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Preface

My thesis is based on case studies of the creation and operation of three small sustainable community farms in New England. I picked my three farms for various reasons.

The first farm is a recreated historic garden at the Old Manse in Concord Massachusetts, which is owned by the Trustees of Reservations. The Trustees of Reservations partner with Gaining Ground, a Concord gardening nonprofit that donates its produce to local food pantries. I picked the Old Manse because I am from Lexington, Massachusetts, which neighbors Concord, so I have biked and walked by the Old Manse hundreds of times. The garden has always caught my eye and this was my opportunity to learn more about the property.

The second farm is Urban Oaks Farm in New Britain, CT, which has greenhouses and fields a few blocks from the original downtown district of New Britain. The farm provides green space and organic produce to a low income and a high crime area. From the start the farm has been supported through a mix of public and private funds and the planning and management have public and private components. I picked Urban Oaks Farm because I wanted to study an urban farm in Connecticut that contrasts with my other case studies in affluent areas. Urban Oaks has proved the most difficult to study however, because currently the farm manager, Tony Norris, is suffering from cancer and despite my best efforts not to burden him, because of his health it has been hard to learn as much as I wanted to about the farm.

The third farm is Crystal Spring Farm in Brunswick, ME. The local land trust owns the farm and surrounding trails and a farmer who runs a CSA leases part of the property from the land trust. I picked Crystal Spring Farm because I have lived in Brunswick for two summers, volunteered at the Bowdoin Organic Garden that shares land with the farm, and last summer was a CSA member.

Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank all the people who supported me throughout my research by sharing their time and knowledge.

Gaining Ground's staff was incredibly responsive to my inquiries. The Garden Manager, Verena Wieloch, gave me a tour of the Thoreau Birthplace garden, taught me about the heirloom vegetables in the recreated garden, answered my questions, and helped me contact Gaining Ground volunteers. The Administrative Coordinator, Emily Wheeler, gave me contact information for volunteers and the previous garden manager, shared her personal pictures of the recreated garden, and offered encouragement.

Deborah Kreisner-Francis at the Old Manse answered my questions, let me read through all her files that pertained to the garden, allowed me to make copies, sent me literature, and recommended books.

Tony Norris and Michael Kandefer told me the story of the creation of Urban Oaks Farm, and Norris allowed me to search through his news files to find articles about the farm. Kathy Spano welcomed me into her home and told me about the history of the Oak Street Neighborhood.

Jack Aley, Tom Settlemyer, and the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust's vision and hard work has allowed me to enjoy the scenic views of Crystal Spring Farm, run on its trails, and eat locally grown vegetables. The property and the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust's work sparked my interest in this project. Settlemyer and Aley answered my questions and told about the creation of the property. Aley also shared land trust brochures and materials as soon as I renewed my land trust membership.

Seth Kroeck at Crystal Spring Farm took time out of his day off and time away from his preschoolers for a long interview. He also shared pictures, his knowledge of other farms in New England.

Katherine Creswell and Joel Cartwright, both employees of the Bowdoin Organic Garden, told me the history of the Bowdoin Organic Garden's partnership with Crystal Spring Farm. As I volunteered with them at the BOG over the previous two summers, they helped me improve my farming skills.

Rick Wilson, history teacher, Brunswick Topsham Land Trust Member and local historian shared his graduate thesis and land trust materials on the history of Crystal Spring Farm.

Professor William Stowe encouraged me throughout my work, read endless drafts of my writing, and gently prodded me to keep asking questions and thinking harder.

Eric Sofen taught me to use endnote and helped me to format my bibliography.

A Note on methodology

When conducting interviews with my informants, I tried to avoid interviewing one person and then interviewing the person he or she suggested. This process is known as snowballing considered problematic because it can lead to a one sided picture of the situation. To avoid snowballing, I tried to identify all of the people involved with the creation and maintenance of each farm before I began the interview process. Because I was dealing with small community projects, I found that there were a few central players in each project who worked closely together. Thus, I cannot be overly concerned about interview referrals because for the creation of each farm, the individuals who were involved collaborated. Because there were just a few key people who made each project happen, I devote a significant amount of time to their stories in each case study.

I also looked through local newspaper articles to try to find new voices and sources that I had not previously identified. Many of the newspaper articles from smaller publications came from the file cabinets of the Old Manse, Urban Oaks Farm, the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust, and Maine Coast Heritage Trust's Brunswick Topsham Land Trust file. It is possible that each of these groups saved only the articles that they felt reflected favorably on them, but I think that for all three farms, they saved as much press coverage as they could to document their histories.

An Invitation

I chose all three of these farms because they are beautiful and I want to give you the opportunity to see what the properties look like. Because color printing is expensive, I have decided to include a CD with pictures of each farm. The CD contains a file for each farm, and I invite you to browse through to get a sense the landscapes.

Introduction

“Which of these items comes from a farm?” I asked my five-year old campers at Wolfe’s Neck Farm as I held up a carton of milk, a box of frozen hamburgers and a box of Jell-o for them to choose from. “Milk!” My campers chimed as they looked at the field of cows grazing behind them.

Figuring out where hamburgers came from was more of a struggle for the five-year olds. They had seen their parents take hamburgers out of their kitchen freezers and grocery store coolers, but many of the children had never stopped to consider how the meat got to the store. Despite my questions about where food at the store comes from, Genevieve was particularly adamant that, “Hamburgers just come from the grocery store.”

Then it dawned on Jack that if he was at farm camp maybe the hamburgers came from the farm too and he guessed, “Do hamburgers come from a farm?”

“Do they have to kill the cow?” Emily asked wide-eyed. I explained that they do have to kill some animals to make food, but that the last item, I had showed them, the Jell-o, contains gelatin made from cows’ hooves and demonstrates that we try to use every part of the animal.

“I’m sure that my food comes from the grocery store.” Genevieve insisted, still skeptical of the connection between her food and the sheep she had pet in the barn earlier or the pigs she had fed. In order to make the concept more concrete for my campers and to show them what some of the vegetables they are familiar with look like in the ground, I took them to the garden.

I was not surprised that my five-year old campers were unclear about the exact connection between living animals at the farm and packaged products at the

supermarket, but I was surprised at Genevieve's resistance to the idea that her food grows on a farm rather than magically appearing on supermarket shelves. Unlike the other campers who had grown up in and around Freeport, Maine and had visited farms before, Genevieve was from a suburb of Boston and had never harvested vegetables from a garden or spent time at a farm.

Genevieve's distance from her sources of food is consistent with an increasing number of Americans' experiences. Less than two percent of the U.S. population lives on farms today, compared to 25% in 1935 and nearly 50% over one hundred years ago.¹ Large automated industrial farms have replaced many of the small family farms in New England and much of the farmland has been sold to developers. As America moves toward fewer, large industrial farms, the majority of Americans, particularly those living in cities, no longer grow up near farms, and many adults as well as children no longer experience first hand how their food is produced.

Though I was disheartened by Genevieve's disconnect with how her food was produced, I was completely shocked at my college friend's reaction when I when I dragged him to visit Wolfe's Neck Farm. At first he did not want to go into the barn because of the smells. While he was standing outside he pointed at a chicken and a rooster and then looked at me asking, "Do they make eggs and chicks?" I nodded and led him into the barn to see the chicks. Afterward, I brought him to the garden to pick cucumbers, and he was as proud as my five year olds when he ate a salad he had harvested himself. My friend is from Florida and the only time he had seen farm animals was at a distance at a state fair. In addition, because of new development

¹ Elizabeth Ann R Bird, Gordon L Bulten, and John C. Gardner eds., *Planting the Future: Developing an Agriculture That Sustains Land and Community* (Walthill, Nebraska: Iowa State University Press, 1995), 7.

near his home, he had only once had the opportunity to pick fruit. Although at first my friend had turned his nose up at the smell of the farm and was overwhelmed by the noises in the barn, he overcame his squeamishness and enjoyed bringing his dinner from the farm to his kitchen.

Small farms are disappearing. America is rapidly losing farmland and open space to development and urban sprawl. Between 1982 and 1992, one million acres of farmland were converted to urban use and rural development and developed land increased by fourteen million acres. Meanwhile, the U.S. population as a whole grew by less than one percent annually. Thus population growth is not the primary cause of farmland conversion—suburban sprawl is. Once topsoil is paved over and replaced with subdivisions and strip malls, quality farmland is denied its utility and is difficult to replace or recover.²

In New England, particularly, many still romanticize farmscape as representative of a virtuous way of life.³ Tumble-down rock walls, rolling hayfields, and sagging farm buildings are an integral part of New England's charming landscape.⁴ Small farms within towns allow consumers to buy their food locally, see where their food is grown, participate in the growing process, and develop a strong

² Julia Freedgood, "Farming to Improve Environmental Quality," in *Visions of American Agriculture*, ed. William Lockeretz (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 2000), 73.

³ See Jefferson's writings on the Yeoman Farmer and David B. Danbom's "Past Visions of American Agriculture. David B. Danbom, "Past Visions of American Agriculture," in *Visions of American Agriculture*, ed. William Lockeretz (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 2000).

⁴ Though St. John de Crevecoeur didn't farm in New England, his description in 1782, of how he saw the American landscape as one of "fair cities, substantial villages, extensive fields, an immense country filled with decent houses, good roads, orchards, meadows, and bridges where an hundred years ago all was wild, wood and uncultivated!" could almost be a modern description of a new England landscape. Even today, in New England we hope that in some towns we can preserve the extensive fields, orchards, and meadows alongside careful development.

J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur and Susan Manning, *Letters from an American Farmer, The World's Classics* (Oxford [England] ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1997), 54.

connection with their sources of food because the farmland is part of their home. But as New England's population grows, the farms, hayfields, and surrounding meadows, forests, marshes, and wetlands are yielding to roads, housing developments, strip malls, golf courses, and parking lots. There is still some farmland and open space remaining, but if residents want their towns to maintain their historic character they need to actively preserve the remaining green spaces and execute long-term management plans that will ensure natural amenities for the future. Preserving small sustainable farms is central to New England's conservation because the farms provide scenic views, open spaces and natural habitat while connecting their communities with healthy food.

In order to address the rapid loss of farmland and open space and suggest ways that New England can preserve farmland my thesis is based on case studies of the creation and operation of three small sustainable farms that provide local food to their communities. The terms small, sustainable, organic and community farms can have different meanings to different people, and I want to explain my definitions of these terms. All my definitions are for American farms, and some of the definitions could be extended to farms in Europe, Latin America, or other locations around the world but they would need to be modified based on the local situation and farm policies.

A small farm does not necessarily indicate a farm of a particular acreage, but to ensure that we are picturing similar farms, I will say that generally small farms are

less than 100 acres and can be as small as a half-acre garden. How a farm operates is also important in categorizing it. If a farm relies heavily on hand labor to allow them to raise a wide variety of products that they sell to the people living around the farm, I consider it part of the small farm system.

I am more hesitant to give a definition of local community or local food because I think everyone should make his or her own decision about what their community is and what is local, based on their particular situation. Sharing food is a wonderful way to build community. Buying food from a local resident on a weekly basis strengthens connections, but large farms generally deny consumers the opportunity to meet the farmers who grow their food. Small farms often provide a central gathering place for people to meet and talk with their neighbors when they do their weekly shopping. Buying food locally can build community and reduce the fossil fuel expended transporting food.

In contrast, a large farm is typically thousands of acres of a single or a few crops and only a few people can do all the labor because they use large machinery for most of the farm work. Large industrial farms tend to be in under populated areas, and they do not grow a diversity of food that could fully meet their community or state's dietary needs. As more people live in cities and as technology allows for ease of transportation of food, we are becoming farther removed from our food sources and huge amounts of fuel are required to preserve and transport our food.⁵ In the United States, food typically travels 1,500 miles, changing hands an average of six

⁵ Brian Halweil, *Home Grown: The Case for Local Food in a Global Market*, ed. Thomas Prugh, vol. 163 (World Watch Institute, 2002), 17.

times as it is transported from the farm to your plate.⁶ Although the ease at which food travels around the globe allows for an incredibly diverse selection of food at cheap prices, at least four-times the energy and greenhouse gas emissions are expended than would be necessary with an equivalent diet from exclusively domestic sources.⁷ Hence the industrial food system depends on cheap oil not only for pesticides, fertilizers, and the team of tractors and combines used in on-farm production but also to transport food all over the world to distribute the crops. But there is a finite source of fossil fuels, the cost of oil is continuing to rise, and beyond the sticker price of a barrel of oil, burning fossil fuels contributes greenhouse gases to the atmosphere, which causes global warming and climate change.⁸

In addition, though at first one may think that increased mobility of food means greater variety year round, much of the shipping of food is illogical, given that at times nations are importing commodities that they already have large quantities of, forcing local producers to export. For example, in Great Britain because milk purchasers prefer to buy large, standardized quantities of milk, they buy from only a handful of widely dispersed sources, forcing local dairy farmers to sell milk abroad.⁹ There is also a huge amount of fossil fuel energy expended to move comparatively few food calories. Perishables— fruits, vegetables, and frozen foods are all low calorie foods, which require high energy for transport. For example, a head of lettuce grown in California and shipped 5,000 kilometers to Washington D.C. requires 36

⁶ Bill McKibben, *Deep Economy : The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future*, 1st ed. (New York: Times Books, 2007), 64.

⁷ Halweil, *Home Grown: The Case for Local Food in a Global Market*, 17.

⁸ Richard et al Alley, "Climate Change 2007: The Physical Science Basis Summary for Policy Makers," (Geneva, Switzerland: Intergovernmental Program on Climate Change, 2007).

⁹ Halweil, *Home Grown: The Case for Local Food in a Global Market*, 20.

times as much fossil fuel energy in transport as it provides in food energy when it arrives.¹⁰ Moving food globally also opens the floodgates to tiny seeds, bacteria and pathogens to be transported to new regions where taken outside their native context can have extremely detrimental effects on the local systems that have no resistance to them and they can cause infestations or spread uncontrolled. In addition the farther food travels and the more steps along the way, and the more opportunities there are for food to be contaminated through mishandling.

The easiest way to avoid these problems is to reduce the distance food travels by buying food that has traveled the shortest distance whenever possible. Buying locally means knowing what is available in your region and purchasing seasonal produce when possible. It means that if you live in New England you might want to buy milk or ice cream from a local dairy where the milk is supplied in state rather than purchasing from a large national supplier where the milk can come from many widespread sources. Everyone must define his or her own standards for what is local. Some people may decide to only purchase seasonal food grown within their state, some people may define local products as domestic products.

Eating locally does not mean endless agonizing over whether to buy the organically certified tomato that has traveled 100 miles or the tomato from the farmer ten miles down the road whose farm is not organically certified. Nor does it mean that if you live in New England you must write off pineapples forever and settle to your lot of turnips and rutabagas for the long cold winter. It means you should realize that your food purchases have an impact on the natural world and shop conscientiously. Or do as Editor in chief of *Gourmet* magazine, Ruth Reichl, urges

¹⁰ Brian Ibid., 18-19.

and vote with your dollars when you shop and understand that “what goes into your cart has real repercussions on the future of the earth.”¹¹

Shopping conscientiously means buying from sustainable farms. This brings me to my final definition of sustainable farms. A sustainable farm enhances the environmental and scenic quality of its area, ensuring that the land will be productive for future generations. Sustainable farms use minimal fossil fuel inputs, synthetic pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, and fungicides. Instead sustainable farms depend on a diversity of crops and livestock and use organic inputs to build soil quality and try to maintain a natural balance on the farm between inputs and outputs while protecting their soil and water resources. Sustainable farms can be much smaller in size because crop diversity allows farmers to utilize much more of their fields and produces much higher yields and it is easier for farmers to break even with fewer acres in cultivation because they do not have to invest as much capital in expensive equipment.

Unlike the sustainable agricultural system, the industrial agricultural system of large farms is harmful to the environment. Small, sustainable farms allow consumers to opt out of the global industrial food system, which offers a huge variety of low cost food, but separates agriculture from nature and is inextricably linked to fossil fuels. Through heavy use of machinery, pesticides and fertilizers, the industrial agricultural system largely ignores the natural growing system and tries to ignore the need for good soil and a diverse healthy ecosystem. Instead industrial farms rely on fossil fuels and monocultures as that is the easiest way for them manage their thousands of acres. In industrial agriculture farmers rely heavily on technology and fossil fuels to eliminate the need for human labor while maximizing crop yield. Fertilizers and

¹¹ Ruth Reichl as part of a review of *The Omnivore's Dilemma* on the jacket of the book.

pesticides run off from the fields and contaminate streams, lakes, ponds, and underground water supplies, polluting public water supplies and hurting natural ecosystems.¹²

The way the industrial system raises livestock also causes major human health and environmental problems. Cattle, poultry, and swine are all raised in cramped, unsanitary conditions where the animal waste creates sewage problems and environmental health hazards that make animal infection extremely likely and cause problems for the surrounding environment and water system.¹³ Instead of confronting the root of the problem and raising meat and poultry in healthier conditions, the industry tries to speed the growth process up by giving animals hormones and they stave off diseases by giving animals antibiotics. Because the industry does not address the larger health issues that arise from raising too many animals close together in their own excrement and because of problems with meat processing, the meat can still become contaminated by deadly strains of E. coli and endanger human health.¹⁴

Increasingly, we cannot assume that by purchasing organically certified food we are avoiding the problems of industrial agriculture by buying food that has been grown and transported sustainably. USDA organic certification does not guarantee food safety nor does it enforce limits on long distance food travel, so it is even more important to buy locally produced food than USDA organically certified foods.

“Organic” produce or livestock loosely refers to food grown without the use of

¹² Bird, *Planting the Future: Developing an Agriculture That Sustains Land and Community*, 3-7. And Danbom, "Past Visions of American Agriculture," ix.

¹³ McKibben, *Deep Economy : The Wealth of Communities and the Durable Future*, 60.

¹⁴ Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation : The Dark Side of the All-American Meal* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001).

synthetic petroleum based chemicals, pesticides, herbicides, fungicides or fertilizers. Today “organically certified” means USDA certified food, which can be “100% organic” or “made with organic ingredients” if it contains at least 70% organic ingredients.¹⁵ There is pressure from large agribusinesses for the USDA organic standards to be further relaxed. For to be “certified organic”, a farm must meet regulations that the USDA summarizes as, “relying on ecologically based practices such as cultural and biological pest management, exclusion of all synthetic chemicals, antibiotics, and hormones in crop and livestock”¹⁶ and it must be officially certified by the USDA. Achieving organic certification can be costly and tedious for small farms, so a number of sustainable farmers work to educate their customers about their environmentally friendly farming practices rather than wasting their time and money on organic certification. That said, it is still important for us to consume organic and sustainably grown foods because increasing evidence suggests that it is better to consume foods free of pesticides and growth hormones because the pesticides build up in animal tissue and the growth hormones given to animals affect human development as well.¹⁷

Despite the obvious benefits of organic products being available at major grocery stores which translates into an enormous reduction in the use of synthetic pesticides, herbicides and fertilizers, large scale organic food production is no longer necessarily linked to a sustainable food system. Now organic products are often

¹⁵ *National Organic Program: Labeling and Marketing* (USDA, October 2002 10/1/2006)]; available from <http://www.ams.usda.gov/nop/FactSheets/LabelingE.html>.

¹⁶ USDA, *Organic Certification* (6/13/2006 [cited 10/2/06); available from http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/_s.7_0_A/7_0_1OB?navid=ORGANIC_CERTIFICATIO&parentnav=AGRICULTURE&navtype=RT.

¹⁷ "When It Pays to Buy Organic," *Consumer Reports*, February 2006. available from www.consumerreports.org.

grown in monocultures and the chemicals and pesticides that were avoided in growing the produce merely resurface in the fossil fuels used to ship the produce around the world.¹⁸ Also, though industrial organic may improve water quality and worker health in agricultural areas and reduce the pesticides and chemicals consumed, it does not necessarily circumvent food safety concerns because there are still many unknown sources of contamination and little accountability from suppliers in the long production chain. Therefore, large-scale industrial organic is not only the solution to the problems with the traditional industrial farming.

Americans need to learn to make smart food decisions, and the best way for them to do that is to have local, quality food available at affordable prices. In order for that to happen, sustainable farms must be integrated into local communities so that people are connected to their food sources and can see how their food is grown. People should live near where their food is grown, but most of the U.S. population is concentrated in and around urban areas, where real estate prices are high and there is very little open space available for farming. However, some sustainable farms in and near urban areas have been extremely successful.

When farmed by innovative, dedicated farmers, small farms can be extremely productive and have much higher yields than large monoculture farms. For example Joel Salatin's 550 acre Polyface Farm in the Shenandoah Valley produces 30,000 eggs 10,000 broilers, 800 stewing hens, 25,000 pounds of beef, 25,000 pounds of pork, 1,000 turkeys and 500 rabbits in a season. Salatin also grow enough vegetables to feed his family. According to Michael Pollan, Salatin's farm is probably one of the most productive farms anywhere, and not because he has amazingly fertile land,

¹⁸ Mark Morford, "The Sad Death of 'Organic,'" *The San Francisco Chronicle* October 13, 2006.

but because he and his family have cared for their land. The Salatin's carefully managed crops and livestock to rebuild soil quality and also only keep 100 of the 550 acres of land clear at a time allowing the rest to return to woods. The woods provide myriad benefits for the farm maintaining biodiversity, keeping predators at bay, helping maintain water balance on the farm, and providing biomass for the farm and for compost to create natural fertilizer for plants.¹⁹ Salatin's example illustrates that a farm is most productive when it becomes part of the nature.

Small farms can be important microhabitats, peaceful scenic landscapes, locations for recreational trail systems, and important healthy food sources for their communities. Yet hardest places for farmers to find land to farm or for farmers to continue to afford to farm their land are heavily populated areas with high real estate prices. It is imperative to keep farms in these rapidly developing areas because these farms provide with fresh local food to concentrated population centers and educate consumers about the importance of eating locally and seasonally. It is only in urban areas that farmers have a built-in market for their goods and therefore make farming an economically viable way of life.

As urban sprawl swallows up fields, forests, and farms conservationists have looked for new models to maximize the benefits of open space. Farmland can integrate human communities with natural landscape. Members of local food movements have also looked for ways to find land in developed areas where most consumers are. It is important to improve environmental quality by developing

¹⁹ Michael Pollan, *The Omnivore's Dilemma : A Natural History of Four Meals* (New York: Penguin Press, 2006), 205-225.

agricultural areas to preserve water quality and natural habitat.²⁰ There are many ways for sustainable farms and conservation groups to work together to preserve a landscape of working farms, scenic views, habitat, and recreational opportunities.

Farmers are important stewards of watersheds, soil, and landscapes and as a result the health of a municipality's ecosystem is deeply affected by farmers' land use practices. There are a number of ways for farmers to profit while developing a symbiotic relationship with nature.²¹ Farmhouses could be the base for educational programs, summer camps, and school programs. Farms can move serve as green spaces for communities, provide educational programs, environmental and recreational amenities including hiking, biking, horseback riding, and skiing trails. They can profit from their good land stewardship by charging fees for camping, hunting, fishing and bird watching. These activities could complement agricultural land use by bringing supporters of to the area.²²

For sustainable farmers to become fully integrated into urban food markets they need to have good farmland available to farm near their customers, and they need supportive consumers. Farmers must support consumers by providing educational and recreational opportunities, composting municipal waste, producing food and making it available at farmers markets and farm stands, and working to build soil and water quality, improve wildlife habitat and increase biodiversity.²³ People can show support for farms by buying products directly from farmers, and by

²⁰ Freedgood, "Farming to Improve Environmental Quality," 82.

²¹ Ibid., 86.

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid., 89.

visiting farms for recreational and educational activities.²⁴ Of course, supporting farming for urban food markets does not necessarily mean farming in the center of a city, or creating vast tracks of farmland in the heart of the financial district. It can mean helping farmers find land around the fringes of cities, supporting community gardens within cities, turning vacant lots into gardens, and building rooftop gardens.

Even when farmers and consumers support each other, the development pressures of housing and strip malls make it increasingly costly for farmers to stay on their land and difficult for new farmers to find good soil and to afford farmland. In today's competitive land market, if communities want to preserve their rural landscapes they need to support local farmers not only by buying their produce, but also by ensuring that they have land tenure. Some farmers are turning to land trusts, municipalities, states, and federal agencies for help preserving land—deeding their land to these entities with the provision that the land must stay in agricultural use. This takes the burden of taxes off of the farmer, while ensuring that the land will stay in agriculture.

Willing or donating land to private or public institutions is not unique to farmland conservation. Private institutions play a significant role in land conservation in the United States. In addition to the land conserved by large national conservation groups including the Trust for Public Land, the Nature Conservancy, and the Audubon Society, over 1,500 smaller land trusts have worked around the

²⁴ Kate Clancy, "Reconnecting Farmers and Citizens in the Food System," in *Visions of American Agriculture*, ed. William Lockeretz (Ames, Iowa: Iowa State University Press, 2000), 52-54.

country to preserve 37 million acres of land, which is 16 ½ times the acreage of Yellowstone National Park.²⁵

Private Land Trusts have the advantage over public conservation initiatives that they need only satisfy their members, and they have fewer legal constraints about how they can acquire land. Land Trusts can acquire land that is part of a development project or through multiparty transactions. Land Trusts may acquire properties or easements through purchase or donation and then transfer or sell the property to another party or to a government agency.²⁶

Generally, land trusts are fiscally conservative and do not want to take on the financial risk of owning and managing a farm, but there are examples around the country of land trusts that own farms.²⁷ Usually, if a land trust owns a farm, the trust is dedicated solely to the management of the farm, and does not hold other properties. There are also a few towns that own and manage farms. When land trusts or towns do own farms it helps if they have large endowments, if the organizations are extremely well organized and have dedicated, skilled members and full time staff. It helps if the organization does not try to run or manage the farm itself, but instead hires a skilled staff person with farm expertise or leases or forms some other partnership with a farmer.

A few towns do successfully manage their own farms including a Cranberry Bog in Carlisle, MA and a farm in Groton, MA. The American Farmland trust advises

²⁵ *Land Trust Alliance: 2005 National Land Trust Census* (12/12/2006); available from <http://www.lta.org/aboutlt/census.shtml>.

²⁶ Jeffrey Kline, and Dennis Wichelns, "Public Preferences Regarding the Goals of Farmland Preservation Programs: Reply," *Land Economics* 74, no. 4 (Nov. 1998): 567.

²⁷ Examples include Aldemere Farm in Rockport Maine is owned by Maine Coast Heritage Trust and run by a farm manger that they hire and the Morris Farm in Wiscasset Maine that was run by the farm trust, but as of April of this year they will lease the farm to a farmer and the trust will continue to run educational programs.

municipalities that if they do buy farmland, that they should put easements on the land and resell it. Most towns do not have the financial resources to take large farm properties off of the tax roles, nor do town managers have the expertise or time to deal with farm management. In addition, when towns try to operate farms, they run into the problem of feeling that they need to satisfy all the local residents, many of whom think that because the farm is publicly owned, it should be completely open for recreational access.²⁸

Chuck Matthei, founder of the Equity Trust, Inc., a non-profit that helps communities gain ownership interests in their food, land and housing, wrote a guide to help farmers achieve land tenure. In this guide, "Gaining Ground, How CSAs Can Acquire, Hold and Pass on Land," Matthei suggests that CSAs and sustainable farmers should partner with land trusts because they can use public funds to purchase farmland, and can often purchase land at below fair market value. Also, land donors receive tax breaks by donating to a land trust.²⁹ Matthei suggests that farmers should try to work with existing land trusts because new land trusts can experience organizational difficulties. The land trusts role in the partnership should be as a steward of the land, protecting the property and representing the public's interests in the land.³⁰

²⁸ Sometimes, however, public recreation and agriculture are mutually exclusive because of dangerous farm equipment or sensitive crops, and it can be hard for a town to balance everyone's interests. It is much easier for a private farmer or a private land trust to ask the public to stay away from farm buildings, sensitive crops, or farm equipment than for the town to ask the public to stay away from a publicly owned farm. Don Buckloh of the American Farmland information Center, phone interview by Allison Burson 2/01/07.

²⁹ Chuck Matthei, "Gaining Ground: How CSAs Can Acquire, Hold and Pass on Land," in *Farms of Tomorrow Revisited: Community Supported Farms--Farm Supported Communities*, ed. Trauger Groh & Steven McFadden (Kimperton, PA: Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association, 1997), 232.

³⁰ Ibid.

Though land trusts are better able to manage farms, towns or states sometimes purchase a farm if no one else can afford to preserve the property, and then put an easement on the property and resell it so that it will return to the tax role. New Jersey has a state program with funding for the state to buy at risk farmland, but the state is required to sell the property back to a farmer with a conservation easement on it within a reasonable amount of time, which is usually a year.³¹ Some states can buy the development rights to farms. In Vermont the Housing and Conservation Board holds statutory right of refusal on any farm that has received property tax considerations or other state subsidies before it can be sold and removed from production, and the state provides financing to local land trusts through a fund capitalized by legislative appropriations. In this way, the state of Vermont and its local land trusts have led the country in preserving farmland and ensuring that small family farms can continue to operate.³²

Because of the aforementioned concerns many farmers and farmland conservationists feel that partnerships between land trusts and small sustainable farms are most beneficial for their communities. Finally, before I can address what kind of relationship makes a successful partnership between a sustainable farm and its community, I must define what I mean by a successful farm and what elements can help bring about its success. Trauger Groh, a biodynamic farmer and theorist, and journalist Steven McFadden address these questions in *Farms of Tomorrow Revisited* by examining how ten sustainable Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) farms have successfully created partnerships with their communities. A successful

³¹ Don Buckloh of the American Farmland information Center, phone interview by Allison Burson 2/01/07.

³² Matthei, "Gaining Ground: How CSAs Can Acquire, Hold and Pass on Land," 234.

community supported farm must be financially viable, create and strengthen community, educate its community about healthy food choices, provide fresh produce at an accessible cost for everyone who wants it, improve the landscape and environmental quality of the area, and have land tenure.

In order to achieve these goals the farmland must be affordable and on fertile or improvable soil, and the farm must be in a manageable size in an easily accessible location so that the farmers can work it and the community can get to it. Working with a land trust gives farms financial support as well as giving the farmers aid with long term planning. The land trust also allows individuals to make tax-deductible donations of equipment and funds to the land trust. Although land trusts have non profit status and can sometimes hold farmland without paying property taxes, farming is not recognized by the IRS as a nonprofit activity so generally farmers, community farm organizations (CSAs), or farm stands do still pay taxes for their business.³³

I chose to research the creation of three partnerships between sustainable farms and land trusts or other nonprofits to learn what allows farms to successfully create community, educate its neighbors and enable healthy eating while preserving open space and enhancing the environmental health of the area. I hope that my findings will guide current community farm partnerships and enable them improve their relationships and tighten their operation. I also hope that what I have learned can be a reference for communities, farmers, and conservation groups who are

³³ "The Brookfield Farm." Steven McFadden, "Examples of Community Supported Farms," in *Farms of Tomorrow Revisited: Community Supported Farms--Farm Supported Communities*, ed. Trauger Groh & Steven McFadden (Kimberton, PA: Biodynamic Farming and Gardening Association, 1997), 136-37.

beginning to discuss partnering and that my writing will both inspire them to work together, and help them to plan a practical model for their situation.

The Old Manse

Introduction

Despite current trends toward more and more elaborate weddings and wedding presents, just before Valentine's Day both the New York Times and the BBC featured stories about the increasing popularity of environmentally friendly weddings. According to the Times more brides and grooms are asking what the ecological impact of their wedding celebration will be and are trying to serve locally grown food at the celebration and instead of cut flowers, some couples choose potted native plants for table decorations.¹ Brides and grooms can choose to go green with their wedding registries as well, encouraging guests to make donations to charities or registering for a wide variety of gifts other than place settings. In the past, American trousseaus were often more conventional, and had linens, undergarments and clothing to provision the bride and groom for married life. Yet in 1842, Henry David Thoreau, who hardly ever did anything the traditional way, seemed to be thinking along the same lines as the green wedding planners of today and gave his friends Sophia and Nathaniel Hawthorne a garden for a wedding gift. Thoreau planted the garden for the Hawthornes at the Old Manse in Concord, Massachusetts, between the Concord River and Monument Street.² Thoreau's gift was far more practical than many of today's wedding gifts of Tiffany alarm clocks and fine china, because it embodied the traditional adage, "Give a man a fish and he'll eat for a meal. But teach a man to fish, and he'll eat for a lifetime." By giving the newlyweds a garden, Thoreau enabled the couple to provide themselves with fruits and vegetables. While an increasing number of couples today are trying to start their married life ethically by offering their friends

¹ Mireya Navarro, "How Green Was My Wedding," *The New York Times*, 2/11 2007.

² Informational sign at Garden at Old Manse. Trustees of Reservation. 269 Monument St. Concord, MA. Viewed 10/17/2006.

and family one sustainable meal, Thoreau's garden provided the family a season of food. Thoreau also made their house more beautiful by filling the plot of land in front of the house with plants and flowers.

Although the Hawthornes enjoyed their garden and cultivated it for subsistence, future owners let the garden rest. Without the garden, the property lacked an integral part of the landscape and the owners missed the opportunity to cultivate prime soil in a river flood plain. Today, thanks to an innovative partnership between the Trustees of Reservations' Old Manse property and Gaining Ground, a Concord-based, non-profit organic farming and hunger relief organization, Thoreau's kitchen garden at the Old Manse in Concord is once again a vibrant garden, planted with many of the same heirloom vegetables and flowers that would have been familiar to Thoreau.

Background

In order to understand the conditions that enabled the recreation of Thoreau's kitchen garden, it helps to have a sense of the surrounding community. Concord is an affluent suburb twelve miles outside of Boston with excellent schools, libraries, and public services. Concord is known as the birthplace of the American Revolution³ and it was home to a number of great authors including Bronson and Louisa May Alcott, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Nathaniel Hawthorne, and Henry David Thoreau. In the 19th and early 20th centuries Concord was predominantly an agricultural community, but agriculture has declined in economic importance since WWII.⁴ Though the town is

³ The Battle of Concord at the Old North Bridge, which is literally a stone's throw from the Old Manse, was one of the first two battles that started the American Revolution.

⁴ *Why Concord* (The Concord Museum, [cited 1/24 2007]); available from <http://www.concordmuseum.org/>.

no longer dependent on agriculture, much of Concord's rural character and historical landscape has been preserved. The historic buildings, homes, farms and Minuteman National Park draw visitors who come to learn about Concord's history. The Old Manse and Historic Garden sit on the edge of Minuteman National Park and at one entrance to the historic Old North Bridge where the Battle of Concord occurred. The property also has frontage on one of the main roads to Concord Center, which has a number of residences as well as an organic farm.⁵ The location of the property makes publicity for the garden easy, because the property is highly visible and on a major thoroughfare less than a mile from Concord center, so many people see the garden and can easily stop to investigate.

Despite its population of just under 17,000, Concord, like many New England towns, still has small town feel and residents are very active in all aspects of community life. Concord is a receptive audience for Gaining Ground and the Old Manse's Garden, with a well-educated, affluent community that has the leisure time and interest to explore their history and learn about their food sources. Over ninety percent of residents are and only 2.2% of residents are African American, 2.8% are Latino or Hispanic, and 2.1% are of some other race. The town is extremely well off; and in 1999 dollars the per capita income was \$51,477 and the median household income was \$95,897.⁶ Real estate is extremely expensive in Concord, however

⁵ The Beemis family who started Gaining Ground owns Hutchins Farm. Originally, Gaining Ground's garden was on their private property, but now Gaining Ground has moved to two other locations and the Beemis family focuses on their own business. Though the Beemis's were integral in the creation of Gaining Ground, Gaining Ground now operates completely independently of Hutchins farm. The Beemis family was integral in connecting Gaining Ground with the Old Manse. John Beemis, phone interview by Allison Burson 10/30/2006.

⁶ *U.S. Census Bureau 2005 American Community Survey* (US Census Bureau 1/24/07)]; available from http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet/SAFFacts?_event=&geo_id=06000US2501715060&_geoContext

because Concord is one of Boston's more rural suburbs there are still at least a dozen farms and half as many farm stands in the town.⁷ Particularly because much of Minuteman National Park is open field and farmland, the town still has a bucolic look in places. Concord citizens have a deep appreciation for the town's history and open spaces, which is evident in the community's preservation of a number of historic houses and open spaces.⁸ Thus, Concord is an extremely supportive community for the Old Manse and Gaining Grounds to work.

History of the Old Manse

Before Europeans settled in Concord, Massachusetts, Native Americans lived in Concord along the Concord, Sudbury, and Assabet Rivers. Archeological evidence supports the site of a 4,500 year-old Native American base-camp in the field behind the present day Old Manse next to the Concord River. Nathaniel Hawthorne and Thoreau were also familiar with the Indian remains near the Manse. In *Mosses from an Old Manse*, Hawthorne wrote that "here in some unknown age, before the white man came, stood an Indian village, convenient to the river, whence its inhabitants must have drawn so large a part of their subsistence." Thoreau and Hawthorne found Indian artifacts including arrowheads, spears, and chisels.⁹

=01000US%7C04000US25%7C05000US25017%7C06000US2501715060&_street=&_county=concord&_cityTown=concord&_stat.

⁷Counting farms is tough because stables and hayfields and other fallow property, which could be used for agriculture, contribute to the "rural feel" of Concord, but do not add to their food supply. The Concord phone book lists a thirteen farms, and three of which are stables. Also, not all of the farm stands in Concord are directly connected to fields, farms or open space in Concord.

⁸ Historic Houses include Orchard House, Thoreau's Cottage at Walden Pond, the Wayside House (Hawthorne), Ralph Waldo Emerson House, etc. Conserved lands include over 1,000 acres of private land held by the Concord Land Conservation Trust, town owned conservation land and National Park Land.

⁹ Nathaniel Hawthorne, *Mosses from an Old Manse, The Works of Nathaniel Hawthorne* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1882), 19.

In 1640, James Blood, a wealthy settler from England, arrived and took title to 666 acres including the fourteen-acre plot where the Old Manse stands today.¹⁰

The Bloods were subsistence farmers who grew enough corn, rye, turnips, cabbage, onions and squash to last through long, cold New England winters. They planted an apple orchard so they could make their own cider, and kept pigs, goats, chickens, cows, and sheep.¹¹

In 1769, the Bloods sold 22 acres to Reverend William Emerson, who began the construction of the present-day Manse using the existing foundation of the Blood house. At this point the property was still a working farm. Reverend Emerson, who was known for his religious and political preaching, was the first to answer the alarm bell in Concord that warned of the British Regulars' approach. There is speculation as to whether he fought at the Battle on the Old North Bridge, but after the battle he joined the Continental army as a chaplain and died of "camp fever."

Reverend William Emerson's wife, Phebe Emerson, remarried Reverend Ezra Ripley in 1780. By 1780, the Manse had evolved into a gentleman's farm. Unlike previous owners who had farmed for subsistence, Ripley farmed as a hobby and made his living as a minister. The Manse had no shortage of esteemed residents, and Ralph Waldo Emerson stayed with Reverend Ezra Ripley for a year in 1834. Ripley owned the property until his death in 1841, after which time the Manse was empty for a year. In July of 1842, Nathaniel and Sophia Hawthorne came from Boston to spend their honeymoon at the Manse, renting the Manse from Samuel Ripley for the next three

¹⁰ Paul Brooks, *The Old Manse and the People Who Lived There* ([S.l.]: Trustees of Reservations, 1983),.x.

¹¹ Self-guided Landscape Tour. The Old Manse. Concord, Massachussets. Trustees of Reservation. Brochure. 1999.

years. Hawthorne wrote short stories and essays while living at the Manse and many of them were published in *Mosses from an Old Manse*. Hawthorne christened the house with its epithet of “Manse,” alluding to the fact that a number of ministers had lived in the house by using the Scottish term for a minister’s house.

In 1845, Samuel Ripley wanted to return to his home so the Hawthorne’s returned to Salem.¹² The house stayed in the Ripley family, passing to Sophia Ripley Thayer, and then to Sarah Thayer Ames. By 1900 the Old Manse was primarily a summer house. In 1939, when Sarah Thayer Ames died, the property and furnishings were conveyed to the Trustees of Reservations.¹³

Trustees of Reservations

Today the Old Manse is owned and maintained by Trustees of Reservations, which is a statewide conservation organization. Trustees of Reservations began when Charles Eliot proposed a statewide non-profit group to preserve open space in Massachusetts in 1890. In 1891 the Massachusetts legislature voted to establish the Trustees of Reservations.¹⁴ Today, the Trustees are still a nonprofit and they do not pay property taxes on any of their holdings. Since they started, the Trustees of Reservation have worked to preserve land in three main ways: they own properties, they hold easements on properties by which they can restrict development, or they partner with other organizations to help them acquire properties or easements.¹⁵

¹² Some sources say that financial troubles necessitated the Hawthorne’s return to Salem. Randall Stewart ed., "Hawthorne and Politics, Unpublischd Letters to William B. Pike," *The New England Quarterly* 5, no. 2 (1932).

¹³ Self-guided Landscape Tour. The Old Manse. Concord, Massachussets. Trustees of Reservation. Brochure. 1999.

¹⁴ *Historical Origins: Trustees of Reservation* ([cited 10/18 2006]); available from http://www.thetrustees.org/pages/89_historical_origins.cfm.

¹⁵ *About Us: Techniques-the Trustees of Reservation* ([cited 12/12 2006]); available from http://www.thetrustees.org/pages/44_techniques.cfm.

Trustees of Reservations and its partner organizations work throughout Massachusetts to preserve undeveloped land. While some conservation groups preserve only pristine natural habitat, Trustees of Reservations' outlook is that all landscape in Massachusetts has been shaped by human action. Therefore the Trustees define their mission more broadly, protecting properties for their historical and as well as natural value. They try to restore the landscape to its past condition while educating visitors about the ecology and history of the area.¹⁶ For example, at the Old Manse, programs include a self-guided landscape tour as well as tours of the house, which contains family furnishings acquired over 200 years.

Landscape Preservation at the Old Manse

Recreating an historic garden at the Old Manse in Concord fit in with the Trustees of Reservation's mission to preserve both a historic house and the surrounding grounds. In December of 1993, with suggestions from a landscape historian, the Advisory Committee for the Old Manse put together a full Master Plan for the Old Manse. The Advisory Committee is made up of volunteers from the community who make recommendations to the Trustees, but do not determine management decisions.¹⁷ In the Master Plan, the Advisory Committee emphasized revitalizing the historic landscape of the Old Manse rather than simply maintaining the historic building. The plan called for the recreation of Thoreau's kitchen garden and replanting of the orchards on the property. The plan stressed that reestablishing a

¹⁶ Deborah Kreisner-Francis, interview by Allison Burson, conducted at Old Manse, Concord, MA, 10/17/2006.

¹⁷ Deborah Kreisner-Francis, e-mail to Allison Burson 2/13/ 2007.

vegetable garden “strongly supports the interpretative theme of a sustaining landscape.”¹⁸

Seasonal Events

The garden has helped the Old Manse to integrate the grounds with programs in the house. They have recently tried new events, which connect the carefully planned landscaping outside the house and the historical programs inside. The Old Manse’s effort to make the house and landscape come alive can be seen in a fall harvest festival called “From Land to Hand,” in which they celebrated the recreated Thoreau garden and educated visitors about the landscape and the Manse. At “From Land to Hand,” activities ranged from tours of the Manse, to displays of heritage breeds of animals, to demonstrations of traditional crafts, to apple cider making, landscape tours, and historic gardening.

Deborah Kreisner-Francis, current site manager at the Manse, said that this was the first year they tried a fall harvest festival, and she felt the event was extremely well received particularly because it appealed to families with children. In the future she hopes she can appeal to a wider audience by including beer making demonstrations using hops from the garden. Celebrations like from From Land to Hand tie together the history inside the house and the work that goes on in the garden by teaching people about the landscape and the history. Large festivals are also great publicity for Trustees of Reservation and Gaining Ground, their partner organization, who maintain the garden.¹⁹

Beginning of Garden

¹⁸ Old Manse Master Plan December 1993. Trustees of Reservation. Page 8.

¹⁹ Deborah Kreisner-Francis, interview by Allison Burson, conducted at Old Manse, Concord, MA, 10/17/2006.

As from “Land to Hand Shows,” the outside landscape at the Old Manse has become an integral part of the Old Manse’s programs. The recreated kitchen garden is the centerpiece of the outside landscaping. The recreated garden not only makes the property more interesting and colorful, it entices more people to visit and volunteer, filling it with their energy and questions. In 1993, when Laurie Butters, then the site manager at the Old Manse, and committee members at the Old Manse and residents from Concord began to talk about how to restore the historic landscape at the Old Manse, they wanted a garden, which would make the grounds more interesting.

As Butter explains, “Re-creating the garden at the Manse made sense and seemed that it would make the property come alive, especially because I read so much about the garden in Hawthorne’s journals.”²⁰ Hawthorne loved spending time in his kitchen garden because it gave him the ability to feed his family fresh fruits and vegetables. Because Hawthorne could carefully tend the small garden he felt “that the light toil requisite to cultivate a moderately-sized garden imparts such zest to kitchen vegetables as is never found in those of the market place.”²¹ Hawthorne reflected on the other pleasures and benefits of working in a garden noting that:

If there be not too many of them, each individual plant becomes an object of separate interest... I used to visit and revisit the garden a dozen times a day, and stand in deep contemplation over my vegetable progeny with a love that nobody could share or conceive of who had never taken part in the process of creation. It was one of the most bewitching sights in the world to observe a hill of beans thrusting aside the soil, or a row of early peas just peeping forth sufficiently to trace a line of delicate green.²²

²⁰ Laurie Butters, phone interview by Allison Burson

²¹ Hawthorne, *Mosses from an Old Manse.*, 22-23.

²² *Ibid.*, 22-23.

Hawthorne valued his ability to grow his own food, and the kitchen garden today allows many visitors the same pleasure of working in a garden so they can see and be part of the process of how their own or (their neighbors') vegetables are grown.

Butters and the committee members at the Old Manse recognized the joys of a small garden and saw that a garden would make the property a “more bewitching sight.” At the same time they realized that the Old Manse and Trustees of Reservation staff did not have the time or labor available to run the garden. As a result of these discussions, the Master Plan in 1993 suggested that the Old Manse find volunteers or another organization to manage the garden.²³

The solution came in 1997 with the decision to form a partnership with Gaining Ground. Gaining Ground and the Old Manse agreed to share the cost of seeds and supplies for the garden while Gaining Ground provides the labor, as they research and plan the garden together. The timing of the Manse's garden was impeccable, because at the time Gaining Ground was beginning to outgrow its original garden, and they were looking for additional acreage to farm. The Old Manse Committee was excited to partner with Gaining Ground because it was and is a well-regarded non-profit organization. Today Gaining Ground manages the small ½ acre garden at the Old Manse as well as a nine-acre farm on Concord Conservation Land.²⁴ Gaining Ground donates the bulk of the produce they grow to local food pantries, and in 2005, they donated over 25,000 pounds of produce.²⁵

²³ Old Manse Master Plan December 1993. Trustees of Reservation page 8.

²⁴ The nine-acre farm is at the Thoreau Birthplace Property, which has been under cultivation for more than 300 years.²⁴ Gaining Ground leases the Thoreau birthplace property from the town of Concord.²⁴

²⁵ *Gaining Ground* (2006 [cited 10/18/06 2006]); available from <http://www.gainingground.org/aboutus.html>.

When the Old Manse was looking for a partner organization there was no conflict about which group they should partner with because although there are a few other non-profit gardens in the Boston area that give food to local food pantries such as the Boston Food Project in Lincoln, only Gaining Ground is Concord based. Also, there is still farmland available to other farmers in Concord, so there were no fights over a small, but high quality plot of farmland. Thus the Old Manse did not hesitate to try the garden and the partnership. Historic site manager, Laurie Butters and the Advisory Committee had a wonderful attitude toward the garden. Instead of worrying about all the future “what ifs,” they decided to jump in and give the garden try and see if it worked.²⁶ And ten years later, both the Old Manse and Gaining Ground feel that the garden and the partnership work splendidly.²⁷

Both groups’ willingness to take a chance and give up some their own autonomy by partnering with another group is impressive. It’s also unusual that the Trustees of Reservations were willing to be flexible about how they managed a property, because they are an extremely old and well-regarded land trust and they have a commitment to the public to preserve their reputation and maintain their properties for posterity. Generally, that means being conservative with how they manage their properties. Fortunately, the garden was a reversible risk, and if they had decided in a few years that a garden did not work with their vision for the landscape or that working with Gaining Grounds was a poor fit, it would have been easy to plough the garden and replant grass seed. But so far there has been no need for a

²⁶ Laurie Butters, phone interview by Allison Burson

²⁷ Laurie Butters, phone interview by Allison Burson

contingency plan because both groups are very happy working together and the garden is incredible.

The Garden

In 1997, when Gaining Ground and Trustees of the Old Manse began their joint garden project, the garden manager, Mark Waltermire, was thrilled at the prospect. Creating an historic garden fit directly with Waltermire's interest in heirloom varieties and was a welcome opportunity because Gaining Ground was looking for a more acreage to expand their farm. In 1999, after Gaining Ground began their partnership with the Old Manse, they moved from their original property, which was private, and too small to provide enough food for the food banks they served to the nine-acre plot owned.²⁸

Initially, coordinating and planning the historic garden involved research in order to find out what Thoreau's garden looked like and whether it was possible to obtain the same varieties of plants that Thoreau and Hawthorne had planted in the 1800s. In 1997, Waltermire and Laurie Butters worked together to determine what the original garden had looked like. Butters did historical research to find the specific crop varieties that had been planted in the garden, while Waltermire investigated which of those heirloom varieties are still available today. Butters found that although Hawthorne had written about his garden, neither Hawthorne nor Thoreau left a detailed description of the garden. However, George P. Bradford, resident of the Manse during the 1860's had kept a journal titled, *Garden Journal, Concord*, which kept track of specific varieties of crops he had planted. By comparing

²⁸ *Gaining Ground*.

Hawthorne's journals with Bradford's more specific notes, they could choose which varieties to plant. They were also able to find some 19th century photographs.²⁹

Waltermire used the information about the previous gardens at the Manse and built on it, talking with contemporary farmers about which heirloom vegetables had been grown historically and still do well in the area. Waltermire visited the Eastern Native Seed Conservancy and the Heirloom Garden and museum at Sturbridge village and from there he came up with a list of seeds he wanted to plant at the Old Manse. Then he tried to obtain the seeds from that list through various heirloom seed sources.³⁰ (See Crop List from Old Manse in appendix)

Balancing Garden Design and Historical Goals

Although they have a good sense of what varieties of crops Thoreau planted and what his garden might have looked like, Gaining Ground, cannot plant the most historically accurate representation of the garden Thoreau planted for the Hawthorne's each year. Crops have to be rotated from year to year, seed varieties have changed or are unavailable, and not all of the seeds from varieties common in the 1800s have adequate germination rates by today's standards. Gaining Ground must keep in mind crop yields and desirability of crops as well. The Old Manse site managers have understood that the garden coordinators must balance a number of biological factors and seed availability while re-creating the historic garden, and have been impressed by the ways the garden coordinators at Gaining Grounds have worked to incorporate the history of the garden and the Manse with sustainable farming practices.

²⁹ Laurie Butters, phone interview by Allison Burson, 10/18/2006.

³⁰ Mark Waltermire, phone interview by Allison Burson, 10/16/2006.

The garden coordinators have tried a number of garden designs and heirloom varieties in the garden. The current garden coordinator, Verena Wieloch, tried a new system for the garden this year, planting heirloom varieties of the traditional “three sisters,” which are corn, beans, and squash. Varieties included flour corn called Bloody Butcher; she found two varieties of old Native American beans Hidatsa Shield-Figured beans and Cherokee Trail of Tears beans; and she planted a native variety of squash called the Connecticut field pumpkin. Wieloch feels that it is important to re-establish this method of planting and to try to bring some of the old varieties back. The three sisters is a wise growing system, which the Native Americans in southern New England used because the three plants all benefit from each other. Wieloch also wanted to plant the three sisters at the Old Manse garden because it is a system that is well suited to the human hand, and the garden at the Manse is small enough that after they plow it once at the beginning of the season the rest of the work can be done by hand.

Since the garden is worked by hand, there is also great flexibility with the shape and layout of its design.³¹ When the Old Manse expressed the need for a more walk-able garden that would lead to more opportunities for self-interpretation, Wieloch was able to reshape the garden because she was using almost all hand labor so she did not have to plant in tractor accessible rows. In response to the need for a more self-explanatory garden, Wieloch experimented with the garden design this year. She tried to plant more of the garden in straight rows so that visitors could walk

³¹ Verena Wieloch, interview by Allison Burson conducted at Thoreau Birthplace Garden 341 Virginia Road, Concord, Massachusetts, 10/17/2006.

between the beds and in the garden. She also staked notes about specific crops throughout the garden.³²

The Orchard

In addition to establishing a garden in front of the Old Manse, the Master Plan called for revitalizing the orchards located between the Manse and the river. The plan recalled that the fruit trees had been important throughout the history of the Manse and concluded that recreating the orchard was integral to maintaining the value of the landscape.³³ Although the Advisory Committee knew from Hawthorne's writings that the orchard contained quince and pear trees in the 1830s and 1840s, they decided to plant only apple trees as Ezra Ripley had described in his orchard in the 1820s and 1830s. This decision was a practical as well as aesthetic because there were already some apple trees in the orchard, which new trees would match, and locating heirloom quince and pear trees is more difficult than heirloom apple trees. The new trees were planted between the house and the river where William Emerson had planted his orchard.³⁴ When Hawthorne lived in the Manse he wrote about the elderly William Emerson's decision to plant the apple orchard praising him for his foresight:

[The Orchard] was set out by the last clergyman, in the decline of his life, when the neighbors laughed at the hoary-headed man for planting trees from which he could have no prospect of gathering fruit. Even had that been the case, there was only so much the better motive for planting them, in the pure and unselfish hope of benefiting his successors...But the old minister, before reaching his patriarchal age of ninety, ate the apples from this orchard during many years.³⁵

³² Deborah Kreisner-Francis, interview by Allison Burson, conducted at Old Manse, Concord, MA, 10/17/2006.

³³ Old Manse Master Plan December 1993. Trustees of Reservation. Page 12.

³⁴ Self-guided Landscape Tour. The Old Manse. Concord, Massachusetts. Trustees of Reservation. Brochure. 1999.

³⁵ Hawthorne, *Mosses from an Old Manse.*, 20.

Like Reverend William Emerson, the Old Manse also looked to the future when they planted apple trees, ensuring that visitors will see apple blossoms in the spring and fruit in the fall for many years to come. The trees offer an additional way for the Old Manse to tie the landscape, the house, and Gaining Ground's work together because they can include cider making demonstrations in a fall festival of local foods such as From Land to Hand. The planning process for the orchard illustrates the careful research and well thought out decisions that elegantly balanced practical concerns, historic value, and yielded a more interesting and inviting landscape. The well-researched, thoughtful, decision-making process is characteristic of all of the projects at the Old Manse.

Examining the Partnership Between Gaining Ground and the Old Manse

Although much of what has made the Trustees of Reservations a successful land trust for over one hundred years is their careful planning and cautious management, they can be viewed at times as overly strict with their rules and regulations for property maintenance. With Gaining Ground, however, the Old Manse has been very flexible. At the Old Manse, the Trustees have been extremely willing to work together with Gaining Ground to find solutions to any problems that arise. Although generally the Trustees like to handle any and all problems pertaining to their properties, they have stepped back and let Gaining Ground handle garden specific problems. For example, when there was a recent woodchuck invasion, the Old Manse saw that it was a small problem for the property, but a huge garden

problem so they discussed the issue with Wieloch, and allowed Gaining Ground to trap the woodchuck.³⁶

How Gaining Ground Has Grown Through Partnership with Old Manse

The groups have not simply worked together; they have both strengthened their missions through the partnership. By working with the Old Manse, Gaining Ground has stretched to include an historical focus. Both Waltermire and Wieloch enjoy the historical component of the garden. If they had not partnered with the Old Manse, they might have planted some heirloom varieties, but they would not have planted as many interesting or unusual crops. Wieloch said that “working with historic garden gives them an excuse to research and plant fun heirloom varieties.” Because of this research and the support from the Old Manse, they can now teach their volunteers more about historic gardening and local history. For example, some of Wieloch’s favorite plants that do not have a large modern market are the West Indian Burr Gherkin, a distant relation to a cucumber, and Mangel Wurzels, a football-sized beet traditionally grown for cattle feed. In general, at the Manse garden they grow a lot more root crops and old fashioned varieties of beets and carrots than we would see in a modern garden.³⁷ The garden at the manse has given Gaining Grounds the opportunity to research and explore heirloom crops and to educate their volunteers about old crop varieties and eating habits.

(See Weird Heirloom crops from Old Manse in CD appendix)

³⁶ Verena Wieloch, interview by Allison Burson conducted at Thoreau Birthplace Garden 341 Virginia Road, Concord, Massachusetts, 10/17/ 2006.

³⁷ Verena Wieloch, interview by Allison Burson conducted at Thoreau Birthplace Garden 341 Virginia Road, Concord, Massachusetts, 10/17/ 2006.

Over the years Waltermire has tried to save seeds and plant varieties that you cannot find in traditional seed catalogues. For example, instead of planting the yellow crookneck squash every year, he switched to a similar, but more endangered variety of squash, the Worcester Indian Pumpkin.³⁸ Such squashes were clearly part of the Hawthorne's garden and he offers a beautiful description of growing crookneck squash:

There was a hearty enjoyment...in observing the growth of the crook-necked winter squashes, from the first little bulb, with the withered blossom adhering to it, until they lay strewn upon the soil, big, round, fellow, hiding their heads beneath the leaves, but turning up their great yellow rotundities to the noontide sun. Gazing at them, I felt that by my agency something worth living for had been done. A new substance was born into the world. They were real and tangible existences, which the mind could seize hold of and rejoice in.³⁹

Hawthorne argued in favor of growing crook-necked squash for their beauty, and perhaps preserving Hawthorne's enjoyment of the squash is enough of a reason to plant and save seeds from the Worcester Indian Pumpkin. Another reason to plant and preserve heirloom crops is that they are better adapted to local soils, climate, and growing conditions. Though heirloom varieties generally only grow well locally, they are more flavorful than hybrid varieties, which can grow anywhere. By saving the seeds, Gaining Ground ensures that the variety does not disappear.

Balancing Historical Crops and Gaining Ground Mission

Heirloom crops, however, are not always the most accessible to the food pantry guests Gaining Ground grows produce for. While working at the historic garden, Waltermire tried to balance the historic goals of the garden while updating some crops in keeping with the mission of Gaining Ground. Though Gaining Ground

³⁸ Mark Waltermire, phone interview conducted by Allison Burson, 10/16/2006.

³⁹ Hawthorne, *Mosses from an Old Manse.*, 24.

donates most of their produce to food pantries, but they do not distribute the vegetables. Staff from the food banks pick up and distribute the produce. Thus, Gaining Ground staff cannot speak directly with the food pantry guests and explain how to prepare unusual produce. Because Gaining Ground supplies diverse populations in the Boston, they try to target produce to the right populations, and send crops to the groups that want them, but a few of the rarest, oldest heirloom crops are hard to match with recipients.

For example, Black Spanish Radish, a winter radish that is traditionally grown in Northern Europe and Portugal was not well received, even when donated to Portuguese populations. Waltermire laughingly noted that, “[he] certainly could not donate hops to food pantries,” but he thought it was another good crop to grow because it was common during the historical period the garden recreates.

Other tough sells are skirrett and scorzonera because they look strange and people are unfamiliar with them. Skirrett is a small root crop, with heavily branched roots, which has to be cleaned and peeled and takes a lot of time to prepare. Scorzonera, also known as Black Salsify or Oyster Plant, is another uncommon vegetable grown at the Old Manse, whose greens are an excellent early spring perennial green and whose roots are also edible. Even though these vegetables look weird, are unfamiliar to most food pantry guest and Americans, and take a fair bit of education and preparation time before people can eat them, Waltermire feels that it is extremely important to plant them in the garden at the Old Manse, not just because they are historic crops, but also because it is important to teach people about the diversity of edible crops available to the home gardener or small farmer. Waltermire

sees the garden at the Old Manse as an opportunity to teach people about Concord's history as well as about the history of crops and agriculture and the importance of maintaining diversity of flavors, colors and varieties in the garden. Even though not all of the vegetables grown at the Old Manse end up at food pantries, Waltermire enjoys educating students and volunteers about heirloom crops.⁴⁰ Wieloch agrees that she chooses to grow some of the more unusual vegetables so that Gaining Ground's volunteers can try them and for Gaining Ground's programs to work with people to be more adventurous eaters.⁴¹

Wieloch also finds that it can be a challenge to teach food pantry guests about some of the more unusual produce from the garden at the Old Manse. She notes that:

Food pantry guests are often busy, don't have cooking equipment, or time, or the bravery to investigate vegetables they are not familiar with. Some of the elderly vets (for example) only have a microwave. There's no way they are ever going to cook funny looking radishes! So a lot of the challenge is opening minds to new ways of eating.⁴²

Gaining Ground works with the volunteers and the directors of the food pantries who pick up the vegetables so that they can educate recipients. Gaining Ground sometimes provides recipes for the unusual vegetables that the pantries can post for people to try, which seems to help. Gaining Ground also encourages volunteers who pick-up vegetables to try samples so they can then "sell" people on how good the vegetables are and teach recipients about the produce.⁴³

⁴⁰Mark Waltermire, phone interview conducted by Allison Burson, 10/16/2006.

⁴¹Verena Wieloch, e-mail to Allison Burson, 11/ 7/06.

⁴²Verena Wieloch, e-mail to Allison Burson, 11/ 7/06.

⁴³Verena Wieloch, e-mail to Allison Burson, 11/ 7/06.

Waltermire notes that because the garden at the Old Manse is much smaller than the main Gaining Ground property, he could grow small samples of unusual crops for educational purposes without losing them in all the other crops at the main Gaining Ground property. For example, he could grow small patches of root parsley or skirrett, rather than putting them at the end of an acre long row of potatoes, where they might not get noticed.

Wieloch also appreciates that the small garden size gives her the flexibility to grow small quantities of some crops mostly for educational purposes. One of her favorite crops is the Bloody Butcher corn, which is a flour corn, not a sweet corn. The corn is a great learning tool and a wonderful plant with stalks growing up to fourteen feet tall. Children particularly love the corn because they can hide in the stalks and because of the red kernels. Because flour corn must be ground into flour before being eaten, it is too much work with too little pay-off to be useful to the food pantries. They also grow lots of dry beans at the garden for educational purposes because shelling the beans out of the dry pods is a great activity for kids. The yield on the beans is very low, however because Gaining Ground only ends up with three or four pounds of beans which they could buy at the store for one dollar a pound.⁴⁴ Despite the fact that a number of the historical crops do not have high yields or high demand at the food pantries, they are still important educational crops. The many of the volunteers who work with Gaining Ground have not seen how their food is grown, and learning about a wide range of crops and how flour is made or how to shell peas is an important step in connecting people with their food.

Volunteers

⁴⁴ Verena Wieloch, e-mail to Allison Burson, 11/ 7/06.

Kim Birge-Liberman, elementary school teacher from Nashoba Brooks

School in Concord takes her elementary school students to volunteer with Gaining Ground as part of a service-learning project. Part of the reason she takes her students is that she thinks it is important for them to see how food is grown. She says that:

Like most Americans, the students are far removed from the source of their food and often have never seen the plant their food comes from. I think the experience of seeing what a broccoli, tomato, squash, etc. plant looks like and how the food product is connected to the rest of the plant is an incredibly valuable experience.

Particularly because Birge-Liberman is working with students from an independent school in a wealthy suburb of Boston, she “also thinks that these students benefit from learning at an early age that there are people in their local community that don't have enough to eat, as they will likely be the ones in a few years that will have the means to help those in need.” She finds volunteering at both of the Gaining Ground sites valuable experiences for her classes because both sites are full of history and volunteering connects students to their food source.⁴⁵ But because the historic garden is smaller, Wieloch finds that it is a more manageable size for small volunteer groups to work in, especially if volunteers are unfamiliar with farming. In addition, volunteer and school groups are particularly drawn to the garden to learn about its history.⁴⁶

Before partnering with Gaining Ground, the Old Manse had not had any volunteer programs. To have enough labor to maintain both their properties, Gaining Ground coordinates a large and diverse group volunteers to the Old Manse. Gaining Ground volunteers include religious groups, elementary through high school age

⁴⁵ Kim Birge-Liberman. E-mail to Allison Burson. 10/16/2006.

⁴⁶ Mark Waltermire, phone interview conducted by Allison Burson, 10/16/2006.

students, public and private school students, boy scouts and girl scouts and many others.⁴⁷ The Old Manse is also enthusiastic about having volunteers on their property, and in the future they hope to do more programs to bring volunteers into the Manse.⁴⁸ Tourists as well as locals take an interest in the garden and the garden draws park visitors learning about local history at the Old North Bridge over to the less visited Old Manse. In the past visitors have been so enthusiastic about the garden that Waltermire had stopped scheduling workdays for Saturday mornings unless there was an additional staff person on duty specifically to do historical interpretation. Otherwise he could not get any work done in the garden.⁴⁹

Wieloch has lots of school groups request to come to the garden. Some schools tie the garden in with their curriculum. Local schools in Concord and Carlisle help Gaining Ground raise money to buy seeds through a fundraiser called “Read for Seeds.” Students do a read-a-thon and solicit pledges for each page they read. This money goes to buy seeds for the garden. And many of the students who read and help raise money for seeds come to the garden to plant the seeds.⁵⁰ For example, seventh graders at Nashoba Brooks School plant tomato seedlings in their classrooms and then transplant them into the garden. In eighth grade they help save tomato seeds, which are used by the next year’s seventh graders. In addition to

⁴⁷ 2005 Gaining Ground List of Volunteer Groups at Old Manse. From “Gaining Ground 2005 Summary Report to Old Manse.” Viewed 10-16-2006 From Old Manse File on Gaining Grounds Garden.

⁴⁸ Deborah Kreisner-Francis, interview by Allison Burson, conducted at Old Manse, Concord, MA, 10/17/2006.

⁴⁹ Mark Waltermire, phone interview conducted by Allison Burson, 10/16/2006.

⁵⁰ *Read for Seeds* (2006 [cited 10/30/2006 2006]); available from <http://www.gainingground.org/readforseeds.html>.

learning about growing tomatoes, students learn about the history of growing them in New England.⁵¹

Conclusion

The garden has been extremely well received not just by the tourists who visit the Old Manse, but by residents of Concord as well. The Old Manse and Gaining Ground have been able to make the entire property come alive with a vibrant garden, more volunteer programs, and they have been able to return an ideal garden plot to agriculture and provide produce to local food pantries. The garden also adds another facet of history to explain to school groups, and another visual tool when explaining that real people actually lived in the house.⁵²

The garden at the Manse lay fallow for sixty-some years from the 1930s to 1997. Those sixty years were not wasted. While the garden was un-tended, the soil had time to rest, and nutrients returned to the soil. Today the Old Manse and Gaining Grounds benefit from extremely productive soil, which Gaining Grounds can fully utilize with labor-intensive hand gardening methods that produce high crop yields. Gaining Ground enjoys greater publicity from the new garden site and has had the opportunity to learn and expand into historic crop varieties.

The partnership between the Old Manse and Gaining Ground has been successful for various reasons. Both organizations have been flexible with each other. The Old Manse understands that Gaining Ground knows about gardening and they give them autonomy to plant the garden as they see best. The staff at the Old Manse and Gaining Ground communicates regularly. Most of all, both organizations have

⁵¹ Verena Wieloch, interview by Allison Burson conducted at Thoreau Birthplace Garden 341 Virginia Road, Concord, Massachusetts, 10/17/2006.

⁵² Laurie Butters, phone interview by Allison Burson, 10/18/2006.

had the attitude that they can enhance their own organization, while learning, growing, and teaching the public through the partnership, and that is exactly what they have done.

Urban Oaks Farm

Introduction

From the street Urban Oak Farm looks unassuming. At first all you can see are the white panes of the hothouse glass, which obscure the fields behind them. During the winter months, the empty fields surrounding the greenhouse and the compost heaps are the only evidence of the vibrant landscape of tomatoes, hot peppers, figs, lettuce, sunflowers, and hundreds of varieties of specialty vegetables, herbs, fruits, and flowers selected from seeds from around the world that Farm Managers Tony Norris and Michael Kandefer grow inside the greenhouses year round and outside during the summer months. Over the summer the fields behind the greenhouses are full of vegetables, wildflowers, and butterflies.

Inside the Greenhouses, Norris and Kandefer have truly created a tropical paradise. They grow fig trees, over thirty varieties of hot peppers, tomatoes, eggplants, and in all at least 250 different vegetables and herbs. Each greenhouse is as carefully tended as the display greenhouses at the New York Botanical Gardens. Straight rows of lettuce grow across from immaculate beds of hot peppers. There are purple hot peppers smaller than your thumb nail, and red Nicaraguan hot peppers the size of your fist in the shape of flying saucers, and long, thin tapered red and green chili peppers the length of your pinkie. The peppers come from all over the world, and each pepper is the key ingredient for a different molé, curry or hot sauce. Restaurants and retail stores around Connecticut rely on Urban Oak Farms' high quality and specialty wholesale organic produce year round, while some local residents and shoppers from the greater Hartford area also take advantage of the

weekly farm stand to buy organic local vegetables. But Norris and Kandefer have not chosen an easy location for a farm.

General History of New Britain

The Oak Street Area, like much of New Britain looks like it has seen better days. During the day, the neighborhood seems fairly quiet, and lifeless. Few cars go up the street; few people walk by the farm. Yet New Britain was once a booming industrial center considered the “Hardware Capital of the World.” It is hard to imagine New Britain’s early history because the remains of the industrial period obscure the past. Before the Europeans settled, Indians claimed New Britain as hunting territory.¹ Europeans settled in the area around 1640, in Farmington, Connecticut and by 1754 the New Britain Ecclesiastical Society was founded. During the late 1700s the Farmington and New Britain area became an important inland trade center, benefiting from shipping trade from the ports of New York and New Haven. By 1850, an East-West railroad line went through New Britain, solving the problem of transporting manufactured goods, and New Britain became a manufacturing center, known as the “Hardware City of the World.”²

New Britain manufactured a wide range of goods from tinware to jewelry, to silver plated copper and brass wires, brass goods, locks, fur hats, hooks and eyes, and many other items.³ By the 1900s major companies included the American Hardware Company, Stanley Works, and Fafnir’s Bearing Company. Products included electric

¹Kenneth A. Larson in association with Ira W. Yellen Larson, *A Walk around Walnut Hill, New Britain, Connecticut* (New Britain, CT: The Art Press, Inc., 1975), 8.

²Ibid., 11-13.

³ Ibid., 52.

tools, architectural and builder's hardware, electric strapping, and other hardware.⁴ In 1903, when the Philadelphia Commercial Museum ranked American cities in order of greatest manufacturing production, New Britain's manufacturing production equaled the combined production of Allegheny, Buffalo, Cincinnati, Bridgeport, St. Louis, Newark and New York City.⁵ After the 1950s as cost of labor in the U.S. increased, manufacturing moved overseas. By the 1970s many of the large manufacturing plants in New Britain were empty, and New Britain has not been successful in establishing new businesses and jobs.

Today, New Britain is nothing like the booming town it was in its hey-day and the Oak Street neighborhood has declined as well. Historically residents of the neighborhood were middle class Italian and Polish families; today the neighborhood has a large Puerto Rican population. Since the decline of New Britain's economy drug dealers have overrun the area, most of the landlords are absent, and the properties are blighted, havens for drug use, drug dealing and other problematic behavior.⁶ In one recent five-year period, the neighborhood accounted for nearly one third of New Britain's murders.⁷ In 2000, nearly one-quarter of the neighborhood's 8,500 residents were living below the poverty level.⁸ In 2005 13.1% of New Britain families earnings fell below the poverty level, compared to 6.2% of families in

⁴ Ibid., 55-57.

⁵ Ibid., 57.

⁶ Mayor Timothy Stewart, phone interview by Allison Burson, 11/13/2006.

New Britain has a large Latino (Puerto Rican) population and 31.6% of its residents are Latino compared to the U.S. average of 14.5%.

⁷ Free to Grow, *Free to Grow: Building Strength in America's Communities* (12/07/06)]; available from <http://www.rwjf.org/reports/npreports/connecticut.pdf>.

⁸ Ibid.

Connecticut and 10.2% nationally. Household and per capita income in New Britain are also well below the Connecticut and U.S. averages.⁹

Yet when New Britain was at its height, the Oak Street neighborhood, also called the North Oak Neighborhood, an area that covers twenty-five blocks, right next to what, was a middle class residential neighborhood.¹⁰ There were a number of retail businesses, which included a lunchmeat and sandwich place, a coffee shop, and a bakery. None of those places are there today. The only store that has remained for over half a century is a liquor store across the street from Urban Oaks farm.¹¹ Despite the fact that the neighborhood still has very few businesses, the city started working on urban renewal projects to make the large neighborhood safer several years ago.¹²

Drugs, Gangs, and Neighborhood Problems

Eighty-one year old resident Kathy Spano has lived at 178 Oak Street since she was twelve. Spano lived through a ten to fifteen year period in the late eighties and nineties before Norris and Kandefer came to the neighborhood when drug dealers took over Oak Street. Living in on the street was unbearable, so she decided to change the neighborhood. Spano persistently petitioned the Mayor, the Chief of police and the state legislature asking them all to address the gang violence in her neighborhood through increased police presence, new development and investment in businesses. Spano's insistence on new businesses eventually paved the way for Urban Oaks Farm. Even today, at eighty-one, Spano is still a powerful community organizer for Oak Street and she vigilantly calls the Mayor's office and the police

⁹ U.S. Census Bureau 2005 American Community Survey.

¹⁰ Grow, *Free to Grow: Building Strength in America's Communities*.

¹¹ Kathy Spano, phone interview by Allison Burson, 11/1/06.

¹² Mayor Timothy Stewart, phone interview by Allison Burson, 11/13/2006.

every time she sees a problem or wants something changed. Spano's neighborhood surveillance is crucial and Mayor Stewart, "wishes [he] had a Kathy Spano on every street because it is so important to have the additional eyes on every street to make the neighborhood safer."

Neighborhood Organizing On Oak Street to Build a Safer Community

In the 1980s, the neighborhood formed a NRZ, or Neighborhood Revitalization Zone. NRZs are state recognized neighborhood groups that foster grassroots improvement efforts.¹³ The NRZ and community members worked together to make and keep Oak Street safe. In a further effort to combat gangs and drugs in the Oak Street area, by 1996, the City of New Britain built a substation for the Oak Street Neighborhood, which improved residents' safety. The substation served as a staging area for community volunteers and police officers to work together to patrol the neighborhoods of New Britain.¹⁴ According to Spano, because of intensive work from the new substation, police and community members from 1996 to 2000 the neighborhood was gorgeous and people could walk outside at nine in the evening.¹⁵ In 2001, however, the substation burned down (arson was suspected).¹⁶ After the substation burned, drugs and violence returned and the neighborhood became unsafe again. It was not until 2005, when a new substation was built, that the neighborhood was truly safe again.

¹³ Kathy Spano, phone interview by Allison Burson, 11/1/06.

¹⁴ Police Chief Bill Gagliladi, phone interview by Allison Burson, 11/29/2006.

¹⁵ Kathy Spano, interview by Allison Burson conducted at 178 Oak Street, New Britain, CT, 11/8/06.

¹⁶ Karen Guzman and A. Larrison Campbell, "West Street Blaze 'Had Help' Investigators Checking Reports of a Man Seen Fleeing the Area," *Hartford Courant* July 10, 2001.

The new substation combined with increased police presence throughout New Britain has once again made Oak Street considerably safer.¹⁷ In addition working with communities and tailoring police activity to be more effective within these neighborhoods, in the past few years the city has worked to clean up Oak Street by acquiring and tearing down a number of blighted buildings and redeveloping the neighborhood with decreased density and more single family homes.¹⁸ Habitat for Humanity has also built a number of new homes on vacant lots.¹⁹ Through a long process of working with the city and the police on initiatives to make the neighborhood safer and to physically clean up the Oak Street neighborhood is safer today. Another key component to permanent positive changes in the neighborhood is new businesses, which increase job opportunities and prosperity in the neighborhood.

Starting Urban Oaks Farm

Urban Oaks Farm was one of the first businesses to come to the revitalized Oak Street. New Britain native Tony Norris and his business partner Michael Kandefer started planning an urban farm in 1997, they began restoring the property in 1998, and commenced farming in 1999. When the partners opened the farm in 1999, they had a two-part vision. They wanted to grow and sell high quality organic produce, both wholesale and retail, and to provide community development opportunities that would help the Oak Street Neighborhood.²⁰ Over the last ten years Norris and Kandefer have continually struggled to create and run a part private, part

¹⁷ Mayor Timothy Stewart, phone interview by Allison Burson, 11/13/2006.

¹⁸ Mayor Timothy Stewart, phone interview by Allison Burson, 11/13/2006.

¹⁹ Police Chief Bill Gagliladi, phone interview by Allison Burson, 11/29/2006.

²⁰ Loretta Waldman, "Organic Farm Prepares for Phase Two; Owners' Thoughts Turn to Community Development," *The Hartford Courant* 12/2/2005.

nonprofit farm which allow them to earn a living as organic farmers and provide organic produce, job opportunities and educational programs to their community.

Prior to working at Urban Oaks Norris and Kandefer were farming organically in relatively rural Bolton, Connecticut. They were interested in working with the city of New Britain on an urban renewal project. As a native of New Britain, Norris wanted to return and take on the challenge of an urban farm. While in Bolton, Norris and Kandefer had wholesale customers from around the state, so by moving to New Britain, they were still centrally located in the state and even closer to some customers in the Hartford and New Haven area. In addition to the business and farming potential of an urban central Connecticut location, they wanted the opportunity to work with an urban community.

Ken Malinowski Director of the Commission on Community and Neighborhood Development in the Department of Municipal Development contacted Norris and Kandefer “after a number of people in the community shared an interest in beginning a community based farming project.” According to Malinowski, “It dawned on [him] that this [land] was just sitting [there]” and commitment for the project came from everywhere.²¹

When Norris and Kandefer were planning their new farm they came to the Oak Street NRZ neighborhood meetings every month to build neighborhood support for a farm and identify a location.²² Prior to speaking to Norris and Kandefer, residents were unaware of the benefits of eating organically grown, food, because there were no organic farms in the area, however community members quickly got

²¹ Kelley O. Beaucar, "Pair Wants to Revitalize Area with Community Garden," *The New Britain Herald* 7/7/1998, 55-57.

²² Kathy Spano, interview by Allison Burson conducted at 178 Oak Street, New Britain, CT, 11/8/06.

excited about a farm. Father Giusani of St. Ann's Catholic Church, explained that he suggested that Norris use the Sandelli Greenhouse space for the farm because the neighborhood had a need for a good farm. As soon as the NRZ accepted was excited about the idea of a farm, they began to help Norris acquire the Sandelli Greenhouse property.²³

Father Giusani was right that the Sandelli property was a good site for a farm because it already had greenhouses from Oldelfo Sandelli's flower business, which had closed in 1983 after he had passed away. Sandelli emigrated from Italy, and built up the business from a storefront florist and produce stand to a thriving distribution operation with seven greenhouses. After his death, however, the family decided not to continue the business and the property sat vacant until it was identified as the location for Urban Oaks Farm.²⁴

The owner of the property, Elmo Auidi, was receptive to the idea of a farm on his land, and he agreed to lease 15,000 feet of greenhouse space and two and a half acre lot to the farmers for the cost of the property tax. Though the previous owners had grown flowers, the property still needed environmental remediation and greenhouses repairs before they could start farming. In 1997, the EPA New England Brownfields Assessment Pilot program awarded the city 200,000 and the city spent \$39,512 to assess the Sandelli Greenhouse properties and two adjacent properties for the need for environmental remediation. EPA and the city determined that there was asbestos in the old greenhouse and removed it. In 2003 the city of New Britain was received another EPA Brownfields Cleanup Grant for \$60,000 to begin clean up of

²³ Father Giusani, interview by Allison Burson conducted at St. Ann's Rectory, New Britain, CT, 10/9/06.

²⁴ Beaucar, "Pair Wants to Revitalize Area with Community Garden."

the abutting property, which was formerly a gas station, and which may eventually become part of the farm.²⁵ In addition to EPA Brownfields funding and municipal funding to clean up the property. EPA Brownfield's Success Stories estimates that the total cost of clean up at the site was 155,000 and the cost to rebuild the greenhouses was 1.25 million. In addition to EPA funding, funds came from the HUD the Connecticut Department of Economic and Community Development, and other local foundations.²⁶

Norris and Kandefer would not have been able to physically clean up and start planting Urban Oaks without help from the city and from volunteers from the neighborhood and the city. The City helped by removing the brush for free. Most of the rest was done with volunteer help. Kandefer describes starting out as "like pioneering" because there were 2 ½ acres of brush and debris to clear including the greenhouses, which were full of trash and completely overgrown with wild roses, which are thorny and difficult to get rid of. Because the soil on the farm had been contaminated with lead paint it had to be removed as well. They brought fresh topsoil in from a facility in Farmington where the city of New Britain sends all of its leaves.²⁷ Aiudi's construction firm, aided with clearing the land and spreading new topsoil.²⁸

Farming with the Neighbors

²⁵ U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, *Brownfields in New England: Urban Oaks Organic Farm* (7/24/2006 9/10/2003 [cited 11/15/2006]; available from http://www.epa.gov/region1/brownfields/success/urban_oaks_ct_agp.htm.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Tony Norris and Mike Kandefer, interview by Allison Burson conducted at Urban Oaks Farm, New Britain, CT, 10/9/2006.

²⁸ Amy Ash Nixon, "Organic Farm Proves to Be Growth Business," *The Hartford Courant*, August 18, 2003.

Volunteers continue to help Norris and Kandefer keep the farm running. One couple helps them wash and prepare produce for the farm stand. Other neighbors help them with the greenhouses or the fields. A grandmother helps weed the greenhouse at five in the morning when she is not caring for her grandchildren. Another man did his volunteer hours to become a master gardener at the farm. Volunteers are reimbursed with plants for their own gardens, vegetables, and knowledge to start their own gardens or farms.²⁹

Norris and Kandefer acknowledge that they have had some trouble with farming on Oak Street, but overall, they describe the experience as positive. Generally, they have just experienced small problems with the neighborhood: a few incidents of vandalism, the continuous annoyance of people throwing trash on the farm, some spray paint on a green house and a stolen watermelon. For the most part, they feel that the neighbors watch the farm for them and protect it.³⁰

The problems are by far overcome by the number of dedicated volunteers who work with them on a regular basis and the farm could not function without them.³¹ The volunteers and neighbors appreciate that Urban Oaks is a visible sign of the neighborhood clean-up efforts. Though the neighborhood may not be safer specifically because of the farm's presence, the having green open space in a dense urban area is good for the safety and health of the community.³² Combined neighborhood and police efforts before and during Urban Oaks time have helped

²⁹ Tony Norris and Michael Kandefer, interview by Allison Burson conducted at Urban Oaks Farm, New Britain, CT, 10/9/2006.

³⁰ Tony Norris, interview by Allison Burson conducted at Urban Oaks Farm, New Britain, CT, 10/9/2006.

³¹ Michael Kandefer, interview by Allison Burson conducted at Urban Oaks Farm, New Britain, CT, 10/9/2006.

³² Mayor Timothy Stewart, phone interview by Allison Burson, 11/13/2006.

created a safer neighborhood and Urban Oaks Farm helps maintain the quality of life in the neighborhood and makes Oak Street a pleasanter, safer place to walk outside.

Urban Oaks Crops

Urban Oaks Farm in New Britain Connecticut is the only certified organic farm in New Britain and one of very few in the area. The farm specializes in heirloom crops and specialty varieties of produce. Because the farm has only 2 ½ acres including greenhouses, they focus on crops that will maximize their yield in limited space. They work hard to know which crops and particular varieties will grow best on their soils. For example, they do not grow carrots, because carrots grow poorly in Urban Oaks clay soil. Some of their most successful crops are tomatoes, hot peppers, and flowers. They grow over thirty varieties of tomatoes and hot peppers. To choose these specialty crops, Kandefer spends the winters looking through thirty seed catalogues from around the world, searching for new plants he thinks will do particularly well. Some years, Kandefer and Norris travel in search of seeds, and they have attended the Slow Food Conference in Italy.

Urban Oaks Beneficiaries

Norris and Kandefer are committed to providing and educating consumers about a diversity of produce, which can be grown locally.³³ Norris and Kandefer focus on specialty produce, which they sell wholesale to about twenty restaurants and stores in the greater Hartford area and around the state. Gourmet restaurants appreciate the quality and diversity of crops, while Kandefer and Norris can maximize the profit from a small acreage by growing and selling crops well suited to

³³ Tony Norris and Mike Kandefer, interview by Allison Burson conducted at Urban Oaks Farm, New Britain, CT, 10/9/2006.

their soils and that bring a high price at specialty restaurants and markets. The restaurants and stores around the state, which Urban Oaks supplies include The Museum Café at Wadsworth Athenaeum, the Polytechnic Club, the Hartford Canoe Club, the Brix Restaurant in Cheshire, Zinc Restaurant in New Haven, Garden of Light in Glastonbury, The Pond House Café in Hartford, The Westside Marketplace in Rockyhill, Wild Oats Natural Market in West Hartford, Hot Tomato in Hartford and Epicure Supermarket in Farmington.³⁴ Specialty items that Urban Oaks grows include edible flowers, herbs, hot peppers, tomatoes, several varieties of eggplant and more than fifteen varieties of basil.³⁵

As detailed by Hartford Courant reporter Amy Ash Nixon, Urban Oaks has large number of clients who rely on what the farm produces. According to Ray Edwards, produce manager at the Edge of the Woods natural food market in New Haven:

There are not that many people locally who are growing and delivering organic produce...In fact, other than one small grower in Guilford, Urban Oaks is the only organic farm to deliver to Edge of the Woods, and they do so in quantity. All winter long we get at least something from them every single week. We get a lot of herbs from them -- they have a real nice selection of fresh herbs...The allure of Urban Oaks is its organic growing methods, which appeal to health-conscious consumers...It also helps that it's local...Their niche is that they can offer such diversity of product.³⁶

Over 350 restaurants, retailers, and individuals in his CSA order produce from Urban Oaks and products from other organic farms and bakeries around the state, which they pick up at Urban Oaks weekly. Norris is proud to make quality local food

³⁴ Nixon, "Organic Farm Proves to Be Growth Business."

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

available to consumers and to give other vendors an outlet for their products as well.³⁷

In addition to wholesale Urban Oaks has a farm stand on Fridays and Saturdays where neighbors with food stamps as well as upper class suburban shoppers mingle. Instead of just impatiently waiting in line shoppers browsed the produce and exchanged recipes. Although the certified organic produce is generally expensive when sold at retail stores, they produce large quantities of their crops when growing conditions are good and selling the surplus allows them to keep prices affordable at the farm stand.

They also offer a small number of CSA shares to about twenty families.³⁸

CSA shares are shares of farm produce, which Norris and Kandefer distribute weekly. CSAs are often used as ways for farmers to defray some of their start up costs at the beginning of the season and to ensure a market for their produce, particularly the bumper crops, throughout the season. Norris and Kandefer keep their CSA very small, and try to use it to provide vegetables to neighbors and volunteers who might not otherwise be able to afford produce, as well as others who are interested in a weekly share of produce.

CSA members do include some more affluent, highly educated participants from outside New Britain. Biologist and Environmental Studies Professor Barry Chernoff from Wesleyan University joined the CSA because he wanted high quality produce, and in addition the CSA share included the best bread he's found in Connecticut. He finds that the CSA is convenient, offers easy parking; he likes that at the CSA and weekly farm stand upper class residents from the suburbs a

³⁷ Tony Norris. Conversation with Allison Burson, Urban Oaks Farm, New Britain, CT, 11/8/06.

³⁸ Tony Norris and Mike Kandefer, interview by Allison Burson conducted at Urban Oaks Farm, New Britain, CT, 10/9/2006.

comfortable place to mix with local residents of New Britain, some of whom shop with food stamps. Chernoff also finds that the CSA and farm stand have brought him to New Britain and encouraged him to explore an area that he otherwise never would have.³⁹

Support From The City of New Britain

Though Norris and Kandefer are extremely dedicated, the farm needs support from other sources as well. The city of New Britain recognized Urban Oaks' potential to revitalize the Oak Street neighborhood and Urban Oaks has relied on funding from the city to run its programs since inception. The city is still working with Urban Oaks to help them obtain a two or three acre property across the street. Mayor Stewart is hesitant to give Urban Oaks more property because he feels the farm has not had a significant impact on the neighborhood yet because they have not created a lot of new job opportunities or skill training for residents of Oak Street, but he thinks that the farm is beginning to so the city wants to keep helping Urban Oaks.⁴⁰ Although Urban Oaks depends on support from the city, as farmers it can often be difficult to work with the City because working with the city's bureaucracy is a slow process, but farm crops cannot wait. In addition, changes in political parties can be hard for the farm because democratic leadership tends to be more supportive of the farm and urban renewal projects.⁴¹

Unlike Mayor Stewart who has mixed feelings about the farm's impact on the neighborhood, Chief of Police Bill Gagliladi says that the Farm has had a positive

³⁹ Barry Chernoff, personal conversation with Allison Burson conducted at Wesleyan University, Middletown, CT, 12/15/2006.

⁴⁰ Mayor Timothy Stewart, phone interview by Allison Burson, 11/13/2006.

⁴¹ Tony Norris, interview by Allison Burson conducted at Urban Oaks Farm, New Britain, CT, 10/9/2006.

affect on the neighborhood. He sees Urban Oaks as an exemplary business for the neighborhood because they were one of the first to reclaim land and have remained in the neighborhood for ten years. In addition, Urban Oaks is especially important because they provide fresh healthy food right in the neighborhood at a reasonable price. And like the substation, the farm brings many people together at a common gathering place.⁴²

Current Financial Troubles and Plans to Remedy them

Urban Oaks has been successful at providing high quality produce to some families on Oak Street and in the Greater Hartford area and in drawing a wide range of people to New Britain and Oak Street to shop at their farm stand and CSA. However, the farm stand and CSA are costly to maintain and Norris and Kandefer have not yet figured out a way to balance their business interests with the goals of their nonprofit. The farm is run as a public private partnership, with a board of directors 50% of whom are from the neighborhood, 50% of whom are professional local farmers.⁴³ Despite the fact that Norris and Kandefer make a profit from the wholesale side of their business and lose money from the farm stand, they are committed to their nonprofit's mission of providing produce to the neighborhood and families in the greater area and to remaining an active business presence on Oak Street. Norris and Kandefer know that they bring a lot of people from outside to New Britain with their farm stand, and that by doing so, are slowly removing the stigma attached to the area. More importantly, for Norris and Kandefer, the farm stand makes affordable organic produce available to a low-income area.

⁴² Police Chief Bill Gagliladi, phone interview by Allison Burson, 11/29/2006.

⁴³ *U. S. Environmental Protection Agency, Brownfields in New England: Urban Oaks Organic Farm.*

Despite the fact that Norris and Kandefer have grown high quality organic produce successfully in a troubled neighborhood for ten years, they have struggled financially and the nonprofit does not break even nor does it always find outside funding so most of the profit from the wholesale business goes back into supporting the farm stand and neighborhood development activities, making it difficult for Norris and Kandefer to earn a living. In order for Urban Oaks to be profitable, Norris and Kandefer would need to do just wholesale business, but they want to provide food to the neighborhood as well as to restaurants and stores.⁴⁴ Currently Urban Oaks is part private, part non-profit, but the IRS does not recognize farming as a tax-exempt activity. Paying property taxes puts a burden on Urban Oaks to earn a large profit, but they want to focus on community development.

Norris is currently looking into ways to alleviate their tax and financial pressures. Lawyers from the University of Connecticut are helping him apply for 501c3 tax status, which would make the nonprofit tax exempt. Because the IRS does not recognize farming as a tax exempt activity, they would have to split Urban Oaks into two separate entities: a farming business and a tax exempt nonprofit, rather than the semi private, semi nonprofit system they have now. This would work well at Urban Oaks because they could divide the farm into a profitable wholesale business and a nonprofit farm stand that sponsors community development programs. Their board that has advised them from the start could continue to guide the nonprofit to help develop and fund the farm.⁴⁵ Removing some or all of the farmland from the tax role may be an unpopular move, however, because New Britain's tax base needs

⁴⁴ Daniel E. Goren, "Organic Farm Struggles for Longer Lease on Life," *The Hartford Courant* 4/24/2006.

⁴⁵ "Urban Oaks Farm Forms Board of Directors," *The New Britain Herald* June 16, 1999.

support form local businesses. Perhaps if the city allowed the wholesale business to expand to a plot across the street, that would add an additional property to the tax role, while allowing Urban Oaks to increase their profits from wholesale production. If the wholesale business expands there may be more job opportunities for Oak Street residents as well.

Norris and Kandefer have struggled financially over the years, but they are tenacious, and they always find another grant or another strategy, which allows them to continue to remain on Oak Street. Their commitment to keeping the farm stand open even though it may not always be profitable to do so shows their commitment to Oak Street and their neighbors. If they were to close the farm stand, Urban Oaks would become a shell of a business on the street, because the wholesale business would have little interface with the surrounding community and would not provide much chance for local residents to purchase food. Norris and Kandefer are personally committed to the farm, and this is best illustrated by their willingness to repeatedly sacrifice their personal profit and comfort for the farm. Currently, the biggest problem Urban Oaks faces is that Norris is fighting cancer and a few weeks ago he suffered a stroke, which severely limited movement on the left side of his body.⁴⁶ But Urban Oaks has faced many challenges and Norris is committed to overcoming this one as well, and when he can, he continues to work at the farm as he regains mobility. However, there is not a support system that can help with the administrative and financial responsibilities as Norris recovers.

Conclusion

⁴⁶ Tony Norris, phone conversation with Allison Burson, 2/28/07 and Conversations with Kathy Spano.

Urban Oaks offers fresh organic produce to a neighborhood that previously had none available and the neighbors have been receptive to the farm and enjoy the produce. Some community members volunteer at the farm, and many more buy the produce. Urban Oaks also draws wealthier suburban shoppers to their weekend farm stand, and at the stand a diverse range of shoppers rub shoulders. At Urban Oaks two hard working enthusiastic farmers brought their farm knowledge and their energy and worked with the City of New Britain to find a way to break the barrier of organic, heirloom, produce being a luxury only for the rich and well educated.

Urban Oaks Farm has faced and overcome many challenges working in a dangerous neighborhood in New Britain. Despite the fact that the Urban Oaks neighborhood did not have wealthy, highly educated or sophisticated residents, Norris and Kandefer rallied support from the local community and federal, state, and private funding. In order for the farm to be successful and continue to improve the neighborhood, they must find a way to work out their nonprofit and tax exempt status so that the farmers can make a living and the nonprofit also has funding and resources for neighborhood development programs. They must also deepen their volunteer and staff base to the point where the nonprofit can continue even if Norris and Kandefer need time off.

Crystal Spring Farm

Introduction

The Saturday morning farmers' market at Crystal Spring Farm, which is run by the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust from May through October, is a weekly block party where area residents and visitors can do their weekly shopping, meet with neighbors, relax, and enjoy the outdoors.¹ Shoppers can buy local carrots, Tuscan kale, bok choy, spinach, organic beets, apples, maple butter, goat cheese, free-range eggs, fresh seven-grain bread, flowers, herbs, yarn, and an ever changing variety of seasonal produce from farmers from around the state of Maine.

Rain or shine, dedicated BTLT members always staff the first stall at the market, talking to shoppers about the benefits of buying locally grown food and asking them to support the work of the land trust, which makes Crystal Spring Farm and the market possible. The BTLT members remind shoppers that without the land trust's work, the fields of vegetables on both sides of the road, the farm house next to the market, the trails behind the market, the woods, the pasture of sheep that the children are so excited to pet, would all be a development of condominiums or a new subdivision of single family homes.

The land trust emphasizes that Crystal Spring Farm was and is a particularly important property to preserve because it is less than two miles from downtown Brunswick, because it is one of the last working farms in town, and because it is located on a well traveled entranceway into town.² The most benefits of Crystal Spring Farm include the unbroken rural views it provides and the fertile sandy loamy

¹ Jack Aley, interview by Allison Burson. Brunswick Topsham Land Trust Office, 108 Maine St., Brunswick, ME. 1/10/07.

² *Crystal Spring Farm North Campaign* (12/04/06)]; available from <http://www.btl.org/campaign/>.

soil and its location over a significant aquifer.³ Residents appreciate the property for its scenic rural views, which remind them of Brunswick's agrarian past. They also enjoy the property for its recreational uses, because of the food it provides through the farm and farmer's market.

Background about Brunswick

Crystal Spring Farm is located in Brunswick, ME, a coastal town half an hour north of Portland. Brunswick is an affluent suburb of Portland, as well as a college town. As of 2000, Brunswick had a population of about 20,000. The mean household income was about \$40,000, and eight percent of individuals lived below the poverty level in 1999. About 95% of residents were born in the U.S. and about 50% were born in Maine.⁴ Brunswick also has a large retirement community and 15.5% of its population is over 65, which is higher than the state average of senior citizens of 14.4% and the national average of 12.4%.⁵ Many members of the retired community, particularly summer residents, are financially comfortable, and have the time to actively support the land trust helping with trail maintenance, outreach and development.

Brunswick is the home of Bowdoin College, a small, selective liberal arts college. The college was founded in 1794, and throughout its history it has had an excellent relationship with the town. The upper middle-class commuters from Portland and the Bowdoin faculty and staff form a well educated and environmentally

³ Ibid.

⁴ *United States Census Data for Brunswick, Me Available from the Curtis Memorial Library Generated from [Http://Factfinder.Census.Gov](http://Factfinder.Census.Gov)* (Curtis Memorial Library [cited 1/15 2007]); available from <http://www.curtislibrary.com/censusbr/index.html>.

⁵ *U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 Fact Sheet, Maine* (US Census Bureau [cited 1/24 2007]); available from <http://factfinder.census.gov/servlet>.

friendly constituency for the land trust. Local farmers from around the state also support the BTLT. A naval air station is located in Brunswick, and has been an important part of the local economy and land use patterns, but it is slated for closure by 2011.⁶ Brunswick also sees a number of summer tourists and residents who add to the BTLT's support base.

Though Brunswick is a suburban town, and most of its developable land has been developed. There is a lot of competition for open space in the town because Brunswick has an extremely valuable and rapidly growing housing market, particularly because of the growing retirement community in the town.⁷ A quick glance through the local paper, *The Times Record*, will reveal how contentious development has become. For example residents are currently concerned about the possibility of rezoning to allow the construction of an industrial park on the outskirts of town, outside the town's current growth zone, in what was once a rural area.⁸ *The Times Record* articles as well as many other discussions in town make clear that there is very little open developable land left, the remaining land is valuable, and there is a lot of concern about how the remaining land should be used.

Early History of Brunswick

Given the rapid development in the town, residents of Brunswick value scenic views and historical connections of Crystal Spring Farm. The Farm is truly a gateway into Brunswick because many visitors and residents enter Brunswick from Freeport on Pleasant Hill Road. Pleasant Hill Road is one of the last remaining roads

⁶ Christopher Cousins, "Base Closure Panel Assess the Impact," *The Times Record* 12/01/2005.

⁷ Jack Aley, interview by Allison Burson. Brunswick Topsham Land Trust Office, 108 Maine St., Brunswick, ME. 1/10/07.

⁸ Rachel Ganong, "Foes: Community Wants Open Space," *The Times Record*, no. (1/12/2007), <http://www.timesrecord.com/website/main.nsf/news.nsf/>.

with stretches of scenic and working farmland remaining in Brunswick, which until the turn of the century was predominantly a farming and industrial town. Brunswick's first European settlers were fur traders, fishermen, seafarers, boat builders and farmers. Settlers quickly took advantage of the hydropower from the falls on the Androscoggin River, and the proximity to the ocean for trade and developed successful industries.

Prior to European settlement, the Pejepscot Indians occupied the Brunswick area.⁹ In 1620, King James granted the Council of Plymouth territory in New England extending from Massachusetts to Maine.¹⁰ In 1632, the Council of Plymouth granted a patent to Thomas Purchase and George Way. Thomas Purchase was the first individual to settle in the Brunswick region, in 1628, before the patent was issued. Purchase traded with the Indians and was in the fishing business.¹¹

Early European settlers fished, traded with Indians, and farmed. European settlement in Maine was brief because hostilities with the Indians arose in 1675, at the time of King Phillip's War in the Plymouth Bay Colony. Indians attacked and killed some European settlers, causing others to flee to Massachusetts. Indian wars continued sporadically for about the next hundred years, hindering, but not preventing European settlement in the area.¹²

The town of Brunswick was incorporated as a township in 1717 when the General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts voted to make Brunswick a township, giving the settlers municipal rights to hold public meetings, raise money for

⁹ George Augustus Wheeler, *History of Brunswick, Topsham, and Harpswell, Maine, Including the Ancient Territory Known as Pejepscot* (Boston,: A. Mudge & sons printers, 1878), 1-2.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 7.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 8

¹² *Ibid.*, 49-54.

their common welfare, and choose town officers.¹³ Because of Brunswick's prime location on the Androscoggin falls, by 1836 there were twenty saw mills in Brunswick as well a number of successful hydro or wind powered mills and factories.¹⁴ Brunswick's economy remained predominantly agricultural until the Railroad came in 1847. By the 1870s both agriculture and the maritime industry played less important roles in the community and textiles and paper became much more important to the town's development.¹⁵

History of Crystal Spring Farm

Crystal Spring Farm is one of the oldest farms in Brunswick. The farm lies on the corner of two of the oldest roads in town. Woodside Road, leads down to Maquoit Bay, which was the first harbor and the shipbuilding center in Brunswick.¹⁶ Pleasant Hill Road was built in 1794 and was the original Post Road connecting Brunswick and Freeport.¹⁷ According to a deed dated 1820 at the Pejepscot Historical Society, George Woodside was the first owner of Crystal Spring Farm.¹⁸

The 1850 Maine Agricultural Census shows that like most farms in Maine in the 1800s, the Woodside farm was predominately a subsistence operation. The census reports that George Woodside had one horse, three milking cows, four oxen, twelve sheep, and three swine. Output from the farm included three hundred pounds

¹³ Ibid., 104.

¹⁴ Ibid., 555-64.

¹⁵ Richard Edward Wilson, "The Labbes of Wallagrass and Brunswick, Maine: A Study in Landscape, Community and Family" (History, Vermont College of Norwich, July 1997), 108-09.

¹⁶ Rick Wilson, personal conversation with Allison Burson, Brunswick High School, Brunswick, ME. 1/10/2007.

¹⁷ Rick Wilson, "Value of Crystal Spring Farm Is Crystal Clear," (Brunswick: The Brunswick Topsham Land Trust, 03/1996).

¹⁸ Given the excellent soil quality, the availability of water on the property, and it's prime location on the main road on the between Brunswick and Freeport and on the way to the harbor, both Wilson and the Pejepscot Historical Society think it is possible that others farmed the property before Woodside, but neither Pejepscot Historical Society nor can the Bowdoin Library's Special Collections and Archives find a record of previous land owners.

of butter, fifty pounds of wool, eight bushels of wheat, one hundred bushels of Indian corn, twenty bushels of oats, six bushels of peas and beans, thirty bushels of Irish potatoes, and thirty tons of hay.

The Woodside family sold the farm to the Billy Edward in 1903. Then Ludger Masse owned and managed the farm from 1908 to 1939.¹⁹ In 1939 the town doctor, Maurice Dionne, bought the farm, and his brother Bert, who was a veterinarian, ran the farm for the family. From the 1940s to 1980s the farm operation included cows, horses, 150 acres of crops and a milk room. Between the 1947 to the mid 1960s, the Dionne Farm was a dairy processor, pasteurizing milk for a number of local farms. The milk for the dairy came from sixty Guernsey cows at Crystal Spring Farm and the contributions from about ten local farmers who each had between six and ten milking cows.²⁰ The part time farmers who brought milk to the Dionne farm used their dairy operations to supplement their main income. The Dionne farm served as an important gathering place for the community where the farmers who delivered milk would stop each morning to discuss the local news and farming practices.²¹ The dairy also sold their ice cream, and the ice cream stand at the farm was a social gathering place for residents.²²

In the 1960s, many small, family run farms were pushed out of business or bought out by larger, more efficient farming operations. Larger dairy operations switched over to delivery in refrigerated milk trucks, and other expensive processing

¹⁹“Historic Preservation Survey tax lot 22-23.” Found in Lower Maine St. to Pleasant Hill Road Address Box of Index Cards with information about Historic Houses in Brunswick. Available at the Pejebcot Historical Society. 159 Park Row Brunswick, ME accessed 11/04/06.

²⁰ Wilson, "Value of Crystal Spring Farm Is Crystal Clear."

²¹ Ibid.

²²Mark Ireland, "Preserving Today for Tomorrow: Preserve Crystal Spring Farm Campaign, a Project of the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust," (USA: 1996/1997).

equipment, which smaller farmers could not afford.²³ The Dionne farm could not compete with larger dairy operations and in the 1960s, they sold the milk pasteurization business to Oakhurst and the ice cream portion to Deering.²⁴ When the Dionnes stopped sold out, large animal farming in Brunswick ended because the smaller farmers gradually stopped keeping cows because there was no one to pasteurize their milk. Overtime, the barns, and some of the farmsteads have fallen down because people have not wanted to or been able to pay for up-keep.²⁵

How the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust Acquired Crystal Spring Farm

After the Dionne's sold the dairy operation, the family continued to operate the farm until 1992, when the family needed to sell some of their land and the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust approached them about buying part of the Crystal Spring property.

The BTLT is a conservation group that has worked since 1985 to preserve over 1,100 acres of land with ecological, aesthetical, agricultural and historical importance.²⁶

The BTLT always looks for new properties that they might acquire, own, or maintain, and they are especially interested in areas with important views.²⁷ From the BTLT's inception they identified Crystal Spring Farm as one of their top priorities for conservation because it is a two-mile green way with scenic views and extensive wildlife habitat.²⁸

²³ Wilson, "The Labbes of Wallagrass and Brunswick, Maine: A Study in Landscape, Community and Family", 129.

²⁴Wilson, "Value of Crystal Spring Farm Is Crystal Clear."

²⁵ Rick Wilson, personal conversation with Allison Burson. Brunswick High School, Brunswick ME. 1/10/07.

²⁶ *About the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust* (12/04/06)]; available from <http://www.btl.org/about/>.

²⁷ Tom Settlemire, phone interview by Allison Burson, 11/6/06.

²⁸ Jack Aley, interview by Allison Burson. Brunswick Topsham Land Trust Office, 108 Maine St., Brunswick, ME. 1/10/07.

In 1992 when the Dionne family suddenly needed to sell part of their farm, Jack Aley, executive Director of the BTLT, and Tom Settlemyre, who was at that time the president of the Land Trust, moved quickly. They negotiated with the Dionne Family Trust to find a way for the BTLT to acquire the farm so it would not be sold to developers who would subdivide one of Brunswick's last farms, and then the town would lose some of its last remaining arable land. Although the land trust had no money in their bank account, individual Land Trust members advanced enough money to the land trust so that they could make a down payment on the property and make an agreement to purchase the property from the Dionne Family. By 1998, after an extensive capital campaign, the Land Trust raised the \$775,000 for the purchase of the Crystal Spring South Property.²⁹

Acquiring the Property in Two pieces Crystal Spring South and North

The BTLT acquired the Crystal Spring property in two pieces. In 1998, the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust finished their five-year campaign to raise \$775,000 to preserve 160 acres of Crystal Spring Farm on the south side of Pleasant Hill Road. As of the first campaign, the land trust was able to reintroduce sustainable farming, construct public-access trails through the woods and fields, and start Brunswick's popular Saturday farmers' market.³⁰

Since 2005 the land trust has worked to raise another \$1.7 million to purchase and endow the other 162 acres of the Dionne farm, called the Crystal Spring North Property, and they are just finishing the campaign. The BTLT has successfully raised funds through gifts and pledges from families, individuals, foundations and

²⁹ Tom Settlemyre, phone interview by Allison Burson, 11/6/06.

³⁰ *Crystal Spring Farm North Campaign*.

businesses. Some of the largest private donations have come from summer vacationers who want to protect the rural quality of Brunswick that draws them to Maine.³¹

The BTLT was also awarded a \$425,000 Land For Maine's Future grant in 2005.³² The Land For Maine's Future program is a statewide program where taxpayers vote to set aside money to preserve important land throughout the state with some of the money earmarked for farmland protection.³³ The LMF program said that the BTLT's Crystal Spring North project application was the highest rated project of its type in the program's rich history. Under the terms of the agreement with LMF, the state will hold a conservation easement of 155 acres of the Crystal Spring North property guaranteeing that it will be protected in perpetuity. The LMF grant ensures that the land trust will not have to turn to developers and subdivide the property in order to fund the project. Current President of the BTLT, Lloyd Van Lunen says that "it is not only an enormous boost to the trusts fundraising efforts, but a strong ratification of the worth of this remarkable undertaking."³⁴

The financial support the BTLT has received for the Crystal Spring farm campaign is a testament to the value people place on having a farm and walking trails in the community and preserving the open rural views as they enter Brunswick. The LMF grant shows that the state recognizes the importance of the project and the incredible work the BTLT is doing and has faith in the land trust's ability to

³¹ Rachel Ganong, "Couple Gives \$100,000 to Dionne Farm Campaign," *The Times Record* July 29, 2006.

³² "Brunswick Topsham Land Trust Cultivating Connections: The Campaign for Crystal Spring Farm-North Project Summary and Campaign Update," (Brunswick: 2006).

³³ Tim Glidden, *Land for Maine's Future* (2006 12/21/2006)]; available from <http://www.maine.gov/spo/lmf/>.

³⁴ "State Awards \$425,000 to Crystal Spring Campaign," *Brunswick Topsham Land Trust Newsletter* Summer, no. 35 (2006).

successfully manage the project and the property in the long term. The fact that the BTLT had the highest rated grant application of any project shows the importance of their project and their impressive organizational ability and attention to detail, which is incredible for a small land trust.

Campaign Challenges

Between the two campaigns, executive director of the BTLT Jack Aley felt that the first campaign was far harder than the second because in the first campaign, they were a small and somewhat new organization campaigning for a dream and no one had seen what the BTLT was going to do with the land or could do with the land. The second campaign was much easier because the BTLT had made many concrete improvements to the Crystal Spring Property so they could ask supporters to build on their previous work, rather than ask them to give money to a pipedream.³⁵

Conservation Plan for Crystal Spring Farm

At the time the BTLT agreed to buy the Crystal Spring Property from the Dionne family, they knew that buying an expensive property as a small land trust was a huge risk. The land trust went in with open eyes, understanding that there were no state or municipal groups that could buy the property. In order to save the incredible farm and forest from developers, BTLT members took a huge financial risk upon themselves and purchased the property.³⁶

Originally, the BTLT had planned to buy the farm, put an easement on the property so it would be protected from development and subdivision, and then sell the

³⁵ Jack Aley, interview by Allison Burson. Brunswick Topsham Land Trust Office, 108 Maine St., Brunswick, ME. 1/10/07.

³⁶ Jack Aley, interview by Allison Burson. Brunswick Topsham Land Trust Office, 108 Maine St., Brunswick, ME. 1/10/07.

property. However, over the course of their fundraising campaign during the few years after they had purchased the property, the BTLT discussed how to best preserve the farm for the future. The BTLT started a committee comprised of Bowdoin professors, economists, farmers, and other community members and held many discussions to determine a management plan for the property.

Having a board comprised of experienced and expert members has been invaluable to the land trust and Crystal Spring Farm. Without developmental economist and Professor, David Vail's professional advice and guidance about long term planning, the land trust would have been less able to come up with sound strategic plans. Professor Emeritus and sheep farmer, Tom Settlemeier's, agricultural knowledge has been invaluable. His knowledge about building renovations gained from being on building committees at Bowdoin also serves the BTLT well when working with contractors to make sure renovations stay within budget.

According to current President, Lloyd van Lunen, the board took a few years to get their heads around a good model for how to conserve the property. Two winter visiting days at the farm in 1994 and 1995 really made the land trust rethink their plans for the property.³⁷ Tom Settlemeier recalls that at the first open house for the public to see the property, over five hundred people showed up to sled, cross-country ski, and play in the snow. At this point the land trust changed their plan to put an easement on the property and resell it and instead decided to model the Dionne farm property after Great Britain's farms where there are public walking trails through farms. The land trust wanted to provide the public access to a system of scenic trails

³⁷ Lloyd van Lunen, personal conversation with Allison Burson and Jack Aley. 108 Maine Street Brunswick ME. 1/10/2007.

and a farm, which would provide residents with local food, and the opportunity to see how their food was produced.³⁸ Lunen adds that what really guided the BTLT's thinking was that at the visiting day, people clearly told the BTLT not to sell the property. After hearing the public's opinion, the BTLT rethought their plans, but it still took a few years to come up with a good management plan.³⁹

The board eventually decided to do exactly what the public told them and to keep the property much as it had been historically by maintaining trails through the woods and fields and keeping some of the land in agriculture. Although the decision to own Crystal Spring Farm put a huge responsibility on the small land trust to pay the taxes, maintain old farm buildings, and start a farm and farmers' market, as the discussion evolved, the board saw that they could maximize the public good through gained from the property if they owned it. By owning the farm they could ensure that everyone in town could have access to the woods and trails and preserve local agriculture by running a weekend farmers market and having a farm on the property.⁴⁰

Keeping the property helped the BTLT hold the attention of the Dionne family and the town, which enabled them to work with them and continue their conservation efforts with the North campaign. The Dionne family could have made \$600,000 to \$700,000 more if they had sold the North half of their property at fair market value rather than selling it to the land trust. But because the family was impressed with the BTLT's stewardship of their land, and confident of the BTLT's ability to fundraise

³⁸ Tom Settlemire, phone interview by Allison Burson, 11/6/06.

³⁹ Lloyd van Lunen, personal conversation with Allison Burson and Jack Aley. 108 Maine Street Brunswick ME. 1/10/2007.

⁴⁰ Jack Aley, interview by Allison Burson. Brunswick Topsham Land Trust Office, 108 Maine St., Brunswick, ME. 1/10/07.

and make prompt payments, when the time came for them to sell the rest of their farm, they chose to sell it to the BTLT.⁴¹

Models for a Farm

After the BTLT decided that they should keep the property and use some of the land for agriculture, they had to decide how to run the farm. Fortunately for the town of Brunswick, the land trust and current farm manager Seth Kroeck some BTLT board members were familiar with how farms operate.⁴² At the beginning, the BTLT planned to hire a farm manager and run the farm themselves, but partway through the discussion, they realized that they did not have the capital or fundraising capabilities to hire a farm manager and buy farm equipment.⁴³ The Land Trust also received a grant to study how other land trusts managed farms and they found that very few land trusts have actually owned and managed farms, and most of them were specific farm trusts, that only ran one farm and did not manage additional properties the way the BTLT does.⁴⁴

In 2002, as the BTLT was discussing models for managing a farm and trying to raise money to hire a farm manager, they met Seth Kroeck, an experienced farmer from California, who was interested in managing Crystal Spring Farm. Over the next year and a half, Kroeck and the land trust had a series of conversations about how the farm might be managed and what Kroeck's role would be.⁴⁵

⁴¹ Jack Aley also thinks that another part of the reason the BTLT was able to buy the property rather than developers, was that though developers wanted the prime property, in they did not want to outbid the land trust because they knew the land trust had a lot of popular support. Jack Aley, interview by Allison Burson. Brunswick Topsham Land Trust Office, 108 Maine St., Brunswick, ME. 1/10/07.

⁴² Seth Kroeck, phone interview by Allison Burson, 11/6/06.

⁴³ Tom Settlemyre, phone interview by Allison Burson, 11/6/06.

⁴⁴ Tom Settlemyre, phone interview by Allison Burson, 11/6/06.

⁴⁵ Seth Kroeck, phone interview by Allison Burson, 11/6/06.

The BTLT knew that regardless of whether they hired a farm manager or leased the property, whoever farmed the property would be in an extremely high profile position, and be a spokesperson for the BTLT.⁴⁶ The BTLT was impressed with Kroeck's knowledge and enthusiasm and decided that they wanted Kroeck to lease the farm. The BTLT felt that having Kroeck lease the farm, would avoid the problem of the land trust having to invest a lot of capital in the farm, while allowing the farmer working with the land trust to profit from the partnership and support his or her family. Leasing the property to the farmer also avoided animosity other farmer's might feel toward a land trust hiring someone to work seemingly "free" land.

Kroeck started farming Crystal Spring Farm in 2003.⁴⁷ The BTLT gave Kroeck flexibility to decide how he wanted to run his farm, and Kroeck chose to have an organically certified CSA. CSA stands for Community Supported Agriculture, which means that members buy shares of the farm at the beginning of the growing season, helping the farmer cover the start-up costs of seeds and equipment. The farm then distributes a portion of the members share back each week, with a week's supply of seasonal vegetables, fruits, flowers and herbs. By paying at the beginning of the growing season, CSA members absorb some of the risks of bad weather and uncertain economy for the farmer, and in return, CSA members get large quantities of high quality vegetables all summer at a lower price than they would pay at the farmers market, health food store, or grocery store.

Kroeck saw that the Crystal Spring property was physically perfect for a CSA. It had excellent soil and it already had farm buildings on it, including a house and the

⁴⁶ Jack Aley, interview by Allison Burson. Brunswick Topsham Land Trust Office, 108 Maine St., Brunswick, ME. 1/10/07.

⁴⁷ Tom Settlemyre, phone interview by Allison Burson, 11/6/06.

old milk room, which was perfect for preparing, washing, and distributing vegetables for CSA pick-up. In addition, Crystal Spring Farm, was already a well-known farm in the area, on a well-traveled road, so Kroeck knew that his farm had good publicity. Kroeck was excited to work with the land trust, because he wanted to do a CSA and he knew that the BTLT would be a strong partner in helping him reach the community to find members. Another benefit for the BTLT of the CSA is that it brings people up to the property on a weekly basis, which makes people more likely to be aware and appreciative of the land trusts work preserving the property.⁴⁸

Generating Support for the Farm and Campaign

Kroeck was wise to tap into the BTLT's networking system, because they are extremely effective at raising support for the land trust and the community. Since the BTLT acquired the farm, the land trust has more than doubled its membership. Right now membership is hovering at just under 1,000, making them one of the largest land trusts in Maine.⁴⁹ In addition to sending regular newsletters to members, the BTLT sends town wide mailings to 9,000 households. Brunswick has a population of 20,000 and Topsham is smaller, but the land trust's mailing list includes a large number of supporters from the surrounding area and summer residents and visitors. The BTLT takes advantage of e-mail to regularly keep members up to date about events. And more than anything else, the farmers market and the trails at the farm get

⁴⁸ Tom Settlemyre, phone interview by Allison Burson, 11/6/06.

⁴⁹ "BTLT's 2006 Membership Drive Begins: Goal to Attract 1,000 Members by Year's End," *Brunswick Topsham Land Trust: Newsletter* Summer, no. 35 (2006).
Jack Aley, interview by Allison Burson. Brunswick Topsham Land Trust Office, 108 Maine St., Brunswick, ME. 1/10/07. According to Aley the BTLT is almost at membership Goal.

people out to the property on a regular basis, causing people to take ownership of the property and offer their support for the land trust, farm, and CSA.⁵⁰

Kroeck has built on the positive energy generated by the BTLT and their campaign, encouraging CSA members to become active participants in his farm and informed consumers. Though year to year bad weather or insects have destroyed some crops, overall yield has been good, and in three years he has been able to expand the number of families in his CSA from 75 the in 2004, to 250 in 2005, to 200 in 2006.⁵¹ Kroeck's CSA is one of the four largest in the state and it is so successful that it fills for the upcoming summer by the end of the preceding summer. Kroeck is successful for many reasons. First and foremost, he is an extremely good farmer, working with great soil. The CSA's success shows the BTLT's good judgment choosing to lease the farm to the right farmer, and shows how wise the land trust was to preserve productive soil that can yield high quality produce even during uncertain weather.

Kroeck has been able to start a successful CSA despite three years of bad weather because he an extremely skilled farmer who does not see his job as simply to grow vegetables; he also knows that he plays a critical role as community educator and knows that he must teach his community about the benefits of being CSA members. By using his farming expertise Kroeck has ensured that he will have successful growing seasons despite the uncertainties of farming in Maine so that his CSA members always have vegetables to bring home. Though Maine has a short cool growing season, he pushes the limits of what can grow in Maine by using plastic

⁵⁰ Jack Aley, interview by Allison Burson. Brunswick Topsham Land Trust Office, 108 Maine St., Brunswick, ME. 1/10/07.

⁵¹ "BTLT's 2006 Membership Drive Begins: Goal to Attract 1,000 Members by Year's End."

and row covers that allowing him to plant melons and other warm weather crops. He pairs the special warm weather crops with Maine staples including potatoes, carrots, parsnips, turnips, summer and winter squash, zucchini, beets, cucumbers, lettuce, peppers, and spinach. To round out the CSA share he adds a number of specialty greens including a mesclun, arugula, and number of Asian greens Tat soi, Mei Qing Choi, and Bok Choi he became familiar with while farming in California. For an additional fee at CSA pick-up, Kroeck also offers free range eggs, and lamb that he raises as well as milk, cream, butter, ice cream and maple syrup from a nearby farm in North Anson, ME.⁵² In his weekly newsletter, Kroeck encourages his members to change the how they eat and shop, explaining the benefits of eating locally, highlighting green businesses and restaurants, and offering new recipes for seasonal produce.

Kroeck feeds over 200 families each summer, and by feeding and talking to these families who then go on to talk to their friends and neighbors he reaches a large portion of the Brunswick community. Kroeck sees his work as functional way to change diets. The location of the farm is important for this mission. People pass the farm frequently and enjoy the change in scenery from houses to cultivated fields, sheep, cows, and chickens at pasture and the surrounding woods and trails. Seeing the farm and appreciating the restful views it offers reminds residents of the importance of eating local, sustainably raised produce. People want to support the farm that offers them pleasant views and a chance to show their children how food is grown by buying the locally raised produce. Also, because consumers can see how

⁵² Ibid.

their food is raised and cleaned they have little reason to worry about contamination.⁵³

Families who were initially hesitant to pay four or five hundred dollars at the beginning of the summer for produce have come to realize that they get more produce than they would get if they were to shop at the grocery store, and in addition, they get higher quality vegetables and enjoy the community atmosphere of the CSA. In 2006, CSA members paid \$475 for a subscription and received around 400 lbs of vegetables, which averaged to \$1.19 lb for vegetables, less than the average price per pound of vegetables at the supermarket, and far less than what one would pay for organic vegetables there.

Liz Pierson, a resident of Brunswick and enthusiastic CSA member, calculated that with nineteen weeks of distribution the CSA cost exactly twenty-five dollars a week, and if she factored in the herbs, strawberries, beans, peas, tomatoes, and flowers she harvested herself in the “u-pick” section the weekly cost was closer to twenty dollars. Beyond the savings to her family’s pocket book, Pierson and her family feel that they cannot put a price on the intangible benefits they derived from belonging to the CSA for example:

the pleasure of knowing that much of the food [they] ate...was grown organically in a field on Pleasant Hill Road by a farmer we know and admire, or the wonderful sense of community so evident at the weekly pick-ups. Most important the CSA has given [her] family a visceral connection to Crystal Spring Farm—and by extension, to farmland in general. [The Crystal Spring] farm that we always have loved has taken on a larger meaning thanks to the BTLT, Seth Kroeck, and the CSA it is once again a place of sustenance in our community.⁵⁴

⁵³ Seth Kroeck, phone interview by Allison Burson, 11/6/06.

⁵⁴ Liz Pierson, "A Wonderful Addition to Brunswick Life," *The Times Record* November 16, 2005.

Pierson captures the feelings of many CSA members who subscribe not just to receive vegetables at a lower cost, but in order to be connected to local agriculture.

CSA pick-up is a time for members to chat with friends, discuss recipes, and let their children play on around the farm and members typically spend at least half an hour at the farm. The CSA experience offers an alternative from the grocery store where members can exchange recipes with the farmer who grows their food and children can pet the lambs that they may eat in a few months. An idyllic property full of inviting trails beyond the farmhouse, which wind between the fields seals people's connection and attachment to the farm. Being a CSA member is a recreational and social event and a time to explore the trails, see friends, harvest vegetables at U-Pick, and a place for children to play, explore and learn about farms.

Saturday Farmer's Market

About 90% of the produce Kroeck grows goes to the CSA and he sells the remaining vegetables, at the Saturday farmers' market at his property and at two local restaurants; anything left over is donated to the food pantry.⁵⁵ Just as the vegetables Kroeck grows on the BTLT's land are available on a weekly basis at the farmers' market for anyone in town to buy, the community at Crystal Spring Farm is not limited to CSA members. On Saturdays the farm overflows with people who come to the farmer's market sponsored by the BTLT on the Crystal Spring Farm Property. The Saturday farmers' market is the land trust's way to share the Crystal Spring property with as many farmers in the area as possible and another way for them to strengthen the communities connection to local agriculture. Though Kroeck does pay to lease his land, the market was Tom Settlemeier's solution for how the BTLT could

⁵⁵Seth Kroeck, phone interview by Allison Burson, 11/6/06.

support as many area farmers as possible and reduce animosity farmers might feel if they viewed the land trust's decision to lease the land trust's property to one farmer as unfairly supporting him or her by giving him free or deeply discounted land and support. Many farmers from around the state appreciate having the market to sell their produce and as a result are now BTLT members. They also appreciate that the land trust educates consumers about the importance of supporting local farmers.⁵⁶

Although shoppers can buy and sometimes do buy a week's worth of groceries at the farmer's market, people do not come just to go shopping. They come, for a Saturday morning outing. They come to enjoy the music, to see the llamas, to walk their dogs, to talk with friends, and to sample the cheese, bread, cider, and fresh jam. Not surprisingly, the market is flourishing and it continues to be profitable for both the farmers who sell at it and for the BTLT. The market is continuing to grow and draw new vendors. To ensure that the market runs smoothly, the BTLT hired one or two people to maintain the property and deal with the organizational challenges of running the market.⁵⁷

Even with the addition of the Crystal Spring North acreage, the CSA can only provide food for a few hundred families. The farmers' market allows families from the Brunswick area as well as many visitors in the area to purchase groceries from local farmers without a CSA share. The farmers' market offers a wide selection of products and purchasing opportunities for consumers, where many palates and tastes are satisfied. If there were just the Organic CSA on the land trust property, many people would be excluded from buying the local produce because they did not want to

⁵⁶ Tom Settlemyre, phone interview by Allison Burson, 11/6/06.

⁵⁷ Jack Aley, interview by Allison Burson. Brunswick Topsham Land Trust Office, 108 Maine St., Brunswick, ME. 1/10/07.

buy a summer's worth of vegetables at once, or because they could not pay the premium for organically certified vegetables. By running the farmers' market, and making the land available to Kroeck for a CSA, the BTLT makes it possible for families in the Brunswick area to purchase their choice of food from local farmers and to meet the farmers who are growing their food.

Community Outreach and Education

Kroeck and the BTLT have worked hard to develop connections with the Brunswick community. Although Kroeck does not rely heavily on volunteer labor, he has volunteer workdays throughout the summer for CSA members to help with weeding and harvesting at the points when he needs a large labor force. The land trust also has periodic workdays for maintenance on the Crystal Spring Trails. These workdays help connect CSA members with their food and the land it grows on and give trail users a greater sense of pride and ownership for the property.

Another innovative partnership is with the Bowdoin Organic Garden. In 2002, a group of students at Bowdoin led by Joel Cartwright wanted to start an Organic Garden. Five or six students worked with the college to identify possible sites for an Organic Garden. Initially in academic year 2002/2003 when students addressed Bowdoin College about the possibility of having a garden on campus, the school was not receptive. The school offered the students a site at a Bowdoin owned property that had once been farmed, about three miles from campus, but the soil was no longer good for growing vegetables. Students met with the land trust and the college to brainstorm, and Tom Settlemire suggested that because of its fertile soil and proximity to campus students might want to use a piece of the Crystal Spring

property for a garden. The students and the land trust liked the idea, but felt that because the farm was leased by Kroeck, it was Kroeck's decision if students would be able to use some of the land for a garden.⁵⁸ Kroeck receptive to letting students use some of his unused land and his washing facilities, in return for their help harvesting and preparing for CSA distribution. He asked that the students write a proposal detailing their responsibilities to him and the garden. Kroeck served as an advisor to the student gardeners sharing his knowledge of inter-planting, crop rotation, pest control, and harvesting.⁵⁹

Despite the written proposal and clearly articulated responsibilities, tensions arose because the students and Kroeck did not always communicate clearly on how the students should leave the washroom or live up to their side of their contract with Kroeck. One of the underlying challenges was that while Kroeck runs his farm as a business, the students are running an educational nonprofit garden, which is supported by the college, so though the students try to make a profit, they do not have the same financial pressure to stay out of the red that Kroeck does. Another glitch occurred when Kroeck needed to expand into the students' first field location the second year and a few of the students who had originally been involved in the garden were abroad, so they chose the second garden site, rather haphazardly, and ended up with a very wet field best suited to native blueberries and cranberries, not the vegetables Bowdoin Dining most desires.⁶⁰ However after one wet season at the new site, the Bowdoin Organic Garden was able to avoid some of the drainage problems

⁵⁸ Joel Cartwright, phone interview by Allison Burson, 12/9/2006.

⁵⁹ Joel Cartwright, phone interview by Allison Burson, 12/9/2006.

⁶⁰ Joel Cartwright, phone interview by Allison Burson, 12/9/2006. and personal observations.

and increase fertility thanks to careful planning, moving the fence line, and adding organic matter.⁶¹

More than anything Kroeck needed consistency from the students at the garden, but students have obligations to course work, go abroad, or at best are only on campus for four years. Kroeck wanted one person at the Bowdoin Organic Garden with whom he would deal with all the time and he was integral in the creation of a garden manager.⁶² Though at first Bowdoin dining was hesitant to hire a garden manager, over the past two years the position has changed from an un-benefited, hourly position, to a position with health benefits.⁶³ This shows that Bowdoin dining and the University have changed now see it as a much more important part of the campus. In addition, this fall, the University has added another half acre of garden space on campus and decided to become certified organic by the Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association.⁶⁴

Overall, Cartwright and students worked things through with Kroeck and were pleased and surprised by how well everything worked out. And the entire Bowdoin community has benefited from the Bowdoin Organic Garden and its partnership with Crystal Spring Farm. Although Kroeck tried to sell his some of his produce to Bowdoin Dining, he found supplying them frustrating because they are so large. Now, Kroeck is able to provide the land so that students can learn about sustainable agricultural methods while they provide local organic food to the campus during the

⁶¹ Katherine Creswell, "Bowdoin Organic Garden Summary," (Brunswick, ME: Fall 2006).

⁶² Joel Cartwright, phone interview by Allison Burson, 12/9/2006.

⁶³ The Garden Manager works for Bowdoin Dining for the growing season and then works for Sustainable Bowdoin, which is part of Facilities. The benefits come from Bowdoin Dining. Katherine Creswell, personal conversations with Allison Burson fall and winter 2006.

⁶⁴ Creswell, "Bowdoin Organic Garden Summary."

summer and fall. This system has worked extremely well for Kroeck, the Bowdoin Organic Garden, and Bowdoin College Dining Services. In return for the use of his unneeded land, Kroeck gets the students' and Bowdoin's farm manager's help preparing for the CSA and because the land is now being farmed, it is being improved and prepared for when Kroeck is ready to farm it himself.⁶⁵ The Bowdoin students get land to farm and Kroeck's expert knowledge and mentoring.⁶⁶ Bowdoin Dining benefits because they now get fresh local produce, which they grow themselves.⁶⁷

Other Challenges and Solutions

The BTLT is still frustrated that people do not always understand that without the land trust's work, the CSA and the trails could not exist. One problem is getting people to understand that although Kroeck is a private farmer and not farming for the land trust, and that the CSA could not happen without the Land Trust's support. Nor could the farmer's market or the trails. For a small geographic area the land trust has a huge membership of 1,000 members. But people don't always see or understand the land trust's involvement in Crystal Spring Farm, which is basically subsidizing the cost of the land. In the past there has not been a lot of overlap between CSA members and BTLT members, but both groups are working to change that through member education, particularly in their newsletters.

Education

⁶⁵ Katherine Creswell, Bowdoin Organic Garden Manager, personal conversations with Allison Burson, summer 2006.

⁶⁶ Tom Settlemyre, phone interview by Allison Burson, 11/6/06.

⁶⁷ For the 2006 growing season the Bowdoin Organic Garden grew 1,240 pounds of produce or \$6,140 of produce. Assuming a truck can carry 1,000 lbs of food, and the food item travels 1,500 miles by truck to reach the consumer, roughly 1,500 miles of transport were offset by having the garden in Brunswick at the College Creswell, "Bowdoin Organic Garden Summary."

In addition to being a working farm, Kroeck hosts a number of statewide Maine Organic Farmers and Gardeners Association Conferences, such as conferences on marketing strategies small farmers including cultivating face-to-face relationships with community members. Thus, the farm is a learning center for farmers around the state as well.⁶⁸ In the future the BTLT plans to work with Brunswick schools to develop more educational programs on the farm and in the woods around the farm, using the farm buildings as a base for the programs.⁶⁹

Conservation Value

In addition to saving valuable farmland, the Crystal Spring Property protects historic buildings, diverse forest types, and wetlands. Farm buildings on the property date back to the 1800s, and the land trust maintains the buildings, preserving them and the historic views for the future. The forest has diverse mix of hardwoods and conifers, which is unusual because it marks the transitional zone between the species rich eastern deciduous woods and the less diverse conifer dominated boreal forest. There is a diverse range of tree species as well as understory species on the forest floor because of favorable soils and because the forest is unusually old for a forest in the area. The woods are an important habitat for birds and other species that are sensitive to fragmented habitat and human encroachment. Habitat fragmentation, which comes with development, makes large parcels of land such as the property an important asset in maintaining bird diversity. Fragmented habitats favor opportunistic and adaptable animals and can also favor other non-native species, which out

⁶⁸ *Selling What You Grow: Marketing Basics, Farm Training Workshops* (6/27/06 12/9/2006)]; available from <http://www.mofga.org/Default.aspx?tabid=298>.

⁶⁹ Ireland, "Preserving Today for Tomorrow: Preserve Crystal Spring Farm Campaign, a Project of the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust."

compete native species. These combined threats make it important to preserve unfragmented habitat.⁷⁰ Thus, the Crystal Spring property, comprised of wetlands, fields, and forest comprise an important natural resource for Brunswick's wildlife.

Conclusion

The BTLT built and maintains 2.5 miles of trails throughout the property, which allows residents to enjoy the forest and the wildlife, as well as walk, ski, or run by the fields where some of their food is grown. Throughout the entire process of acquiring the property and deciding how to manage it, the BTLT knew that they wanted people to actively use Crystal Spring Farm and maintain their connections with the property and its history.⁷¹ During the campaign, the BTLT and town residents were cognizant of the property's history as an agricultural center, and a large part of the reason people wanted to preserve the property, was to preserve its history and to preserve Brunswick's rural history.⁷²

The BTLT was extremely successful in using their members' expertise to allow a small land trust to run and manage a huge campaign, and rally the support of the Brunswick and surrounding community. They had a successful campaign because they told the story of the farm's history elegantly and because they listened to their constituents. They spent the time necessary to discuss various strategies to preserve the property and maximize the benefits from the property. The BTLT's thoughtful approach and foresight allowed them to act quickly when the property was

⁷⁰ Loraine and Jan Pierson Kohorn, "Who Lives at Crystal Spring Farm North?," in *Cultivating Connections: The Campaign for Crystal Spring Farm-North* (Brunswick, ME: Brunswick Topsham Land Trust, 6/24/04).

⁷¹ "Brunswick Topsham Land Trust Cultivating Connections: The Campaign for Crystal Spring Farm-North Project Summary and Campaign Update." And Ireland, "Preserving Today for Tomorrow: Preserve Crystal Spring Farm Campaign, a Project of the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust."

⁷² Ireland, "Preserving Today for Tomorrow: Preserve Crystal Spring Farm Campaign, a Project of the Brunswick Topsham Land Trust."

up for sale, but step back and plan and make sure they had a sound long term vision before committing the land to a long term management plan. The BTLT's willingness to take large financial risks, committing to buy a property before they had raised the funds or had ever run a large financial campaign, and taking on the financial risk of a farm combined with their expert planning and long-term vision has led to an extremely successful conservation project, farmers' market and CSA.

Without such incredibly dedicated land trust board members, college professors, luck, good soil, a great farmer, and a supportive community that welcomed the CSA and the farmers market this would have been a much tougher project. They hardly imagined how successful and important the property could become to the town ten years after they purchased it. The BTLT felt the farm is like a museum displaying Brunswick's history, but it is not static. It keeps moving and changing. By preserving the farm their goal was not just to preserve history or an open space, but to ensure that the property is actively used by the community.

The BTLT has successfully restored Crystal Spring Farm to active agriculture and to an agricultural center as it was historically when Bert Dionne owned the farm. Today instead of farmers dropping off milk for pasteurization, farmers bring their goods to sell at the farmers market and families and farmers congregate at the farmers market and CSA to exchange news, chat, and discuss the week's events. The historical, rural character of the land has been preserved, the historic buildings are still standing, and the BTLT has successfully expanded and redefined the uses for the land, bringing people a closer connection to the land where their food is grown and a deep appreciation for the land.

Conclusion

I want to examine how successfully the three farms have taken the resources they started with and enhanced the landscape while providing their communities with local, sustainably grown produce. At the Old Manse, Urban Oaks Farm and Crystal Spring Farm, partnerships between the local community and expert agronomists allowed for the preservation, continuation, and rebirth of an existing farm. The three projects have each had at least seven years to grow and change. After assessing these three farms I can generalize about strategies that other farmers should keep in mind when partnering with nonprofits to increase access to local food and preserve open space.

Summary of Case Studies

Gaining Ground

The recreated garden at the Old Manse is a successful collaboration between two nonprofits, which has enlivened an historic property. In addition to brightening the landscape, the historic garden provides educational opportunities and fresh vegetables for local food pantries.

Ten years after recreating the garden, the groups continue to enjoy a seamless partnership while maintaining their own missions and agendas. By partnering, both nonprofits' maximize their staffs' time, expertise and resources. Though the partnership, both groups have learned and grown. The Old Manse has begun to emphasize the outside landscape and local agriculture in their programs, while Gaining Ground has expanded their mission to include a historical component.

The Old Manse garden started out in the most privileged position of the three farms, in the affluent and well-educated town of Concord and as product of a collaboration of two firmly established, well-funded and organized nonprofits.

Before Gaining Ground's first growing season at the Old Manse, the Old Manse spent six years thinking about and planning for a recreated garden. Gaining Ground also spent a year planning and researching the garden with the Old Manse before planting. By spending a significant amount of time planning before they began the physical partnership and garden, the Old Manse and Gaining Ground ensured a smooth transition to the garden and thus had few unforeseen challenges or disagreements between groups.

In the future, it is likely that there will continue to be a recreated garden at the Old Manse. Gaining Ground is a well established, fourteen year-old organization. Trustees of Reservations is over 100 years old and clearly will continue to hold and preserve the property in the future. Gaining Ground and the Old Manse have worked out a mutualistic relationship where both groups benefit. The Old Manse has begun and plans to further integrate the garden into the house tour, landscape tour, and seasonal festivals. If in the future Gaining Ground were no longer able to maintain the garden, the Old Manse is committed to maintaining a recreated garden on the property, and they have experience partnering with farmers. They might look for other nonprofit farms or food bank farms or a master gardener who could maintain the garden for them.¹ Because the garden is only half an acre, if there were a

¹ In the greater Boston area there are a number of sustainable farms, educational farm programs, and food projects, so if the Old Manse were in need of other partners, they would probably be able to find them. The Farm School, the Boston Food Project, The Natick Community Farm, Waltham Fields

transition period while the Old Manse looked for a new partner organization or if Gaining Ground needed to take a year off, the land itself could benefit by being left uncultivated.

Although there is no specific formula for the Old Manse and Gaining Ground's success, other groups can learn from their partnership and take away the following general concepts.

- Nonprofits can successfully partner with other nonprofits when both groups trust each other.
- Trust develops when groups are well organized, and communicate frequently and effectively.
- Partnerships between organizations work best when both groups are well run and financially comfortable.
- Keep finances as straightforward as possible and let each organization do its own accounting rather than trying to have separate accounts for each organization as well as a joint account for partnered projects. The Old Manse and Gaining Grounds kept the financial situation simple, splitting the cost of the garden evenly rather than having a third set of finances for the garden.

Urban Oaks

Urban Oaks is the hardest farm for me to analyze because although Urban Oaks has the reputation among many of its clientele and neighboring farms in Connecticut as an excellent nonprofit that is in partnership with the city of New Britain and its neighborhood,² what I found as I did my case study was that legally and in practice Urban Oaks cannot be described simply as a collaboration between a private business and nonprofit or a partnership between a business, a nonprofit and

Community Farm are all programs in the area, which could offer resources or support or possibly trained personnel in the future if Gaining Ground no longer could maintain the garden.

² Melina Shannon-DiPietro, Director of Yale's Sustainable Food Project suggested I research the farm when I asked about farms in the area that partnered with their local communities to provide local food. As Director of Yale's Sustainable Food Project, part of Melina's job is to research farms and suppliers in the area.

the City of New Britain. When Urban Oaks started however, the city, the neighborhood, and the farmers, all envisioned that the farm would be a stronger collaboration between the nonprofit farm run by a board and the surrounding community. The farm managers also expected significant support from the city.

Currently Urban Oaks has greenhouse space and two and a half acres outside under cultivation, which allows them to run a farm stand, a twenty family CSA, and a wholesale business. The farm successfully provides a green space and visual relief from the surrounding urban setting. Urban Oaks is still struggling financially and they have not fully achieved their mission of reaching their entire neighborhood by improving their community's eating habits and through educational programs, training and creating jobs.

When the Urban Oaks project started, it was faced with many challenges. It was in a poor, blighted urban area with a high crime rate, and little expert support from the community. The Urban Oaks Farms had support from the neighborhood revitalization zone (NRZ) group and from the city, but they did not have the support of any well-established, well-funded partner nonprofits that could offer them structural support, guidance or help fundraising.

The future of the farm is uncertain. They currently rent the land for the farm from a private landowner at a bargain price, and they are working to obtain an additional lot from the city, but the private landowner could sell his property or raise the rent at any point and the city has been hesitant to turn over additional property to the farm. One of the major difficulties in working with the city of New Britain is that changes in political leadership slow down or undo progress the farm has made in

gaining support or funding from the city and the farm has to campaign for support continuously. If Urban Oaks is unable to work out their financial troubles and remains strapped for resources, they will not have a great impact on their neighborhood. Perhaps if they are able to increase their profit margin by developing wholesale and distribution business, they could use the profit to fund their neighborhood improvement programs.

Other groups can learn from Urban Oak's experiences.

- Farms and nonprofits should come up with as complete a long term funding plan as possible before they begin farming. Urban Oaks has had many difficulties because the farm managers have had to spend time campaigning and fundraising while they are farming full time.
- Clearly define the terms of any private public partnerships at the beginning of a project. Urban Oaks private business and public nonprofit distinction is currently unclear.
- The farm managers and the executive directors or managers of the nonprofits should be separate. The farm managers at Urban Oaks have taken on too many responsibilities. Although there is an advisory board comprised both of neighbors and expert farmers, the farm managers make the major farm decisions and are the key fundraisers, managers, visionaries, and planners for the farm. Someone should be responsible for the private farm business and its finances, which is a full time job, while someone else should be responsible for administrating, organizing, planning the nonprofit's community development work.
- Sustainable farming and community development can and should go hand and hand, but it is simpler to administer when the farming is left to the farmer who is partnering with another group who can work with him or her to build community programs.
- One farmer cannot do everything.
- Nonprofits should be careful if they look to cities for funding because changes in political power may mean fluctuating support.
- Farmers should secure land tenure on a suitable property before they begin farming. The farm managers at Urban Oaks believe that they would be able to increase their profit if they had more land to farm, however, the city is reluctant to give them more land and it is difficult to lobby the city while running the farm.

Crystal Spring

The Brunswick Topsham Land Trust has preserved Crystal Spring Farm and the surrounding woods and maintains two and a half miles of trails through the property, they have leased the property to a farmer who runs a 200 family CSA, they share an acre of land with Bowdoin College's Organic Garden, and they run one of the largest farmer's markets in the state.

The town of Brunswick was an excellent location for the land trust because the community is acutely aware of the recent loss of farmland and open space and the well-off, educated population actively supports conservation efforts.

In the future Kroeck will continue to be a role model for farmers around the state in how to run a successful CSA, training new apprentice farmers, leading workshops, and educating consumers about the benefits of being a CSA member and buying locally grown foods. The BTLT will also continue with its work, setting an example for other land trusts in the state and around the country for how dedicated, visionary, and well organized leadership can effectively preserve working landscapes and sustainable agriculture. In addition to their commitment to preserving the Crystal Spring Farm, the BTLT has signed a commitment with the neighboring land trust in Freeport stating that they will try to preserve as much of the remaining farmland as possible on Pleasant Hill Road and in the coastal area near Crystal Spring Farm. Both land trusts have already begun to act on that commitment and hold properties in fee and easements in the stated area and the BTLT is also in negotiation for more properties in the vicinity.

Land Trusts from around the country already look to the BTLT and they see a clear model for action.

- Land Trusts should have big visions and big dreams.
- Land Trusts can successfully preserve farms.
- Land Trusts and land conservation groups should be ambitious and strive to acquire even the most expensive, desirable properties in their areas.
- It may be necessary for land trust members to take personal financial risks, and taking personal risks can work as long as they take a well calculated risk with a trustworthy organization, and for a cause that they are ready to campaign for.
- When Land Trust members and town members are dedicated to their mission and their vision, and personally invested in it, it shows others the importance of the project.
- In order to avoid wasting time fundraising later and to ensure that the organization will have enough capital to operate and maintain properties, it is best to raise as much money as possible at the beginning, and if possible to endow the property.
- Visions and dreams do not stand in for hours of discussion and making a long-term plan for managing a property.
- When partnering with a farmer, it helps to have members of the land trust or nonprofit who have enough farm experience and knowledge to work with a farmer and help oversee a farm, but who also understand that they need to leave the farming to the farmer.
- Despite any farm experience board members have they must have confidence in the farmer, and the board cannot micromanage the farm.
- It is important to find a skilled farmer, who can also be a public spokesperson for the organization and an educator.

General Conclusions

There is no simple formula for community partnerships between publicly owned lands and sustainable farms. Because farmland is becoming increasingly expensive and because many Americans no longer see where their food is grown small farmers and communities benefit by finding ways that farmers can obtain land for below market value.

My three case studies support the advice that Trauger Groh, Steven McFadden, and Chuck Matthei's provide in *Farms of Tomorrow Revisited*, which offers a template for how to start a sustainable community farm. In *Farms of Tomorrow Revisited* the example farms illustrate the importance of planning ahead, fundraising at the beginning and trying to get finances in order before beginning a new farm. They also advise working with a pre-established supporting organization rather than trying to start a new organization and a new farm at once.

In many ways the Old Manse and Crystal Springs followed Groh, McFadden and Matthei's guidelines, to achieve successful community supported farms, while Urban Oaks continues to struggle, not because they are in an underprivileged area, but because they have not spent enough time planning or developing strong lasting partnerships with a supporting organizations or with the city.

There are many examples of sustainable community farms in urban and rural areas that successfully serve low-income populations. The Homeless Garden Project in downtown Santa Cruz, California is a successful CSA farm that provides homeless people with job training, transitional employment and a share in the harvest, while also feeding 130 paying shareholders and leasing retail and office space from the city of Santa Cruz at a nominal rate.³ The Homeless Garden Project has ensured its financial security through various fundraisers including seasonal festivals, special events, grant and letter writing, and innovative direct campaigning activities. The garden enables homeless people to learn job skills and creates a forum where

³ *Homeless Garden Project* ([cited 2/17 2007]); available from <http://www.homelessgardenproject.org/>.

homeless people and other community members can have open discussions and build understanding.⁴

In Connecticut, the nonprofit Hartford Food System partners with a number of nonprofits in the greater Hartford area to make local produce available to low income residents of Hartford. They work with various farms including Holcomb Farm in West Granby and half acre Grow Hartford farm, which is on parkland in Hartford, to bring inner city teenagers to the farm for summer programs. Holcomb Farm is a nonprofit that is on a farm property that includes historic buildings, an education center, and hiking trails.⁵ Each year in addition to the produce they grow for their 200 CSA members, Holcomb farm provides 45,000 pounds of food to 1,500 low-income residents in West Hartford.⁶ Holcomb Farm, Grow Hartford, and other farms contribute to a farmers market the Hartford Food System Organizes in Hartford.⁷ The Hartford Food system has been successful in bringing sustainably grown food to urban areas partially because they have worked extremely hard to develop strong connections with supporting groups, partnering and collaborating with over twenty-five local and regional organizations in the past few years.

There are many other examples of farms in poor urban areas that do an excellent job transforming the landscape, providing food to low-income residents, and educating the surrounding community. Each group approaches its situation differently, however a common tactic for providing sustainably grown produce to

⁴ "The Expanding Scope of Community Farms." McFadden, "Examples of Community Supported Farms," 212.

⁵ *Holcomb Farms* ([cited 2/21 2007]); available from www.holcombfarm.com.

⁶ *Holcomb Farm CSA* ([cited 2/15 2007]); available from <http://www.holcombfarmcsa.org/>.

⁷ *Hartford Food System* (10/04/06 [cited 2/15 2007]); available from <http://hartfordfood.org/index.html>.

low-income urban residents are to have CSAs for which the membership fee covers the cost of a share and subsidizes additional shares which are sold to low income residents or pays for growing surplus produce. The produce can be donated to food pantries or sold at affordable prices at urban farmers markets. This approach works well for some farmers because they can farm in more rural areas where farmland is available and land is less expensive. It also gives farmers an outlet for the surplus produce, which is inevitable, and the CSA ensures that the farm is financially viable. The Food Bank Farm in Western Massachusetts is an example of a farm that successfully uses this model to feed 400 shareholders and also gives 100,000 pounds of produce to food banks each year.⁸

Farms can also partner with nonprofits including religious organizations, schools and universities and use volunteer or hired labor. Whether farms and organizations choose the CSA model or other models to provide financial support to provide produce to low income residents, it is important that the farmers and organizations think ahead and have long term plans that clearly identify sources of funding and regular fundraising events and strategies if that is part of the plan.

Just as each of the three farms I researched is different, each partnership between a sustainable farm and its community has a different story and a different recipe for success. When beginning a project, it is important to remember what makes a particular farm and community unique and draw on the strengths that the situation can offer. For example if you have highly acidic soil, plant blueberries. If

⁸ "Expanding the Scope of Community Supported Farms." McFadden, "Examples of Community Supported Farms," 212.

you have college professors and retired farmers on your board, let them help you plan.

It helps to build on tradition; generally the best place to start a new sustainable farm is on the site of a previous farm particularly if the farm has historical significance to the community. The advantages to starting a farm on a previous farm is that the soil is probably well suited for agriculture, preexisting farm buildings can probably be used, updated, or adapted for the new farm, and the community is already familiar with the location of the farm. The disadvantage to planting on an old farm is that the soil can be highly eroded from years of poor farm management or contaminated from pesticide and fertilizer use. If soil quality is degraded, sustainable farming practices and intensive application of compost and manures can rebuild it.

It is also important for farmers working with nonprofits to understand the limitations of working with their partner organizations. Often, farmers must understand that working with a board of volunteers means that funding and management decisions may happen slowly despite the fact that the farmer's crops and livestock need immediate attention. Therefore a long-term plan, in which the organization determines funding and details before the growing season is important. The farmer must also be patient and flexible with the nonprofit and volunteers. Finally, groups must develop trust and strong communication. The farmer must be able to count on the board or executive director of a nonprofit and know that his or her needs will be addressed and the nonprofit must trust the farmer with their land and as one of the main representatives of their organization. At the same time, they

must know when there is need for discussion and be able to affectively address and rectify concerns as they arise.

Communities must recognize the importance of preserving agricultural land so that they can continue to have a healthy food source near by and can maintain their connections to their food. Once communities commit to preserving and recreating sustainable farms, there are many possibilities for them to do so. One excellent method is for land trusts and farming non-profits to partner together to hold farmland and manage the farm, but of course, there are many permutations to this model. As long as community members care deeply, plan carefully, and work hard to keep farms in their communities, they can find ways to produce fresh, local foods.

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Appendix

Crop List from the Old Manse¹

Bean: True Red Cranberry, Mohawk, Jacob's cattle beans

Beets: Early blood turnip beet, Mangle

Cabbage: Jersey Wakefield, Lateflat Dutch

Carrots: Early horn, Oxheart

Corn: Bloody Butcher

Cucumber: Ephram

Flowers: Striped French marigolds, Statice, Strawflowers, Mammoth grey sunflowers, Yellow zinnias, Love lies bleeding, Nigella

Hot Pepper: Long Red Narrow Cayenne, Bessler's Pepper

Lettuce

Melon: Ali Baba, Jenny Lined, White Meated, Moon and Stars, Cream of Sask, Green Nutmeg

Onion: Red Wethersfield

Parsnip: Hollow crown

Peas: Dwarf grey

Potato: Green mountain, Purple marker, Russian banana, Butterfinger

Pumpkin: Worcester Indian, Long Island Cheese

Radish: Black Spanish

Rutabaga: American purple top

Skirret

Summer Squash: Yellow Crook Neck

Tomato: Amish Paste, Yellow Stuffer, Ekert Polish, King Umberto, Rose Deberne

Winter Squash: Black Fatso, Butternut

¹ From the Old Manse's garden files. Accessed 10/17/2006.