities currently occupy a set of "temporary" trailers from the 1970s) was proposed early in the partnership discussions. This seemed to offer exciting possibilities for shared interpretive and educational activities, but raising funds for such a venture appeared unrealistic. The park's ultimate goal was (and remains) to demolish the non-period, non-compliant buildings once the farm is able to rebuild its core infrastructure on one of the other properties that it owns in the neighborhood.²⁶ The park has extended the short-term lease (currently to 2020, with the possibility of going as far as 2026) as a way to ease the transition for the farm, but the farmers have emphasized that additional time will not necessarily offset the financial burden of rebuilding their infrastructure elsewhere. Their likely responses to this challenge include a substantial capital campaign, an increase in production, and perhaps even a shift away from growing vegetables toward a more grass-based, less labor-intensive farm operation, reflecting the kinds of adaptation that farmers must constantly make to changing economic conditions. Any of these will have a significant effect on how Roxbury's farmers spend their time, how the farm does business, and the amount of time or motivation it has for continuing to cultivate its partnership with the national park. Negotiations over these issues, which continued to take place as this study was being concluded, reflect the complexities of merging the needs of a non-profit federal agency and a for-profit working farm. Despite good will on all sides, difficulties remain in working out the many layers of regulatory, legal, financial, and logistical questions involved in the shared stewardship and use of this land.

In addition to these specific tensions within their partnership with a land trust and a historic site, Roxbury's owners and workers continually grapple, like all farmers, with weather conditions, finances, equipment and transportation issues, and labor (a handful of farm staff are full-time and many are seasonal, supplemented by some volunteer labor by shareholders). But its biodynamic orientation also makes it something of a laboratory for ethical living and farming. The farm's weekly newsletters are filled with meditations on what it means to grow and sell food in a way that honors the work of the farmers, the

²⁶ Interviews and conversations undertaken for this study did not fully clarify the various assumptions and understandings of the different partners during the initial 1999-2000 land and management transactions.

wishes of the consumers, the investment of funders, and the health of the land. This is a nurturant vision of farming; as Jean-Paul notes, "You talk about animal husbandry, but in some ways it's also very much a maternal activity. And in many ways you are in the business of creation"—or as Hawthorne Valley Farm's motto phrases it, biodynamic farmers are "Nurturing the land that nurtures us."

These ethical and social issues also extend to questions about who participates in the local food and sustainable agriculture movements. Many of the people involved with Roxbury Farm are involved in actively debating questions relating to equity and labor, many of which intersect with social class. Local, organic, and sustainable food products are often seen—with some justification—as luxuries for more prosperous consumers rather than as a realistic solution for changing the American food supply as a whole. Roxbury has addressed these critiques by working to keep its share price as affordable as possible, reducing the cost for low-income shareholders, and adding delivery points in lower-income urban areas, like Harlem. At the same time, Roxbury's farmers and workers themselves earn decidedly less than the majority of the shareholders, creating a perception of a class divide that echoes long-standing anxieties about farmers' social status in an industrialized and professionalized society. According to Dick Shirey, one of the founding shareholders from the Capital District, the farmers and their customers are "not seen necessarily as equals" in terms of income, benefits, and lifestyle. This difference, which relates directly to the price of a share, creates something of a power imbalance within the CSA that is troubling to some. "To my mind, this is where the notion of community and local support breaks down and where the class difference emerges," says Shirey. A Steiner-inspired way of reframing this issue is to reclaim—as Jean-Paul does proudly in a September 2010 newsletter column—the label of "peasant farmer" (Courtens 2010:1-2). Embracing the term "peasant" revalorizes a mode of farming that was beginning to be superceded while Martin Van Buren was still living at Lindenwald, and asserts the value and importance of mutuality and a life lived in intimacy with the sources of our food.



Fig. 79. Volunteer labor by Roxbury Farm shareholders enables the farm to reduce its reliance on both mechanical cultivation and seasonal paid farmworkers.

Love Apple Farm (Ghent)

Three final short case studies will complete this chapter, exploring some different facets of the “local food” and “sustainable agriculture” sector of Columbia County that Roxbury Farm is an important part of. The first, Love Apple Farm on Route 9H in Ghent, is an orchard and fruit farm that its founder, Chris Loken, refers to as a “Hydra-headed operation” encompassing a retail farmstand selling fresh fruit, ice cream, jams and other products from this farm and others, pick-your-own (PYO) sales, and small wholesaling, as well as a playground and petting zoo.²⁷ The 80-acre farm grows many varieties of apples, cherries, currants, gooseberries, peaches, plums, nectarines, apricots, and berries, plus tomatoes, pumpkins, and some other vegetables. Fully organic in its early years, it

²⁷ Information about Love Apple Farm is drawn from two visits in June 2010, one of which included an informal interview with Chris Loken, documented in fieldnotes.

is now a low-spray operation. Fruit farming is currently a fairly minor part of Columbia County's agricultural economy—in 2007, it accounted for just 12% of the county's total farm output, down from 16% five years earlier (see Table E)—but it is an important attraction for tourists and others who are drawn to the area's lush farm landscapes. As with CSA shareholders who volunteer at "their" farms as a way to gain a more hands-on experience of what growing food is like, picking fruit or buying a homemade pie gives many visitors and residents a sense of being closer to their food supply and often to the hand-skills associated with home cooking, food processing and preserving.

	total CC farms	total CC farm acreage	fruit farms	% of total farms	fruit farm acreage	% of total acreage
2007	554	106,574	64	12%	2,679	2.5%
2002	498	119,718	82	16%	3985	3.3%

Table E. Columbia County orchards and fruit farms (National Agricultural Statistics Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture)

Chris Loken, a former actor and still a writer, grew up on a Wisconsin farm but did not learn to farm himself until after 1969, when he bought property in Columbia County and essentially taught himself on the job. Finding that "Cities are stifling to me," he moved with his wife Randae, a former model, to what was then an arid and bankrupt small farm with a history dating back to the eighteenth century. Love Apple is very much more aligned with the conventional market than most CSA or biodynamic farms, but it is similar to other new farms in that Chris made a determination early on that he would only sell directly to customers (whether retail or small wholesalers) so that he could set his own prices rather than being beholden to what he refers to as "big wholesale"—"the Board of Trade or the Chicago Commodity Exchange." Chris points to the importance of flexibility in farming and encapsulates his approach as "find a niche market and be prepared to move with it."

A recent addition to the Love Apple farmstand is "Leticia's Cosina," which serves homemade Mexican food cooked by the wife of one of the Lokens' long-time seasonal workers. Like many farms in the area, Love Apple employs a number of immigrant farmworkers, and like some other farmers interviewed for this report, Chris Loken said that he would hire more if he were able to get more visas for them. There is a concentration of Mexican families in Valatie, near a small Mexican grocery store, and farmworkers from Central America, the Caribbean, and elsewhere live throughout the

county, reflecting the ongoing difficulty for farmers of finding experienced and steady but seasonal laborers who will work for a wage that is not high by American standards. Most of these farmworkers are themselves farmers, whose income from picking apples or vegetables in Columbia County helps to keep their own families on the land.



Fig. 80. “Leticia’s Cosina” at Love Apple Farm, Ghent.

Little Seed Gardens (Chatham)

Willy Denner and Claudia Kenny of Little Seed Gardens in Chatham represent another strand of the “back to the land” and “sustainable agriculture” movements.²⁸ Like many of the newer farmers, they came from non-farming backgrounds. Claudia was previously a landscaper, Willy a carpenter with only one farmer in his family, a great-uncle who was a produce grower in New Jersey and who tried his best to convince Willy that selling vegetables was a terrible way to make money. Ignoring this advice, Willy and Claudia “slowly came to believe it was feasible” to take up farming, and they moved to Columbia County, rented a small piece of land to which they gradually added. Finally,

²⁸ Information about Little Seed Gardens is drawn from a June 23, 2010 informal interview with Willy Denner, documented in fieldnotes.

in 1995, they were able to put together the financing to buy a 97-acre farm along the bottomlands of Chatham near the confluence of two creeks, the Stony Kill and the Kline Kill. They operated a 200-share CSA with customers in New York City for several years, making at least one trip to the city each week. Eventually, though, they concluded that they wanted to market their food more locally, and have cut back to a 100-share Columbia County CSA along with selling some food wholesale, some at several farmers' markets a week (see Fig. 81), and also selling some breeding stock from two heritage breeds that they raise, Randall cattle and Suffolk horses. The farm is certified organic.

Like Roxbury Farm, Little Seed grapples with the fact that growing food organically and on a small scale means that it will inevitably be more expensive than industrially-grown commodity crops that have the advantage of economies of scale, much more mechanized production, and frequently government subsidy as well, meaning that the cheaper supermarket produce is more affordable for lower-income consumers. Willy Denner notes that he enjoys selling at farmers' markets because of the opportunity to speak to a broader spectrum of customers than is found in the typical CSA, and points out that the farm gives or sells a share each year to a number of area churches and food pantries. Little Seed's experience also shows how new farmers and new models like CSA can become interwoven over time with the older "conventional" farms in the area. Many of the vegetable growers Willy considers close friends are in fact conventional rather than organic farmers; he appreciates the multi-generational knowledge they have gained through their families and their willingness to share what they know, and Little Seed often shares equipment, organic inputs, labor, and skills with neighbors in turn. Farmers and educators at Hawthorne Valley Farm, with whom Willy and Claudia are very friendly, have similarly worked over time to forge connections with other area farmers of all types and also with the county's business community (an effort aided by the fact that Hawthorne Valley is now one of the county's largest employers). As with the Lokens at Love Apple Farm—an actor and model who were dismissed by area farmers as dilettantes when they first arrived in Ghent—Willy and Claudia's ability to sustain a working farm over time, along with their demonstrations of mutuality, have established them within the social landscape of Columbia County's farm community.



Fig. 81. Family members from Little Seed Garden sell produce to customers at the Chatham Farmers' Market in July 2010.

Harrier Fields Farm (Stuyvesant)

If Jean-Paul Courtens proudly claims the term “peasant farmer,” Mike Scannell of Harrier Fields Farm on Muitzeskill Road in Stuyvesant has taken on the agrarian ideal of the American yeoman farmer—a small, independent operator able to make a living from his land without over-exploiting its resources, importing its nutrients, or indebting himself to banks, corporations, or other purely profit-oriented entities.²⁹ Harrier Fields incorporates about 90 acres just north of Bob Van Alstyne’s Arrow Farm and not far from the Czajkowski family’s original farms. Mike bought the core 60 acres, then an unused

²⁹ Information about Harrier Fields Farm is from a July 8, 2010 informal interview with Mike Scannell and from “Harrier Fields Farm” by Tracy Frisch, *The Valley Table*, October-November 2007 (accessed online at <http://www.hardwickbeef.com/producers.html>).

property that had been part of a larger pre-Civil War mixed farm, in 1983, and has since added additional acreage as well as leasing some land from neighboring farms for growing hay. The property included a farmhouse and complex of four barns (see Fig. 83) dating to 1835, shortly before Martin Van Buren returned to Kinderhook. Unoccupied for about fifty years before Mike purchased it, the farm constituted a kind of time capsule of earlier eras of agriculture, and makes an appropriate setting for a farmer who is attempting to put a very radical critique of modern industrial farming into practice in the twenty-first century.

Mike Scannell brings a varied background—helicopter mechanic in the Vietnam War, longshoreman, rodeo rider, loom-fixer—to his work. His family background, like that of many other new Columbia County farmers, includes some farming but is not a traditional farm family history. Both the paternal and maternal sides of his family included professional people who bought farms during the 1940s, making Mike a second-generation "back to the lander" in some sense. He started life on his grandfather's small dairy farm, but his parents moved away when his father took a job as a golf course superintendent. His mother was a weaver and clothing designer who kept her own small flock of sheep. Both of his parents, then, straddled the line between outdoor and growing work and the service, arts, and recreational sectors. Mike came back to farming largely as a result of reading Wendell Berry's work in the late 1970s while he was recuperating from some broken bones from a rodeo injury. Berry's analysis in *The Unsettling of America* and other works resonated deeply with him, particularly the idea that American farmers had become too dependent on debt financing, petroleum, and imported nutrients. Over the past three decades, he has worked toward a yeoman vision of farming that would have been quite recognizable to Jesse Buel and other agricultural reformers of the 1820s and 1830s, who argued that viable small family farms were the foundation of an enduring democracy in the new (but rapidly changing) nation. This is a vision in which small-scale farming is linked with both civic and spiritual virtue. Mike points to a range of texts as inspirations (including southern agrarianist Andrew Nelson Lytle's essay "The Hind Tit," writing by Albert Howard and Lewis Bromfield, and E. Parmalee Prentice's 1936 work *Farming for Famine*). He also believes that the Christian Bible contains all of the main ideas that are needed in order to farm sustainably—an idea that would have resonated with Edward Van Alstyne at the turn of the twentieth century and also with the Albany Catholics who sought out Roxbury Farm to be "their" farmer in the early 1990s. His

approach is very different from that of biodynamic farmers in many ways—for example, he believes that they do not emphasize the importance of outright land ownership enough—but they are alike in their efforts to re-spiritualize agriculture and to frame the relationship among humans, their food, and the land on which it is produced as a deeply moral contract.



Fig. 82. Mike Scannell of Harrier Fields Farm with one of his Red Devon cows.

After some forays into producing mostly hay and then organic vegetables, both of which continually deplete the soil, Mike concluded that having animals on the farm was essential, and shifted his focus to breeding Red Devon cattle. Devons were a common breed in the American northeast during the colonial period, although like most cattle, they have been bred to be very different since the genetic innovations of the twentieth century. Harrier Fields Farm has been breeding them back to something closer to their eighteenth-century size and shape, when they were, in Mike Scannell's words, essentially "boxes of meat" on very fine legs (see Fig. 82). The farm sells its cows for beef but it also sells genetic stock through artificial insemination. The irony of being engaged in this high-technology trade is not lost on Mike, who acknowledges that the realities of keeping a farm afloat in the contemporary economy make it very difficult to farm as he would

ideally like to. "Under the pressure of usury, it's easy to do things you're not proud of," he told a reporter in 2007, although as time has gone on, he has been able to get closer to his goals, paying off his mortgage by the mid-1990s and finding a diverse local market for his products (Frisch 2007:58). Like Carl Williams, he has reservations about the role of land trusts in maintaining farmland in production, noting that the non-farmers who operate the trusts are not necessarily as knowledgeable as he himself is about the specific habitats and seasonal rhythms of his land. He acknowledges that he has learned a good deal from younger farmers who are also entering the market. Willy Denner and Claudia Kenny at Little Seed Gardens, for example, convinced him that he had to begin basing his prices on a realistic calculation of what it cost him to produce beef on his specific 60-acre farm, rather than working backward from what he believed the market would bear. This insistence on linking food prices with the farmer's actual cost of production is perhaps the most radical aspect of what many of the "new farmers" do. It is a refusal of the market-driven logic that has shaped agriculture since the early nineteenth century, and an assertion that at bottom, all wealth relies on the resources of the earth, which are finite and interconnected.

The uncertainty of farming as a way of life was brought home to Harrier Fields at the end of July 2010, when a hay fire destroyed the entire complex of 1830s barns, along with much of Mike's modern and historic farm equipment, one of the three pairs of draft horses with which he works the fields, and most of the year's hay supply, which Mike had just laboriously gotten in by himself. The Devon cattle, which live outdoors all year round, were not harmed, but the loss of so much infrastructure was devastating to a small farm that continually struggles to remain profitable. Mike and his partner, weaver and educator Joan Harris, intend to rebuild the barn and to persevere at the farm, and a community fund has been set up to help them raise the money that their limited insurance policy did not provide. These are the kinds of risks and reversals that farmers and their allies have tried over the past century to offset through modernization, mechanization, and more predictable "inputs" and "outputs." But in the process, they have created a new set of hazards and problems for which there are no simple solutions, leaving "alternative" farmers like Mike Scannell struggling to replace and reinvent the kinds of local food systems that existed in Martin Van Buren's day and before.



Fig. 83. The c. 1835 barn complex at Harrier Fields Farm, July 2010, shortly before it burned in a hay fire.

Study Themes in This Chapter

Changing agricultural methods and approaches

- emergence of multi-faceted “local food” movement incorporating many new and existing models, including biodynamic farming
- resurgence of direct farm-to-consumer marketing
- new technologies (robotic milking operations, biotechnology for gene sales)
- increase in number of *small* farms after trend toward consolidation, expansion
- some divergence of industrial and alternative farming, but some convergences as well

Farming in a market economy

- organic and “alternative” agriculture become more mainstream
- development of CSA farming, starting in New England/New York
- rise in overall number of farms after many decades of decline
- continued over-production of milk and loss of dairy farms
- agri-tourism, pick-your-own, other retail and consumer experiences increasingly used by farmers to add value, attract customers
- resurgence of local farmers’ markets
- alliances between farmers and land trusts to keep farmland in production
- range of new uses of ideas about heritage and tradition by farms and others within local food movement

The roles of policy and law in farming

- shift in federal farm policy away from protected markets and toward subsidy to offset overproduction
- regulation of “organic” as a label for food
- convergence of government, non-profit, and agricultural sites and groups in protecting, presenting farming to a non-farming public
- land trust movement as a recent set of legal tools that uses resources of private enterprise/ownership to offset environmental and other effects of market pressures

CHAPTER NINE

RECOMMENDATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has worked to document some of the many connections that can be made between the long history of Columbia County agriculture and the themes and topics interpreted at Martin Van Buren NHS. This concluding chapter will return to the questions posed in Chapter One about the synergies and challenges of relationships between historic sites and working farms, and will consider how the research conducted during this study might inform the park's future decisions about the farmland now within its boundaries. The chapter will begin by suggesting a range of specific goals and actions that the park might adopt as part of a more clearly-defined vision for its role in relation to farming. It will then sketch out some sample projects that could strengthen the park's presence within the county's agricultural sector and its relationships with area farmers. It will conclude with a list of areas that could fruitfully be explored in future research, including collaborative research projects that could further the park's overall goals for its involvement in farm-related activities.

Identifying Core Goals

For more than a decade, Martin Van Buren NHS has been actively incorporating consideration of Van Buren's farming activities into its interpretation and special events (most notably at its one-day Harvest Festival, held each September, as well as in wayside markers and ranger tours). And in the past several years, the expanded park boundary has brought questions relating to farmland more fully into the administrative and management realms of the park's operation. In various ways, then, the park has become much more involved with both historic and present-day farming. However, it still lacks a clear statement of goals relating to this involvement. The core recommendation of this report, therefore, is that **the park should develop and articulate a clear vision for its role(s) in relation to the history and present-day practice of farming at Lindenwald and Columbia County**. Further, it should undertake this as soon as possible, ideally within the framework of the General Management Planning process now underway.

There is a wide range of potential roles that the park might adopt, and this report does not recommend any single one. Rather, it will set out some of the options that seem most feasible and appropriate, and will discuss some of the advantages and challenges of

each. These options are by no means mutually exclusive, and it seems most sensible for the park to consider and selectively adopt them in combination with one another. They are discussed separately here as a way to highlight the different central goals of each: to participate in civic discussion, to produce useable historical knowledge, to support the park's primary farm partner, and to expand its range of farm partners, respectively.

- 1. Initiate and/or participate in area farming projects that in some way reflect the issues and questions associated with agriculture during Martin Van Buren's tenure at Lindenwald.**

Chapters Seven and Eight have detailed the history of how working farms became separated conceptually and institutionally from museums and historic sites in the second half of the twentieth century. This separation has contributed to the "implied synergy" between "old-fashioned" farming and places that have preserved and presented the tools, methods, and landscapes associated with them. Now that farmers are increasingly turning to techniques and approaches formerly considered to be obsolete, it is more problematic for historic sites that incorporate farmland to focus solely on the past. In fact, doing so runs the risk of reinforcing precisely the kinds of nostalgic and romantic public perceptions that have accrued around certain types of farming for nearly two centuries. The new synergy with "local food" efforts challenges that association in dynamic ways, but only if historic sites can find ways to push their own interpretation beyond the conventional boundaries of a narrowly bounded period of significance or a specific historical approach to farming. This is Nancy Rottle's "continuum and process" approach, which argues that preservation of agricultural landscapes should envision "a period of significance that allows for a continuum inclusive of the present" (2008:136).

At the same time, Martin Van Buren NHS, like all national parks, is mandated to focus its energies and resources on a core subject and time period. How is the park to operate within a continuum that includes the present while remaining true to its mission of preserving and interpreting Martin Van Buren's career and farm estate? A productive solution may be to shift the park's focus toward the intellectual, political, and economic history associated with Van Buren's farming activities rather than focusing solely on the landscape features or specific farming practices and crops of Van Buren's day. An approach that starts from the exploration of issues and questions offers a way to link Van Buren with

his own past, with the period between his day and ours, and with the present as well—because, as this report has shown, the questions and debates surrounding food and farmland have been remarkably consistent over the long span of colonial and American history. Not only have the same issues and questions recurred, but Van Buren himself was deeply involved in debating and trying to resolve them, in his political activities as well as his approach to farming.

The park could pursue this as a core goal by:

- A. using this report, particularly the study themes as set out in Chapter Five, to identify how debates about agriculture were reflected in Martin Van Buren’s life;
- B. considering how and where debates on these specific issues are taking place today; and
- C. developing events or partnerships with other groups or farms that are actively exploring the same issues. Such an approach offers the opportunity to bring to the table a historical perspective on important civic discussions while allowing the park to serve as a meeting-ground for different approaches and views.

2. Participate in the continued creation of useable historic data about farm practices in Columbia County.

The the 2004 Cultural Landscape Report, Reeve Huston’s study of Martin Van Buren as a farmer, and now this Ethnographic Landscape Study have created an already-substantial body of new research that illuminates aspects of the long history of farming at Lindenwald and Columbia County. The park could focus on extending this work by dedicating resources or creating partnerships designed to expand on what has been done and to link it with the kinds of ongoing debates and discussions mentioned above. In this approach, research activities would play a more central role, but they would still be linked with present-day farming—the key word here is “useable.”

Pursuing this as a primary role for its farming-related activities would involve:

- A. inventorying the body of knowledge and material currently produced by and housed at the park;

- B. identifying other ongoing research projects focusing on the history of agriculture in the county and nearby places;
- C. considering how and where debates relating in some way to these specific topics are taking place today;
- D. considering what resources are available to the park to pursue future research;
- E. prioritizing topics or sources that could be pursued, either through park-sponsored research, in partnership, or both;
- F. pursuing funding and/or partnerships for specific research projects; and
- G. determining what kinds of forums or venues would make the results of new studies available to an interested audience including farmers.

An important model as well as a key potential partner in such activities is the Farmscape Ecology Program at Hawthorne Valley Farm in Ghent, whose ongoing research and public programs combine scholarship with civic participation in issues relating to Columbia County's contemporary farmscape.

This is the area where there is perhaps the greatest potential for defaulting to focusing mostly or entirely on the past. In order to counter that tendency, any future research projects should be developed with very careful attention to item (C) above. It is always easy to generate new scholarly research projects, any of which could be useful for the park's own interpretation and self-documentation. The more crucial and challenging task here is to choose research projects that support ongoing relationships with area farms or farm organizations, or that connect with the park's participation in farm-related activities.

One key question that arises in relation to this approach is, "Useable for whom?" There is not only the potential to default to projects that are more useable for the park than for people associated with farming, but also to create knowledge that is likely to be of interest to some kinds of farmers but not others. This raises the issue of what kind and number of farm partnerships the park should pursue, addressed in the next three items.

3. Focus on strategies to support the activities of its current primary farm partner, Roxbury Farm.

Roxbury Farm is by no means the only farm that Martin Van Buren NHS can or should partner with. And some of its characteristics—for example, its use of modern mechanized equipment for part of its cultivation—do challenge the park’s goal of creating a landscape that reflects the mid-nineteenth century world of Martin Van Buren. However, other facets of its operation—many of its farming techniques, its emphasis on small-scale regional markets, its careful integration of social, spiritual, and economic goals, and some other less immediately visible but significant features of the farm’s operation—make Roxbury exceptionally reflective of the kind of pre-industrialized farming that Martin Van Buren participated in. Furthermore, the farm is a key partner in the overall project of preserving and cultivating the land around Lindenwald as farmland. It is also unusually reflexive in its own practice—that is, its farmers devote a good deal of attention to the history and interlocking human and biological systems of the land that they farm. The relationship with Roxbury Farm offers unique opportunities as the park works to define and consolidate its own role(s) as a more active participant in the area’s farm sector. In clarifying those own roles, the park may wish to foreground its partnership with Roxbury Farm as a crucial element of its expanded focus on farming.

If it does so, the park should follow Rottle’s argument that preservationists need to find appropriate ways of intervening to create favorable conditions for agriculture to continue in the present day. Thus Martin Van Buren NHS should identify activities that could support the economic sustainability not only of Roxbury Farm but also of future farms that may cultivate this land. The projected end of the lease and demolition of the modern farm buildings on the 25-acre parcel behind the mansion raises questions about how and when Roxbury Farm will need to shift its financial and organizational energies over the next few years. As it develops its own plans relating to agriculture at Lindenwald, the park should clearly recognize the long-range effects of this impending change, particularly the likelihood that vacating its current farm buildings will make the farm less able and willing to pursue potential interpretive and other collaborative projects.

The complexities of these ongoing discussions between the park and the farm reflect some of the questions raised in Chapter One about Rottle’s vision of the “continuum and process” model of preservation for local and regional agricultural landscapes. Rottle proposes that the National Park Service act as

a source of support for farmers and farm economies, but in an era of lowered public investment in historic and natural preservation, parks themselves are struggling with issues of funding and capacity, limiting what they are able to offer without lightening the considerable regulatory burden that their staffs operate under. In the face of this reality, Martin Van Buren NHS and other parks hoping to forge strong relationships with working farms should consider carefully what types of support they might be able to offer.

Beyond the more generalized kinds of collaboration that the park could undertake with local farms (see “Sample Projects,” below), there are various ways that agreements to share resources could benefit both the park and the farm. Whatever agreements are made, great care should be taken to make sure that any benefit to the farm is more than token or symbolic, and that any plans are developed in full consultation with the farmers themselves. Continued and potentially collaborative research on biological, historical, and cultural topics relating to the Lindenwald lands is clearly of interest and use to both the farm and the park. Some kinds of equipment used by both could be loaned. Space for meetings, special events, or everyday operations (such as meal breaks for staff) could be provided by the park. Various services, skills, and knowledge—for example, advice on pest control and soil health—can be found at the farm and within the National Park Service, and cooperatively produced in-house or public forums to address issues of common or general interest could help to share and expand on this combined wisdom.

These kinds of ideas demonstrate the potential for exciting, productive, and mutually beneficial projects between working agriculture and historic sites. At the same time, the ongoing negotiations over farming at Lindenwald demonstrate that the logistical, legal, and financial aspects of such agreements can be highly complex. Intermediary organizations, such as land trusts or other partners, may have important roles to play in helping to bring for-profit farms and non-profit sites closer together. While the task is by no means easy, a commitment to a continuing dialogue will help to define what kinds of new partnership models and projects might be possible. As the environmental and economic challenges of the present continue to intensify, it seems likely that the issues surrounding local food and sustainable agriculture will only become more important for visitors and consumers alike, creating a demanding but valuable new public role for sites like Martin Van Buren NHS.

4. Work to create a presence within current attempts to reinvigorate local and regional food economies.

Rather than partnering solely with Roxbury Farm (above) or creating a much broader network of contacts and relationships (below), the park could decide to situate itself within a specific segment of the farm sector and work to develop a more active presence there. The most likely area is probably the “local food” movement, for a variety of reasons. Farmers engaged in local-food initiatives tend to operate on the kinds of scale that reflects Columbia County farming of the nineteenth century, making these ventures historically appropriate for the park. Creating and sharing knowledge about the circuits of exchange that Van Buren was a part of could broaden farmers’ awareness of what was possible in the past, and help define what might be feasible in future. In many ways, historic sites contribute to a “sense of place” for visitors and local residents, and the present emphasis on localness within the sustainable agriculture movement also dovetails well with this facet of the park’s role in the community.

Harvest Day at Martin Van Buren NHS provides an excellent foundation for this approach, although there is more that could be done to counter the event’s emphasis on modes of cultivation that the public associates with the “olden days.” The inclusion of some participants or activities that more clearly show the continuum of past, present, and future in farming could help to offset the tendency for visitors to associate the festival with pleasantly archaic types of farming. For example, side-by-side demonstrations of different approaches to a given farm task would raise provocative questions about the decision to use one method or another. Why might a mechanized solution make sense in one time period or situation and not in another? How have changing labor patterns, public tastes, reform movements, government policy, and other factors shaped farm practices in the past and today? Designing some of the Harvest Day activities around these kinds of comparative questions—as the 2010 walking tour described below attempted to do—could be a useful strategy for opening discussions with visitors about these kinds of decisions and their consequences on the national, local, and personal level. Interpretation of Martin Van Buren’s farming can provide the anchor-point for these interpretive strategies, but the questions should extend both back and forward from the nineteenth century in order to capture the the complexity and continuity of the issues.

5. Pursue and nurture relationships with a wider or more representative range of farms and farmers in Kinderhook and the county.

While the local food movement, like Roxbury Farm, offers outstanding synergies with the national park, there are also reasons to consider a wider range of partnerships among farmers. As noted in the case study of Wil-Roc Farms in Chapter Eight, there is a perception that historic sites and land trusts favor small and “sustainable” types of farming over large “conventional” types, and this creates some tension among financially-pressed farmers who are competing for a limited amount of prime farmland in the county. The perception is not inaccurate, and there are clear reasons for the kinds of alliances that have developed among environmentalists, preservationists, and others from the non-profit and educational realms. Aside from the obvious overlaps in their missions, they tend to share similar approaches to land stewardship and chemical pesticide and fertilizer use, as well as concern about the social, environmental, and other effects of treating land and food as commodities.¹ As a national park, however, Martin Van Buren NHS may want to look beyond these obvious alliances and reach out to other kinds of farmers in the area.

The park has existing contacts among a range of Columbia County farms, and its existing relationship with the Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia County could also provide a basis for expanding those contacts. Doing so could help to broaden any public discussions about issues and trends in agriculture in which the park is involved, by bringing in a wider range of opinions and experiences. A benefit of engaging directly with the challenges presented by this approach could be to raise the park’s profile in the county and to signal its seriousness about serving as a civic institution where various publics can come to learn and share ideas. It would also provide an opportunity for the park to acknowledge and perhaps address some entrenched perceptions (and misperceptions) on the part of “conventional” farmers about its intentions and existing alliances. It would be more difficult to identify concrete benefits that might accrue to these farmers from participating in park-related activities. The discrepancies in values and practices—for example, differing opinions about the use of toxic pesticides—would probably need to be discussed. Given the value that most farmers seem to place on straightforward speech, *not* acknowledging

¹ The National Park Service has worked toward an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach that favors non-toxic pest control methods and uses toxic pesticides sparingly and cautiously only for specific problems.

these issues could be as difficult as acknowledging them. Building these kinds of relationships would demand time, skill, and commitment on the park's part, and would likely be an uneven and perhaps uncomfortable process. This approach would push the park to become more aware of the tensions within Columbia County's contemporary farm sector and more effective at working within those tensions.

If the park identifies this as a goal to be pursued, it would be wise to articulate at the outset why certain types of farm partnerships have been more immediately compatible than others. The park should also consider the available resources of time and staff in pursuing this goal, even more than in the case of the previous options. A wider range of relationships, especially among those with less commonality of approach or values, takes much more effort to start and maintain, and the park is somewhat in the position of colonial Dutch farmers in being better-endowed with land than with labor. Given the continued constraints on staff time and personnel levels within the NPS, it may be wiser for the park to focus its energies on a core set of relationships and projects. In formulating its vision for its farming-related activities, it could, of course, include the goal of working outward from those core relationships over time, and should articulate a strategy for doing so.

One area model for extending a "progressive" farming organization into more "conventional" realms is Hawthorne Valley Farm, which has intentionally cultivated relationships outside the specific biodynamic, "local food," and "sustainable agriculture" networks in which it is based. Rachel Schneider, the farm's Educator Coordinator, described in a 2010 interview how Hawthorne Valley farmers negotiated their current position. By attending Chamber of Commerce meetings, participating in public discussions about the future of agriculture in the county, and sponsoring educational programs (for example, a Farmers' Research Circle run by Hawthorne Valley Farm's Farmscape Ecology Program), Schneider and others at the farm have gradually woven themselves much more fully into the county's agricultural scene, where they are now one of the largest agricultural employers and a respected source of ideas about revitalization of the farm sector. While acknowledging various class, political, and philosophical tensions within the county, Schneider has found these to be "extremely bridgeable," and notes:

As the whole Hawthorne Valley [operation] grew, we started to understand that we had to be good neighbors and good citizens of our county. And

I think that Jean-Paul, Roxbury, all of us sustainable farmers, we are recognizing that. We are able to stick our heads out of our own farms now. We're the older generation now, we've built up our farms and we realize that we want to be part of our county, we want to be good citizens and good neighbors. We want to play a role. We want to bridge over to our small farm counterparts all around. And various ones of us are trying to do things to make that happen.

Seeking out relationships with a wider range of farmers in and around Kinderhook could move the park in a similar direction and make it a safe and welcoming “third space” where present-day questions about the past and future of agriculture can be aired and discussed.

Within any combination of these—or other—goals that the park identifies for itself in relation to farming, two guiding principles should be followed:

- A. There should be a **sustained focus on *issues and questions*** relating to Martin Van Buren's farming activities as a way of creating a permeable boundary between past and present and of overcoming the tendency to separate the two. Emphasizing “period” farming methods and landscapes will tend to reinforce the separation, whereas holding open those questions—and creating a safe space for discussing them—can help to illuminate both past and present circumstances and to inform present-day actions by farmers, interpreters, visitors, consumers, and local publics alike.
- B. Any projects that the park undertakes should work toward providing **identifiable, concrete benefits for any farms and farmers involved**, and farmers themselves should be involved in deciding what those benefits might be.



Fig. 84. Jean-Paul Courtens talks with “Luther Tucker” and his son, portrayed by Conrad and Otter Vispo at the 2010 Martin Van Buren NHS Harvest Day.

Sample projects

As a way of illustrating the principles and possible roles outlined above, this section will propose a number of sample projects that the park might pursue. These are not necessarily intended as recommendations, but rather simply to show some of the possible ways that the park could raise questions relating to past, present, and future farming while providing identifiable benefits to a range of farm partners.

SAMPLE PROJECT 1: Multi-Period Farm Tours

At the 2010 Harvest Day festival at Martin Van Buren NHS, some of those involved in this Ethnographic Landscape Study presented a prototype multi-period farm tour of the Lindenwald fields. The Farmscape Ecology Program’s Conrad Vispo portrayed Luther Tucker, an agricultural reformer and journalist who took over Jesse Buel’s Albany-based publication *The Cultivator* in 1840; the author of this report portrayed Elisabeth Van Alstyne Wilson, whose memoir *Children of Sunnyside* provides the basis of the extended case study in Chapter Six; and Jean-Paul Courtens of Roxbury Farm participated as himself. Using the landscape of Lindenwald, the three presenters were able to make interpretive and historical connections for visitors

between issues about soil depletion, problems of farm succession and population loss, and ideas about farm fertility. These were presented through Roxbury Farm's present-day cultivation of the site in comparison with ideas from Van Buren's period and from the turn of the twentieth century. Visitors were surprised by some of the juxtapositions and contradictions of this history—for example, the fact that the adoption of toxic lead arsenate as an orchard spray was not spurred simply by a search for effective new pesticides but also by a broad concern about the decline in profitability of older apple orchards and the continued viability of farming as a way of life in Columbia County.

The park could certainly continue and expand this kind of multi-period tour of Lindenwald's fields, costumed or not. However, a more extensive and outward-looking project might help to create a more diffuse set of individual farm tours that could perhaps combine into a kind of "open farms" route. This could be publicized as part of the Harvest Day program (similar to the "open studios" that have proven popular in arts districts). While there are many working farms open to the public for retail sales, few if any offer a historical component of the farm visit experience. The project could work outward from an existing set of park contacts and relationships—for example, at Hawthorne Valley Farm and Roxbury Farm—and then to farms with an interest in adding this historical element for their own visitors and customers—perhaps nearby farms like Golden Harvest in Valatie (see Appendix I), Samascott Farms in Kinderhook, and others. More "conventional" farms with an interest in preserving and presenting their own histories might also find value in participating.

The park's role in such a project could include:

- A. creating and gradually expanding a network of participating farms;
- B. recruiting and/or training interpreters at the individual farms from among family, staff, or friends; and
- C. developing a template for gathering data, scripting a short tour around a set of shared questions, issues, or trends (for example, changing methods, policies, patterns of farm succession and ownership). These tours could emphasize both continuities and changes (for example, the persistent issues of farm succession and land affordability from quite early in the nineteenth century).

In essence, the park could work to craft an outline for the tours, suggest resources to add to farms' own knowledge base where appropriate and needed, and then help to organize

and publicize the overall route. If the questions and topics were considered carefully in advance, visitors would likely encounter multiple resonances and multiple ways of thinking about the past, present, and future of agriculture in the county and beyond.

SAMPLE PROJECT 2: A New Farmers' Institute

The park could host an annual, off-season, one-day symposium with an emphasis on scholarship that could be in some way useful to contemporary farmers. This is of course by no means a new idea—the Farm Extension services of the land grant colleges, the Grange, and many other agriculture-oriented organizations have long undertaken projects that work to link up-to-date scholarship with farm practice in useful ways. The history of such projects shows that farmers have often been skeptical about the actual utility of purely scholarly or academic knowledge for their own day-to-day farm operations, so this is an area where the park would need to be particularly attentive to the issue of moving beyond just documenting or representing the past. There are countless potential topics and connections that might be made between the period interpreted by the park and issues affecting farmers today, so the key would be to choose topics and questions with some utility to contemporary farmers. A related issue would be to consider in advance what kind(s) of farmers the park would hope to attract to the event, and to select a topic and agenda designed to address concerns relevant for the intended audience. The park should solicit or vet ideas in consultation with key potential attendees, and then work to link the topic and presentations with historical materials and examples in a way that will broaden everyone's thinking about an issue or problem that is both historical and contemporary.

For example, visitors to farms are both a blessing and a distraction, whether tourists, shareholders, customers, or other farmers and would-be farmers. A park-sponsored symposium could focus on the issue of **how to balance visitor- or volunteer-oriented components of farming with the all-absorbing tasks of actually running a profitable farm**. Historical examples could prove useful in showing various ways and reasons that farmers have tried to make their farms more open to visitors over nearly two centuries (for example, as model farms, stops on scenic tours, ways of attracting extra income, or education for consumers or other new or experienced farmers). Speakers could be recruited from among researchers and farmers themselves, and panels or roundtables constructed that could blend past and present examples. For

instance, a roundtable could bring together a group of contemporary farmers who offer “value-added” tours, farm-stay bed and breakfast, or other visitor-oriented activities at their farms, or it could combine a historical and contemporary look at a single topic such as ecospirituality and farm visitation from the Shakers to biodynamic farms. Lindenwald is of course one site that could provide a case study, particularly during Martin Van Buren’s tenure but also in its current incarnation as a national park within a working agricultural landscape.

This type of event would obviously be more appropriate for the off-season, a practice long followed by educational and other organizations supporting farmer education and exchange. Possible outcomes of this kind of symposium might include the sharing of strategies for balancing farming and visitor interaction; sharing of knowledge about other area resources for visitors; enhanced interpretation strategies for farmers; and a deepened sense of historical perspective through recognizing the long history of farm display and tourism in Columbia County.

SAMPLE PROJECT 3: A Web-Based “Third Place” for Farm Histories

The park could create a space within its website documenting and displaying the history of a range of neighboring and area farms.² This web space could begin with some or all of the specific case studies included in this report and the park could add more material over time, focusing on additional farms. As with the tours outlined in Sample Project 1, the park could create a template and foundational set of questions or topics to unify the different histories and ensure that they go beyond the purely celebratory or documentary (“Four generations of our family have farmed this land”) to touch on the kinds of critical and contextual materials within which the National Park Service and those engaged in public scholarship to situate their interpretations (“Farm succession was a difficult issue for my grandfather, as it is today”).

This is a project that might well be undertaken in collaboration with a non-NPS partner such as the Columbia County Historical Society, Farmscape Ecology Program, or Cornell Cooperative Extension. The park might choose simply to build one component

² A possible model for this is the web reduction of a previous NPS Ethnography Program report produced for Salem Maritime National Historic Site (<http://www.nps.gov/sama/historyculture/polish.htm>). The web version of the report encapsulated the main narrative and some of the key figures through pictures, audio files, and short text descriptions, along with links and references to the full report.

of the project within its own website, but could work to help develop a unifying template within which other organizations could construct additional segments housed outside the NPS servers. More than the previous two samples, this idea moves in the direction of bringing together a much broader range of farm histories and approaches to agriculture within the same space of display. Benefits to farmers could include having help with the construction of a short, accessible farm history to which they could link from their own website. An expandable network of such sites could provide a useable piece of historical infrastructure for many people and groups interested the past and present of Columbia County agriculture, and the connections made through working on a project like this could help to expand the national park's own network of contacts and relationships among farmers and others, without requiring a heavy investment of resources.

Future Research Directions

The future research directions identified below emerged from the research, writing, and review of this report. Many of these topics could be mined for ideas connecting to the goals and kinds of sample projects described in the first parts of this chapter.

- **History of public and farmers' markets in Albany**

As noted in Chapter Four, the history of public markets in Albany dates to well before the Revolution, and northern Columbia County farmers have a long history of taking or sending their products there. More research could be done to determine the dates and locations of previous markets, particularly in the mid-nineteenth century period.

A display board at the office of the Capital District Coop, which manages the farmers' market in Menands, includes images of a number of Albany farmers' markets between the early nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries (Fig. 85). The display was made around the time of the opening of the market in Menands in 1934, and is signed by "Harry E. Crouch, Senior Marketing Specialist" from the New York State Department of Agriculture and Markets. Sources for the images are not given, but the collection makes a useful starting-place for inquiry. According to Fred Cole, General Manager of the coop, there has been some recent interest among area college professors and students in doing this research, which could perhaps be undertaken collaboratively with a park intern or other researcher.

- Martin Van Buren's **grocer/wholesaler, Geery** of "Walker Street and Broadway"

Van Buren was known to have sold potatoes and perhaps other produce to this dealer in 1846, although it is not clear from his correspondence as quoted in Searle (2004:45) whether Geery was in Albany or New York City. Some exploration of this business and its owner in the relevant city directories would help to contextualize Van Buren's non-local farm sales more fully.



Fig. 85. Display board in office of Capital District Cooperative, showing Albany public markets over time. (Capital District Cooperative, Inc.)

- Writers/editors at *The Cultivator* and other nineteenth-century agricultural publications known to have been read by Van Buren

These figures are only briefly alluded to in this report, and could be investigated much more fully as a way to understand and interpret Van Buren's relationship to the agricultural reform movement(s) of his time. Jesse Buel (1778-1839) is one important figure about whom a considerable amount can be learned, through his own writings and documentary evidence about his political, educational, and journalistic activities. As noted in the first sample project, above, Luther Tucker (1802-1873) was another reformer/ journalist.

Tucker's journal, *The Genessee Farmer*, was combined with Buel's publication *The Cultivator* in 1840, shortly after Buel's death.

- **Menus and Entertaining at Lindenwald**

A subject neglected in this report (for lack of space and time) is Martin Van Buren's own culinary taste and activities. Van Buren was pilloried by some in his day for his supposedly elitist tastes and imported foods and chefs, much as Barack Obama was perceived to have an "arugula gap" with "ordinary" voters during the 2008 election campaign. The topic of Presidential statements about and through food could be a way to open complex questions about social status and identity as negotiated at the table. Park interpretation already touches on some of these issues through tours and artifacts; further research into Van Buren's menus and accounts of his entertaining at Lindenwald could potentially provide material to connect with what is known about traditional Dutch foodways (for example, see the final section of Chapter Three in this report), changing American tastes in the antebellum period, and contemporary food politics. The planting of an organic garden at the White House during the Obama family's tenure also offers another point of connection with the topic of Presidential food tastes and politics.

- **Wilder Family History**

The Wilders, explored to some extent in Chapter Six, present another potentially rich subject for research. Exploratory inquiries at the Rochester Historical Society found almost no collections containing materials relating to either Abel Carter Wilder, who was briefly Mayor of the city and a newspaperman there, or his brother Daniel Webster Wilder, who lived there even more briefly (there were three letters by Carter Wilder in the Society's archives). A search for the newspapers published by these abolitionist brothers could provide additional context for understanding the family of George Wilder, Lindenwald's owner in the late 1860s and early 70s. Research in Massachusetts, particularly in Ashburnham (where the family seems to have started out) and Blackstone (where they resided during George's youth) might provide additional context. Inquiries at the Worcester Historical Society found no useful information, but the smaller town libraries or historical societies may have materials in their collections, as the Wilders appear to have been prominent citizens wherever they were living. At a minimum, it should be determined whether George was indeed the brother of Carter and Daniel, in order to get a better sense of how closely he might have been connected with this active abolitionist family. If possible, a search of Denver street directories from the 1880s might shed light on what kind of business George Wilder was engaged in there after he moved to the West.

- **Wagoner Family History**

This report has added some material to what was known about the Wagoners and their farming history, but they remain somewhat shadowy figures. At a minimum, it would be useful to determine from property deeds and other records just when various members of the Wagoner family began moving into the Lindenwald neighborhood.

- **Ephraim Best Farm Ledger** (Columbia County Historical Society)

This extensive and detailed record of one well-to-do Kinderhook farmer's activities from the 1840s through the 1870s provides a potentially very useful comparison with the farming of Martin Van Buren, with whom Best is known to have traded at least minimally, and within whose social and agricultural circles Best likely traveled. As noted in Chapter Five, much can be learned here about ethnic and race relations among the farming population of Kinderhook and the surrounding area, wages and prices, tenancy contracts, building and renovation practices on prosperous farms, and many other subjects. This data can be of particular use in understanding labor patterns on mid-nineteenth-century Kinderhook farms, which can help support the national park's interpretation of farm work and workers at Lindenwald.

Because time was limited on this project, only 20 of the pages of the ledger from the period covering Van Buren's tenure at Lindenwald were transcribed in detail. Using the present study as a base, much could be read into Best's additional ledger entries about specific relationships among known area families and individuals, perhaps including later owners and farmworkers at Lindenwald.

The transcribed pages were headed as follows:

Sold in Summer Fall and Winter 1849

Sold in Spring Summer Fall and Winter 1850

Sold in Spring Summer Fall and Winter 1855

Sold in Spring Summer Fall and Winter 1856

Kinderhook July 1849-misc 1849 Transactions

Hired John Sitser for one year He is...

Kinderhook Jan 29th 1850 Hired John Schemerhorne

Nov 11th 1850 John Schemerhorn commenced work at 3s/ per day

Nov 9th Margaret Irish Girl Commenced work at 7s/ per week

1854 Frederick Sitsor to E P Best

Kinderhook January 5th 1854

Old Sitzor Moved 16th March 1854
John Sitzor to E P Best Dr March 14th 1854
1854 John Sitsor's Share
Kinderhook Oct 31st 1854
John Davis Commenced Work Nov 9th for one...
Kinderhook January 3rd 1855
Hired John Sitzor for eight months at \$15 per
John Helse July 8th
Peter Paddock By one day planting corn May 1855

The transcriptions are in database form, making them searchable by produce, name, year, etc.

- **Records for Risedorph's Beverages**

The story of this local beverage company, sketched briefly in Chapter Five, may bear more in-depth research as a way to show some of the opportunities and vicissitudes of a local food processing business that survived for a century, from the 1860s to at least the 1960s. Attempts to locate records and other materials during the course of this research were not successful. It appears that the company's files may be with members of the Dreher family who were its last local owners.

- **Histories of Local Agricultural Organizations and Events**

The various local and county agricultural organizations are given short shrift in this report, again due to lack of time to follow leads and find people knowledgeable about these rather fragmented but interlocking histories. Key organizations and institutions in and around Kinderhook were (and are) the Lindenwald Grange, Kinderhook Pomological Association, Columbia County Fair, and Columbia County Agricultural Society. Beginning with these as a core, it should be possible to map the larger network of farmers' association and mutual support over time.

- **History of Farm Tourism in the Hudson Valley**

The long history of tourism in the Hudson Valley and its changing relationship with farming over time is a potentially rich source of context and ideas as Martin Van Buren NHS continues to define its presence within the agricultural landscape of the area. This report has attempted to sketch the broad outlines of this history, but there is much more to be discovered in terms of specific practices of farmers, tourists, and recreational or educational projects in different time periods. It appears that this topic is not represented

in the scholarly literature to the extent that it is for neighboring New England (particularly in Dona Brown's excellent chapter on farm tourism in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Vermont), despite the fairly well-documented history of the tourism infrastructure of the Hudson Valley in general. The oral histories conducted by the Farmscape Ecology Program among elderly farmers may be a good starting-point for this. There may also be memoirs and accounts by vacationers that would shed light on how farmscapes were perceived and experienced by visitors to the area. There is considerable literature from the preservation and tourism-promotion sectors that might be mined here as well.³

- **Other Long-Term and Prominent Kinderhook and Stuyvesant Farm Families**

In addition to the several families treated in this narrative, members of the Snyder, Morrell, Merwin, Shufelt, Ham, and other families had long-term histories in Kinderhook's farming community, and were often related through marriage and social ties to the Van Alstyne, Van Buren, Hoeses, and others. Farmers in neighboring Stuyvesant were often part of these same networks. In order to concentrate on a manageable number of people and families known to be associated in some way with Lindenwald, this study has purposely not included material on these additional families, but gathering information about them could provide useful additional comparative and contextual data.

- **Women's Farm Histories**

Gender is under-emphasized in this study in many ways, in part because many of the most readily-available historical sources tend to privilege male experience and the kinds of public records in which women's participation is often harder to see. This report has worked to include data about women in Columbia County's farm economy wherever possible, but much more could be done. For example:

- A more detailed transcription and close reading of Ephraim Best's farm ledger could provide more data about the gendered division of labor on his farm in the mid-nineteenth century.

³ For example, a 2001 paper from the Northern Research Station of the U.S. Forest Service, "Agritourism in New York: Management and Operations" (Oswego: NY Sea Grant, accessed online at http://www.nrs.fs.fed.us/pubs/gtr/gtr_ne289/gtr_ne289_217.pdf) includes data from a 1999 agritourism business study conducted by the state, which found that 75% of New York farms gained at least some income from agritourism. Another potential source, "Farm to Market: Cultivating a Conservation Ethic for Agricultural Landscapes," is a 2008 master's thesis by Ashley Jacksen Hahn for the University of Pennsylvania's Historic Preservation program, focused on Hudson Valley farmscapes; it is accessible at http://repository.upenn.edu/hp_theses/107/.

- Explore the secondary literature and comparative studies of how farm work was gendered in the mid-nineteenth century on New York farms. Martin Van Buren NHS's current interpretation is based on data primarily about domestic/indoor women's work, and more should be done to gather information about potential work by women in the fields, gardens, barns, and other areas of the farm.
- More exploration of the Alexander family's history could help to contextualize **Nancy Alexander** (Chapter Five) more fully.
- The figure of **Marion Birney** (Chapter Six) remains a tantalizing one, given her apparently great interest in farming and her active management of the Lindenwald farm in the early twentieth century. Although she died in the 1970s, her son still lives in California and may be a source of more information about her training and experiences as a farmer. She and her sister Clementine could both be more fully considered as examples of the "new woman" of that era.
- More could perhaps be discovered about Edith Stanley's small-scale growing and selling activities on the old Dingman farmstead in the 1930s and later (Chapter Seven). Park neighbor Caryn Moore has been in contact with descendants of Edith who may know more.
- **History of Social Service/Reform Farm Projects**
 - Research for this project found no archives or documentation relating to the State Farm in Valatie, but it seems a topic worth exploring in more detail, given that it was such an important source of farm labor for farmers in and around Kinderhook, including at Lindenwald, in the early twentieth century.
 - The connection between John Van Buren and the Burnhams of the Berkshire Industrial Farm/Berkshire Farm for Boys could also be investigated, particularly as it may reflect philanthropical and reformist impulses on Van Buren's part.

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¹ Annotations focus on sources that were particularly relevant to the study or that may be most helpful for future research.

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in response to what they saw as foundational challenges to the ideals of local self-determination and democratic government.

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- Ullrich, Heiner. 1994. "Rudolf Steiner." *Prospects: The Quarterly Review of Comparative Education*, Vol. 24, No. 3 / 4, pp. 555-572. Stands almost alone as a scholarly analysis of Steiner *not* produced from within fold of Steiner-influenced thought. Focuses primarily on Steiner's educational philosophy, but given his holism, this inevitably illuminates aspects of his scientific and spiritual approaches as well, including their roots in early 20th century European neo-Romanticism and disillusionment with the modern age. Concludes that Steiner's educational system has built "a beneficial practice on the foundation of a dubious theory," leaving "a contradictory balance sheet" overall (570).
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Collection of annual reports from Farmers' Institutes, 1900-1909. New York State Library.

Maps, family/genealogy files, self-published family histories, other resources at Columbia County Historical Society.

APPENDIX A

List of Interviews

T = telephone interview N = documented in project fieldnotes rather than transcription

Name	Description	Date(s)
Bob Worsfold	Park neighbor, farm owner, Friends of Lindenwald member	3/20/10 (N)
Dick Shirey	Roxbury Farm shareholder, volunteer, economics professor	3/23/10
Caryn Moore	Park neighbor, owner of Dingman/Wagoner house	3/23/10 (N)
Jody Bollyut, Jean-Paul Courtens	Park neighbors, biodynamic farmers, owners/Roxbury Farm	3/24/10
Rachel Schneider	Biodynamic farmer, farm educator/Hawthorne Valley Farm	3/25/10
Carl Williams	Kinderhook conventional farmer/Wil-Roc Farm	3/25/10 (N)
Margaret and Tredwell Burch	Park neighbors, former farmers	5/24/10
Bob Van Alstyne, Pat Van Alstyne	Former farm family, former residents of Lindenwald neighborhood	5/25/10 (N), 6/3/10 (N), 6/23/10 ()
Steve Hadcock	Dairy educator, Cornell Cooperative Extension of Columbia County	6/3/10
Jeanne deProsse Akers	Former Lindenwald resident	6/10/10 and 6/11/10 (T)
Leslie Obleschuk	Chief of Interpretation, Minute Man NHS	6/13/10 (T,N)
Brian Donahue	Farmer, environmental historian, President / Battle Road Farms board of directors	6/17/10
Chris Loken	Farmer / Love Apple Farm	6/22/10 (N)

Appendix A

Name	Description	Date(s)
Willy Denner	Farmer / Little Seed Farm	6/23/10 (N)
Dorothy Kennett, Mary Kennett Kilcer, Tom Kilcer	Park neighbors (Dot-Mar Stables), owners of Sunnyside Farm, farmers	7/8/10
Mike Scannell	Farmer / Harrier Fields Farm	7/8/10 (N)
Alex Bervy, Muriel Pawluk, Ellen Sauca	Former area farmers (Barnwell seniors' home, Valatie)	6/25/10 (N)
Bill deProsse	Former Lindenwald resident	7/14/10 (T)
Fred Cole	General Manager, Capital District Farmers Market (Menands)	6/25/10 (T), 7/26/10
Bill Brizzell	Member and former manager, Capital District Farmers Market	7/8/10 (T,N)
John Bryfonski	Descendant of Polish immigrants and farmers in Lindenwald neighborhood	7/16/10(T,N)
Marion Hess	Farmer / Hess Farm (Claverack)	7/28/10(N)
Sally Czajkowski Jung	Descendant of Polish immigrants and farmers in Kinderhook	7/28/10

APPENDIX B

Project Documents:

- Project summary
- Superintendent's letter of introduction
- Informed Consent Form
- Permission to reproduce photographs

Project Summary

Ethnographic Landscape Study, Martin Van Buren National Historic Site

Cathy Stanton, Ph.D., Principal Investigator

March 15, 2010

The Martin Van Buren National Historic Site is sponsoring a study of farming practices on and around “Lindenwald,” Martin Van Buren’s estate in Kinderhook, New York, with the goal of gathering information that national park staff can use in their interpretation and management of the site. A second, equally important goal is the development of potential relationships with park neighbors who are engaged in farming. The results of the project will also help inform the General Management Planning process currently taking place at the park. The study will focus on continuities in the farming landscape of the park and the surrounding area as shaped by agricultural practices and practitioners, and the context of farming as a way of life in Columbia County over the long time period from European arrival in the region to the present day.

The project will take place between October 2009 and January 2011. The primary researcher is Cathy Stanton, Ph.D., a cultural anthropologist and public historian working for the University of Massachusetts History Department under a cooperative agreement with the National Park Service. She will conduct interviews and related research and may be reached at 978-249-8299, 1139 Chestnut Street, Athol, MA 01331, cstanton@tiac.net, or by cell phone at 978-413-2312. The research will consist of examination of records and other materials in archives and published sources, participant-observation activities at area farms as appropriate, and recorded interviews with people who are knowledgeable about the history of farming in the area and/or about specific people and families associated with agriculture on or near the Lindenwald lands.

Participation in the research is entirely voluntary. People choosing to participate in interviews will be asked to sign a consent form explaining the project and a release form authorizing the use of the interview information by the National Park Service. Interviewees will have the option of stipulating that their names not be used in quoted material in the final report. Tapes and transcripts of the interviews will be housed permanently in the library of Martin Van Buren NHS, and may be available to other researchers in the future.

A Research Design/Work Plan for the study is available upon request from Cathy Stanton. Questions about the project can be directed to Chuck Smythe, Northeast Regional Ethnography Program Manager, National Park Service, 15 State Street, Boston, MA 02108, 617-223-5014, Chuck_Smythe@nps.gov. The Park Superintendent is Dan Dattilio, Martin Van Buren National Historic Site, 1013 Old Post Road, Kinderhook, NY 12106-3605, 518-758-9689, Dan_Dattilio@nps.gov.

Superintendent's Letter of Introduction



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

Martin Van Buren National Historic Site

1013 Old Post Road

Kinderhook, New York 12106

March 15, 2010

Dear Study Participant,

Between October 2010 and January 2011, Martin Van Buren National Historic Site is sponsoring a study of agricultural practices in Columbia County over time, with a particular focus on the lands of "Lindenwald," Martin Van Buren's home between 1839 and 1862. The purposes of the study are to gather information that national park staff can use in interpreting and managing the site and to help the park develop its relationships with park neighbors who are engaged in farming the Lindenwald fields. The results of the project will also help inform the General Management Planning process currently taking place at the park.

The principal researcher for this project is Cathy Stanton, a cultural anthropologist and public historian associated with the History Department at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. Other researchers may also be gathering information under Cathy's supervision. Preliminary research began in November 2009; interviewing of people knowledgeable about agriculture in the area will begin in March 2010 and continue through Summer 2010. A final report based on the research will be available in 2011. The report will be available to the public when it is completed.

Questions about this project should be addressed to Chuck Smythe, Northeast Regional Ethnography Program Manager, at (617) 223-5014 or Chuck_Smythe@nps.gov.

Sincerely,

Dan Dattilio
Superintendent

Informed Consent Form

- Name of Study: Ethnographic Landscape Study
Martin Van Buren National Historic Site
- Sponsors: National Park Service
under Cooperative Agreement with
the University of Massachusetts
at Amherst (History Program)
Martin Van Buren NHS
Northeast Ethnography Program, National Park Service
- Principal Investigator: Cathy Stanton, Ph.D.
University of Massachusetts at Amherst (History Department)
- Purpose of Study: To gather information about agricultural practices over time and the people associated with them on the lands that made up Martin Van Buren's farm ("Lindenwald") in the mid-nineteenth century.
- Study Schedule: October 2009-January 2011. Interviewing will take place primarily between March and December 2010.
- Your Participation: If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to provide information about farming practices on the Lindenwald lands and in Columbia County, and people associated with those practices. This information will be collected via recorded interviews that will take between one and two hours to conduct.
- At any time during the interview, you may specify that you are speaking off the record, or request that certain statements not be recorded or quoted. You are under no obligation to provide information and you may choose to end the interview at any time. Recordings and transcripts of interviews will be part of a project archive that will be curated at Martin Van Buren National Historic Site.
- Further information: The researcher will be happy to answer any questions you have about this study. You are welcome to contact Cathy Stanton at 1139 Chestnut Street, Athol MA 01331, phone (978)249-8299, email cstanton@tiac.net. You may also contact Martin Van Buren National Historic Park Superintendent Dan Dattilio at 1013 Old Post Road, Kinderhook, NY 12106-3605, phone (518)758-9689, email Dan_Dattilio@nps.gov, or Northeast Region Ethnography Program Manager Chuck Smythe, at 15 State Street, Boston, MA 02108, phone (617)223-5014, email Chuck_Smythe@nps.gov.

Statement of
Informed Consent: I have read this form and decided that I will participate in the
project described above.

Legal Release: I give the National Park Service legal title and property rights
for the interview, including copyrights and exclusive rights of
reproduction, distribution, or public display (for example, as part
of a future park exhibit or publication). I authorize the National
Park Service to record, transcribe, and edit the interview, and
to use and re-use the interview in whole or in part. I understand
that the National Park Service shall have no obligation to use
the interview. I further understand that I am to receive no
financial compensation for my participation in the project.

A copy of this form has been offered to me.

Interviewee

Date

Interviewer, on behalf of the NPS

Date

Permission to Reproduce Photographs

This agreement is entered into by _____ and Martin Van Buren National Historic Site of the National Park Service. Both parties enter into this agreement in order to facilitate the future use of the photograph(s) described below.

Permission is hereby granted to Martin Van Buren National Historic Site and the National Park Service to reproduce the photograph(s) listed below as part of its Ethnographic Landscape Study of agricultural practices at “Lindenwald” and in Columbia County. The photo(s) may be used in printed materials, online, as part of an exhibit, or in any other form unless specified below:

The rights listed above have not previously been given to other parties. I understand that the National Park Service shall have no obligation to use the image(s). I further understand that I am to receive no financial compensation for these materials.

The source of the photograph(s) will be listed in print and other materials as follows:

Photo(s):

Date

Principal Investigator, on behalf of the NPS

Date

APPENDIX C

Fieldwork Visits and Tasks

- Planning meeting with park Superintendent, Historian, and Northeast Region Ethnography Program Manager on October 23, 2009 (included conversation about goals, methods, potential contacts).
- Initial fieldwork visit November 19-21, 2009 (included meeting with Superintendent and Historian, surveying of files in park library from Cultural Landscape Study and other previous research, surveying of holdings in Columbia County Historical Society and preliminary study of selected maps and materials there, walking and driving tours of Lindenwald fields and nearby area).
- Second fieldwork visit February 18-19, 2010 (included meeting with farmers at Roxbury Farm, facilitator for partnership planning process, and some work in the park's archives and at Columbia County Historical Society).
- Third fieldwork visit March 20-25, 2010 (included some formal and informal interviewing with park neighbors, Roxbury Farm and other farmers, consultation with historian Ruth Piwonka and Farmscape Ecology Program staff, archival research at Columbia County Historical Society and Columbia County Courthouse, transcription of 1977 MAVIA oral history interviews).
- Fourth, fifth, and sixth fieldwork visits May 24-25, June 2-3, June 21-25 (included continuing formal and informal interviewing with current and former area farmers and others, archival research, visits to Menands Farmers Market and follow-up conversation with organizers).
- Seventh and eighth fieldwork visits July 6-8 and 26-29 (included continued formal and informal interviewing, surveying of Roxbury Farm CSA shareholders at pickup in Schenectady, archival research).
- Additional fieldwork included telephone interviewing of former Lindenwald and area residents and a visit to Minute Man NHS to talk with Battle Road Farms board president Brian Donahue.

APPENDIX D

Will of Thomas Van Alstyne (1764)

Thomas Van Alstyne's will is found in its entirety in *Early Records of the City and County of Albany and Colony of Rensselaerswyck*, Vol. 4, Mortgages 1658-60 and Wills 1681-1765 (translated by Jonathan Pearson, revised and edited by A.J.F. Van Laer). Albany, NY: State University of New York, 1919, pp. 193-96.

Will of Thomas van Alstyne

[302] In the name of God, Amen. Know all men by these presents that on this fifteenth day of November in the year of our Lord one thousand seven hundred and sixty four, I, Thomas van Alstyn of the township of Kinderhook, in the county of Albany, in the province of New York, being advanced in years, but having my memory and understanding perfect, considering the shortness of human life, the certainty of death and the uncertain hour thereof, have determined this to be my last will and testament in manner following.

First I commend my immortal soul whenever it shall depart from my body to the gracious and merciful hands of God my Creator and Savior and my body to a Christian burial in the earth from whence it came, there to rest until my soul and body be reunited at that joyful day of the resurrection to be made partaker of that insatiable joy of our salvation which God by His grace through the merits of Jesus Christ has prepared and promised for all those who have true repentance and faith in Him. And as regards such temporal estate, as money, obligations, goods, rights and credits, nothing in the world excepted, where and whatsoever they may be, I order and dispose thereof as follows. I desire that all my just debts shall first be paid out of my above-mentioned estate.

[303]*Item* I give and bequeath to my son Wiliam Van Alstyn in consideration of his right of primogeniture of being my eldest son my large shot gun.

Item I give and bequeath to my son William Van Alstyn and his heirs forever the farm which he now has in his possession and dwells upon with all the rights thereto appertaining lying in Claverack in the manor of Rensselaerswick and in the county of Albany upon this condition that my son William or his heirs therefor pay the sum of one hundred pounds current money of this province, which is still owing on that land, and furthermore, after my wife's death, that my son William pay or disburse to my daughter Cathariena Hofman, widow of Petrus Hoffman, or her heirs, the sum of forty pounds

current money of this province, if it goes well with the woodland which I have conveyed to my five children; if not my son William must pay to the aforementioned Cathariena the sum of sixty pounds current money aforementioned.

Item I give and bequeath to my son Lambarth Van Alstyn and his heirs forever the farm which he now possesses and occupies. lying in the township of Kinderhook in the county of Albany.

Item I give and bequeath to my son Peter Van Alstyn and his heirs forever my whole farm as I now possess the same, with all the farm implements thereto belonging, after the death of my wife, on this condition that my son [304] Peter or his heirs pay therefor to my son Lambarth or his heirs the sum of four hundred pounds current money of this province, the first payment of one hundred pounds two years after my death, the second payment also of one hundred pounds four years after my death the third payment again of one hundred pounds six years after my death, the fourth payment again of one hundred pounds eight years after my death, from this time forth my son Peter is to have the half of the whole income of my farm and is also to be at half of the expense of the whole and after my death my son Peter is to have the whole income of my farm, provided that he is to give to my wife during her life the fourth of the income, and also a free dwelling, also pay all my debts. Furthermore my son Peter or his heirs must pay or disburse to my daughter Maria or her heirs the sum of forty pounds current money of this province if it goes well with the woodland which I have conveyed to my five children; if not, my son Peter must pay to my aforementioned daughter Maria or her order the sum of sixty pounds current money as above.

Item I give and bequeath to my two daughters Catharina and Maria and their heirs after my wife's death all my movables and household furniture except my son's pictures, of which each shall have his own; furthermore I give to my daughter Cathariena or her heirs my negress named Alloon and to my daughter Maria or her heirs I give my negress named [305] Anne.

Item I give and bequeath to my son Peter or his heirs my negro named Lott.

Item I give and bequeath to my five above named children, William, Lambarth, Peter, Cathariena and Maria, and to their heirs all my silver work, nothing excepted, to be equally divided among them, to the one no more than to the other.

Item I give and bequeath to my son William and his heirs my brew kettle for which he is to pay three milch cows, one to my son Lambarth, one to my daughter Cathariena and one to my daughter Maria.

Item I give and bequeath to my three sons, William, Lambarth and Peter Van Alstyn, to them and their heirs, my whole interest in the sawmill.

Item I desire and order that if my aforementioned children or any of them be not content with what I have above bequeathed and given to them, but make further claims or pretensions on any part of my estate or on anything that I have heretofore sold or made over or conveyed, here or elsewhere, of whatsoever nature it may be, he who undertakes to do so shall be completely cut off from his inheritance or share herein bequeathed to him and my executors shall retain control of the same in order [306] to resist him according to my desire until the matter is settled, when they shall equally divide the remainder of the same among my other contented children and their heirs.

Item I give and bequeath to my son Peter van Alstyn after my death all that lies within my fence, house, orchard and meadowland, which is now in possession of my son Lambarth, and it is my will and order that Lambarth shall turn over the same to my aforesaid son Peter.

Item I give and bequeath to my son Peter van Alstyn and his heirs a parcel of hickory wood to the west of the high hill; also a piece of ground lying upon the west side of the Batten vly, between the ridge and said vly.

Item Furthermore it is my will that my youngest daughter Maria shall remain at home with my son Peter until she marries.

Lastly I nominate my worthy wife Maria van Alstyne and my son William van Alstyn and my friend Casparis Conyn junr executors of this my last will and testament and desire that in due time they shall pay my just debts which I may leave behind.

In witness of the truth hereof I have subscribed and sealed this and declared it to be my last will and testament the day and year above written.

THOMAS VAN ALSTEN (L.S.)

Signed, sealed and declared by Thomas van Alstyn to be his last will and testament in presence of us as witnesses (the words “or their heirs,” on the first page, were interlined before the signing and sealing hereof)

his

Petrus RX Coll jun

mark

his

Seybout X Kranckheyt

mark

Gerrit C van Den Bergh

Albany County [307] Be it Remembered that on the 7 day of September 1765 Personally came and appeared before me John Depeyster Surrogate of the said County Petrus Cool Jur of Kinderhook in said County of Albany and Gerret Van Den Bergh of the manner of Renselaer in said County farmer and being duly Sworn on their Oaths Declared that they and Each of them did see Thomas Van Alsten sign & seal the within written Instrument propoting to be the will of the said Thoms Van Alsten bearing date the 15 day of November one thousand Seven Hundred and sixty four and heard him publish & Declare the same as and for his Last will and testament that att the time thereof he the said Thomas Van Alsten was of Sound Disposing mind and memory to the best of their Knowledge and belief of them the deponents and that there names Subscribed to the said will are of there Respective hand writing which they subscribd as witnesses to the said will in the Testators presence and that they also saw the other witness Sybout Krankheyt sygn his name as witness to said will in the Testators presence

Jo DE PEYSTER Surrogate

I do hereby certify the preceding to be a truly Copy of the Original exd & Compared the 6th day of October 1781

Pr MAT VISSCHER Clk

APPENDIX E

Tenant agreement between Philip Sitzor and Ephraim Best

Article of agreement made this 25th day of January 1866 between Ephraim P. Best of the first party and Philip James Sitzor of the second party. The said party of the first part agrees to let the said party of the second party [sic] have his whole farm to work for the term of one year from the 1st of April 1866 to 1st of April 1867 and for a longer term if both parties shall agree for one half of all production. The said E. P. Best agrees to furnish the said Philip Sitzor with house room all that main body of the house on the west side of the hall together with the cellar underneath [sic] and Kitchen adjoining for the term of one year from April 1st 1866 to April 1st 1867. The said E. P. Best agrees to let the said Philip cut and gather fire wood for one fire. The said Sitzor not cutting any for fire wood which shall be of value for rails or post or slat wood; Trees which are dead or blown down or broken to pieces or the tops of trees from which rails post and slatwood has been taken he is to have for fire wood. And it is expressly understood [sic] and agreed upon that the said Philip Sitzor shall at no time have in use more than two stoves in said house nor more than what constitutes himself and family no second family in said apartment at no time if he chooses [sic] to put up a stove in setting room adjoining kitchen, he must burn coal but no stove on second floor [sic] at all. The first party agrees to let the second party have barns and room to store hay and grain if their [sic] shall be sufficient room for all. The first party reserves room for his Ox carts and waggon which are now on said premises also for all utensils which are on said farm. The first party reserves the strawberry bed in said garden and one sweet apple tree in said Orchard exclusive to himself and Philip Sitzor agrees to plow the ground well to put in all crops

[page 2]

in a workmanlike manner to plow and sow the ground with oats that the said E. P. Best shall direct him to plow and plant with corn and potatoes that the said E. P. Best shall direct him; to plow and sow with buckwheat the ground that the said E. P. Best shall direct him and in the fall to plow and sow the ground with rye that the said E. P. Best shall direct him and the said Philip Sitzor hereby agrees that he will plow said ground well and do the best in his power to cultivate each and either of said crops and to gather them and preserve them in the best manner possible. The party of the first part agrees to let second

party have the use of his hay press to press all hay for market but second party responsible for all damages don [sic] to said hay press, the first party agrees to let the said second party cut all slat wood which the said parties may need for pressing their hay the second party cutting it where the first party shall direct him to cut it. It is agree [sic] by both parties that each party is to furnish one half of all seed sown and all seed planted One half of clover seed one half of plaster and all kinds whatever. The said E.P. Best agrees that the said Philip James Sitzor shall have all the hay which he needs from the next growing crop for his three horses up to April 1st 1867 but no more than three horses is he to keep at no time, and against this the said Philip agrees that the said E. P. Best shall have all the hay and straw and stalks which he may need for his horse and cow the said Philip delivering the same unto the said E. P. Best in his barnes in the Village of Kinderhook. The grain which the said parties may need for their horses must first be threshed cleaned and dried each one half before any is fed. The said Philip Sitzor agrees to gather and put in market all productions from said farm in good order and wherever the said E. P. Best shall direct him. It is agreed that each party owns one half of all stock on said farm one half of cows one half of sheep one half of hogs one half fowls and each party is entitled to one half of all increase profits and gain from said stock. The said Philip Sitzor

[page 3]

agrees to milk the cows and make the butter and return to the party of the first part his half in good order. The said Philip Sitzor agrees to cut and make post and rails to make and repair fences he the said Philip cutting such trees as the said E.P. Best shall direct him to cut; and he thereby agrees that he will make and repair and keep [hole in ms.] all fences on said farm in good order and in a workma[nlike man]ner; also to repair gates and keep fences and gates in [hole in ms.] the said Philip agrees to cut down all weeds and burn [hole in ms.] y grow along fences and ditches and to mow down and dis [hole in ms.] ne weeds sutch as canady thistles dock and burdock [hole in ms.] out all brush along fences and ditches in a workmanlike manner; And the said Philip agrees if he does not perform the above metioned [sic] labour then the said E. P. Best may employ a man to perform the above labour and the said Philip must may for the same; The said Philip is to have the garden for vegetables exclusive to himself the said E. P. Best reserving the strawberry bed and one square of currents [sic] on west side of garden exclusive to himself. The said Philip agrees to keep said garden and walks free from weeds and grass

in a garden like manner. Each party to have one half of all fruit from said garden and doreyard [sic] and lane and orchards. The said Philip to pick and gather and market the same for one half; each party to find one half of all barrells necessary for marketing fruit and potatoes. The said Philip agrees to do all necessary labour to yard garden and orchard to prune all trees cut out dead limbs in spring and fall clean and clear said garden and yards from all leaves and rubbish [sic] and dirt of all kinds to have garden and yards look like a homestead where people live. The said Philip agrees to draw out all manure on said premises and to put it where the said E.P. Best shall direct him; and spread said manure in a workmanlike manner. The said Philip also agrees to draw out all straw which is on said farm and which may be in barn or on stacks on said premises and put it where the first party shall direct him to draw it on said farm; to have barnes all clean from straw and dirt on or before the 15th of June 1866.

[page 4]

The said Philip Sitzor also agrees to gather all walnuts and chestnuts on said farm for one half and the party of the first part hereby grants unto the party of the second part the power of law to prohibit any person or persons from taking any nuts from said farm; The said Philip Sitzor also agrees to pay one half of all farm taxes which said farm is or may be taxed for one year from the 1st April 1866 to April 1st 1867. The said Philip agrees to work all road tax which said arm is or may be taxed for during the year; The said Philip hires the tenant house which is on said farm from the said E P Best for the sum of thirty dollars for the term of one year from April 1st 1866 to April 1st 1867.

It is agreed by both parties that they will not take in pasture any stock on said farm; and it is further understood and agreed upon that the said E.P. Best now has forty two bushels of rye sown on said farm which is his exclusive. Now the said Philip Siztor agrees to sow next fall that same number of bushels again for the benefit of first party from his own seed; Then the party of the first part will let the said Philip Sitzor gather and put in market the now growing crop for one half; but all straw to remain on said farm for the benefit of said farm and the benefit of said stock on said farm. And it is further understood and agreed upon that the said Philip shall not make sale of any stock or produce from said farm without the advice or consent of the [overlay in ms.].

Witness

D Van Schaack

It is hereby understood [hole in ms.] and mutually agreed upon by both parties that the o[hole in ms.] article of agreement shall be and remain in full force and virtue for the term of another year from April 1st 1867 to April 1st 1868.

Witness

D Van Schaack

E. P. Best

his

Philip + James Sitzor

mark

E. P. Best

his

Philip + James Sitzor

mark [hole in ms.]

APPENDIX F

Farmers' Institutes in Columbia County, 1900-1915

[Kinderhook dates shown in bold type]

1900

East Chatham (February)

1902

none

1903

Canaan (January), Hudson (January)

1904

Kinderhook (January, February, April, October), **Kinderhook Lake** (August),
Canaan (February)

1905

Kinderhook (April and August)

1906

Kinderhook (January)

1907

Hudson (January), Claverack (January), Chatham (March)

1908

Claverack (January), Germantown (January), Hillsdale (January), **Kinderhook** (January)

1909-10

Claverack (January), East Chatham (January), Germantown (January),
Hillsdale (January), **Kinderhook** (January), New Lebanon (March)

1910-11

Claverack (March), East Chatham (January), Germantown (February),
Hillsdale (January), Linlithgo (February), New Lebanon (January)

1911-12

Claverack (February), East Chatham (January), Germantown (February),
Hillsdale (January), **Kinderhook** (February), Linlithgo (March), Old Chatham (January)

1912-13

Claverack (January), Copake (January), East Chatham (January),
Germantown (January), Johnstown (January), Linlithgo (November),
Old Chatham (January), West Ghent (January)

1914-15

Claverack (1915), Copake (1915), East Chatham (1915)

APPENDIX G

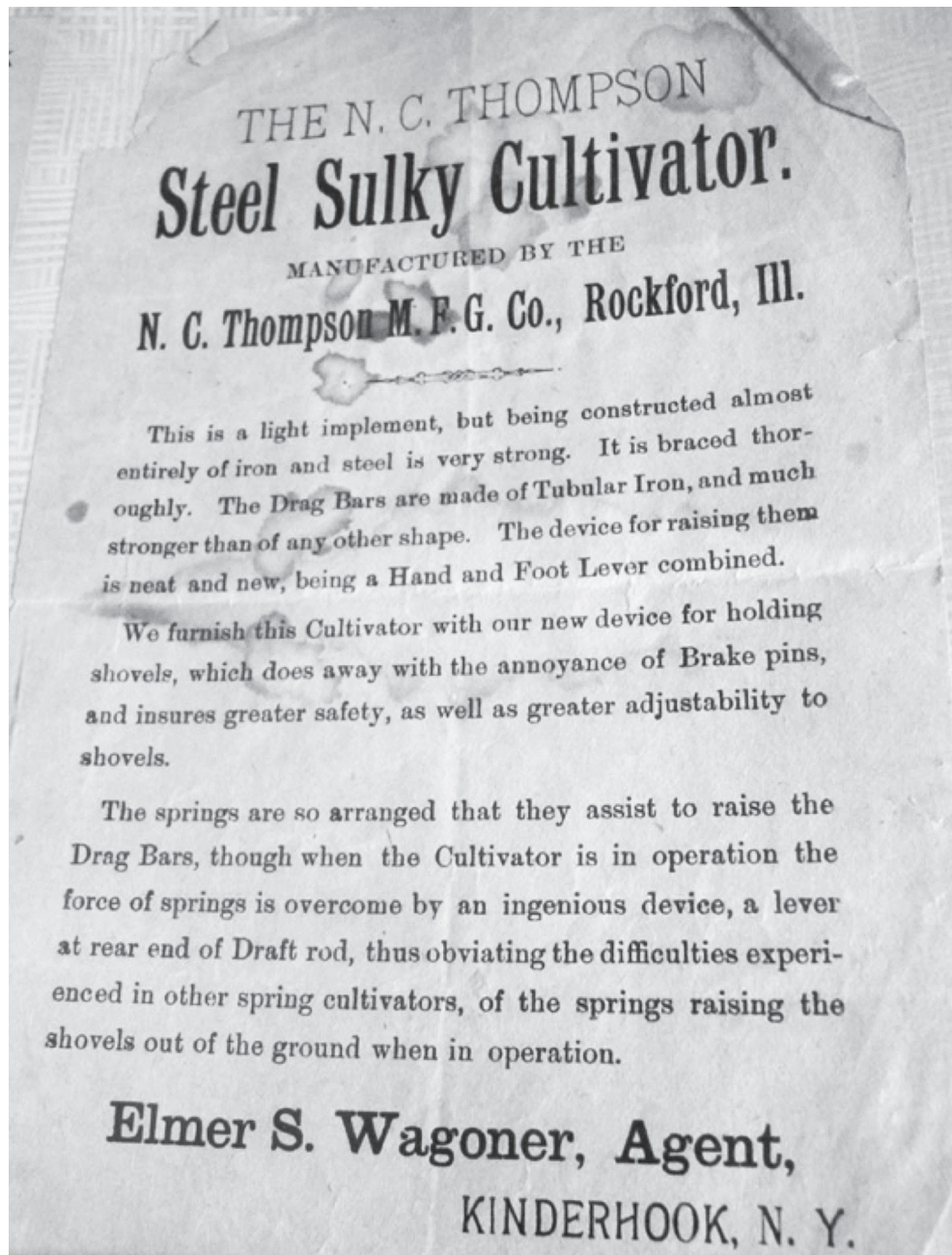
Invoices Showing Some Farming Activities of Elmer Wagoner

1912:

STOCKPORT				CATSKILL & NEW YORK STEAMBOAT CO., LTD.			
Sales for account of <i>Elmer Wagoner</i>							
1912	17	10	Bales Hay	1055	1 ⁰⁰	20	55
	24	10	" "	2020	90 ⁰⁰	18	18
Freight and Commission						38	73
						5	09
Net						33	64

STOCKPORT				CATSKILL & NEW YORK STEAMBOAT CO., LTD.			
Sales for account of <i>Elmer Wagoner</i>							
1912	13	28	Bales Rye Straw	5830	95 ⁰⁰	55	38
		3	" " " "	590	75 ⁰⁰	4	42
	14	10	" " " "	1915	95 ⁰⁰	18	58
		1	" " " "	210	75 ⁰⁰	79	57
Freight and Commission						10	68
Net						68	89

undated:



Family documents provided by Bob, Dorothy, and Pat Van Alstyne show some of the farming activities of Bob's grandfather, Elmer Wagoner. The two invoices for hay and rye straw are dated 1912; the handbill for the N.C. Thompson steel sulky cultivator is undated. N.C. Thompson is listed as a manufacturer in an 1891 book on *Industrial and Picturesque Rockford* which notes that the company employed 12 people manufacturing sulky cultivators, hay-rakes, lever harrows, and plow jointers (Eugene Browne and F. Ford Rowe, Rockford, IL: Forest City Publishing Company, p. 31).

APPENDIX H

Kinderhook Farmers' Institute program (February 19, 1912)

New York Bureau of Farmers' Institutes program collection, 1911-12 volume

New York State Library/Manuscripts and Special Collections

AR 566-4 COLPF 206-2082 1911-12

"I know of no pursuit in which more real and important services can be rendered to any country than by improving its agriculture."
George Washington

State of New York—Department of Agriculture
ALBANY, N. Y.

FARMERS' INSTITUTE
AT
KINDERHOOK
Columbia County

MONDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 1912
IN
Grange Hall

Conducted by **EDWARD VAN ALSTYNE**
Local Correspondent, **EUGENE MERWIN**

ADMISSION FREE

Every one interested in Agriculture is invited to attend and take part in the discussions.
Write out, and place in the Question Box, any proper questions pertaining to Agriculture. Make all questions and remarks short and to the point.
Bring note book and pencil, and use them.
Bring the whole family. Ladies are particularly requested to be present.

PROGRAM
MONDAY 10 A. M.

PRAYER
OPENING REMARKS
CARE OF THE ORCHARD
WAYS OF MORE ECONOMICAL FEEDING

REV. MR. SLOCUM
EDWARD VAN ALSTYNE, Kinderhook
O. M. TAYLOR, State Experiment Station, Geneva
MR. VAN ALSTYNE

1.30 P. M.

QUESTION BOX
SMALL FRUITS
COMBATING INSECT PESTS

MR. TAYLOR
PROF. P. J. PARROTT, State Experiment Station, Geneva

7.30 P. M.

QUESTION BOX
FORESTRY (Illustrated)
THE SCHOOL PROBLEM

JOHN W. STEPHEN, State Forester, State Conservation Commission, Albany.
E. F. McDONALD, State Education Department, Albany

DORMANT SPRAYING

To control the San José Scale and Blister Mite the trees should be sprayed in the spring, before leaves appear, with the lime-sulphur wash. This may be made by the following formula:

Home-Made Concentrated Mixture.

Lump lime (90 per cent. pure), 40 lbs.; sulphur, 80 lbs.; water to make 50 gallons of mixture. Make the mixture according to foregoing formula, but when the entire amount of lime has been slaked add the full quantity of water. When kettles are used, a sufficient quantity of water should be added to provide for evaporation in cooking. Boil mixture for one hour. This preparation may be safely stored in tight containers if not subjected to frost. Test clear solution before using with Baumé hydrometer to determine density. Dilute as follows for San José Scale or Blister Mite:

Degrees Baumé	San José Scale	Blister Mite	Degrees Baumé	San José Scale	Blister Mite
33.....	1-8	1-11	27.....	1-6	1-8¼
32.....	1-7½	1-10½	26.....	1-5¾	1-7¾
31.....	1-7	1-10	25.....	1-5½	1-7½
30.....	1-6¾	1-9½	24.....	1-5¼	1-7
29.....	1-6½	1-9	23.....	1-5	1-6¾
28.....	1-6¼	1-8¾	22.....	1-4½	1-6¼

There are a number of commercial preparations which are excellent substitutes for the home-made mixture. For San José Scale dilute 1 gallon of mixture testing 32° to 34° B. with eight or nine gallons of water, and for Blister Mite 1 gallon with eleven gallons of water.

SUMMER SPRAYING

Lime-sulphur with lead arsenate.

This spray is used for Apple Scab, Bud Moth, Codling Moth and Case Bearer. It has largely superseded the Bordeaux-lead-arsenate mixture, formerly used for the same purpose, because it is less liable to burn the foliage and russet the fruit.

Dilute the concentrated lime-sulphur solution (32° B.) at the rate of 1 to 40. For each 50 gallons of the diluted solution add three pounds lead arsenate, previously made into thin milk by thorough stirring in about two gallons of hot water.

One application should be made just before the blossoms open and another just after the blossoms fall.

AGRICULTURAL VIRTUES

WHICH BRING SUCCESS IN NEW YORK

- 1 Conservation of fertility
- 2 Thorough cultivation
- 3 Drainage
- 4 Growth of leguminous crops
- 5 The use of cover crops
- 6 The proper use of lime and commercial fertilizers
- 7 Crop rotation
- 8 Selection of seed
- 9 Spraying for fungous and insect pests
- 10 Disposal of poor cows
- 11 Use of pure-bred sires
- 12 Feeding economical rations
- 13 Protection against bovine tuberculosis
- 14 Production of clean milk
- 15 Keeping of farm business accounts
- 16 Use of mechanical power and machinery
- 17 Employment of labor throughout the year
- 18 Maintaining a reputation for honesty
- 19 Providing home comforts
- 20 Reading reliable agricultural publications
- 21 Membership in active agricultural organizations

HOW MANY OF THESE ARE CONSPICUOUS ON YOUR FARM?

APPENDIX I

Homepage of Golden Harvest Farms (Valatie) website, June 2011, illustrating the use of “pastness” in marketing contemporary small-scale agriculture



