

Appendix, Part III

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SELECTED READINGS IN AGRICULTURAL HISTORY: A BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

Those starting to learn about agricultural history should start with the big picture. Surveys of agricultural history can help you get a sense of regional crop and stock cultures, social and cultural patterns of rural and farm life, and economic and policy issues. The following examples warrant discussion because they differ in their approach to studying North American rural and agricultural history.

Surveys

Pamela Riney-Kehrberg solicited contributions from twenty-five historians for her anthology *The Routledge History of Rural America*. The book accomplished her goal of “complicating the history of the United States and adding often-neglected wrinkles to the story. . . adding places, people, and topics to the national narrative that you may not have previously considered.” Agriculture appears throughout the book, but so do small towns, and rural and farm people. Chapters on masculinity in rural America, about the experiences of rural and farm women, children and laborers, and about issues such as race, ethnicity, the environment, and rural-urban tensions, all synthesize information drawn from a range of sources and each offer original contributions to understanding rural America. The bibliographies of each essay, and a “top ten” list of sources on each topic in the “Suggested Reading” section warrants consideration by anyone researching agriculture today.

David Danbom’s highly regarded history text, *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America*, synthesizes social history and wrestles with the relationship of rural America to farming, and vice versa. For a sociological perspective on rural America, see Gary A. Goreham’s edited collection, *The Encyclopedia of Rural America*.¹

R. Douglas Hurt explains that he intended his survey, *American Agriculture: A Brief History*, “for anyone who is coming to the history of American agriculture for the first time.” He “designed [it] as a ready reference for the most important economic, social, and political developments in American agriculture.” Hurt balanced “praise about American agriculture. . . the production of American farmers. . . their risk taking, entrepreneurial spirit, and courage” against the fact that agriculture was “shaped by the best and the worst of human nature.”

John T. Schlebecker centered *Whereby We Thrive: A History of American Farming, 1607-1972* “on what farmers themselves achieved and what others achieved for them.” He recognized that “even subsistence farmers were. . . putative commercial farmers.” Not all histories of agriculture address this fact, perhaps because, as Schlebecker explained, “historians have tended to define commercial farming in terms of the commercial farmers of their own day.” This confirms the challenges of thinking historically about a complex economic system similar to what some may have experienced as a child, yet totally foreign in reality, given changes in technology, the environment, and the markets. Schlebecker attempted to compensate with *Whereby We Thrive*, spinning it as “a history of commercial farming. . . a history of those who sold any farm commodity and received payment.”² The overview gained from general secondary sources should provide much to contemplate as you build an agricultural narrative for your museum or historic site.

After being introduced to the high points of agricultural history as conveyed in surveys, you can then read published sources from other eras with an understanding of the mindset of their time. Two examples suffice, Robert L. Ardrey, *American Agricultural Implements*, published in 1894, and the four-volume set, *The Cyclopedia of American Agriculture*, edited by Liberty Hyde Bailey and published between 1907 and 1909.³ Careful reading of these surveys can give you a perspective on contemporary agriculture (written by a person living within the era and involved in the process). The historic publications also convey perceptions of agricultural conditions from the point of view of a person who had not experienced the second agricultural revolution that resulted from the introduction of the internal combustion engine during the 1910s and 1920s or the production revolution that resulted from rapid adoption of synthetic chemicals during the 1940s to 1970s.

Access to Period Publications

Libraries at “land-grant” universities created by the 1862 Morrill Land-Grant Act have led the effort to identify, digitize and make broadly available agricultural publications. To access the open source websites (which are available without charge to the general public) go to your state’s land-grant university website. For southern and western states, check the digital resources in your state’s 1890 land-grant (the traditionally African American universities so designated by the Second Morrill Land-Grant Act of 1890), and the libraries of the 29 Native American colleges recognized as 1994 tribal land-grants by the Elementary and Secondary Education Reauthorization Act of 1994.

Scientific treatises from previous eras provide valuable evidence of thought processes of an earlier times. These can become the basis for first-person interpretation, realizing that the author’s convey only the intellectual framework of their time, and that the practices they advocate may be dangerous or inappropriate for general audiences! With this information in hand you can put historic agricultural science into the context of modern scientific thought and indicate the relevance to daily life. Accessing the historical language allows you to develop an overview of scientific writing relevant to your physical location and the time period that your museum or site interprets.

Access to scientific writing from that past becomes easier by the day as digitized databases expand. Because land-grants employed agricultural scientists, economists, and nutritionists, they have led in making this material accessible. One of the first, the Core Historical Literature of Agriculture (CHLA) is open-access through Cornell University. CHLA provides access to thousands of historical journals and monographs documenting agricultural practices, processes, and science over time. As the website explains: “the record of pre-World War II agriculture is almost entirely a literature of what we now call ‘alternative’ agriculture.”⁴

Other open-source treasure troves made available by land-grant universities include the “Home Economics Archives: Research, Tradition, History” (HEARTH). This electronic collection of books and journals in home economics from 1850-1950 including more than 1,000 books and 15 journals, all available through the Cornell University website. These resources provide the prescriptive literature generated by home economists and domestic scientists working in the country and the city across the nation.⁵ The University of Illinois has digitized and created a live-text searchable, open source database of farm journals from the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. The project materialized around the belief that farm newspapers played a key role in the modernization of rural America. To understand that process, readers needed more access to the holdings of critical farm newspapers. “The Farm, Field and Fireside Collection” contains farm weeklies published in the United States.⁶

The National Agricultural Library (NAL) contains print and digitized collections produced by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) such as the USDA’s *Yearbook of Agriculture*. These include publications on topics as wide ranging as the “Historical Dietary Guidance Digital Collection” to the “Agricultural Law Information Partnership.”⁷

Raw data, collected by the U.S. Bureau of the Census, includes farm numbers, crop yields, acreage in cultivation, ages of farmers, numbers of horses and automobiles and radios owned. The details can overwhelm. But these data warrant analysis. The *Historical Statistics of the United States*, first published in 1949, and revised in 1960, 1977, and 2005. The latest edition contains hundreds of pages focused on agricultural statistics, edited by prolific and thought-provoking economist, Alan Olmstead, with Paul W. Rhode and Daniel A. Sumner. Such data provide quick confirmation that can put a farm into county, state, and national context.⁸

Understudied Topics

Some major topics remain understudied. None of them address rural and farm businesses in any systematic way. These include the small shops that existed after mechanization displaced the craftsmen, and the processing industries such as shoe factories and canning plants that once existed in small towns across the United States, or the seed and fertilizer companies that served farmers directly. Rural businesses do not have the nostalgic cache that family farms do, which might account for the oversight. A history of agricultural markets prior to the Civil War indicates the role of formal markets in rural and agricultural economies. A history of the DeKalb County Farm Bureau indicates the symbiotic

relationships that existed between farmer needs, agricultural boosterism, and business development. A history of long-haul trucking shows links between agrarian truckers, agribusiness, conservative politicians, corporations, and consumers seeking cheap food. Research can bear fruit because findings can inform ongoing conversations about rural and agricultural sustainability.⁹

Nor do these surveys explore class divisions in the countryside, including commonality that may exist between black and white landowning farm families, or between tenants and sharecroppers. The surveys do not provide a cross-race analysis of small farmers, either, be they owners or tenants. This is not the fault of the authors. Instead, the lack of coverage indicates the need for additional work on topics not yet explored to their fullest. Much remains to be done to address research questions such as: In what ways did race affect relationships across class? How did black landowning families interact with tenants, and agricultural laborers including sharecroppers, of their own race? Did these relationships differ from those of white landowning families, white tenants, and white sharecroppers? In what situations did class trump race as the basis for an alliance? If your site includes rural businesses, farm families of a different race or class than scholarship has tended to address, or you seek context for a recent past, you will need to dig deeper into monographs and journals such as *Agricultural History* or your state history journal to develop context.¹⁰

Agricultural History is Local, Regional, National, International History

Agricultural history is local history, but it occurred all over the world. Surveys of agriculture as practiced in different continental and national contexts provide an even broader overview, but a useful one to put cultural practices and change over time into context.¹¹

Added nuance results from linking people in one place to the agricultural practices in the place from which they came. Terry Jordan modeled the process of cultural transfer based on a study of German emigrants to Texas. Learning about agriculture as practiced by ethnic groups in their nation of origin before immigration can inform you about practices used in the United States.¹²

Encyclopedias and multi-volume surveys of rural and agricultural history often following geopolitical boundaries – they focus on a nation. These can help you establish context relatively quickly.¹³ Research networks may approach agriculture within geographic or ecosystem boundaries. For example, the Comparative Rural History Network (CORN) began in 1995 to support research on rural subjects. Faculty at universities in Belgium and The Netherlands coordinate projects that focus on nine countries bordering the North Sea. The multi-volume *CORN Publication Series* (Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers) features current research by experts in their fields. The first volume, edited by Erik Thoen and Leen Van Molle, provided an overview of recent research on rural history of the North Sea area, the focus of CORN research, and over a long time period, from the Middle Ages to the early twentieth century. Subsequent volumes addressed labor markets, food production and processing, credit systems, marriage and the rural economy, differences between farming on land and sea, rural environments, and transitioning from peasants to farmers, among other topics. A four-volume survey of north-western

Europe from 500 to 2000, *Rural Economy and Society*, includes volumes on the environment, food markets, making a living, and social relations. CORN research partners participate in the Rural History conferences organized by the European Rural History Organization every two years.¹⁴ Such collaborative research can contribute to citizen education, policy formation, and museum programming.

Environmental histories offer useful information to understand changes in soils, topography, and climate in your area over time. Not all will incorporate agriculture, but agriculture reflected and affected environmental conditions.¹⁵ Regional characteristics contributed to farmers' choices about staple crops grown and methods employed to raise livestock. Encyclopedias and collections of essays add details about regional distinctions to your agricultural understanding.¹⁶ Without an overview of the farm setting and its regional context, any agricultural interpretation lacks context.

An Agricultural Overview Plus Suggested Readings

The term agriculture, in its earliest classical Latin form – *agricultūra* -- referred to cultivation of fields. This meaning continued in use in the middle French language, and by the 1340s, the regulation of crop fields – *agronomie* – kept local magistrates busy in the rural countryside. By 1440, the English term “agriculture” linked two processes familiar to the majority of the world’s population at the time -- the cultivation of the soil and the culturing of the planted crop -- with the ultimate goal of ensuring a bountiful harvest.¹⁷ Growing enough grain to meet the demand for food motivated scientists, inventors and policy makers in Europe for centuries. In 1649, writer Walter Blith emphasized the need for good “husbandring” of crop fields to ensure increased yields: “Consider the vast advantage there will be by Husbandring a little well... One Acre Manured, Plowed, and Husbandred in season, may and doth usually beare as much Corne as two or three ill Husbandred.” In 1751, Samuel Johnson, the London lexicographer working on the *Dictionary of the English Language*, considered agriculture “the first and noblest science” when measured on the basis of immediate usefulness. The science of soil cultivation and plant propagation – agronomy -- gained credibility by the 1790s.¹⁸ This indicates that, while traditional practices dictated the relationships of crops, stock, and humans, the science of agriculture affected practices, too.

Farming in North America began long before the first recorded use of “agriculture” in English. Each Indian nation in North America satisfied food, fuel and fiber needs from local resources. More work could be done to put this indigenous practice into the context of domestication of species in other parts of the world. In many North American Indian nations, women farmed. They grew corn, melons, and beans. Men hunted, fished and foraged. Cultivation of domesticated crops and carefully stored harvests meant the difference between survival and starvation for many indigenous cultures. Women bore the responsibility for this. Not all practiced sedentary agriculture because the cultures responded to the environmental, climatic, topographic, and geological factors of the lands in which they lived. At the point of contact, the agricultural practices accounted for one of the most significant causes of cultural conflict. The Indian women managed land use, cultivation, harvest, and preservation. The French-Indian

relations created a “middle ground” but English men could not accept female authority over these resources and responsibilities that common law confirmed as their bailiwick. Their masculinity depended on their management of these resources. The cultural conflict displaced Indian nations and negatively affected the cultures.¹⁹

Agriculture influenced decisions of all countries that colonized North America. Europeans sought control of parts of the globe that could generate precious metals but also land to cultivate foodstuffs, specifically rice, wheat and other grains, and other agricultural commodities such as sugar and its byproduct, rum, or indigo, a popular dye. Much has been written about the Columbian Exchange of foodstuffs between Europe and the Americas, and about the ways new commodities transformed society and culture on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean.²⁰ The English grew tobacco in the Chesapeake, rice and cotton in the Carolinas, and sugar in the Caribbean, but they also expanded their food sources with wheat and other grains grown in the Chesapeake. The French established wheat plantations in Illinois Country.²¹ Family farmers managed the environment in some places, but exhausted the soils in others.²² The Indians who lived where the colonizers wanted to be jockeyed for position as the foreigners with their different agricultural practices destroyed Indian hunting lands and coopted their corn caches and squash and bean plants.²³

The prominent and warring European nations, Spain, France, and England, in that order, all positioned themselves in North America. The cattle that the Spanish imported to their colonies helped lay a foundation for an open-range ranching system that engaged cultures across the Plains.²⁴ The wheat that the French cultivated in Illinois Country helped stabilize the grain supply in Paris. A variety of agricultural commodities produced across the British North America assuaged paranoia about starvation (rice and wheat), satisfied demand for stimulants (tobacco and sugar), and provided fiber and dye stuffs for the textile industry (cotton and indigo). All colonial powers solved labor shortages by applying their unfree labor systems to their North American colonies, and when the numbers of Spanish, French and British servants could not satisfy the demand, each colony imposed a new system of racialized enslavement by exploiting indigenous laborers or capturing and enslaving West Africans.²⁵

Crops that required physically demanding labor perpetuated slave culture. Slaves on sugar cane plantations suffered from harsh working conditions and ill treatment. Slaves on rice plantations worked on the task system. They used the time between tasks to develop skills, earn money, and buy livestock, tools, and equipment that they used to make their lives more materially comfortable. Skilled slaves could, under certain circumstance, earn enough to buy their freedom, and the freedom of their kin.²⁶

Other crops required less constant labor. Wheat farmers made a better economic decision to hire labor during planting and harvesting than own a slave. In fact, wheat exceeded tobacco in profitability when using free labor, but slave owners could farm tobacco profitably in the Chesapeake. Thus, wheat came to be increasingly associated with free labor as the debates about slavery intensified after the Revolutionary War. Some planters responded by building mills and working their slaves in grain processing. This helped develop an infrastructure for wheat processing and flour marketing inland. Many on Maryland’s eastern shore freed slaves because retaining them did not make economic sense in a wheat

economy. The freedmen became wage laborers or small farm owners. Mechanizing harvest would further reduce labor costs associated with the crop and remove the dependency on wage laborers at harvest. In this context, the reaper becomes a powerful statement for free labor.²⁷

Intensive animal husbandry had a rhythm of work that family labor could best satisfy. Farm families produced their own labor supply to feed themselves. Parents and children tended stock that produced manure to fertilize fields in which they raised crops that fed the critters and the family, and thus sustained the cycle. Excess went to market, and the disposable income they received went back into the farming operation, sometimes increasing the acreage in cultivation, constructing new barns or sheds, or investing in better breeds of livestock. Intensive animal husbandry required industries to process the grain (grist mills) and stock (slaughter houses), skilled artisans (blacksmiths, wagon makers, wheelwrights) to construct tools and equipment, and an infrastructure of roads and markets (merchants as well as local, regional, and international trade networks) to distribute it.²⁸

Agriculture began in the new United States within the context of a debate over the best economic philosophy to adopt and promote. Thomas Jefferson's agrarian ideology emerged dominant. In short, agrarianism linked nation-building to the concept that the strongest nation depended on a population of independent morally upright land-owning farmers. Jefferson may be most often associated with the philosophy, but others shared his belief. Agrarianism affected land policy and agricultural policy over the decades. It ensured distribution of the nation's wealth, its land, to a privileged class of farmers at the expense of American Indian nations.²⁹

Land policy evolved from the 1785 Land Ordinance which authorized the survey of public lands, and sale of that land in 640 acres townships to those who could afford the purchase. Subsequent land-sale laws reduced the acreage required for purchase to 80 acres. Preemption Acts gave squatters the opportunity to purchase the land they had improved to secure their title to it. Bounty Warranty acts issued acreage to veterans of wars. Land grants to private railway companies created additional opportunities for settlers to secure land at reasonable rates, often \$1.25 per acre, with the stipulation that they had to improve the land. These measures ensured that the United States would gain revenue from its public lands as it facilitated settlement of land-owning farm families.³⁰

Farm families worked locally, raising crops and livestock, and worked regionally, marketed the commodities they grew. Numerous factors affected their way of doing business, including the physical demands of the job, the biological rhythms of livestock, and the seasonal rhythms of the climate. British common law gave men authority over property, and this translated into historical evidence privileging male perspectives over day-to-day operations. This resulted in a long-term focus of male responsibility on the farm. This does not take into account shared authority over agricultural processes on the farm. Women's history and gender studies indicate that male authority resulted from constructions of masculinity and perpetuation of male privilege as guaranteed by law but challenged in practice. Scholarship on women's and children's responsibilities on the farm can enrich interpretation.³¹ So can a growing body of literature on children on the farm.³²

Published memoirs make clear that many factors affected the family's ability to secure land and thrive on it. Those who farmed managed high-risk operations and they worked hard for little financial return.³³ Many factors undermined the model family farm including measures beyond the control of farm families, often summarized as the 3-Ms: middlemen, money, and markets. Lack of access to short term, low interest credit forced farmers to mortgage their land-holdings, and when market prices dropped, farmers often lost it all. To survive, they relied on laborers (including family members) to meet seasonal demands and complete daily chores. They formed social organizations that evolved into a formidable political movement -- the largest third-party movement in U.S. history -- and allied with labor unions in a cross-class challenge to corporate power. Their influence led to national regulatory legislation. Farm families that remained in the field measured their success by acreage secured, level of economic stability realized, and political power either through lobbyists or through the ballot that they wielded.³⁴

The myth of the family farm became as ingrained in the American psyche as its associated concept, the agrarian ideal. Families still own and operate and live on farms, but many have created corporations and trusts as business strategies to protect their land which amounts to their investment, their livelihood, and the basis for their way of life. Women, men, and children often work off the farm to diversify the income. Regardless, as long as family members operate the farm, they describe the farm as a family farm rather than a corporation.³⁵

Some farmers needed little acreage to make a living. Market gardens and truck farms near the cities operated fewer acres but did not need more acreage than they could manage to harvest when perishable vegetables and fruits ripened.³⁶

Farm life revolved around the farmhouse and barnyards. Studies of the buildings and landscapes, as planned, and as constructed, document the close relationships of people to their means of production.³⁷ Analysis of material evidence yields information about the ways that women in frontier Utah created quilt blocks as symbols of agricultural prosperity, and about the archaeological evidence of consumption in the post-bellum South.³⁸

Climatic patterns, soils, and topography combined to create the perfect conditions for raising field corn.³⁹ With the exception of years of extreme droughts or floods, the Corn Belt harvests grew exponentially during the twentieth century. The land became too valuable for stock, and as farmers mechanized and specialized in corn and soybeans, they confined their livestock to feedlots and transformed the hog-corn culture and the Corn Belt farmscape.⁴⁰

Climatic patterns created arid grasslands that sustained Plains Indians and their buffalo culture, and ranchers and their cow culture.⁴¹ Dryland farming suited the ecosystem, but irrigation and other technological changes have turned the grasslands into productive cropland. Extreme weather turned the expansive wheat fields of the Plains (from the southwest to the Canadian prairies into the Dust Bowl of the 1930s. Drought-resistant varieties, low-till or no-till cultivation, and irrigation systems sustain productive farmland, but the debate continues about the long-term environmental consequences and durability of the aquifer.⁴²

Management of livestock balanced stock used on the farm for draft and other farm work, and stock raised for market. Livestock breeding proved lucrative, and livestock breeders held influence in local economies. Some formed breeders' associations to increase their visibility and facilitate marketing of their prize stock.⁴³ Breeders produced purebred livestock for market, but also for farm use. Horses and mules proved particularly lucrative given the demand for horse-drawn conveyances in cities, and use of horse- and mule-drawn equipment in the countryside.⁴⁴ All livestock bound for market met the same fate – at the hands of a butcher in a local slaughterhouse or regional meat packing facility. Conditions in these facilities generated enough concern that government regulations required changes to meet consumer needs; laborers in the facilities remained at risk. Regulation affected farmers who raised hogs, milked cows, kept beef cattle and sheep.⁴⁵

Farm operators depended on agricultural laborers for short-term, long-hour tasks such as planting and harvest. Farm operators often retained hired help for routine tasks such as milking cows and other daily chores, but more consistent wage-paying jobs drew laborers from the countryside to industrial cities. In the Midwest, laborers left the farm for Chicago, and this made labor expensive and created an incentive for farmers to mechanize.⁴⁶ While wheat and other grains, and hay, proved relatively easy to mechanize, cotton and perishable crops such as fruits and vegetables did not lend themselves to mechanization.⁴⁷ Laborers in regions of intensive cotton cultivation, or in fruit and vegetable zones, remained essential to farmers' success. Farmers had leverage through their grower cooperatives and lobbying organizations. Laborers had no leverage at all. Technological changes displaced them, and they moved south to north and back again, planting or pruning and then harvesting fruits and vegetables as they ripened.⁴⁸

New Deal policy that expanded protection for industrial laborers, did not extend to agricultural laborers. Edward R. Murrow featured the plight of migrant laborers on the East Coast and Midwest in the 1960 broadcast, *Harvests of Shame*, aired the day after Thanksgiving. Laborers launched numerous protests and strikes over the years, and public policy responded by providing some public services such as camps for migrant laborers, but growers employing migrant laborers still did not have to provide minimum wage or overtime, nor did they have to allow laborers to organize. Why? Because urban consumers, the majority of the U.S. population, depended on farmers for fresh and processed foods, but they also demanded cheap food. Farmers, a tiny percentage of the U.S. population supplied the need, and they thus constituted a class of business owner that some have described as “too important to fail.” Today farm policy balances support for farmers as a class and the urban and suburban consumers that depend on them. The shift in policy, with consumers driving farm bills more than farmers, occurred by 1973.⁴⁹

Processed foods require transformation of the fresh crops cultivated and harvested into canned or frozen and marketed commodities sold to hungry customers. Histories of fruits, vegetables and other perishable crops, and the process by which they become frozen or concentrated or otherwise processed can inform exhibits about farming as well as agricultural industry and policy.⁵⁰

Farm families had to manage considerable change during the twentieth century as they adapted to technological changes. Overviews of change in twentieth century agriculture either decry the loss of farmers or emphasize the efficiency of the survivors. Other studies emphasize changes, particularly technological changes as farmers replaced horse-drawn equipment with tractors after World War I, and replaced their horses entirely after World War II. Studies address the changes that resulted from adoption of synthetic chemicals, cotton pickers, hay balers, and combines with interchangeable headers. Perishable vegetables and fruits remained dependent on migrant laborers, and farm laborers became more aware of their unfair treatment and consumers more aware of their plight.⁵¹

Policy changed radically as World War II production goals continued into the Cold War of the 1950s. Producer cooperatives remained powerful, and national policy aligned with farmer goals to produce “from fence-row to fence-row” as USDA officials framed it. Land-grant universities became the conduit through which farmers learned about agricultural policy and gained access to enroll in the programs.⁵²

Crop sciences kept up with the pace of change, researching new varieties. County agricultural extension service agents, or technical experts working for the farm bureau encouraged farmers to adopt the new varieties and the new equipment needed to cultivate them. Policies supported farm operators’ interests, but did not support the interests of laborers. Policies proved controversial because they favored large-scale producers, and left small operators without much of a safety net. The cultivation of southern staples, including cotton, rice, and tobacco changed significantly as a result of post-World-War-II policy.⁵³

As agricultural policy and labor relations changed, rural women had to sustain the farm home. They had to make decisions about whether or not to purchase new household technologies. Some worked on the farm, managing operations or working with other family members. Others took jobs off the farm. Members of the Iowa Porkettes even envisioned the “Pork: the Other White Meat” marketing campaign to sustain their family farm operations.⁵⁴

Alternative perspectives on farming take the most obvious form in the “back to nature” movements that have occurred cyclically during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Sometimes practical need dictated the retreat from urban environments to rural communities. Gardens provided food during times of economic depression. Sometimes idealistic goals and imagined purity of rural life beacons. This motivated many to join communes or invest in rural community development. Sometimes utopian ideals drove the decisions, as people created transcendentalist communities or psychedelic retreats.⁵⁵

The twenty-first century farmer bears little resemblance to the iconic independent yeoman of yore. Instead, farmers balance their responsibilities, partially protected as a class but also at great risk depending on the vagaries of weather and pestilence. On one hand large-scale operators oppose government regulation. On the other hand, the cooperatives that they join to gain leverage on policy and buy in bulk and sell commodities in quantity, enjoy freedom from some anti-trust legislation. On one hand, producers of perishable commodities have steep overhead and limited flexibility to harvest their

crops. On the other hand, these farmers do not have to comply with minimum wage, maximum hours, overtime compensation, or Social Security benefit legislation.

Scholarly presses public beautiful four-color paperback books about agricultural issues. This essay has focused on the work of historians. The most complete context for agriculture interpretation takes into account the work of geographers, sociologists, economist, anthropologists, and political scientists. Their work indicates the interest in the topics, and can provide evidence to rationalize and justify museum and historic site programming that takes into account agriculture yesterday and today.⁵⁶

Understanding the local requires well-developed understanding of the environment, the climate, the topography, the people, the animals, the crops, the diet, the faith, the ritual, the economy and the politics in the place. Learning about processes of agriculture is essential to understanding the rhythms and routines described in the original sources you will consult when you begin site-specific research.

NOTES

¹ Pamela Riney-Kehrberg, editor. *The Routledge History of Rural America* (New York: Routledge, 2016), quote 4; David Danbom, *Born in the Country: A History of Rural America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995; 2nd ed, 2006), quote x; Gary A. Goreham, ed. *The Encyclopedia of Rural America: The Land and People*. Vol. 1 A-L; Vol. 2 M-Z. 2nd ed. rev. (Grey House Publishing, Inc., 2008).

² R. Douglas Hurt, *American Agriculture: A Brief History* (Iowa State University Press, 1994; rev. ed., Indiana University, 2002), quote viii; John T. Schlebecker, *Whereby We Thrive: A History of American Farming, 1607-1972* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1975), quote ix and x.

³ Robert L. Ardrey, *American Agricultural Implements: A Review of Invention and Development in the Agricultural Implement Industry of the United States* (Chicago: R.L. Ardrey 1894), and L.H. Bailey, ed., *The Cyclopedia of American Agriculture: A Popular Survey of Agricultural Conditions, Practices, and Ideals in the United States and Canada* vol. 1 Farms, vol. 2 Crops, vol. 3 Animals, vol. 4 Farm and Community (New York: Macmillan, 1907-1909).

⁴ Sara E. Morris, "Sources for the Researcher," *Routledge History of Rural America*, 349-364. The Core Historical Literature of Agriculture (CHLA) contains 2,084 books and 36 journals (934 Volumes). See "About CHLA: Background of This Collection," CHLA (Ithaca, NY: Albert R. Mann Library, Cornell University). <http://chla.library.cornell.edu> (version January 2005). J. A. Venn, *The Foundations of Agricultural Economics: Together with an Economic History of British Agriculture during and after the Great War* (Cambridge University Press, 2015).

⁵ Home Economics Archive: Research, Tradition and History (HEARTH), (Ithaca, NY: Albert R. Mann Library, Cornell University) <http://hearth.library.cornell.edu> (Version January 2005). The collection contains 1180 books and 16 journals (440 volumes).

⁶ "Farm, Field and Fireside," available via the University of Illinois website: www.illinois.edu; then search for "Farm, Field and Fireside." Digitized collections include 12 newspapers published between the 1850s and the 1930s.

⁷ National Agricultural Library, <https://www.nal.usda.gov/>; Morris, 361.

⁸ Alan L. Olmstead, ed., "Agriculture," in Susan B. Carter, et al., *Historical Statistics of the United States: Earliest Times to the Present, Millennial Edition* (Cambridge University Press, vol. 4, 2006), pp. 7-273. Alan L. Olmstead and Paul W. Rhode, "Farms and Farm Structure," in Susan B. Carter, et al., *Historical Statistics of the United States: Earliest Times to the Present, Millennial Edition* (Cambridge University Press, vol. 4, 2006), pp. 10-15

and 39-88. Alan L. Olmstead and Paul W. Rhode, "Crops and Livestock," in Susan B. Carter, et al., *Historical Statistics of the United States: Earliest Times to the Present, Millennial Edition* (Cambridge University Press, vol. 4, 2006), pp. 15-19 and 89-191. Alan L. Olmstead and Daniel A. Sumner, "Farm Policy," in Susan B. Carter, et al., *Historical Statistics of the United States: Earliest Times to the Present, Millennial Edition* (Cambridge University Press, vol. 4, 2006), pp. 31-38.

⁹ K. Austin Kerr, Amos J. Loveday and Mansel G. Blackford. *Local Businesses: Exploring Their History*. Nearby History Series, American Association for State and Local History (AltaMira Press, 1990). David E. Kyvig and Myron A. Marty. *Nearby History: Exploring the Past around You*. Nearby History Series, American Association for State and Local History (1982; 2nd ed. AltaMira Press, 2010). Martin Bruegel, *Farm, Shop, Landing: the Rise of a Market Society in the Hudson River Valley, 1780-1860* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2002). Eric Mogren, *Native Soil: A History of the DeKalb County [Illinois] Farm Bureau* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2005). Shane Hamilton, *Trucking Country: The Road to America's Wal-Mart Economy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2008).

¹⁰ Many studies address white yeomen farmers, called rural plain folk in the southern context. Many address conditions of the enslaved, the newly freed, and sharecroppers and tenant farmers. For an indication of the potential of documenting understudied subjects, see Debra A. Reid and Evan P. Bennett, eds., *Beyond Forty Acres and a Mule: African American Landowning Families since Reconstruction* (University Press of Florida, 2012).

¹¹ Graeme Barker and Candice L. Goucher, *The Cambridge World History*, vol. 2, *A World with Agriculture, 12,000 BCE-500 CE* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015). Mark B. Tauger, *Agriculture in World History* (Taylor & Francis, 2010). Learning about other cultural practices can inform us about alternative methods of production, other government policies, and other applications of science, technology, and economic theories. See, for example, Francesca Bray, *Science and Civilization in China*. Vol. 6, Pt. 2 *Agriculture*. Edited by Joseph Needham (Cambridge University Press, 1984); Xu Guohua and L.J. Peel, *The Agriculture of China* (Oxford University Press, 1991); Christian A Daniels and Nicholas K. Menzies. *Science and Civilization in China*. Vol. 6, Pt. 3. *Agroindustries and Forestry*. Edited by Joseph Needham (Cambridge University Press, 1996); Ashok Gulati and Shenggen Fan, eds. *The Dragon and the Elephant: Agricultural and Rural Reforms in China and India* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007); and Mart A. Stewart and Peter A. Coclanis, eds. *Environmental Change and Agricultural Sustainability in the Mekong Delta* (New York: Springer-Verlag, 2011).

¹² Terry G. Jordan, *German Seed in Texas Soil: Immigrant Farmers in Nineteenth-Century Texas* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1966; reissued 1994); Terry G. Jordan with M. Kaups, *The American Backwoods Frontier: An Ethnic and Ecological Interpretation* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989); Jon Gjerde, *From Peasants to Farmers: The Migration from Balestrand, Norway, to the upper Middle West*. Cambridge University Press, 1985. Santosh C. Saha, *The History of Agriculture in Liberia 1822-1970: Transference of American Values*. Studies in African Economic and Social Development (Edwin Mellen Press, 1990).

¹³ Anthologies for European countries should be required reading for anyone interpreting a first-generation emigrant family. See, for example, Joan Thirsk, editor, *The Agrarian History of England and Wales* vol. 1 *Prehistory; A.D. 43-1042*; vol. 2 *1042-1350*; vol. 3 *1348-1500*; vol. 4 *1500-1640*; vol. 5 *1640-1750: Agrarian Change*; vol. 6 *1750-1850*; vol. 7 *1850-1914*; vol. 8 *1914-1939* (Cambridge University Press, 1967-2000); Alexander Fenton and Kenneth Veitch, editors, *Farming and the Land*. Vol. 2. *Scottish Life and Society: A Compendium of Scottish Ethnology* (Edinburgh: John Donald in association with The European Ethnological Research Center, 2011).

¹⁴ For information on the Comparative Rural History Network see <http://www.corn.ugent.be/>; for information on the European Rural History Organization see <http://www.ruralhistory.eu/>

¹⁵ Richard Judd, *Second Nature: An Environmental History of New England* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 2014). Jack Temple Kirby, *Mockingbird Song: Ecological Landscapes of the South* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Paul S. Sutter and Christopher J. Manganiello, eds., *Environmental History and the American South; A Reader* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009).

¹⁶ Clyde A. Milner II, Carol A. O'Connor, and Martha A. Sandweiss, eds., *The Oxford History of the American West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994). David J. Wishart, ed., *Encyclopedia of the Great Plains* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004). Burt Feintuch and David H. Watters, eds., *The Encyclopedia of New England: The Culture and History of an American Region* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2005). Richard Sisson, Christian Zacher, and Andrew Cayton, eds. *The American Midwest: An Interpretive Encyclopedia* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2006). James C. Cobb and Melissa Walker, *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*. Vol. 11: *Agriculture and Industry* (University of North Carolina Press, 2009). J.L. Anderson, editor, *The Rural Midwest since World War II* (DeKalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 2014). R. Douglas Hurt has edited several regional anthologies including *African American Life in the Rural South, 1900-1950* (Columbia: University of Missouri; reprint edition; 2011); *The Great Plains during World War II* (Bison Books, 2010); *The Rural West since World War II* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998); *The South since World War II* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1998);

¹⁷ Emmanuel Le Roy Ladurie, *Times of Feast, Times of Famine: A History of Climate since the Year 1000* (Allen and Unwin, 1973). M. M. Postan, *Essays on Medieval Agriculture and General Problems of the Medieval Economy* (Cambridge University Press, 2008).

¹⁸ "agriculture, n." and "agronomy, n.", Oxford English Dictionary.

¹⁹ Mauro Ambrosoli, *The Wild and the Sown: Botany and Agriculture in Western Europe, 1350–1850* (Cambridge University Press, 2009). R. Douglas Hurt, *Indian Agriculture in America: Prehistory to the Present* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1996). For information about differing perceptions of female and male roles, see William Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003); John Demos, *The Tried and the True: Native American Women Confronting Colonization* (New York and London: Oxford University Press, 1995) and Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region 1650-1815* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1991). White has also published studies that address Indian subsistence. See *Land Use, Environment, and Social Change: The Shaping of Island County* (Portland: University of Washington Press, 1979) and *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change Among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983). For Plains Indian cultural change, see Pekka Hämäläinen, *The Comanche Empire* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 2008). Close reading of classic studies about cultural conflict and construction of new identities yields fruitful information about environmental context and nuggets of information about agriculture. Historians may mention agriculture but not explore it in detail. This indicates the work that remains to be done.

²⁰ Immanuel Wallerstein, *The Modern World-System I: Capitalist Agriculture and the Origins of the European World-Economy in the Sixteenth Century*, Studies in Social Discontinuity (Academic Press, Inc., 1974). John H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492–1830* (New Haven, Conn., Yale University Press, 2006). Alfred Crosby, *The Colombian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Greenwood, 1972); Judith A. Carney and Richard Nicholas Rosomoff, *In the Shadow of Slavery: Africa's Botanical Legacy in the Atlantic World* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2011).

²¹ Lois Green Carr, Russell R. Menard, and Lorena S. Walsh, *Robert Cole's World: Agriculture and Society in Early Maryland* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1991). Allan Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680-1800* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina, 1986); for cotton and tobacco in cultural context, see Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan (eds.), *Cultivation and Culture: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993). S. Max Edelson, *Plantation Enterprise in Colonial South Carolina* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2006) and S. Max Edelson, "Beyond 'Black Rice': Reconstructing Material and Cultural Contexts for Early Plantation Agriculture," *The American Historical Review* 115, no. 1 (2010), 125-135. Carl J. Ekberg, *French Roots in the Illinois Country: The Mississippi Frontier in Colonial Times*. (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

²² Brian Donohue, *The Great Meadow: Farmers and the Land in Colonial Concord* (Yale University Press, 2004).

²³ See, for example, Cronon, *Changes in the Land*;

²⁴ Terry G. Jordan, *North American Cattle Ranching Frontiers: Origins, Diffusion, and Differentiation* (University of New Mexico, 1993); Terry G. Jordan, *Trails to Texas: Southern Roots of Western Cattle Ranching* (University of Nebraska Press, 1981).

²⁵ Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1998). John Thornton, *Africa and Africans in the Making of the Atlantic World, 1400-1800*, 2nd ed. (New York: Cambridge University Press; 1998); O.T. Faulkner and J.R. Mackie, *West African Agriculture* (Cambridge University Press, 2013); Robin Law, Suzanne Schwarz, and Silke Strickrodt, eds., *Commercial Agriculture, the Slave Trade & Slavery in Atlantic Africa*. Western Africa Series (James Curry, 2013). Santosh C. Saha, *A History of Agriculture in West Africa: A Guide to Information Sources*. Studies in African Economic and Social Development (Edwin Mellen Press, 1990).

²⁶ Ira Berlin and Philip D. Morgan (eds.), *Cultivation and Culture: Labor and the Shaping of Slave Life in the Americas* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1993); Philip D. Morgan, *Slave Counterpoint: Black Culture in the Eighteenth Century Chesapeake and Lowcountry* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998). Martha B. Katz-Hyman and Kym S. Rice, eds. *World of a Slave: Encyclopedia of the Material Life of Slaves in the United States*. Vol. 1: A-I; Vol. 2: J-Z (Greenwood, 2011).

²⁷ T.H. Breen, *Tobacco Culture: The Mentality of the Great Tidewater Planters on the Eve of Revolution* (1985); Carville Earle, *Geographical Inquiry and American Historical Problems* (Stanford, Cal.: Stanford University Press, 1992); Debra A. Reid, "Wheat," in Katz-Hyman and Rice, eds. *World of a Slave*, 526-532. David Klingaman, "The Significance of Grain in the Development of the Tobacco Colonies," *Journal of Economic History* 29, no. 2 (1969), 268-278.

²⁸ Apply historical thinking skills when reading classic studies so you identify the ways that understanding of rural and farm society and culture has changed over time. The following list, in chronological order, includes classic studies of antebellum agriculture in northern, southern, and Midwestern regions: Percy Wells Bidwell and John I. Falconer, *History of Agriculture in the Northern United States, 1620-1860* (Carnegie Institution of Washington, 1925; 1941); Lewis Cecil Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860*, 2 vols. (Carnegie Institution of Washington 1933, reprinted Peter Smith, 1958); Paul Wallace Gates, *The Farmer's Age: Agriculture, 1815-1860*. Economic History of the United States, Vol. 3. (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1960); Clarence S. Danhof, *Changes in Agriculture: The Northern United States, 1820-1870* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1969); Allan G. Bogue, *From Prairie to Corn Belt: Farming on the Illinois and Iowa Prairies in the Nineteenth Century* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1963; reprint, Iowa State University Press, 1994); Sam Hillard, *Hog Meat and Hoe Cake: Food Supply in the Old South* (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1972); Howard S. Russell *A Long Deep Furrow: Three Centuries of Farming in New England* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1976; abridged edition, 1981); Joan, M. Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women 1750-1850* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press. 1986); Jeremy Atack and Fred Bateman. *To Their Own Soil: Agriculture in the Antebellum North* (Ames: Iowa State University Press, 1987).

²⁹ David A. Chang, *The Color of the Land: Race, Nation, and the Politics of Landownership in Oklahoma, 1832-1929* (University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

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³¹ Allan G. Johnson, *The Gender Knot: Unraveling Our Patriarchal Legacy*, 3rd ed. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2014). Michael S. Kimmel, "Masculinity as Homophobia: Fear, Shame, and Silence in the Construction of Gender Identity," in *Theorizing Masculinities*, edited by Harry Brod and Michel Kaufman (Sage Publications, 1994), 119-141. Colin R. Johnson, *Just Queer Folks: Gender and Sexuality in Rural America* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2013). Jennifer L. Morgan. *Laboring Women: Reproduction and Gender in New World Slavery* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2004). Ruth Moynihan, Susan Armitage, and

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³⁴ Theodore Saloutos, *Farmer Movements in the South: 1865-1933* (University of Nebraska Press, 1960). Luther Tweeten, *Terrorism, Radicalism, and Populism in Agriculture* (Ames: Iowa State Press, 2003). Charles Postel, *The Populist Vision* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007). Numerous memoirs exist. See, for example, Rebecca Burlend, *A True Picture of Emigration* (Chicago: Lakeside Press, 1936) available at <https://archive.org/details/truepictureofemi00burle> (accessed 1 January 2016).

³⁵ Sonja Salamon, *Prairie Patrimony: Family, Farming and Community in the Midwest* (University of North Carolina Press, 1995). Mary C. Neth, *Preserving the Family Farm: Women, Community, and the Foundations of Agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900-1940* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998). Carrie A. Meyer, *Days on the Family Farm; From the Golden Age through the Great Depression* (University of Minnesota Press, 2007). Jenny Barker-Devine, *On Behalf of the Family Farm* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2013).

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⁴² Richard Manning, *Grassland: The History, Biology, Politics, and Promise of the American Prairie* (Viking Penguin, 1995). Donald Worster, *Rivers of Empire: Water, Aridity and the Growth of the American West* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985). Pamela Riney Kehrberg, *Rooted in Dust: Surviving Drought and Depression in Southwestern Kansas* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994). Geoff Cunfer, *On the Great Plains: Agriculture and Environment* (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 2005). Thomas R. Cox, *The Lumberman's Frontier: Three Centuries of Land Use, Society, and Change in America's Forests* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 2010).

⁴³ Margaret E. Derry, *Bred to Perfection: Shorthorn Cattle, Collies, and Arabian Horses Since 1800* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003).

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