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### Russell Lord and the Permanent Agriculture Movement: An Environmental Biography

Margaret L. Eppig

*Antioch University, New England*

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**Russell Lord and the Permanent Agriculture Movement:  
An Environmental Biography**

By  
Margaret L. Eppig

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Environmental Studies  
Antioch University New England

Committee:  
Alesia Maltz, Ph.D (Chair)  
Rachel Thiet, Ph.D  
Allen Dietrich-Ward, Ph.D

2017

## **Dedication**

Dedicated to my family on the land in Maryland, Delaware, Pennsylvania, Vermont, and New Hampshire. Your good work and stewardship inspired me to take a closer look at why we love our land and why, perhaps, it may love us back.

## Acknowledgments

This work would not have been possible without the commitment and assistance of numerous historical societies and archives. The Historical Society of Harford County, Bel Air, Maryland served as my research home, and I thank Maryanna Skowronski, executive direction, most sincerely for her friendship, years of encouragement, generous access and ready assistance. Thanks to the volunteers at the Baltimore County Historical Society my research table was always loaded with files on the Sparks High School, county 4H history, farm clubs, and news items from the farm papers. This research took me beyond archives close to home, to explore the places where Russell Lord and members of the Society of the Friends of the Land farmed, traveled, and worked to inspire a holistic restoration of America's degraded agricultural landscapes of the 1930s and 40s. I especially thank the staff of Malabar Farm State Park, former home and farm of Louis Bromfield, and the Ohio History Connection in Columbus, for several weeks of access to the living landscapes and archival resources of the Friends of the Land in Ohio. I traveled across fifteen states to explore landscapes that less than a century ago were so severely degraded that it seemed all had been sacrificed to the boom and bust of the war economies of World War I and the floods and droughts that followed. This effort involved visiting over twenty national and state parks, former working lands given to conservation for repair and rest. I thank my hiking partners, park staffs, librarians, soil conservation district members, farmers, and fellow historians for their enthusiasm and companionship in the field. Thanks to Curt Meine, Leopold biographer and scholar, for our friendly and informal conversations at conferences and through emails. He helped me to understand just how cutting edge *The Land* journal had been for its time and he taught me to gain perspective through the lived experiences of Russell Lord and Society members who were witness to and participants in one of our nation's greatest modern environmental challenges. I thank Dr. Alesia Maltz, my Antioch University New England advisor and committee chair, who with utmost patience and good humor, kept me upright and facing forward over the years it took to complete this work. I cannot imagine having accomplished this much without her steady encouragement. Dr. Maltz along with my committee members, Dr. Rachel Thiet of Antioch and Dr. Allen Dietrich-Ward of Shippensburg University, provided not only scholarly and professional support but friendship as well. My sister, Laura Smith Weldon, an excellent American history scholar in her own right, offered to help proof and improve this work for its final draft. Finally, I wish to recognize Mary Umbarger Corddry, who now in her nineties, continues to advocate for the principles of land care and stewardship that the Friends of the Land instilled in the minds of American land owners and farmers when she took her first job, fresh out of Hood College, with Russell Lord. The exciting days of working as his assistant then as co-editor helped her to build a respected and long career in environmental journalism for the Baltimore Sun.



## **Abstract**

This work is an environmental biography of agricultural journalist Russell Lord and a history of the agricultural conservation organization he co-founded. Today the work of the Society for the Friends of the Land (1940 – 1960) is little known to contemporary agricultural and environmental history, yet its influence continues through the fields of sustainable agriculture and landscape restoration. This work chronicles how modern revolutions in scientific and ecological thought transformed the future of American agriculture. It formed the cornerstone of an emerging environmental movement. I argue that this movement, with Lord as its literary vanguard, was the lynchpin that bound together a diverse set of conservation philosophies that transformed working landscapes and their farming communities damaged and almost lost to the physical and economic degradations of American war economies. I introduce the concept of sacrificial landscapes to describe the socio-ecological pressures and biological loss that working lands endured during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This is important to the narrative of the origins and history of the Friends of the Land and demonstrates how ideas of interdependence and agricultural ecology were translated into workable conservation solutions.

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## Introduction

I have sought not so much to report technical advancements as to suggest the human result. The people are not only changing their methods, they are changing their minds.

Russell Lord, *Men of the Earth*, 1931

Russell Lord (1895-1964), agricultural writer and editor of the agricultural literary journal *The Land* (1941-1954), helped shape and disseminate ideas of an ecologically responsible branch of American agriculture during the tumultuous mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. Co-founder of the conservation organization Society of the Friends of the Land, Lord served as a key thought leader of the permanent agriculture movement. His work conveys the importance of socio-ecological ideas of holism, interdependence, and engaged stewardship during a time of environmental and economic crisis. His emphasis on working lands conservation prepared the ground for America's environmental and sustainable agriculture movement, and he elevated the status of ecologically-minded farmers as America's most important stewards of land.

Considered one of the most influential American agricultural writers of his time, *The Baltimore Sun* proclaimed him to be "the country's foremost farm writer" during the New Deal years. Henry A. Wallace, Secretary of Agriculture under F.D.R., acknowledged his "grace of style" and "depth of feeling" and described him as a literary artist who was also an agricultural philosopher and historian."<sup>1</sup> Lord is barely known today, however, and his work was nearly lost to obscurity. This is unfortunate, if not inexcusable, considering our robust 20<sup>th</sup> century agricultural history field. The main goal of this work, therefore, is to shine new light on Russell Lord's life, times, and work as it embodies the history of the permanent agriculture movement and its legacy.

Why, then, the obscurity? I argue that the permanent agriculture movement is misunderstood within the context of agricultural history and may not have received the scholarly attention it deserves. Given its association with earlier back-to-the-land and country life movements, critics could be justified in framing permanent agriculture within the context of early 20<sup>th</sup> century reformism and counter-culturalism. But the mid-century work of permanent agriculture leaders, including Russell Lord, is often misread as nostalgic and utopian. It is easy to dismiss as quaint or romantic. These criticisms, however, are unfair and beg a closer look.

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<sup>1</sup> Chrismer (2007) adds that in addition to *The Baltimore Sun* and the USDA, *The Saturday Review of Literature* described Lord as "America's premier writer on agriculture," pg. 3; A complete bound collection of *The Land* can be found at the Historical Society of Harford County, Bel Air. This archive served as the foundation for this research. See also Beeman and Pritchard (2001), pp. 67-68.



Pritchard and Beeman (2001) and Sutton (2015) begin to shed new light by acknowledging Lord and the permanent agriculture movement as a small but influential group of notable writers, scientists, and government officials who maintained a vibrant campaign of agricultural reform centered upon socio-environmental concerns decades in the making. They are rightfully recognized for challenging ideas of American agricultural progress to consider restraint and stewardship as hallmarks of sustainable and profitable farming. Sutton's environmental history of Providence Canyon gives Lord his proper due as journalist-turned-advocate. He credits Lord as a catalyst for action, who made permanent agriculture "a rallying cry" for conservation efforts in the Deep South and Midlands in the 1930s. Both Beeman and Sutton suggest that permanent agriculture was made irrelevant by a suite of new social and environmental concerns that blossomed as civil rights and rural depopulation. Although many permanent agriculture writers remained popular and widely read after mid-century, "an ecological ethic," holism, and other ideas generated by Aldo Leopold, Paul Sears, Hugh H. Bennett, and Russell Lord drifted out of favor for the institutional and commercial audience. This is an accurate assessment, yet there are significant gaps in the history of the movement that must be examined in a different light.<sup>2</sup>

In this work, I realign the permanent agricultural movement within the context of environmental history where a much more robust and complex narrative emerges. Here the ideas and practices of permanent agriculture can be observed against the backdrop of shifting environmental values at a time when the effects of war economies on America's domestic landscapes and massive waste of irreplaceable natural resources were first considered an environmental crisis. Sutton demonstrates such a realignment with an excellent examination of controversial agricultural arguments rooted in a late 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup> century debate between agronomists Milton Whitney and F.H. King. Taken as agricultural history the debate-turned-feud between these two influential soil scientists over the causes of soil exhaustion is an interesting side-story of rivals and competing ideas, but shift the analysis to the framework of environmental history and new contextual ground appears. King's ideas, embedded in experience and knowledge of ancient agricultural civilizations and the topographies and cultures of China and the Far East, would find resonance with soil and natural resource conservation thinkers and planners in America during the interwar years. King's ideas of sustainable land use formed "an ideal of permanent agriculture that would later assume a central place" to transform environmental thought and cemented conservation commitments to restoring degraded American working landscapes.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Pritchard and Beeman, *A Green and Permanent Land, Ecology and Agriculture in the 20th Century* (2001), is based upon Beeman's 1995 doctoral dissertation "A Green and Permanent Land: Agriculture in the Age of Ecology, 1935-1985." This work sets the contextual stage for interwar and postwar years to include Beeman's historical assessment of the permanent agriculture movement, *The Land* and *Friends of the Land*, and lightly touches upon Russell Lord. Sutton, (2015) constructs a biography of a landscape, the Providence Canyon erosional complex of Stewart County, Georgia, given celebrity by permanent agriculture promoters. See "Giving Fame and Focus to the Fact of Soil Erosion," pp. 83 – 108.

<sup>3</sup> Sutton (2015), pp. 43-46.

Like King, Lord's relationship to working lands and farmers was formed from experience and deep knowledge. His arguments for rigorous conservation commitments to American agriculture were strengthened through his passion for projecting the big picture over the long term. The permanent agriculture movement as seen through the life and work of one of its most important advocates, then by necessity becomes, biographical. It is important to remember, however, that as biography, we rely solely on Lord's life and experiences to form this singular perspective and that it means sacrificing time and space for other advocate's work and life stories. I promise to delve deeper in the future into the lives of permanent agriculturalist and poet Ben Smith and peace activist and farmer P. Alton Waring.

Environmental biography dispels mythologies and characterizations by revealing often hidden social or political contexts that underlie personal histories. Environmental biography confronts the broader influences and intimate events that shaped Lord's life and changed his mind, and softened or hardened his heart. I dismiss criticisms of the permanent agriculture movement as nostalgic or utopian by paying close attention to how Lord approached and responded to social, environmental, and technological change. He assailed policies and institutions he thought to be deeply flawed. He challenged boosterism and the agricultural establishment because he experienced the disconnect between what was happening on the land and in the lobbyists rooms in Washington. But all was not doom and gloom. A close reading of his love of poetry and rural prose reveals his hopefulness and belief in society's ability to fix what it had broken, to heal, if possible the land on which real people, not policies or promotions, lived and worked.

At mid-century, the young permanent agriculture movement embodied a blend of earlier social reform layered with new approaches to the sciences of ecology and economics. It is important to remember that Lord was not only a co-founder of the Friends of the Land, the organization that promoted the ideas of permanent agricultural philosophy and practices, but he was also its keeper. I had to understand that this was Lord's primary concern, and that through the organization's journal, *The Land*, Lord upheld his most important commitment. Lord was immersed in an atmosphere of positivity and ambition as the journal's editor. He brought to each issue an affirmation of his own belief of an encompassing theory of holism as well as testimony to pragmatism. While I reviewed each issue and every article published in *The Land*, over its fifteen-year run, I became more convinced that the materials, ideas, and motivations of Lord and his contributors could not be mistaken for promoting nostalgia or utopianism. Lord and his movement offered "hope as a force to drive change." This is a new angle on the environmental scholarship surrounding the Dust Bowl and Great Depression Era by providing an alternative to the more prevalent purview of crisis and declension that pervades this period.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>Adock, "Hope and Environmental History" (2017), refers to a series of roundtable discussions regarding the power of hope in environmental history to force change and override the field's tendencies towards declension. Retrieved online: Network in Canadian History and Environment (NiCHE) <http://niche-canada.org/2017/06/05/hope-and-environmental-history-an-introduction/> ; Cronon, "The Uses of Environmental History," (1993) challenges environmental historians to forego declension and seek histories of solutions and hope instead, pp. 1-22.

An important aspect of this biography is to acknowledge that Lord believed that man could not be removed from nature, that environment was a shaper of and shaped by those who worked the land. Worster argues for this very perspective as we detangle man's relationship to nature, that the natural resources on which people depend are intertwined with the development of human culture, not simply a backdrop "against which the affairs of humans are played out."<sup>5</sup> For the purposes of this environmental biography, Worster's definition is altered slightly to reflect "the role and place of nature in [a] human life." It is an essential framework that considers the role that nature, land, and agriculture served in shaping the life and worldview of one man who influenced tens of thousands in turn. The methods of environmental biography offer a way to interpret the complex interplay of environment and the man, and create a dual examination of environmental factors that shaped Lord's worldview and work.<sup>6</sup>

From his vantage point as observer and chronicler of unfolding crisis, Lord deconstructed in his writing the mindset of land as commodity and promoted instead land as a living and life-giving system. By mid-century, ecological thinking was no longer new to the American farmer, and many viewed land care as essential to the social and economic health of the farm. Letters to the editor and reviews of books by farmers featured in *The Land* during the 1940s bear this out. But significant obstacles existed that prevented Lord and the movement from achieving their goals with the greater agricultural community. Chief among these was a persistent tenant system of the South and shifting political currents regarding Cold War ideologies pitted against the ideals of interdependence and holism. Add to these, the problem of a lack of definition of the movement itself and perennial problems with funding and paying membership. What Lord continues to promote, fervently, hopefully, testifies to his reputation for speaking to those principles of long-term thinking, and as we would say to day – sustainability. The legacy of Lord's commitment to healthy relationship to our working lands is with us today as sustainable agriculture, agroecology, and the shape democracy takes in our rural townships.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Mosely, *After Seven Years* (1939), argued for man and nature to be taken as an intertwined whole. He witnessed the environmental crisis of the interwar years, much as Lord did and served on FDR's advisory Brain Trust, pg. 916.

<sup>6</sup> Holmes, *The Young John Muir: An Environmental Biography* (1999), an embodiment of the founding of the modern environmental movement through an examination of Muir's formative years in childhood "wildness," religious influences, ecstatic experiences, and the inner life of his youth using an ecopsychological framework, pg. 3 and pp. 265 - 287; Merchant, *American Environmental History* (2007), describes biography as one of a set of approaches to environmental history and offers a bibliography to include referential examples of environmental biographies in "Anthologies and Bibliographies," pp. 345-356.

<sup>7</sup> Corddry, *Russell and Kate Lord* (2007), pg. 52, and in personal conversations regarding the obstacles and legacy of *The Land*, suggests that fiscal difficulties were always looming. As I examined the accounting books and varying (often failed) membership drives and special offers it was clear to me that the executive committee struggled to pay Lord and to provide him with a small honorarium budget for contributors, Friends of the Land archives, in collection at State Archives, Ohio History Connect, Columbus, Ohio.

Gaddis is helpful in constructing the measure of Lord's commitment to communicating the principles of permanent agriculture during the troublesome time of the early Cold War by suggesting a set of biographical waymarks that helped me determine how and why Lord stood out from hundreds of other well-known farm journalists of his time. Moments of dependent sensitivity, "windows of opportunity" that create conditions for an individual to influence others are frequent in these difficult times. Lord's windows of opportunity came quickly and often as the permanent agriculture movement was challenged and ultimately silenced by Cold War revolutions in agricultural science, ecology, and consumerism. He demonstrates consistency of character, patterns of behavior, and responses that "[cause] a person to deal with dissimilar circumstances in similar ways" and that leave "the right things behind."<sup>8</sup>

Despite his dedication to the movement he helped to establish, Lord was forced to re-examination long-held beliefs. Lord, and other thought leaders of permanent agriculture, were literary and scientific figures whose strength rested on ideas of ecological balance and the predictability of restorative succession in conservation. These strengths were severely tested at the height of the Cold War. How and why Lord responded to the threats of consumerism, materialism, and nuclear war are examined in the last chapter of this research and it is here that I began to understand the conditions that bring to bear the possibilities of obscurity. Understanding how the standards of significance in agricultural thinking changed during the Cold War is an important contribution to agricultural history as well as to the history of the environmental movement. Lord's belief that man is a critical component of the landscape nearly collapsed as environmental thinkers challenged us to consider that nature minus man would be the most expedient path to restoration. His response was his last work, *The Care of the Earth* (1962) was, I believe, memorial to the permanent agriculture movement and a way of thinking about people and relationship to land. It seemed a dignified way of handing off his responsibilities to an unknown generation, future vanguards of sustainability. Gaddis suggests that historians "liberate their subjects from the prospect of being forgotten," and I argue that Lord's final book was created as a lifeline to future researchers, farmers, and historians who might discover a history of how the ideas and practice of permanent agriculture came to be.<sup>9</sup>

I subscribed to Mark Hersey's technique of constructing environmental biography as intertwined social and individual memory. Lord's personal legacy and the legacy of the

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<sup>8</sup> Gaddis, *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past* (2002), in "Molecules of the Mind," identifies sensitive dependence, character, reputation, and the artifacts or legacies of the individual as markers for what makes him stand out from a history "full of people who seemed unimportant," pp. 119 – 121; Barbour, "Ecological Fragmentation in the Fifties" (1995), notes that transitions in ecological thinking marked "a revolution" in ecological sciences, based upon a post-war fundamental shifts from the understanding holistic plant community-succession theories of Frederic Clements (1874-1945) towards reductionist individualistic-competition theories of Henry Allen Gleason (1882 – 1975). These shifts had dire consequences for those adhered to the ideals of interdependency, nature-in-balance, and permanency, pg. 234.

<sup>9</sup> Lord, *The Care of the Earth* (1962) forms the foundation of the final chapter of this dissertation and is, I believe, Lord's relinquishing of his duties as keeper of the ideas promoted by permanent agriculture; Gaddis, (2002) pp. 138 – 139.

permanent agriculture movement are entwined and embedded in the combined struggle for legitimacy and acceptance in a world rushing headlong into industrialism and militarism. Though elements of the Friends of the Land and its most prominent members and proponent survived into the 1980s, Lord's passing in 1964 signaled the end of an era. As one "possessed [by] a strong continuity of purpose to reconcile the ways of Man to Nature and make this a green and permanent land," the movement faded with his death.<sup>10</sup>

As will be discussed at the end of this work, there are direct descendants of the permanent land movement. The Land Institute in Kansas and the Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture in Iowa are two examples of organizations that bear the conservation commitments of the Friends of the Land, but there are disciplinary heirs as well, rooted in the emerging fields of agroecology and agroforestry. Lord's living legacy of words and ideas revived in this environmental biography serves as an enduring narrative that affirms important foundational cornerstones in 20<sup>th</sup> century American conservation and environmental history that I hope inspires further research.

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<sup>10</sup> Hersey, *My Work is That of Conservation: An Environmental Biography of George Washington Carver* (2011), demonstrates a combined personal and social history in the environmental biography; Rexford Tugwell's keynote speech at the Washington D.C. opening meeting of Friends of the Land in "Proceedings." *The Land* (Winter 1945) and Lord's *Forever the Land*, pp. 1-10.

# **Chapter One:**

## **The Education of an Agriculturalist**

### **1895-1912**

#### **Introduction**

The progressive political and social landscapes of the early 1900s are vitally important to the story of Russell Lord. He was immersed in the spirit of rural reform immediately upon his arriving in the Worthington Valley from Baltimore City, moved to the countryside by his father who was absorbed in the romance of farming and the back-to-the-land initiative. He was a young man without an agricultural upbringing who learned a new way of life in the countryside with a spirit of adventure and opportunity. This was Russell Lord's coming of age at a time when rural reformers believed that it was beyond the congestion and corruption of the urban industrial environment that hope for pure democracy and a revitalized American identity could be nurtured. Enrolled in the first class of the first agricultural high school in the nation, his impressions of and proximity to multiple perspectives and practices in farming would shape his thinking about the development of a new and permanent agriculture in America. In this chapter I lay the philosophical ground in which Lord developed his life-long love for the American farmer and fostered a robust commitment to conservation and stewardship of working landscapes.

Integral to the contextual landscape of Lord's early years is an understanding of the Country Life movement under the leadership Liberty Hyde Bailey who developed, designed, and implemented the movement's central education commitments to rural reform. Bailey's work in agriculture education was framed by pragmatic progressivism that embraced the teaching of scientific principles through experiential methods, while infusing student learning with civic pride and duty. Lord was among the first high school students to experience Bailey's ambitious commitment to agriculture and rural life through the intensive programs offered at the new agricultural school in Sparks, Maryland. Through an ambitious young Cornell extension educator, Bertrand H. Crocheron, hand-picked by Bailey to lead the school, Lord was shaped by the program enriched by integrative arts, agricultural and mechanical sciences, nature study, and journalism.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Bowers, *The Country Life Movement in America 1900-1920* (1974), describes themes and values of the country life movement as reformatory, agrarian, tinged with utopianism, pp. 15-29; Major, "Other Kinds of Violence: Wendell Berry, Industrialism, and Agrarian Pacifism" (2013), compares modern agrarian thinking with neo-agrarian ideals of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and emphasizes the struggle of nostalgic values versus movement politics as inconsistent, pp. 32-33; Minter, *The Landscape of Reform: Civic Pragmatism and Environmental Thought in America* (2006), describes the personal and professional dimensions of the country life movement through

In Lord's development as a thought leader in the permanent agriculture movement of the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century was his relationship as a student to the national trend in agricultural education reform under Bailey. Russell Lord's first-hand experiences and thoughtful recollections of his time at AHS in Baltimore County 1909 – 1912 serves as an invitation to readers to rethink some of the assumptions that today's sustainable agriculture was an outgrowth of the modern environmental movement of the 1970s. I suggest that the rural reform movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, with Liberty Hyde Bailey's commitments to agricultural education reform at its center, served as an important foundation for the rise of environmental thought and ecological agriculture that followed.<sup>12</sup>

With this environmental biography of Russell Lord, especially within this first chapter, I establish an historic and traceable legacy of ideas through the social movements in anti-urbanism, conservation, agrarianism, and rural revitalization that framed Lord's early experiences. These were the ideas that he would carry forward to influence the new movement in permanent agriculture arising in the 1920s. In a larger framework of conservation and agricultural ideas, Lord as chronicler serves as an integrator and narrator of this legacy and gives voice to dynamic agricultural thoughts and ideas developed in response to rapidly transforming and modernizing American agriculture. Lord serves as an important lynchpin to connect the country life movement and its emphasis on agricultural reform of the early 1900s to the sustainable agriculture movement of the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

## **Back To the Land**

Henry Murdoch Lord, investment banker and gentleman farmer found 'a way out' to escape the stress and strain of city life and removed his family to the small farm *Iona* in rural Baltimore County to explore a lifestyle of self-sufficiency and simple living.<sup>13</sup> The Lords were part of the back-to-the-land movement which romanticized life in the country. The family believed a return to simpler, more deliberate living as a way to counter hectic urban cog-in-the-wheel existences that taxed physical and mental health. Educated, well-read, and loyal followers

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Liberty Hyde Bailey, who as the leader of rural education reform, laid philosophical ground for contemporary ideas of ecological stewardship of working lands and environmental ethics, pp. 44-48.

<sup>12</sup> Harwood, "A History of Sustainable Agriculture" (1990), places the rise of sustainable agriculture squarely within the field of environmentalism of the 1960s-70s. This is not a unique claim by any means, as there is an abundance of popular and academic literature that does the same, seemingly ignorant of a long and forgotten legacy in sustainable thought and practice in agriculture that reaches well into the nineteenth century.

<sup>13</sup> Brown, *Back to the Land: The Enduring Dream of Self-Sufficiency in Modern America* (2011), explains that the back-to-the-land urbanites of the early 1900s certainly thought of themselves as escaping the evils of city life to find contentment and self-sufficiency in the rural landscape. "...as 'one way out', they arrived at it through a bewildering array of political and social routes, from the center of contemporary American discourse all the way out to its radical fringes," pg. 30.

of a popular literature that capitalized on their desires to reclaim a perceived loss of independence and self-sufficiency, these back-to-the-landers attempted to connect with rural values that echoed a treasured Jeffersonian philosophy of the yeoman farmer:

Cultivators of the earth are the most valuable citizens. They are the most vigorous, the most independent, the most virtuous, and they are tied to their country and wedded to its liberty and interests by the most lasting bonds. — Thomas Jefferson <sup>14</sup>

“Romantic” about farming, Henry Lord had come through the nation’s two most severe economic downturns to date, battered and exhausted, ready to act on his dream of escaping to the country. “My father grew so tired of the stockbroker’s business in Baltimore and of life in one of Baltimore’s restricted suburbs that he bought a farm.” <sup>15</sup> Such a radical act was the dream of many upper middle class financial workers during these tumultuous economic times. The Panic of 1893, compounded by years of economic depression and the hard-hitting follow-up Panic of 1907 was for America’s banking sectors, nerve-wracking and traumatic. Returning home late in the evening from long days in the anxious Baltimore offices of his employer, a New York-based investment firm, he would turn to popular magazines and books that offered him a sense of contentment, education, and escape.

Popular back-to-the-land titles of the late 1890s and early 1900s included *Ten Acres Enough* (1864) by Edmund Morris, the book that served as a model for generations of back-to-the-land writers yet to come. Loosely based on his own experiences, Morris tells the story of a young capitalist who barely survives the withering economic collapse of 1837 only to face an even harsher downturn in 1857. Written as a practical guide for self-taught farmers, Morris encouraged his readers to consider the economic and health benefits of small scale farming, of “a moderate income, so that it be a sure one.” Lord would likely also have read Donald Grant Mitchell’s *My Farm at Edgewood* (1863), less a practical manual and more a collection of country life stories enjoyed by genteel gentleman farmers. But it was Philip G. Hubert’s *Liberty and A Living* (1889), a book that unleashed a torrent of similarly themed publications following the Panic of 1893 that asked his readers directly “Why is it not possible for a healthy man to make bread and butter for his little ones without chaining himself down to a life of drudgery?” The flood of popular titles that followed *Liberty and A Living* were mostly by authors who may have experienced, but most likely invented, a hundred different variations on Hubert’s theme of some urban catastrophe of health, wealth, or morals that could only be healed by escaping to the honest lifestyle of the countryside. Additionally, most popular subscription magazines of the day including *Country Gentleman*, *American Magazine*, *Craftsman*, *Atlantic Monthly*, *Saturday*

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<sup>14</sup> Kelsey, “The Agrarian Myth and Policy Responses to Farm Safety” (1994), argues that the oft quoted words of Thomas Jefferson do modern farmers no favors in the formation of poor policy that have resulted in tenancy and dependence on government programs, pp. 1171 – 1177. It is interesting to note that sustainable agricultural organizations today continue to promote this vein of Jeffersonian thinking. For example, see ATTRA (USDA Rural Cooperative Service) promotional film retrieved on Sept. 8, 2014 at: <https://attra.ncat.org/index.php>

<sup>15</sup> Lord, “Christmas in the Country: A Memoir” (1950), in: *Forever the Land: A Country Chronicle and Anthology*, pg. 173.



*Evening Post*, and *Farm and Fireside* carried serials and features on the same theme: the failure of urban living and life's redemption in the country. Brown (2011) suggests that by the beginning of the 20th century the genre had become exceedingly profitable for publishing houses. Though most readers were not in an economic position to do so, the allure of moving to the country provided at the very least a wishful escape from the stresses of suburban and city life. But for some like Henry Lord, who had the economic means to make the dream a reality, moving away from the confines and insecurity of city life was what was best for his growing family.<sup>16</sup>

Influenced and inspired by the dream of getting out, Henry plotted and planned, researched and studied the market for the right opportunity to find a little land and house in the country. Finding and purchasing an abandoned, overgrown fifty-eight-acre farm north of the city, he announced the impending move to his family. "Out to that part of middle Maryland to which we were headed, electric lights, my father said, hadn't even been heard of. He spoke of enthusiasm of oil lights and of the possibility, even, of making one's own candles. My mother shuddered." Despite the uncertainties of the stock market and the crowdedness of suburban Baltimore the isolation, lack of modern amenities, and loss of her social and family network worried Engalina Lord, who viewed the move as both a nostalgic venture and an economic experiment. Still, "with earth in his veins," Henry Lord moved the family to Iona in 1907 at the height of the second market panic.<sup>17</sup>

Henry set about learning his way forward in small scale livestock and hay production, while restoring and beautifying the tired but sufficiently, for Lena, elegant farmhouse. The work was hard and the hours long, requiring all of the family to pitch in. Their agricultural endeavor included a few beef cattle, a milk cow, swine, poultry, and a large kitchen garden. Sam, the hired man who had worked for the previous occupants, tutored Henry in the art of rural trading, buying, and selling, a far different prospect than trading in Baltimore's investment houses.<sup>18</sup>

Russell, somewhat 'allergic' to the hard work of farming, seemed more interested in horses, reading, writing, and listening to the stories and language of the valley residents. Much of his early days at *Iona* were spent exploring fields, forests, and streams astride his Chincoteague pony. His Dutch-born mother, who had always cultivated in her children a love of literature and good writing, seemed pleased enough that Russell had on taken on the role of documentarian in

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<sup>16</sup> See Brown's (2011) review of historic and contemporary back-to-the-land literature in collection at the University of Massachusetts library. It is very likely that Henry and Lena Lord would have owned or borrowed a number of these books and subscribed to many of the popular home and garden magazines that promoted back-to-the-land themes and ideas. Brown suggests that the sheer quantity of books, articles, papers, and magazines devoted to the back-to-the-land crusade reflected not only the intense interest of an audience made weary and anxious by economic and social problems of their day, but also of the rich profits to be had in publishing such work to an all too eager audience hungry for escape and dreaming of a more simple and deliberate life. See: "Dreamers and Readers," pp. 12-17, and "Adventures in Contentment," pp. 52-78.

<sup>17</sup> Lord, "The Elements" (1931), in: *Men of Earth*, pg. 24.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 24-25.

their family experiment, a role that inspired his future as one of America's most respected agricultural writers.<sup>19</sup>

## **Two Roads Converge: Country Life and Back-to-the-Land Movements**

Russell Lord was born in 1895 and grew up in a rapidly industrializing world. By 1900 technical revolutions in transportation, industry, and the mechanization of agriculture drove the American economy to new levels of wealth and prosperity, a welcome economic reversal from the devastating market panic of 1893. By 1907, the year Henry Lord moved his family to the countryside to find contentment on a farm of their own, thousands of back-to-the-land seekers of independence and self-sufficiency were moving against a mass migration of millions coming into American cities from abroad as well as the countryside itself.

The back-to-the-land movement was loosely organized and leaderless at the time the Lords moved to their small farm in 1907, but it was a popular and powerful social driver of anti-urban perceptions fueled by food shortage fears, economic alarm, and anxiety over swelling immigrant populations in eastern U.S. cities. It was largely reactionary and wishful, holding in common with country life reformers the romantic notions of the colonial yeoman but little else. Bailey decried the back-to-the-land movement as "sharply distinguished" from the country life movement and described it as "agitation that fueled escapism," a fear of immigrants, and that disregarded the realities of agricultural economics.<sup>20</sup> Even so, the back-to-the-land movement gave momentum to ideas of self-sufficiency at the household and community levels evidenced in the popularity of urban vacant lot gardening, intensive small plot farming and communal gardening plots held in-common for those unable to escape the city environment. Ideas of home craft and cottage industry also inspired the simple aesthetics of American Arts and Crafts movement.<sup>21</sup>

The numbers of people moving back to the land, however, was dwarfed by the rural exodus that had been building since shortly before the Civil War. By the 1870 census farmers had, for the first time in American history, become a minority. Urban centers were expanding and industry needed workers. Factories, mills, offices, shipyards, and manufacturing ensured that the urban workforce would outnumber those toiling in agriculture by two gainfully employed

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<sup>19</sup> Chrismer, "Russell and Kate Lord: Harford's Artists on The Land," (2007) in: *Russell and Kate Lord*, Harford Historical Bulletin No. 106, pp. 3 – 5.

<sup>20</sup> Bailey, *The Country Life Movement in the United States* (1915), states that the back-to-the-land movement is more an agitation of city dwellers to escape to the country or to find relief in the city. "The country-life and back-to-the-land movements are not only little related but in many ways are distinctly antagonistic," pp. 2-3.

<sup>21</sup> Shi, *The Simple Life: Plain Living and High Thinking in American Culture* (1985), states that the back-to-the-land "boom" was particularly attractive to urbanites who developed homesteading projects including cottage industries in furniture-making and decorative arts in cities across the country even as it was undermined by agrarians like Bailey who sought to distance himself and the Country Life movement from it: Arts and Crafts influences, pg. 190, and city homesteading, pp. 202-203.

industrial workers to one farmer on the land by 1910. The trend was worrisome not only to back-to-the-landers who fretted that there would not be enough people left on the land to grow enough food for all, but especially to progressive social reformers, university men, bureaucrats, and businessmen, albeit for different reasons.<sup>22</sup>

The shock of the 1893 crash and its effect on the rural economic and social landscape pushed state agricultural colleges to increase their efforts to reach out to farmers and offer educational opportunities that would help them adapt to changing technologies and new market conditions. It was a period of rapid response, especially for the extension departments at Cornell with Dean Liberty Hyde Bailey leading multiple efforts to connect to and educate New York's hard hit farmers and rural citizens. Innovative programs such as nature study for students and intensive teacher training for outdoor education that emphasized conservation and stewardship were shepherded by Anna Botsford Comstock and Louis Agassiz through the late 1890s and well into the new century. Bailey initiated a statewide system of field stations for demonstration education on farms that were employing new methods of soil conservation, orchard management, and dairying. He restructured program of extension educator training that would infuse agrarian morality into the teaching of modern approaches to farming.<sup>23</sup>

Initially the response of the USDA to the agricultural depression that followed the 1893 panic was to focus attention on farmer rehabilitation programs that promised the farmer could "make two blades of grass grow where one grew before," by promoting increased farm output and yield through scientific, mechanized agriculture. In its efforts, the department seemingly ignored problems of disintegrating agricultural credit and rural banking, throwing most of its efforts at farmers themselves, giving little attention to policy reform. Iowa State College President Dr. Seaman Knapp, instrumental in crafting the Hatch Act in 1887, railed against the poor and wasteful management of USDA demonstration sites and was eventually appointed to take charge of them from a newly created position in Terrell, Texas in 1903. In the process of reforming the reformer, Knapp steered USDA programs towards meaningful agricultural business and mechanical training, while bearing witness to the realities of near peasantry in the South. As he worked to lead a multi-front fight against the boll weevil, Knapp, with an almost religious zeal, fought to align what the federal government assumed the desperate farmer needed

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<sup>22</sup> Bowers (1974) states that "Although conditions in agriculture were generally better than they had been, the farmers' gains were moderate when compared to others. Farmers were simply not making as much money as men in other occupations," pg. 14.

<sup>23</sup> Armitage, *The Nature Study Movement* (2009), provides a rich accounting of the rise of progressive extension and teacher training institute for both extension educators and classroom teachers in nature study, farming techniques, and rural improvement; Comstock, *Handbook of Nature Study* (1912) compiled teacher training materials into her landmark book. It contains all of the material that she, Agassiz, and their staff used and shared with rural as well as urban teachers to promote the teaching of nature study in classrooms; Minter (2006) devotes an entire chapter to Liberty Hyde Bailey to describe his great passion for designing and implementing progressive education programs that addressed the problems of rural schools, exhausted soils, disintegrating markets, and the need for extension teachers, pp. 17 – 50.

with what he actually observed on the southern working landscape.<sup>24</sup> By 1906 the USDA enthusiastically endorsed his work in part for its effectiveness and in that funding came from alignments and sponsorships with business interests and foundations; the relationship with the Rockefeller General Education Board gave the program much credibility that in turn attracted many other business and state commerce interests.<sup>25</sup>

States and counties promoted farm fairs and festivals. Farm women, members of new homemaker's clubs, were encouraged to demonstrate improved food preparation and preservation techniques contests and competitions. Business interests, seeing the potential for profits as farmers and their wives modernized, promoted new farming equipment, home conveniences, and processing machinery. The railroad monopolies heavily vested in improving the lot of farmers ran "farm trains" through the west and northeast that brought displays of how to market products to urban consumers, to make farming pay better through better marketing practices.<sup>26</sup>

The country life movement, emboldened by the appointment of the Country Life Commission by President Theodore Roosevelt in 1908 under the leadership of Liberty Hyde Bailey, gave further credibility to the efforts of extension and business by gathering through extensive written surveys and town meetings, a crosscutting account of the needs of the American farmer. The Commission's official report prompted the President to call for organized rural reform. "[Roosevelt] called for 'better business and better living on the farm, whether by cooperation among farmers for buying, selling, and borrowing; by promoting social advantages and new opportunities in the country; or by any other legitimate means that will help to make country life more gainful, more attractive, and fuller of opportunities, pleasures, and rewards for the men, women, and children of the farms.'"<sup>27</sup>

The Commission's report enveloped agrarian ideals comfortably within the rural reform agenda though Bailey categorically declared that country life movement had little to do with the back-to-the-land-movement. Writing in *The Country Life Movement in America* Bailey asserts "Some persons seem to think that the movement of city men out to the country offers a solution

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<sup>24</sup> Lord, *The Agrarian Revival; A Study of Agricultural Extension* (1939), in "Knapp and Spellman" credits Seaman Knapp with serving as one of the principle crafters of federal policy that laid the foundation for agricultural reform within the USDA. Described as a founder of "organized agricultural extension in this country" Lord describes Knapp as not only an astute and serious agricultural reformer but a mystic as well, who much like Liberty Hyde Bailey invoked religiousness and morality towards his work, pp. 54 – 85.

<sup>25</sup> Bowers (1974) claims that because of better funding through business relationships, the USDA extension programs under Seaman produced much more effective results than state agricultural colleges, pg. 89.

<sup>26</sup> Bowers (1974), pp. 14 – 29.

<sup>27</sup> Lord, "Colleges on Our Land" in: *The Agrarian Revival* (1939), pp. 52-53; Ellsworth, "Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission" (1960), details the nuances of Roosevelt's preface to the Country Life Commission's Report, pp. 161-163.

of country problems,” when in fact, he states bluntly “it usually only offers a solution of a city problem.”<sup>28</sup> The two social movements were at odds with each other but inextricably linked by the philosophical underpinnings of agrarian thought. Country life reformers understood that rural life could not be the utopian fix to complicated urban living as back-to-the-landers had dreamed it to be, yet city dwellers who made the move to the countryside or those who stayed within their urban environments to homestead in the city embraced ideas of self-sufficiency and independence from tangled economic hardships.<sup>29</sup>

Roosevelt in his special message in the preface to the Country Life Commission Report took on a decidedly agrarian tone that appealed to both movements. American civilization itself was dependent upon the prosperity of both the urban and country dweller, that each relied upon the other. “Upon the development of country life rests ultimately our ability, by methods of farming requiring the highest intelligence, to continue to feed and clothe hungry nations; to supply the city with fresh blood, clean bodies, and clear brains that can endure the terrific strains of modern life; we need the development of men in the open country, who will be in the future, as in the past, the stay and strength of the nation in time of war, and its guiding and controlling spirit in time of peace.”<sup>30</sup> Interdependence, a new idea to enter agrarian thought of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, made clear both the similarities and differences of the two movements that so affected the trajectory of Russell Lord’s life.<sup>31</sup>

Critics suggest that the back-to-the-land movement made little contribution to the major reform commitments of the country life movement, that it focused specifically on the needs of the urbanite, even going so far as to caution against involving oneself in cash crops, to choose self-sufficiency over market production. But for back-to-the-landers like Henry M. Lord who endeavored to restore an abandoned farm to economic vibrancy, the immersion into rural life to become farmers in their own right came primarily from the intersection of the two movements.

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<sup>28</sup> Brown (2011) states that Liberty Hyde Bailey was defensive about the intents of the country life movement, that it was not related at all to the back-to-the-land movement. He tried to distance his progressive initiative from urban escapism, pg.26.

<sup>29</sup> Shi (1985) describes overlapping motivations shared by the country life and back-to-the-land movements. Both movements made commitments to a revitalization of rural living and promoted economic declarations of independence that drew from re-imagined work in food production, arts and crafts, and the cultural experience of rural living, pg. 194.

<sup>30</sup> Theodore Roosevelt, “Special Message to the Country Life Report,” February 9, 1909, in: *Report of the Country Life Commission*. (Washington Government Printing Office, 1909).

<sup>31</sup> Thompson, “Convergence in an Agrarian Key” (2009), describes Roosevelt’s agrarianism as having drawn heavily from elements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century values for hard work and good habits (Jeffersonian) but that his was a contemporary adaptation that served to reposition eco-centric and utilitarian concerns about soil, water, agricultural, and human resources in a new agrarian light, a personal and political perspective that could unite multiple aspects of rural revitalization. In: *Environmental Ethics and the Contested Foundations of Environmental Policy* (2009), pp. 179-182.

The back-to-the-land impulse provided a pathway to becoming good and modern farmers and paired with the benefits of agricultural education and utilitarian rural reforms of the Country Life Movement, it was a pattern that many would follow.<sup>32</sup>

Russell Lord grew up under the influence of both movements at home and at school. He demonstrated that it was possible to maintain forwarding-looking enthusiasm for the future of farming while participating in a grand experiment to buffer oneself and family from economic crisis and social uncertainty through scientific agricultural understandings and good land practices. Contrary to criticisms that claim the two movements kept polite distance from each other, the dual exposure to country life and back-to-the-land ideals prepared the way for Lord's professional interests that combined fields of literary arts and journalism with conservation, rural education that included nature study and scientific agriculture. Integrated as such, the two movements working in tandem upon both rural and urban folk served to create the conceptual roots of modern environmental thought<sup>33</sup>

In all, the back-to-the-land movement stressed production of food and everyday needs as important to reclaiming independence and achieving a sense of security in an unstable economic environment. "Producerism" defined the movement's drive to unhitch from mass production in order to create authentic and enduring quality in one's life and living. Scott Nearing, an early and life-long back-to-the-lander, a modern icon of the movement, benefitted from agricultural education initiatives promoted by the early by the Country Life reforms as he homesteaded with his wife in Vermont and Maine for over sixty years. He cautioned that one must "watch for a chance to escape the cramping limitations of his surroundings, to take life in his own hands and live it in the country, in a decent, simple, kindly, way." Like Nearing, Lord wrote passionately about how the two movements together enabled his family to find success and a good living in the countryside, but it was decidedly the move to the country that launched his lifetime passions in agriculture and conservation.<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> Pathways from back-to-the-land enthusiasms to production farming were made by many in the early 1900s and continue today as the impulse to live and work the land is supplemented by an array of educational and mentoring opportunities for those with little or no agricultural experience. This is a pattern that repeats throughout Russell Lord's life and among his friends, acquaintances, and colleagues' lives as the back-to-the-land movement transformed and resurfaced throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. See: Shi (1985) "Progressive Simplicity," the Country Life Movement was an example of moral and utilitarian tendencies of Progressivism coming together," and that it also functioned to "make the simplicities of rural life more attractive to disaffected urbanites as well as struggling farmers and alienated villagers," pp. 202-203.

<sup>33</sup> Brown (2011) explains that although sympathetic with farmers and the troubles they faced, back-to-the-land advocates kept a polite at a distance from rural reform, pp. 27 - 29.

<sup>34</sup> Nearing, *The Good Life: Helen and Scott Nearing's Sixty Years of Self-Sufficient Living* (1970), describes throughout the book the many ways he and his wife Helen utilized the many the educational resources made available by extension services as a back-to-the-lander in the 1909 for starting agricultural businesses, rehabilitating farm structures, and managing land. *Living the Good Life* is an iconic back-to-the-land text that owes much of its utilitarian success to

## The Agricultural High School at Sparks

Thirteen-year-old Russell Lord trotted his sturdy little Chincoteague horse up the Old York Road to the Western Run Turnpike where a handsome stone tollhouse stood at the intersection. The chestnut and cream pinto pony was a gift to Russell from his father in celebration of their recent move to the country. Lively yet sure of step, the horse carried Russell on endless summer outings in 1908 to explore the lay of the limestone valley, investigate the banks and sandbars of the Gunpowder River, and eagerly follow the scarlet coats of the huntsmen as they galloped through the Worthington Valley.<sup>35</sup>

From the toll booth at the crossroads Russell could see west towards vast fields of wind-rippled wheat, hefty stands of corn, and acres of sweet clover meadow that surrounded his farm. Herds of dairy and beef cattle roamed great pastures that flanked the Oregon Ridge. How fortunate that a boy from the Baltimore city suburbs could call both pony and valley his own. The landscape was vastly different from his crowded city neighborhood and his newfound freedom to roam at will made lifelong impressions. “Grown on pavements and within the neat designs of suburbia, I could not feel my father’s farm was small. It seemed stupendous that my family should hold all that land and all the buildings on it and the livestock and the trees. Pride – a growing sense of pride and importance – this I recall as the governing emotion of my first months in Arcadia.”<sup>36</sup>

Lord, the boy from the suburbs who happened to be riding his first pony past the tollhouse on that summer day in 1909 was soon to be immersed in a new approach to rural education. The tollhouse keeper gave the young rider an approving nod as he passed by on the way home. The Lord’s farm *Iona* fronted ‘The White Road,’ as the Western Run Turnpike was known locally. Paved with brilliant white crushed limestone supplied by the nearby Cockeysville

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agricultural education efforts to educate and support new and beginning farmers in the interwar years of 1920-1940.

<sup>35</sup> Lord, *The Care of the Earth: A History of Husbandry* (1962), describes his joy at receiving a fabled Chincoteague pony as his first horse, pp. 236-237. Chincoteague Island ponies are semi-wild horses of the Atlantic barrier islands of Maryland and Virginia’s Eastern Shore. Since the 1700s these stocky, tough horses, thought to be descendants of Scot-Welsh stock brought over by early settlers. Still popular as first horses for young riders in the Mid-Atlantic region, they are rounded up on ‘pony penning days’ in late July to select foals to be sold at auction to herdsmen from across the country. See Rachel Carson, “Chincoteague: A National Wildlife Refuge” (1947), for a description of the origins of the herds on Assateague and Chincoteague Islands, pg. 17. See also the agricultural profile for Baltimore County, Milton, “Soil Survey of Baltimore County, Maryland” (1919) issued by the USDA, Bureau of Soils, Washington D.C. This document serves as a rich description of the agricultural landscape that Russell Lord grew up in, surprisingly not too different than today.

<sup>36</sup> Lord, “Christmas in the Country” (1950), in: *Forever the Land, A Country Chronicle and Anthology*, pp. 173-174.

marble quarries, the commercial road company chartered in 1868, built and maintained a series of handsome Gothic stone bridges with gracefully arched culverts, and decorative parapets that connected the outlying village of Butler to the Old York Turnpike. The improved road was one of the best in the country and it served as a critical link for outlying farms to deliver products to the stations of the North-Central Railway (NCR) that linked city consumers to country farmers. It was upon this vital rail line that agricultural products, dairy, meat, local ores and cut stone from the Worthington Valley reached markets in the cities of Baltimore to the south and York, Pennsylvania, to the north.<sup>37</sup>

Russell admired the turnpike, its romantic bridges, massive stone tollhouses, interesting travelers, and the broad sweep of land that cradled the valley farms between two sinuous forested Piedmont ridges. The whole atmosphere of his new home in the country was endearing from the start. Having lived only a year in the valley, it was a place of tranquility and adventure, compared to the restrictive, noisy, and stressful city environment where he spent his first eleven years of childhood. Lord was no child of the tenements, however, nor his parents refugees from the factories, mills, and stockyards of the city. He was a privileged middle-class youth from comfortable but crowded city suburbs who experienced the country life as his father had once imagined it and now had the means to enjoy it. In this valley, however, he was sheltered from the harsh effects of 1907 market panic inflicted upon Northeast agricultural systems, just recovering from the agricultural depression of 1893.

“Northeast farmers were selling themselves, their families, and their basic capital, the soil nutrients, too cheaply at whatever the market offered, and buying what they needed for their farm operations at monopolistic rates,” recalled Lord in 1939.<sup>38</sup> Unable to compete with highly mechanized and more efficient agriculture in the Mid-West and West, regional farmers from Pennsylvania to Maine struggled to adapt and modernize or sell their farms. Farm consolidation was common as was farm abandonment. Demoralized and impoverished, Northeast farmers and their families streamed into the industrial centers of the East to find work. They left behind crumbling roads, poor schools, and deteriorating bank and credit systems, high taxes, corrupt middlemen, and monopolistic arrangements that capitalized on exploitative rail transportation schemes that moved agricultural products to major markets. Embittered by their experiences, defeated farmers were often suspicious and even angered by the country life movement’s premise that they were somehow to blame.<sup>39</sup> The Worthington Valley, however, in its close proximity to the ready markets, roads, wealth, and rich soils seemed far removed from problems beyond the embrace of its ridges between which Lord spent the happy, long days of summer exploring.

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<sup>37</sup> “Western Run Turnpike Bridges and Culverts,” in: Maryland Historical Trust. Inventory Form for State Historic Sites. Retrieved from Maryland State Archives: [http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/stagsere/se1/se5/004000/004200/004205/pdf/msa\\_se5\\_4205.pdf](http://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/stagsere/se1/se5/004000/004200/004205/pdf/msa_se5_4205.pdf)

<sup>39</sup> Lord (1939), pg. 47; Bowers (1974), in: “American Agriculture at the Turn of the Century,” pp. 7 – 14.



If the pastoral landscapes were endearing to young Russell, especially so were its people: country folk, masons and carpenters, farmers and their hired hands. “Negroes who obligingly tipped their hats” when he met them at the stables or passed them on the road were always kind and exceedingly helpful in country matters unfamiliar to the boy from the city. The valley retained a rather refined English air of large thousand-acre horse farms where some of Maryland’s finest driving, racing, and hunt horses were bred and raised. Lord referred to Iona’s neighbors as “the squires Merryman” who owned neighboring farms Hayfields and Gerar, places of permanent pasture in timothy and clover that ran up the slopes to the Oregon Ridge. Iona, a small farm of only fifty-five acres, was wedged between the two large estates and both were graciously open for jumping his pony over the low gates in the well-kept hedgerows. Farm hands, trainers, cattlemen, haying crews, and the squires themselves engaged young Russell in conversation and invited him to share in the work. The physical labor, however, was not as attractive to the boy as were the slowly told stories and gentle dialogue of the countrymen.<sup>40</sup>

“We had a hired man named Sam, who had a way of his own in speaking. ‘Where is your place?’ a man on the road, out buying calves, asked him. ‘Our farm lies in the arm of the white road as it leaves the valley,’ said Sam. That was poetry. But it also stated an explicit fact, so this man who was buying calves could find us. For the only white road in the valley then was the Western Run Turnpike, with its roadbed of white limestone, and the only point where it turned to leave the valley was at the southwest corner of our farm.”<sup>41</sup> He had an ear for the poetry of the pragmatic man and thoroughly understood the intertwining of business with pleasure, of farm with landscape.

Thoroughly enjoying his newfound freedom and independence, something caught the young rider’s eye while passing the tollhouse on his way home that summer day in 1909. He pulled his little horse up, wheeled about, dismounted, and climbed the steps to the porch. The cluttered community bulletin board contained a freshly pinned bright red poster that announced a new high school would be opening in the fall to be built in the community of Sparks, Maryland, five miles north on the Old York Road. “The courses to be offered, it said, were practical and vocational, not academic, not college preparatory, but distinctly designed to train students for farming and country life.”<sup>42</sup> Russell took the news home and asked to be allowed to enroll in the first class to attend the Agricultural High School.

Henry thought well of Russell’s request, pleased that his son would consider the noble career of farmer. With his father agreeable to the new school venture, convincing his mother Lena was a different matter altogether. The appeal of college preparatory schools being only a ten-mile train ride south to the suburbs of the city, she argued for Russell’s serious consideration of the benefits of a proper, if not privileged, education. Consider the two closest private schools available to him: The Gilman School located in their old neighborhood of Roland Park that

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<sup>40</sup> Lord (1950), in: “Christmas in the Country: A Memoir,” pp. 173-177.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., pg. 173.

<sup>42</sup> Lord (1962), in: “This Land and Time,” pg. 236.

offered a rigorous academic and athletic program, and Boys Latin, a school founded by Princeton professor Evert Marsh Topping in 1844 that stressed the arts, humanities, and literature just a station stop further. She could not see the purpose or advantage of a program that declared itself ‘non-academic nor could she understand what the appeal was to Russell.’<sup>43</sup>

“It was not so much the prospect of being trained to farm that appealed to me, in that bright new poster, as an adolescent; but this new school likewise promised to fit the young for ‘country life’ – and that was something else. I told them at home that I wanted to go to this new high school at Sparks. My mother, born in Holland, was horrified, and took comfort only in the thought that I would soon repent and transfer to more seemingly classical courses of preparation. Father believed in public schools – for boys, at least. He was romantic about farming and was quietly pleased at my choice. My father was unalterably of the opinion that – to paraphrase William Cowper only slightly – God made the country, man made the city, and the devil made the suburbs and the country clubs.”<sup>44</sup>

Lena Lord’s concerns for the education of her eldest son were not unfounded. In the Worthington Valley only six small one-room school houses remained by 1907, schools that provided a widely scattered population of rural children compulsory education until age 14. Some of the schools still used the Bell-Lancaster Monitor Method, a single teacher prescribed lessons to older children who then in turn taught the younger, a rudimentary education at best. Other schools divided their students into upper and lower grades and with differentiated lessons for each.<sup>45</sup> Some were pre-Civil War log-built structures, heated by coal or wood burning stoves, and provided outdoor privies only.<sup>46</sup> “Housed in uncomfortable buildings, without proper furniture or faculties for heating, ventilation, and light, they lack adequate provisions for guarding the health and morals of the children.”<sup>47</sup> And getting to a rural school was as serious a concern as staying warm in one.

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<sup>43</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 237.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., pg. 237.

<sup>45</sup> Menand, *The Metaphysical Club: The Story of Ideas in America* (2001), explains that the Bell-Lancaster Monitorial System, still in use today in rural Amish schoolhouses throughout Pennsylvania and Ohio, was the predominate method for teaching all rural and poor urban children through late nineteenth century. By the 1890s this method had come under intense scrutiny by educational reformers, becoming a leading public issue by the time of the 1893 stock market crash, pg. 321; Danbom, “Rural Education Reform and the Country Life Movement 1900-1930” (1979), pp. 462-474; A succinct definition under “Monitorial System” in Encyclopedia Britannica Online: <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/389525/monitorial-system>

<sup>46</sup> Clemens, *From Marble Hill to Maryland Line: An Informal History of Northern Baltimore County* (1983), pg. 65.

<sup>47</sup> Monahan A.C., “The Status of Rural Education in the United States.” U.S. Bureau of Education Bulletin No. 8. Washington D.C. (1913); Danbom (1979), pg. 464.

In Baltimore County, as in much of the rural Mid-Atlantic, public rural county roads were poorly maintained, except for the system of privately held turnpikes that, with collected revenue and investor support, provided reliable upkeep and access to more reliable rail service. In the hilly Piedmont, most rural roads were often impassable for days if not weeks after heavy snows and blizzards. September brought hurricanes, and January brought ice, creating log and ice jams that regularly dislodged vital bridges throughout northern hill country. The Northern Central Railroad's direct commuter line to Baltimore's independent schools was, to Lena and many parents of rural families of means, the best option for an education.<sup>48</sup> Her concerns were soon calmed by Henry's faith in the promise of a new progressive rural secondary education. Besides, he suggested, the community of Sparks was only five miles away and the good roads from Iona crossed no bridges. Russell was soon thereafter enrolled in the new school to join the first class in November.<sup>49</sup>

Agricultural High School (AHS) built by local stonemasons, carpenters, and farm hands, opened its doors two weeks late due to construction delays. Leaves had long past fallen and the fogs lifted from the river at the bottom of the hill when the massive fieldstone structure was finally occupied by students and teachers. Its size and mass dwarfed nearby stone tollhouses, stone barns and farmhouses and ornate turnpike bridges both in size and workmanship. Two stories high and capped by a low prairie-style hip roof, the school housed primary grades in the back and secondary classes in the front. The high school rooms included a fully outfitted lab for ag and general science, a domestic arts classroom, demonstration kitchen, a lecture hall, modern heating and indoor restrooms. The campus grounds, graded nearly flat from a hilly Piedmont slope, featured an expansive plain to accommodate galloping horses, demonstration gardens, and acreage dedicated to farming the land.<sup>50</sup>

Four one-room schoolhouses were closed to accommodate the consolidation. When abandonment was complete, nearby Quaker Bottom School was opened as a Negro elementary school and would continue to serve rural black children until late 1950s. Up until 1955 and the beginning of school desegregation in Baltimore County, black students wishing to attend high

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<sup>48</sup> Not only did the Northern Central Railroad enable wealthier rural families to access college preparatory schools in the city suburbs, railroad stock helped to fund independent (non-public) schools. Baltimore's suburban private schools to include the Johns Hopkins University in northern Baltimore founded in 1876, were established with the profitable investments made from railroad company stock. Johns Hopkins, a prominent Baltimore investor, established the University and its private hospital with over \$7 million in Baltimore and Ohio RR stock. The Gilman School for Boys, established with railroad investments and named for Daniel Coit Gilman, educational reformer and first president of JHU for 25 years, is located in Roland Park near a former NCR station; Menand (2001), "Baltimore," in: *The Metaphysical Club*, pp. 255-284; Clemens and Clemens (1983), "Transportation," in: *From Marble Hill to Maryland Line: An Informal History of Northern Baltimore County*, pp. 26-27.

<sup>49</sup> Lord (1962), in: "This Land and Time," pp. 236 -239.

<sup>50</sup> Clemens & Clemens (1983) pg. 27; Lord (1962), pp. 237-239.

school had to travel by rail in separate commuter cars to Negro High School in Towson fifteen miles to the south.<sup>51</sup> School reform came slowly for rural black children in Maryland, especially so in former slave-holding counties like Baltimore where the slave legacy permeated rural culture until the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The largest slave-holding property in the state of Maryland, Hampton Plantation just ten miles south of the Sparks community, now a National Historical Park (NPS), stands as testament to the persistence of discrimination against rural blacks and the invisibility of black farmers and their small communities that continues today.<sup>52</sup> If Russell Lord was aware of the social and economic injustices black farmers and their families endured at the time he lived and schooled in rural Baltimore County, he does not mention it nor argue on their behalf. AHS and its programs in agriculture, forestry, and domestic arts were closed to black students reflecting in a larger context the country life movement's exclusion of people of color generally in agricultural education reform. Save for the educational efforts of the 1890 schools created by the Morrill Land Grant Act, rural education for African American farmers and their families was considered inferior to that of white land grant schools and offered black farmers, especially so for those unable to read or write few alternatives or opportunities existed.<sup>53 54</sup>

The country life ideals excluded farmers and agricultural students of color, so it seems education in modern farming technique and sciences was exclusively the domain of young white men. Female students were relegated to training in sewing and other domestic arts. The programmatic aim of keeping farmers on the land was accompanied by efforts to keep these farmers well-clothed and fed, his children healthy, and the farm household well-organized and managed by the farm wife. The school's paper *The Agriculturalist* in 1915 boasted proudly of its course offerings for young men in drafting, agricultural mechanics, mechanical drawing, surveying, breeding improvement, tillage, farm management, cropping systems, tenure and

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<sup>51</sup> Clemens & Clemens (1983), pg. 28.

<sup>52</sup> The history of black farmers in Maryland is a topic area that Hampton National Historic Site has recently made central to its research and education work. The end of slavery in Maryland during 1864 and through earlier manumissions and land transfer to former slaves freed black men and women to work farms of their own, either as tenants or land owners from the 1860s through the 1920s. The 1920 U.S. Census states that there were over one million black farmers in America, but by 1990 there were less than 18,000. The country life and back-to-the-land movement paid little attention to the needs or contributions of the black farmer and efforts to keep the black farmer on the land through education and training came sparingly if at all. See Maryland Public Television's excellent educator resources for the PBS film *Homecoming: Black Farming and Land Loss, A History*, at <http://www.pbs.org/itvs/homecoming/history.html>; *Legacy of Slavery in Maryland*, Maryland State Archives Online <http://slavery.msa.maryland.gov/>; and the excellent research and archival materials available at the Hampton National Historic Site near Towson, Maryland <http://www.nps.gov/hamp/index.htm>.

<sup>53</sup> Wennersten, "The Travail of Black Land-Grant Schools in the South, 1890-1917" (1991), pp. 54-62.

<sup>54</sup> Bowers (1974), pp. 34-40.

leases, horticulture, field rotation, cereals, forage crops, dairy and milk testing, carpentry, horse and cattle breeding, saddlery, and seed testing. For young women, the selection was less impressive, stated almost as an afterthought to the above as “For girls: sewing, cookery, and personal hygiene.”<sup>55</sup> Lord states that the full course for girls in domestic science included “one stiff course each year in straight science: botany, chemistry, biology, physics,” and that seemed adequate to serve the needs of the modern farm family, the boys enjoyed “the equivalent of the basic course in college agriculture as then laid down at Cornell. If this experiment proved nothing else it proves to me at least that the young [men] of high-school age can take teaching at the undergraduate college level in their stride; can take it indeed, more eagerly and at a faster rate of growth than most of us do in our twenties.”<sup>56</sup>

Indeed, Cornell had much to do with the planning and implementation of this new experiential vocational curriculum. Liberty Hyde Bailey had long held concerns for the rural public educational system. Like many progressive educators of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Bailey believed strongly in the hope of public schools to serve as wellsprings for the emergence of a more intelligent and engaged democratic citizenry. Bailey also believed, unlike Jeffersonian proponents of the romantic agrarian ideal, that farmers needed to be held accountable for their own corruption and reform, that they were, in fact, corruptible. This he experienced firsthand during the agricultural depression of 1893 as soil erosion due to poor stewardship of the land brought on by short-sighted, sometimes desperate business decisions and damaging agricultural practices. A general lack of environmental and scientific awareness in the Northeast and Midwest forced many farmers into poverty and drove them off the land. Tasked by the college to restructure rural education venues and driven with the energy of the country life movement he developed a framework for a new kind of agricultural education for youth. By providing informed scientific and expert agricultural instruction during the high school years Bailey was confident that young soon-to-be farmers and their future wives could be persuaded to stay on the farm beyond graduation. Infused with a new economic and social ethic through a liberal technical and scientific training in agriculture, students thus educated would ensure their communities that farming could become permanently productive, restorative, and fulfilling.<sup>57</sup>

Planning agricultural curriculum, Bailey was careful not to turn fellow progressive education reformer John Dewey’s learning-by-doing experiential platform into a utilitarian pipeline for training students for a future in industrial-style farming and rural manufacturing. Instead and following Dewey’s lead in promoting holistic education, he and his curriculum planners introduced the arts, music, drama, and nature study to round out the educational endeavors of the modern agriculture student, to forestall trends in a rapidly industrializing

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<sup>55</sup> *The Agriculturalist* (1915) “Course of Study.” In file: Sparks Agricultural High School, Historical Society of Baltimore County Archives.

<sup>56</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 239.

<sup>57</sup> Danbom (1979), “Rural Education Reform and the Country Life Movement,” pg. 466; Minter (2006), pp. 2-49.

agriculture that threatened the spiritual and cultural soul of rural communities.<sup>58</sup> Bailey, whose deep moral and faith-based foundations in environmental thought, brought to bear his ideas of a reformation in agricultural education that broadened the vision for the restoration of American farming. The new curriculum included as mandatory courses in culture studies, fine arts, music, and civic engagement alongside life sciences, chemistry, agricultural mechanics and engineering, agronomy, and earth sciences. As the first students to experience the demanding curriculum, Lord recalled that before long he and his eight classmates were “all fired up to make rural American prosperous and Arcadian right away... I was delivering enlistment speeches to Boys’ and Girls’ Corn Clubs and, as an exercise in English class, editing the works of Shakespeare – the Merchant of Venice for one – into streamlined versions for amateur production by rural groups. Only a little later, as the community work program extended into proselyting the Country Life evangel in urban parts, on tour with “demonstration teams” of my schoolmates, I found myself delivering before boards of trade and chambers of commerce such reassuring discourses as ‘Why I Will Not Leave the Farm.’”<sup>59</sup>

### **Bertram H. Crocheron, First Head**

With the opening of the Sparks AHS in 1909, Bailey’s plan to overhaul rural and agricultural education was set in motion. By 1912 twenty-two agricultural high schools had opened across the country, modelled on the successful AHS curriculum. With an emphasis on teaching agricultural efficiency using Dewey’s progressive educational methods, AHS and its sister schools operated year-round in order to take full advantage of the summer growing and harvest seasons, integral to hands-on instruction and experimental modules to be conducted on home farms as well as on campus. The AHS campus hosted summer cattle shows, riding and driving competitions, and provided commercial opportunities for small-plot student growers.<sup>60</sup> “For the first entering class in the high school, a four-year course was foreshortened to three years, in order to speed things up at approximately a junior-college level. Instruction was continuous, on a twelve-month basis, more or less, as we were required to conduct supervised summer projects on our home farms.”<sup>61</sup> New agricultural high schools in Minnesota,

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<sup>58</sup> Liberty Hyde Bailey’s deeply held faith convictions about farmer as steward stem from his ideas on good husbandry as a form of devotion. See his beautiful treatise on environmental ethics and faith, *The Holy Earth* (1943). Bailey contributed frequently to *The Land Quarterly* before his death in 1954 and was a principle influence in Lord’s writing about permanent agriculture 1930s -1950s; Bowers (1974) states that “It irritated Bailey to have people make a distinction between a so-called ‘liberal’ education and one in agriculture which stressed technical training,” pg. 59. Bowers argues here that Bailey has yet to have receive full credit for transforming the method and delivery of science, natural resources, and agricultural education in American schools; Armitage (2009) provides an overview of Bailey’s integration of nature study, arts, literature, and community service as critical to agricultural training in rural schools, pp.170-194.

<sup>59</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 238.

<sup>60</sup> Stimson, “In Special Agricultural Schools,” (1913) Subsection *b* of Section IV: “The Use of Land in Connection with Agricultural Teaching,” pp. 30-39.

<sup>61</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 238.

Massachusetts, Wisconsin, Louisiana, New Hampshire, Ohio, Virginia, and Texas modelled the school at Sparks to integrate a fully twelve-month intensive program.<sup>62</sup>

The new school flourished under the leadership of Bertram Hartford Crocheron, hand-picked by Bailey to serve as principal and educator. Crocheron, recently graduated with a Masters in Extension Education from Cornell in 1908, set to work immediately to ensure that his rural students grew to appreciate, if not celebrate, their agricultural heritage. He was credited with expanding the curriculum to include energetic project-based classes in the sciences, extra-curricular agricultural activities, service opportunities, livestock and crop clubs, and a school newspaper, all designed to build an appreciation for the local farming culture.<sup>63</sup> “B. H. Crocheron brought to his work as a public schoolmaster in the hills of Maryland the zeal of a convert. He made our slumberous countryside for the four year he was to work there, twelve months of each year, a place of extraordinary wonder, mystery, endeavor in service, and high delight.”<sup>64</sup> Lord admired the young principal and appreciated his work to make the school program even more appealing to rural students but with “the expressed and definite purpose *not* to send country boys and girls on to college, agricultural or otherwise, but to complete their schooling there in their home country and keep them there.” This was a central tenet of the Country Life Movement, to keep rural youth on their farms satisfied enough with their rural industry not to flee to the city for work.<sup>65</sup>

The first five classes at AHS were comprised of entirely of local students, but it soon drew students from as far as twenty-five miles away, some commuting on the NCR from Baltimore and more distant rural stations from the north near the Mason Dixon Line. As the consolidated school grew in student population, the district offered the first rural school bus service with horse drawn bench-seat wagons covered with canvas tops to keep out rain and snow. The extended school year, excellent vocational education, and progressive instructional methods attracted a cadre of motivated students, who, for those who stayed on the farm became some of the county’s most noted agriculturalists.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Stimson (1913), pp. 33-34.

<sup>63</sup> In Memoriam: Bertrand H. Crocheron, Agricultural Extension and Systemwide, 1882-1948. University of California. Retrieved from the University of California Digital Library: <http://texts.cdlib.org/view?docId=hb9p300969&doc.view=frames&chunk.id=div00005&toc.dept=h=1&toc.id=>

<sup>64</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 240.

<sup>65</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 237.

<sup>66</sup> I compared student profiles listed in AHS graduation programs 1912 – 1920 to a random sampling of farm club minutes and newspaper articles provided by the Baltimore County Historical Society for the years 1920-1940, and noted that many of the graduates of AHS became prominent and involved farmer-citizens, no doubt influenced by AHS emphasis on civic engagement and rural community building. Many of the families continue in farming today, if not on century farmland (lands held by families for over 100 years), then involved in prominent

“Crocheron’s teaching and guidance was so stimulating,” recalled Lord, “that nearly three-quarters of his first two graduating classes proved unwilling to settle down there at home with the little they knew.” The stated aim of keeping students of the farm did not work out as planned as students afire with the challenge of academics and applied sciences “pushed on to college, regardless of the artificial obstacles imposed, quitting their homes for years or forever. An admirable result, a credit to any teacher, but certainly out of keeping with our watchwords and war cries at home.” Local families protested and Crocheron was offered a position to transfer his innovative ideas to Berkeley in 1913 as the first Director of California Extension Service.<sup>67</sup>

The AHS program awakened and inspired in its students a love of learning and a desire to pursue higher education in sciences and agriculture. Whether or not the reverse effect of keeping students on the farm may have influenced the political decision to replace Crocheron with a ‘tamer choice’ for head-of-school is unknown, but a precedent for learning had been established by him and a growing reputation for quality outdoor, experiential, and project-based education had the effect of growing the school’s secondary program quickly.<sup>68</sup> Lord credited Crocheron’s enlightened and liberal approach to vocational teaching as establishing a long-lasting legacy of excellence in rural education:

“He taught us many things beside the assigned subjects: that people really do not catch cold by waking in the rain; or sleeping out at night under a canopy of heaven, a venture hitherto unknown save to some city people in those parts. That you can look in a stream and watch the hills dwindle into utter flatness; that a speck of pollen must poise and fuse with the tip of every strand of corn silk before there can be a full ear; that is not unmanly to feel that quaint lift inside which comes when a hush settles on the valleys, the stars come out, and the fireflies light their lanterns in the wheat. And teaching of that kind renews itself forever.”<sup>69</sup>

### **On Listening to Experts**

A prolific writer with an ear for good stories, Lord immersed himself in opportunities to write for his school and reported for the school paper. On assignment for various projects, Lord traveled across the countryside to collect material. He sat in on local farm club meetings and listened to the concerns, problems, and ideas of the farmers. He was a regular visitor to grain and feed mills, as well as to local rail depots when morning deliveries of produce, milk, hay, straw, and beef were loaded for markets in the city. He spoke easily with elders, and listened respectfully to what they told him. He developed rapport with farmers and found, despite their grumbling and sometimes gruff appearances, that he enjoyed their company.

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agricultural business and services (tractor dealerships, feed mills, custom harvest services, livestock export, etc.) to include continued participation in the Northern Baltimore County Farm Club, 4-H, and FFA.

<sup>67</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 239.

<sup>68</sup> Ibid., pg. 239.

<sup>69</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 240.



One such farmer, Marvin Oren from Bald Hill, came to speak to the class about his work in soil building. Bald Hill is one of a dozen large serpentine barrens in a geologic region that arcs across Baltimore County, MD into Pennsylvania's York, Lancaster, and Berks Counties along the Mason Dixon Line. A landscape very different from the pastoral Worthington Valley, it barely supported agriculture and was known by valley locals as The Hill or The Barrens, sounding so remote and foreign from the familiar scenes of horse farms and cornfields of the valley that many people regarded the place with suspicion. Farmers who settled there during the early 1800s were often too poor to afford much else, all the best lands settled long ago. The chromium soils were good only for growing a thin veneer of wiry grass and stunted pines. It was on this thin soil that for nearly a century the Oren family tried to eke out a living, mostly having failed to do so.

Marvin Oren speaking before the class impressed Lord with his ideas about restoring poor soils to lush pasture in his fervent belief that one day the ground would be rich and thus profitable. The old farmer had committed most of his adult life to his 'limestone experiments' conducted in a hayloft laboratory at night, while tending to a small beef herd and flocks of sheep during the day. He collected and spread his custom mixed manures in early morning, and made observational notes about the treatments of limestone dust and mineral additives and the ever-greening barrens pastures under his care.<sup>70</sup>

Oren's visit to the school and subsequent interviews left Lord with lasting impressions that formed a new line of inquiry in the value and worth of the earth-educated farmer, who through trial and error and devotion to his land, challenged the idea of university expertise. Thinking Crocheron had invited Oren to class to make an example of the old farmer's raw approach to scientific agriculture, it was suggested to Lord by local farmers that he consider Oren as 'brilliant' and they warned, contrary to the principal's rough appraisal, 'you go a long way wrong if you take him for a fool.'<sup>71</sup>

As a self-taught agricultural chemist, Oren had been conducting decades of calcium tests of his pasture soils and calculating mineral solution combinations for his fields, hoping for soils that would one day produce more nutrient-dense wheat crop and forage for livestock. He explained to students that in ten years he would measure the density of collected cattle and sheep

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<sup>70</sup> Serpentine barrens are distinct, and now, protected geoecological habitats in the Eastern U.S. that foster fire-adapted grasses and rare herbaceous plants as well as lichens and mosses. See Rajakaruna, "Serpentine Geology of Eastern North America; A Review," (2009), for plant associations with heavy metal soils and the unique ecological communities that are found in these areas.

<sup>71</sup> Lord (1931), in: "Soil Builders and Managers," *Men of Earth*, pp. 118-131; Lord (1943), in: "A Short Story," *The Land*, 3(1): pp. 19-26. Marvin Oren's story ends tragically as some farmer's lives do, in desperate poverty and with suicide a year after Lord published his scientific work in the local paper. "There's an awful lot of these 'Farmer Kills Two, Then Self' stories if you notice, in the course of the year," he wrote. The economic fallout of the 1907 market collapse was especially painful for isolated and capital poor farmers like Marvin Oren. Suicide, then like now, seemed to some in particularly dire situations, the only way to escape.

bones to document the improvements in forage nutrition over decades. He explained how he cut by hand precise amounts of wheat at each harvest from dozens of ten-foot-wide test strips to compare “on that gram scales” in order to eliminate unsuitable combinations of animal, mineral, and straw composts. For soils that were proving good for wheat, he mixed and applied large batches of his custom mixtures to his pastures. “I see my way almost through to things that nobody in your time or mine will ever know about. I’ll never really know anything that I want to know. That’s why I work all the time. That’s why I can’t sleep.”<sup>72</sup>

Concluding his talk with the students, Oren matter-of-factly stated “Earth is the farmer’s instrument. He plays upon it in the dark as best he can. The individual who undertakes to prescribe for the land and to see that his plants are fed their quota of mineral waters in the correct proportions, may call his choices scientific, but he is still fumbling among mysteries unsolved. Into that thin dark sea, all life as we know it passes, and out of it comes all life renewed. The earth is alive. And all things that we call living move in their time upon the waters under the earth to keep it so.”<sup>73</sup> His words may have come across as quaint, even overly devout to Crocheron and others, but their effect on Lord made him realize that here was a good story, good enough to stand up to the experts’ advice. On a follow-up visit to the Oren farm to deliver a printed copy of the school paper article, Lord explained that as a result of his story the paper’s editor had agreed to let him start a regular column called “Our Interesting Farmers.” Oren flushed with appreciation. “It’s the first recognition that my work has ever received,” he said and explained, “I inherited my task and I think I may have made a mess of it. But it has taken me a lifetime.”<sup>74</sup>

This was a transformational experience for Russell Lord that took years for him to fully appreciate. Whether or not he realized then as a sixteen-year-old club reporter, the old farmer’s scientific work in soil improvement represented something new that was really quite old, something that had been concealed by modern scientific methods and progressive thought as being old-fashioned and therefore, unimportant. From this experience, Lord honed his interviewing and listening skills to discover farmers intrinsic understanding of earth processes and pragmatic mixture of traditional and scientific thought, ideas that need not be considered mutually exclusive.

### **Facing Forward, Looking Back**

In his second year at AHS Lord continued to explore the rural countryside riding his dependable little Chincoteague pony, while he developed a greater interest in horses through clubs and equine shows staged on campus. Borrowing horses he felt were too high spirited for his skills, he joined competitions for dressage, attended a workshop in jumping, and participated

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<sup>72</sup> Lord (1943), in: “A Short Story,” (1943) *The Land*, 3(1): pp. 19-26.

<sup>73</sup> Lord (1943), pg. 25.

<sup>74</sup> Lord (1943), pg. 21.

in local and regional horse shows.<sup>75</sup> He was interested in the health, care, training, and breeding of good draft horses as well, for at the time of his agricultural schooling, most Mid-Atlantic farming still involved the work of the heavy horse breeds that pulled plows, reapers, wagons, and stoneboats across the rolling, rocky Piedmont landscape.<sup>76</sup>

In 1910 classes in agricultural mechanics featured the design and repair of horse-drawn implements with shop courses in blacksmithing and farrier skills.<sup>77</sup> These were mandatory for the boys as knowledge of the working horse would continue to be important in almost every aspect of field farming for another decade while horse racing, still to this day, made Maryland breeders wealthy. So Lord learned to shape and fit horseshoes, administer equine medicines, and how to affix a jointer to a moldboard plow beam, even as giant lumbering gas-powered tractors pulled massive gang plows across the broken prairie in Kansas and Oklahoma, and heavy wheeled steam engines tugged custom threshers across the wheat fields of Upstate New York, Ohio, Illinois, and Wisconsin.<sup>78</sup>

In reformed agricultural education, governed as it was by country life principles, the agrarian idealism of rustic independence, self-sufficiency, and the virtuous close-to-nature idea of the traditional if not mythic American farmer seemed to run counter to the need to prepare students for mechanically advanced American agriculture.<sup>79</sup> But with its emphasis on scientific methods and progressive academics the school flourished and exceeded the expectations of students and their parents. There was always the concern that although AHS functioned well enough to keep some students on the farm in Maryland, some aspects of its programs risked becoming obsolete as industrial methods and technologies made their way east from the great proving grounds of the Mid-West and Prairie States. Active community and business groups advised teachers and staff to keep a close eye on markets, new trends, and changing technologies to ready students for the future. These partnering organizations included professional groups, chambers of commerce, women's garden clubs, and well-established farm clubs made up of seasoned and successful area farmers, provided students with opportunities for supervised off-site work experience and the school with boosters to support its program.

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<sup>75</sup> AHS Graduation 1912 Program. Detailed descriptions of afterschool activities for students as well as Lord's involvement in many equine skills workshops and school sponsored horse shows. HSBC.

<sup>76</sup> Clemens & Clemens (1983), pg. 34.

<sup>77</sup> AHS Graduation 1912 Program.

<sup>78</sup> Conkin, *A Revolution Down on the Farm: A Transformation of American Agriculture since 1929*, (2008), states that until 1930 horse-drawn agriculture was dominate in the East, pp. 8-14.

<sup>79</sup> Bowers (1974) states "During the early years of the new century the groups tried to harmonize their objectives despite serious duality. The journals and meetings of those who saw agriculture as a business gave consideration to conditions of country living, and the surveys, conferences, and periodicals of those who viewed farming as a way of life included information, discussions, and articles of the commercial aspects of agriculture," pg. 29.

If anything was made obsolete by the new school's curriculum it was the textbook, as the idea of using hands-on learning to include field trials, forestry conservation camp, active labs and workshops, and dynamic engagement with community professionals and the world of work proved very effective indeed. Bailey's directive to limit the use of textbooks and emphasize experiential methods proved not just a novel way to teach and learn, but reconfigured how agricultural education was administered. "When we start using the good earth as a textbook, concepts freshen, panoramas lengthen, perspectives deepen, and viewpoints sharpen," Lord wrote in 1950 in *Forever the Land*, giving tribute to Louis Agassiz, who greatly influenced Bailey's visions for hands-on agricultural high schools, "Try to imagine what might have happened had Agassiz lived to firmly establish the out-of-door laboratory for the training of teachers." Lord need not have worried, as today outdoor field training and professional development for teachers is prevalent throughout the Chesapeake region, a legacy of progressive outdoor education for educators linked directly to methods championed by Comstock, Bailey, and Agassiz.<sup>80</sup>

The relationship between rural Maryland and the sprawling urban landscape of Baltimore was changing as well. Those who had fled the city a decade before, who looked scornfully upon city life and the industrial environment, were realizing just how intricately entwined rural and urban needs and services were. For farmers who adapted readily to new market demands and employed emerging technologies, the growth of the urban environment meant economic well-being at home on the farm. Back-to-the-land fears of overpopulated cities facing critical food shortages were now seen as overblown and exaggerated as farmers yields increased with the adoption of better cultivation methods and advanced machinery.<sup>81</sup>

The booming agricultural demand of Baltimore City's burgeoning industrial labor force kept North Central Railroad depots busy night and day. Road improvements allowed larger wagons to carry heavier loads of milk and produce to city markets and livestock to large slaughter houses via rail in the heart of the city. The steel mills at Sparrows Point on the Chesapeake demanded more raw materials, especially metals ores. Chromium mines reopened on the barrens across Baltimore and Harford Counties. Electricity and telegraph lines snaked farther up the turnpikes. The agricultural village of Warren, a few miles south of Sparks, disappeared under the rising waters of a newly dammed impoundment created on the Gunpowder

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<sup>80</sup> AHS Graduation 1912 Program. Listing of boosters and levels of participation in student affairs, including supervised work experiences, a forerunner of FFA's supervised agricultural experience requirement for agricultural students in high school today; Lord, "Teaching," (1950), in: *Forever The Land*, Lord describes the Agassiz method of experiential education for teachers, adopted by LHB as the foundation of teaching methods to be used in agricultural high school programs, pp. 255-256; Chesapeake Bay Trust, Aldo Leopold Foundation, NASA, NOAA, FFA, and many outdoor schools and school districts employ dozens of experiential teacher trainings every summer across our region, a growing trend in science, natural resource, and agricultural education training.

<sup>81</sup> Bowers (1974) states that not only did many American farmers adapt to increasing food demands from urban areas, but they profited by doing so. Back-to-the-land Neo-Malthusian fears of food shortages in cities simply did not materialize, pp. 66-67.

River, the immense reservoir called Loch Raven to service the city's increasing demand for clean water. Upstream along the river, mills and factories expanded to accommodate new milling equipment and production.<sup>82</sup>

The last year of Lord's high school education was good year for farmers in the Worthington Valley. Producers received fair prices for their crops, hay, and livestock and a spirit of revitalization permeated Baltimore County farming villages.<sup>83</sup> In 1912 Russell Lord graduated as a member of the first class to attend the AHS at Sparks. The world had changed dramatically during the three years spent in agricultural studies and despite an improved rural economy, there was a palatable tension between those who pined for the nostalgic yeoman farmer and the realities of a modernizing farm culture. The country life movement was vibrant and relevant, energized by the advisement of the Country Life Commission's report to continue its expansion of demonstration, extension, and formal education and in many respects the enthusiasm of the back-to-the-land movement had faded away. Never completely having abandoned the world of investment, real estate, and banking, Russell's father Henry returned to the Baltimore suburbs with his family as Russell moved on to college. Lena was happy that her daughter and youngest son could attend the fine private schools once offered to Russell, since neither demonstrated any interest in farming. The experiment had ended. Henry, ever the gentleman farmer, continued to buy and sell farms and remained interested in the affairs of the country.<sup>84</sup>

Farming, once offered as a rebuke to the ills of the urban environment, could now be seen as a compliment to city life, for as a growing awareness of interdependence of agriculture to industry revealed, the farmer needed the city man as the city man needed the farmer. Until the next economic downturn, 1912 was as close to economic parity as most farmers would come, but the requirement for this parity, beyond achieving contentment and happiness in the country, was to modernize. Bailey's vision of a holistic and moralistic agriculture education advanced core tenets of the Country Life Movement in rural stewardship and modernization as well as established important philosophical roots that established rich foundations for the development of permanent agriculture.

The pace and intensity of advancements in rural life was to some disconcerting, however. There would always be an element of anti-urbanism among rural communities and agrarians, but of greater concern was that democratic engagement need not be lost with the realization that city and farm were becoming more dependent on each other as Lord would learn on his way forward into extension education training. In his 1913 farewell speech to AHS graduates on the eve of his departure to California, Crocheron warned his audience of changes to come, changes he predicted might take country folks of the valley districts by surprise and to their detriment. "Be ready for change..." he said, "I mention the telephone, new farm clubs, the prevalence of the automobile, the Agricultural High School, the creamery, cow testing associations. It may be that

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<sup>82</sup> Clemens & Clemens (1983), pg. 39.

<sup>83</sup> Lord (1962), in: "This Land and Time," pg. 240.

<sup>84</sup> Henry Robbins Lord, great nephew to Russell Lord, private correspondence, phone conversation, July 2014.

through all of these new influences we will get a revival of that pioneer spirit of which we have been talking, and a restoration of those standards of excellence and efficiency which dominated our ancestry.”<sup>85</sup>

## Conclusion

Bertram Crocheron’s final speech to the students and community at AHS was tinged with foreboding as well as anticipation. Agricultural education, whether it served farmers through demonstration or agricultural students interested in learning the trade and future of farming, served only the good farmer who accepted the offer of assistance. Who was the good farmer? Certainly, those who had become good capitalists, who through efficiency and sound business practice, had become not only better farmers but better businessmen. Lord saw early that not all farmers, however, were so fortunately placed within their communities or the landscape. The rural reform movement, with some success, helped to commercialize aspects of farming for those who could invest in new equipment, fertilizers, and market strategies, but it left out a large proportion of the farming population who simply could not afford to do so. During the early 1900s many farmers became tenants, such as the farmer Sam from whom the Lord’s purchased their worn but sturdy farmhouse. For others who continued to struggle as best they could, such as Marvin Oren on poor land, farming was a way of life, but not an easy one.<sup>86</sup>

As a student immersed in the country life movement’s most treasured and effective tool for evangelizing its commitments to rural reform through progressive education, Russell Lord saw that often the message was an abstraction and that the reality of rural life, pitted against the affluence of industrial society, was filled with contradiction. As a young farm correspondent, these early observations of the promotion of an agrarian ideal were sometimes hard up against industrialism. Improved roads, the arrival of the telephone, the truck and tractor, farm clubs for the farmer-turned-businessman, and the improved relationship of commercial farmers with local and regional markets and suppliers made it apparent that the tide of industrialism would overcome the sentimental and nostalgic yearnings for a mythologized American yeomanry.

Writing of Marvin Oren and others like him who he’d met as a student reporter, Lord positioned the agrarian mythology against the backdrop of the reality of the non-commercial farmer who worked the land not as striving capitalist but as one who simply tried to make a living from it:

All the time I was talking to him, I had the feeling that he was a man peculiarly doomed to punishment on bare earth. He was easily the most restless mind, the most daring imagination, that in my sheltered rural innocence I had ever encountered. And Bald Hill was enough to drive such a mind mad; it was mean, clay land, slow to yield. He had done wonders with it, but look at him – a scrawny, jerking, denim-draped skeleton – and then look at the hill and guess which was going to win. He was licked and he knew it,

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<sup>85</sup> Crocheron (1913) from Commencement Speech, Agricultural High School 1913. Type-written notes and copy, Agricultural High School stack file: LD 7501. B2-A36 (1915).

<sup>86</sup> Bowers (1974) claims that overall the country life movement was not a success because it did not benefit all farmers as it had promised, and that only those who were in a position to capitalize and organize as businessmen realized improvements, pp. 128 – 134.

I thought. Yet safely removed from the heat of the weather, he might have been a reasonable plump and well-poised chemist, or clergyman, or professor, or even a poet. He felt this.<sup>87</sup>

Within the context of the Country Life commitments to rural revitalization, the central tenet for unified rural education reform served as the foundation for what amounted to a massive humanitarian effort led by progressive educators and extension agriculturalists. The aim of agricultural education at the secondary level according to Bailey's designs was to prevent farmer's sons from leaving the farm once formal schooling had been completed by combining a scientific understanding of new principles of farming with an affirmation of democratic and civic appreciation for rural life. But advances in higher education in agricultural sciences and economics developed as well as the majority of graduates from AHS, Russell Lord included, took on the challenges of post-secondary education or worked off-farm in businesses that supported or expanded agricultural progress that helped meet the needs of an expanding urban population.<sup>88</sup>

To its credit rural education reform worked to correct many of the institutional and logistical ills that plagued country school systems with efficiency as the driving force behind consolidation of one-room schoolhouses, university organized and well-funded teacher training programs, and the overhaul of outdated and ineffective curriculum. Crocheron, having done his best as head of the new school in Sparks was well aware, however, of the "lethargy" of opposition coming from farmers themselves, who he saw as ignorant and coolly resistant to change. During his parting speech, Lord observed the audience of farmers who had grumbled all along at Crocheron's university-bred elitism. "When he came to the end of his talk – challenging for the last time, the amiable smugness, their enveloping traditions, and pleading for a new standard of efficiency – there was a mumbling and stirring here and there in the audience. The member of a committee squeezed themselves, one by one, into the aisle, clumped down to the platform and embarrassedly presented a cup. It was a good big cup. These farmers had dug down deep in into their milk money to buy it; and upon the face of it, they had caused to be engraven: *For B.H. Crocheron, Who Remade This Community.*"<sup>89</sup>

Lord would carry this observation forward to make sense of later as his agricultural understandings broadened and deepened. These contradictions learned early made a lasting impression on Lord and influenced his thinking and writing about agriculture: the persistence of agrarian yeoman myth against the incessant march of industrialism, the resistance of an entrenched farming culture to expanding opportunities offered by modern farming, and the

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<sup>87</sup> Lord (1931), in: "Soil Builders and Managers," pp. 119-120.

<sup>88</sup> Swanson, *The American Country Life Movement*, (1972) offers a succinct overview of the movement through the perspective of humanitarian aid to suffering farmers and economically devastated rural society following repeated economic panics of 1893, 1907, 1920, and 1929; Danborn (1979) argues that the country life reformist emphasis on efficiency overtook nostalgic sentimentalism, particularly in agriculture education, pg. 463.

<sup>89</sup> Lord (1931), in: "Attendants and Outriders," pg. 216.

mistrust of traditional farmers towards those they believed to be of authoritarian demeanor that pit university and USDA extension experts against the earthy wisdom of those long on the land. These contradictions would play out in Lord's writing in later years, enriched and informed by what would be a dramatic half century of change in agricultural practice and thought.<sup>90</sup>

"Now, with the farm in question only some sixty acres, supported by my father's brokerage business, and with that typewriter of mine taking most of my time from field work, I must certainly must have known I was going to leave the land, and pretty shortly. But sustained by the emotions of the moment, I declaimed what was ordered and expected of me, and believed it, probably, up to the hilt at the time. [Crocheron] knew what those city people wanted to hear. They wanted to hear that something was being done about the 'drift to the cities' and the food supply was safe."<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Kesley (1994) traces the legacy of traditional farmer's mistrust of extension and USDA authorities to the early 1900s, pp. 1171-1177; Major (2013) continues and builds upon Kesley's legacy of farmer mistrust and the contradictions of modern farming within the contemporary agrarian mindset, pp. 25-41; Peters and Morgan, "The Country Life Commission: Reconsidering a Milestone in American Agricultural History," (2004), argue for new examinations of the Country Life Movement as providing the philosophical and sometimes contradictory tenets of the contemporary sustainable agriculture movement, themes which would have been familiar to Lord in the 1920s through the Cold War era, pp. 289 – 316.

<sup>91</sup> Lord (1931), pp. 217 – 218.



## **Chapter Two**

### **Countryman and Soldier**

#### **1912 - 1920**

Who under the present circumstances may be called the basic producer? The farmer who breaks the land to grow food? Or the city workers who made the plow? Or the steel and woodworkers who prepared the materials from which the plow was made?

- Russell Lord, 1931 <sup>92</sup>

#### **Introduction**

This chapter explores how changes in technology, land use, and agricultural education impacted a new generation of American agriculturalists who experienced training in husbandry and cultivation during a time of intensely developed relationships between industry, science, and agriculture. Russell Lord reflected upon this short period of his life for the next forty years as the time when his personal belief in the interconnectedness of all things and the disillusionment with ideas of progress took firm root. He was a student of agriculture at home and a soldier on foreign soil caught between contradictory worlds of industrialism and conservation.

I will continue to analyze the country life movement, its influence on Lord and on the academic and social environment in which he lived and studied. Whether or not the agrarian country life movement and the anti-urban back-to-the-land craze of the first decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had any lasting effect on larger ideas of agriculture in America remains to be explored in later chapters, but their elemental ideas certainly did affect Lord's thinking and framed his worldview for the rest of his life. Why did he embrace certain aspects of the country life philosophy, yet come to reject others? How did the country life movement influence the larger worlds of agriculture and education in which he lived and studied?

From the philosophical legacies of the back-to-the-land and country life movements, I explore how Lord navigated a new world of ideas about modern agriculture and industrialism that functioned seamlessly together in the decade leading up to World War One. In 1917 as he was preparing to enlist in the Army, Lord asked himself "If mechanization is the price of progress, what was the alternative?" In exploring the implications of how and why he comes to certain answers during the Great War, I explore, too, the ideas of human and natural community

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<sup>92</sup> Lord (1931), pg.188.

displacements and to some degree, its restoration. Lord astutely observed these kinds of changes here and abroad became sensitive to it.<sup>93</sup>

This is a grim chapter. Despite the ideals of 19<sup>th</sup> century agrarian thought that permeated this stage of Russell Lord's life, his encounter with the industrialism of war and issues of utilitarianism concerning agriculture that needed to feed armies and the hungry in war-torn lands shifted his thinking towards a contemporary pragmatism framed by disillusionment. His time behind the battle lines of France contributed towards ideas of permanent agriculture that evoked an engaged stewardship for land and farming peoples, sensitive to long histories and the importance of traditional modes of agricultural conservation.

I examine the concept of sacrificial landscapes, properties overtaken by military agencies for training camps or bombing ranges, and those agricultural landscapes that suffered direct effects of war in Europe. Lord had a gift for observing large scale patterns of use and abuse on these lands and how the actions or absence of farmers affected the health and fertility of both man and earth. His observations during the war and his reflective accounts many years later concerning the paradox of modern warfare and a centuries-old standard of land care did much to deepen his appreciation of interdependent human and natural systems. This short segment of Lord's long life is not triumphalist but it is important to recognize as transformative.<sup>94</sup>

By 1915 the national agenda for agricultural education in the United States was adjusting, albeit slowly, to an increasingly industrialized agricultural socio-environmental landscape. Chemical and technical advancements and new levels of mechanization in agricultural production rapidly shifted agricultural education priorities away from the commitments held by agrarian reformers. From 1910 to 1915 eighty-five dedicated agricultural high schools delivered thousands of vocational students to land grant institutions. Yet prospective freshmen taking entrance exams to agricultural colleges were required to enroll in preparatory courses and soon

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<sup>93</sup> I rely mainly on Lord's autobiographical account of the war, *Captain Boyd's Battery A.E.F.* (1920), and perspective he gained in later years as he reflected back upon his transformative experiences in uniform.

<sup>94</sup> Hooks & Smith, "The Treadmill of Destruction: National Sacrifice Areas and Native Americans" (2004), examines the ecologies of sacrificial lands (mostly military) and Native American cultures history of sacrificial landscapes; Mylynntaus, *Thinking Through the Environment; Green Approaches to Global History* (2011) states "Environmental historians cannot specialize only in telling stories with happy endings or promising prospects. They should also reveal grim cases of failure and discord in interactions between the natural and societal realms." He suggests that environmental history has wandered too comfortably near triumphalism and warns historians away. Environmental problems sometimes cannot be solved, and battles sometimes cannot be won. Mylynntaus suggests too that while environmental historians may give the idea some thought, not many of us are willing to work in the realm of calamity, pg. 3; Thompson (2009) weighs the influence of industrialism, utilitarianism, and intrinsic values of landscapes during the early 1900s, a formative time for Russell Lord as well as a transformative period for outdated understandings of agrarian thought, pp. 179-184.

discovered that their progressive agricultural educations were now obsolete.<sup>95</sup> As Robison (1921) observed, a serious disconnect had occurred between vocational and practical high school agriculture education and higher education university counterparts. The need for advanced agricultural science students exceeded what the more liberal, holistic programs of Bailey's design could provide.<sup>96</sup>

The industrial shift in post-secondary agriculture curriculum was most noticeable in the scope and sequence of required courses in the chemical sciences. For most students entering university undergraduate programs in 1910, at least two advanced chemistry courses were required during the freshman year. By 1914 the basic suite of the underclassman's agricultural chemistry coursework had expanded to include advanced classes in analytical and statistical chemistry, qualitative analysis in plant and animal nutrition, pesticides and fertilizers, and applied industrial chemical development.<sup>97</sup>

Upperclassman majoring in animal husbandry, horticulture, veterinary sciences, soils, plant breeding, and dairy were fully immersed in systematized and specialized courses in organic and inorganic chemistry. Students taking up agricultural mechanics also found themselves

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<sup>95</sup> Robison, "Agricultural Instruction of the Public High Schools of the United States" (1911), states that in his 1910 national survey of secondary agricultural education there were 85 newly dedicated agricultural public high schools and 151 public high schools in which agriculture was a new elective major. Fifteen-thousand public high school students were enrolled in dedicated agricultural training programs across the country, graduating upwards of 4,000 that year, most of whom continued their educations at land grant universities and private agricultural colleges, pp. 29-32.

<sup>96</sup> Robison (1911) asked agricultural high school principals of their difficulties and needs for providing high quality, modern instruction to students. Top concerns among the 151 respondents were lack of equipment and facilities, lack of time, shortage of scientifically trained instructors, lack of suitable and relevant textbooks, moral and financial support from school system administrators, pp. 158-182. In his summary recommendations, Robison states "Current practice places agriculture in the lower years of the high-school curriculum; and so it will probably function more and more as an " introductory science," as physical geography was once expected to do. It cannot then avail itself of the training and information gained from the other sciences as some of its advocates would have it do," pg. 180.

<sup>97</sup> A comparison of editions 1900-1914 of *Principles and Practices in Agricultural Analysis* by noted agricultural chemist Harvey Wiley, PhD was revised from one to three volumes in its final edition in 1914. The final full three volume set topped 2000 pages to include topics and techniques of analysis that did not exist in 1910 such as chapters in food preparation, food safety and preservation, bacterial analysis and pasteurization of milk, and combustion of organic fuels. Materials available in Special Collections, National Agricultural Library, National Agricultural Library, 10301 Baltimore Avenue, Beltsville, MD. Reference: Harvey Washington Wiley; See also a comparison of course requirements, College of Agriculture, Cornell University in The Cornell Register, 1909-1910 (pg. 348), 1914-1915 (pg. 84, pp. 119-127), and 1915-1916 (pg. 91, pp. 127-136).

attending courses and labs in advanced chemistry coursework that included combustion and fuels, metals, and mechanical production. Scientific agriculture expansions in chemistry alone required universities to construct new modern laboratories, special buildings for breeding, and hire thousands of expert instructors.<sup>98</sup>

For agricultural students like Russell Lord, who received their high school education under the Country Life Movement's reformed agricultural education agenda, classes in Shakespeare and the dramatic arts did little to prepare students for a modern future in farming. The romanticism of a revitalized countryside steeped in civic duty and progressive education was eclipsed by an exploding agricultural economy in 1912.<sup>99</sup> Mechanization, transportation, commodification, and scientific advancement rearranged the rural American natural and social landscape to maximize yields and expedite the shipment of agricultural products to urban population centers. The expansion of land grant and federal extension programs, propelled by generous government appropriations made possible by the passage of the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, thrust the American farmer into a wholly interdependent relationship with urban and increasingly global markets.<sup>100</sup>

The excitement and fervor of the Country Life Movement's rural humanitarian and social reform agenda quickly faded as economic prospects improved in commercial-commodity agriculture and for agricultural education institutions. The principles of rural reform left an indelible mark, however, in post-secondary agriculture education. Ideas of independence and rural community self-sufficiency translated into concepts of political, economic, and natural capital that grew into fields of agricultural economics, farm management, rural law.<sup>101</sup> And most

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<sup>98</sup> True, "A History of Agricultural Education in the United States: 1785-1925" (1929), documents the rise of chemical agriculture education as having begun in 1862 at a few agricultural colleges, and having completely matured as a full suite of crop, animal, and soils areas of scientific specialties by 1915, pp. 260-261.

<sup>99</sup> Bowers (1974) states that "while paying constant lip service to the farmer's uniqueness derived from his independence and individuality, reforms demanded government aid for him." The dichotomy of looking back to a time that existed only in American mythology while moving forward into an era of efficiency, government subsidies, and mechanization seemed "almost schizophrenic," pg. 101.

<sup>100</sup> Lord (1962) notes that at the time Secretary of Agriculture Tama Jim Wilson retired in 1913 after sixteen years of service to the USDA, farm exports had mushroomed to over \$2,500,000,000 a year. "When he took office in 1897, prices had touched bottom; after that they began to rise, and land values as well. This was still a lusty young debtor nation, expanding in production and working it off," pg. 241. See also "Grid and Grain" in Steinberg (2009), pp. 61 – 63.

<sup>101</sup> Rural sociologists Flora and Flora, *Rural Communities; Legacy and Change* (2008), trace conceptual understandings of rural political, human, economic, and natural capital to hallmark work conducted by rural sociologists working from 1930s through the 1960s, who in turn were influenced by rural sociologists interested in the social problems of farmers in the early 1900s, in "The Rural Landscape and the Importance of Place," pp. 3-28; Liberty Hyde Bailey promoted

importantly, the country life movement left an intellectual legacy that inspired an emerging conservation ethic among educated agriculturalists moving swiftly into a industrialized, capitalized, and mechanized farming landscape.<sup>102</sup>

For Russell Lord, a young man coming of age in what has been called the Second Industrial Revolution, experiences of a world undergoing incredible scientific, technological, and environmental change served as inspiration for the start of his professional journalistic career.<sup>103</sup> This chapter draws heavily on his work for *The Cornell Countryman*, from his first published book, *Captain Boyd's Battery*, and from a rich chronicle of his student and military life found in many articles and books written in decades later.

While serving in the Maryland 110<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, Lord recorded his thoughts in his field journal every day and also composed the light-hearted weekly company newspaper *The Mustard Roll* which he posted every week on the company command tent bulletin board, written on a single sheet of paper on a military issue Corona typewriter. He published his soldier's autobiography in 1920 upon returning to Cornell to complete his studies. *Captain Boyd's Battery A.E.F.* received high praise from the English Department faculty at Cornell but he insisted then and throughout his life that "I hated the prospect of a military existence, and to put it bluntly, I was frightened."<sup>104</sup> We are incredibly fortunate to have this chronicle that in no way serves as a

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research in rural sociology as a key component of the country life movement and argued that agricultural education should not be strictly technical. True (1929) credits Bailey for advocating for rural sociology in agricultural colleges as courses that led to better understanding of the human, economic, and environmental condition of farmer and their land. "It stands also for all the social and economic relations of the farm to its community. It stands for the discussion of the rural church, the rural school, rural literature, sanitation, good houses, good roads, organization, and all the laws that govern trade in farm products," pg. 257.

<sup>102</sup> Lord (1962) regards the conservation movement as the hardiest survivor of ideals to come from the country life movement. He credits Theodore Roosevelt with "an invigoration of country life to the national benefit" as farmland conservationists and hydrologists were given their say at two national conservation conferences sponsored and hosted by Roosevelt himself, the National Governors' Conference of 1908 and the North American Conservation Congress in 1909, pp. 247-250. Bowers (1974) suggests that the affinity between agricultural reformers and early conservationists was galvanized by concerns over soil, forest, and water resource degradation, with sustained national and regional attention to natural resource conservation a lasting legacy of the country life movement, pp. 32-38.

<sup>103</sup> Landes, *The Unbound Prometheus: Technological Change and Industrial Development in Western Europe from 1750 to the Present* (2003), argues that a "second wind" of industrialization overtook earlier advancements in manufacturing, transportation, resource extraction, and agriculture at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with technological and scientific advancements in petroleum, chemistry, communications, and electricity, pp. 5-7.

<sup>104</sup> Lord (1941), in: "As I Remember," *The Land*, Vol. I, No. 3: pg. 381; The Cornell Alumni News Literary Review, Feb. 12, 1920, praises Lord's book *Captain Boyd's Battery A.E.F.* as containing "none of the smoke of battle," and that "it presents the point of view of the man in the

military history, but of a young man's journey into the confusions and disillusionments of war that foretells of his future in agricultural journalism and ecological philosophy.

Lord's later published material including his books and issues of *The Land Quarterly* magazine provide depth and perspective to his earlier writings, and I include reference to them throughout this chapter to reveal his reflective and scientific interweaving of transformational experiences and ideas of complex interrelationships of ecology, agricultural, and conservation. This chapter is a narrative from the perspective of Russell Lord the storyteller who chronicled the "spectacle of progress" for future readers and leaders who would continue to build the foundations on which twenty first century sustainable agriculture would stand.<sup>105</sup>

## Countryman

In 1912 Russell Lord graduated from AHS in Sparks, Maryland with no intention to return to the family farm. Despite the aims of an ambitious country life rural reform agenda to keep young farmers on the land, Lord looked forward to continuing his studies at university, to set off from home on his first adventure an independent, confident college student. He followed former and much-admired AHS principal Bertrand Crocheron to Berkeley, California, believing rather naively that he would find there a continuation of the "grand time" had in high school.<sup>106</sup>

Crocheron for all his youthful enthusiasm and commitment to an inspired curriculum he himself designed with Liberty Hyde Bailey's blessings from Cornell, did his job maybe too well.<sup>107</sup> As many skeptical northern Baltimore County farmers had predicted, the consolidated agricultural high school turned out more sons and daughters to colleges of agriculture as it returned to rolling farmlands of the Worthington Valley. Lord found it impossible to find another teacher like Crocheron. The young extension graduate student hand-picked to serve as the school's first principal by Dean Bailey, proved to be one-of-a-kind and enthralled students with his zeal and passion. Lord later understood that Bailey served as the "heart and soul" of the Country Life Movement, who so inspired this new generation of agricultural teachers and their students. "He set his students ablaze with dreams of the new agriculture. He made them think in terms of the country life movement, a movement in which they were to function as social

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ranks, and the thoughts of those who did their simple tasks in simple ways and reacted directly to their experiences," pg. 235.

<sup>105</sup> Lord (1931), pg. 221.

<sup>106</sup> Lord (1931), "We were having, all of us, an amazing awakening and a grand time. [Crocheron] held, with Bailey, that soils and cows, properly taught, could be made, to a country boy especially, subjects more stimulating to their imagination than Latin, and of greater cultural effect," pp. 213-214.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., "He set up a course of study calculated to educate in home terms the ninety and some percent who never would, and never should go to college." In other words, a standard-fare vocational program, different only in that it was delivered by an inspired, charismatic teacher, pg. 213.

pioneers for a better American civilization – a civilization of countrymen, economically and spiritually sound, and leader and not the slave of urbanism.”<sup>108</sup>

The Country Life Movement involved many leaders, of course, but Liberty Hyde Bailey as Dean of the College of Agriculture at Cornell University gave it the emotional fervor of a crusade. The movement was based in both emotion and reality, stemming from fears that a steady migration of America’s rural population to crowded, chaotic urban centers threatened the food supply as well as agrarian principles on which the nation was founded. Urbanism threatened to obliterate romantic notions of independence, moral character, and civic duty encapsulated in the Jeffersonian ideals. By the late 19<sup>th</sup> century agrarianism served as a kind of agricultural fundamentalism that promoted sentimental attachments to ideas of the independent landowning American farmer. “The city sits like a parasite, running out its roots to the open country and draining it of its substance,” Bailey declared, “The city takes everything to itself - materials, money, men - and gives back what it does not want.”<sup>109</sup>

The rural exodus that so alarmed Country Life reformers in the early 1900s had been indeed been intensifying since the 1860s as part of a long-term trend in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic. Rural people had been steadily migrating to cities since the late 1700s as mechanization, volatile agricultural economies, and exhausted land forced many from their farms. During the early 1800s the Industrial Revolution in manufacturing swept through eastern American landscapes where steep gradients and abundant water resources could be harnessed to power mills and turbines. Water-powered factories lined river valleys from Maine to Virginia. New roads, wharves, transportation systems, mines, quarries, lumber camps, and manufacturing required workers and drew from the rural American countryside or from urban immigrant labor pools in the cities. By the 1890s new production technologies that harnessed energy from coal and petroleum triggered a second wave of industrial growth that drew tens of thousands of rural tradesmen, skilled and unskilled laborers, and their families. Industry dominated the American landscape in the Northeast by the early 1900s and a cultural-economic shift from “an agrarian handicraft economy to one dominated by industrial and machine manufacture” was complete.<sup>110</sup>

Country Life reformers believed that this observable and new kind of urban industrial behemoth threatened not only the agrarian ideal of independence and morality by siphoning off American’s farmers and their children, but it left and even “gave back” an intellectually demoralized and spiritually diminished rural population who needed, simply put, *saving*.<sup>111</sup>

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<sup>108</sup> Lord (1931), pp. 213-214.

<sup>109</sup> Bowers (1974), pp. 37-38.

<sup>110</sup> Bowers (1974) notes an acceleration in the rural migration occurring between 1890 and 1910 when those employed in agriculture decreased from 64% to 30%. By 1920 the census showed that less than 25% of Americans could claim to farm, pp. 13-14; Steinberg, *Down to Earth: Nature’s Role in American History* (2009), pp. 57-61; Landis (2003), pp. 1-2.

<sup>111</sup> Lord (1931) interviewed Bailey in his retirement. In 1930 he abided by his earlier beliefs in the inherent evil of the industrial urban life. “It is by such processes that cities have become impersonal and undemocratic. The people there have become submerged in the system. The machine and the mechanism dominate their philosophy. It deprives them of the joy of a personal

Liberty Hyde Bailey, renowned horticulturalist, pragmatist, and progressive education reformer entered eagerly into the movement in 1895 to help organize educational efforts that aimed to restore and uplift rural culture. He quickly became its leading evangelist and worked from his influential position as Dean of the College of Agriculture at Cornell to improve pre-service agricultural education training, organize rural youth clubs, and promote nature study and school gardens in public schools. He advocated for an expansion of the reach and relevance of a struggling university extension education platform and made good use of new technologies in publishing and mass communication.<sup>112</sup>

In 1908, after hearing Bailey give an impassioned speech arguing for continued uplift of the American farmer as a national symbol for democracy, stewardship, and morality, President Theodore Roosevelt appointed him Chair of the Country Life Commission to investigate why rural people migrated from the land to America's cities. Roosevelt strongly believed in the economic and democratic value of America's rural sector, and felt as Bailey did, that the country's rapid industrialization and urbanization threatened to leave rural life, and thus its virtues, behind.<sup>113</sup> Bailey wrote and presented the Commission's final report to the President after compiling and analyzing a year's worth of surveys collected from over 10,000 rural respondents. Roosevelt presented the report to Congress with an equally impassioned cover letter that urged elected officials to act upon legislation that would preserve the American farmer, his rural culture, and the open, productive landscapes of nation. "The strengthening of country life," wrote Roosevelt, "is the strengthening of the whole nation."<sup>114</sup> By 1910, Bailey was not only a national name, beloved author and public speaker, but a man wearing down and thinking about retirement. He looked forward to returning to his interests in horticulture, plant breeding, and travel, but he maintained an influential presence in the affairs of rural reform and discourse

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product. It presses out the variations that make men to be men rather copyists, and that put into life the personality and separateness that make it worth living," pg. 226.

<sup>112</sup> Armitage (2009), pp. 178-180 and pp.184-185; Bowers (1974), pp. 45-61; Minter (2006) provides a most thorough and evocative biography of Bailey, framed the pragmatist tradition in "Nature Study, Rural Progressivism, and the Holy Earth: The Forgotten Contribution of Liberty Hyde Bailey," pp. 17-50.

<sup>113</sup> Peters and Morgan (2004) offer a contemporary review of the Country Life Commission's work to counter earlier criticism that it served as a platform for social engineering, which the authors contend was far from Roosevelt's and Bailey's intents. Instead, they argue, the Commission served as America's first foray into promoting permanent, sustainable agriculture. "The heart of the commission's report is a challenging call for the development of a 'system of self-sustaining agriculture' built on 'new and permanent rural civilization' that would be 'in full harmony with the best American ideals,' pg. 292.

<sup>114</sup> The Report of the Country Life Commission, February 9, 1909.



authoring over sixty books including *The Holy Earth* (1915) that argued for a transformational approach to environmental stewardship and policy.<sup>115</sup>

Agricultural educator Bertrand Crocheron and AHS graduate Russell Lord, were among the first generation of teachers, students, legislative leaders, and citizens who were profoundly inspired by Bailey's progressive efforts to restore and make permanent a healthy, prosperous, and stable rural culture in America.<sup>116</sup> Most far-reaching of these efforts, however, was Bailey's nature study program that he entrusted to Anna Botsford Comstock to build and nurture in school systems across the country.<sup>117</sup> Comstock's dedication to making available nature study to all schools, regardless of whether they were rural or urban, launched a movement in outdoor education. Through a national series of teacher training opportunities, educational mailers and instructional pamphlets available through Cornell Extension, and her own prolific writing on the methods and virtues of nature study education, Comstock's influence expanded through teacher's academies and summer institutes. The national organization of Junior Naturalists in turn would influence the future scientific and civic endeavors of young people around the world.<sup>118</sup> Nature study, which permeated all courses of natural science for high school students also served as an important core course taught at all levels and grades at AHS. In addition to agricultural course work, the school gardens, an off-site summer wilderness camp and outdoor classroom on the Gunpowder River, a school forest, and daily care for classroom animal and plants were highly regarded aspects of the AHS program. Fondly remembering his summers at camp, nature walks in the school forest, and caring for the classroom pets, Lord attributes nature study to his early sense of environmental awareness.<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>115</sup> Bailey (1915) in: *The Holy Earth*, pushes past the arguments of preservation versus conservation and draws deeply upon his Judeo-Christian tradition to promote right relationship between the farmer and his land, land use and management. He regards democracy and well-crafted public policy as sacred.

<sup>116</sup> Lord (1931) gives Bailey equally high regard for leading the rural reform movement of the early 1900s that shaped agricultural reform in later decades, and for himself personally as a student and extension worker in Ohio, in: "Attendants and Outriders," pp. 180 – 227, and pp. 226 – 227.

<sup>117</sup> Comstock, *Handbook of Nature Study* (1911), continues to serve as a foundational manual for nature study in the U.S having been in print for over a century. Bailey and Comstock enjoyed an amiable relationship at Cornell and he trusted her entirely to the idea of nature study as a national program for rural restoration of land and people.

<sup>118</sup> Armitage (2009), pp. 187-189; Minton, "The History Of The Nature-Study Movement and its Role in the Development of Environmental Education" (1980) and Kohlstedt, "Nature, Not Books: Scientists and the Origins of the Nature-Study Movement in the 1890's," (2005) pp. 324-352.

<sup>119</sup> Lord (1931) in "Crusade," pp. 211-223.

The exodus of farm children from AHS to the halls of universities to further their studies did not please the farmers who had questioned the aims of a program that promised to return to the land young, educated, and eager-to-farm students. Crocheron was dismissed after four years as head-of-school and soon after his departure for California the school's tone and temper settled down and its vocational teachers seemed far less inspiring and charismatic. Lord recollected that "some part of it, I could see even then, was sheer hoopla, and the end would come as soon as the impetus faded; and some of it was bad for us children, giving us too grave ideas of our own importance – but that one outlives."<sup>120</sup>

At seventeen, Lord followed his beloved teacher west. He believed that a course in university agriculture at Berkeley under Crocheron would provide him access to bigger ideas and more opportunity.<sup>121</sup> With a strong interest in reporting on rural issues, and honing his journalistic skills, it seemed at first a grand adventure. But far from home and in an academic environment very different from the progressive agricultural school nestled the rolling Piedmont hills of Maryland, he found major obstacles. For one, acceptance to the university school of agriculture required proficiency in a foreign language that would require nearly three full semesters of pre-requisite coursework. This, as Lord would later discover, Crocheron had decided to leave out of the preparatory curriculum at AHS. In addition, the program required advanced knowledge in mathematics, calculus, and trigonometry and more pre-admission courses were needed. Lord later wrote rather disgustingly of Crocheron's liberties with AHS curriculum, "Latin was out. All foreign languages were out. Trigonometry – if you wanted that, you could go elsewhere. English, history and some math, yes; but so far as possible in rural terms."<sup>122</sup> Frustrated and homesick he returned East at end of his freshman year.<sup>123</sup>

"In my freshman year at college I wrote a book in praise of agricultural high schools, and threw it away," he wrote during that summer home. Things had changed. The farm was struggling. His father had returned to brokerage work in Baltimore to support its operation. Lord spent time on his horse revisiting familiar trails and backroads of the Worthington Valley, if only to think things through.<sup>124</sup>

Riding home disillusioned and not a little lost for future plans, he recalled being inspired by Bailey himself while attending a large gathering of agriculturalists and 4H members at the Pennsylvania Rural Progress Association conference in Philadelphia during his senior year at AHS. Here was the heart of the country life reform movement, nearing the end of his term as

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<sup>120</sup> Lord (1931), pg. 216.

<sup>121</sup> Lord (1931), pg. 220.

<sup>122</sup> Lord (1931),pg. 214.

<sup>123</sup> Lord (1931). Despite the frustration of not having the requisite courses to be admitted fully at university, Lord describes his freshman year at UC Berkeley as "unremarkable," and the classes uninspiring, pg. 220. By this time Crocheron, however, was already directing the California Extension Service and no longer teaching.

<sup>124</sup> Lord (1931), pg. 221.

Dean of the College of Agriculture at Cornell and preparing to retire, yet giving his audience impassioned reason to believe that there was purpose to it and that “sustained by the emotion of the moment” Lord believed he would someday, and soon, leave the farm to pursue a career in rural journalism to further the cause of rural reform.<sup>125</sup> By midsummer Lord had applied to take the entrance exams at Cornell and passed. His year of frustrating and uninspired study in foreign language and mathematics at Berkeley counted towards fulfilling the university’s strict entrance requirements. He was allowed to enroll as a sophomore and he began classes in September.<sup>126</sup>

The classes at Cornell like those at Berkeley were standard fare and quite boring. Lord’s second year in college was dedicated to building on fundamentals in botany, entomology, physics, languages, soils, and advanced chemistry.<sup>127</sup> Still he found enough of the “dizzy idealism of the Bailey regime surviving there” so that he felt welcomed to join in debates, clubs, extension activities, and to contribute articles, poems, and stories to the university’s student journal *The Countryman* for which Bailey was founding editor in 1903.<sup>128</sup>

Chemistry in all of its new forms and specialties fascinated him, and he recalled his interviews with farmer and amateur agricultural chemist Marvin Oren of Bald Hill in the calcium poor uplands of Baltimore County’s serpentine barrens. The experience of interviewing the brilliant but isolated and impoverished farmer had been transformative for them both; Oren pleased that anyone would be interested in his pasture experiments with soil chemistry and biological amendments, and Lord’s discovery of intrinsic scientific understandings of the common farmer. New technological innovations and applications, however, held an appeal for

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<sup>125</sup> Lord (1931). Bailey, speaking at the Pennsylvania Rural Progress Association conference, said, “We must have a rural civilization that will be as effective and satisfying as other civilizations.” Lord recalled, “I quote him from memory, but believe that even at this twenty years distance, I have the words right. To youths as tensed as we were to his outlook, he was a prophet and the words of a prophet are hard to forget,” and that “it was plain in this and in all other of his utterances that he meant more effective and infinitely more satisfying. Or at least that is how we took it, and saw ourselves as a generation privileged to share in historic doings,” pp. 219-220.

<sup>126</sup> “Russell Robbins Lord” is enrolled as a student of agriculture at the sophomore level, having met requirements and passed the entrance exam. See: *The Register of Cornell University, 1914-1915.*, pg. 245.

<sup>127</sup> True (1929) describes a typical agriculture student’s class schedule in 1915 as filled with fundamental courses in natural, physical, and chemical sciences with advanced agricultural courses taught by professors who were specialists in their fields but not necessarily trained educators; See also the *Cornell Register 1914-1916, 1916-1917, and 1917-1919* for course descriptions.

<sup>128</sup> Lord (1931), in: “Crusade,” pg. 220; Lord (1941) explains that when he received his position as student editor of *The Cornell Countryman* the possibility that a career could be made of writing about agriculture excited him very much and he was quick to investigate and apply to the agricultural Communications Department, pp. 381-382.

Lord, a very different perspective from that of old agrarian ideas, more pragmatic and hopeful in the promise of modernization and advancement in agriculture to improve farmers' economic outcomes and thus benefit rural communities.<sup>129</sup>

Lord returned home as often as he could afford to do so, and despite his earlier aversion to laboring on the farm when a boy, he worked happily and vigorously at haying, livestock care, and barn chores, content to listen to the stories of the country folk he missed so much. Russell Lord's attachment to his home landscape included an appreciation for its geography and the people who shaped its culture. It was rooted in an early admiration, born of novelty and new freedoms, on the occasion when his father moved the family out of confines of the Baltimore suburbs to a small farm in the country. Yet the severe spectacles of cut-over, mined, deforested hills and the rough, coarse ground of worn-out farms from the windows of his train did little to endear him to central New York and Pennsylvania, and the sight of abused, worn out land disgusted him.<sup>130</sup>

Changes were occurring at home as well. Minus the zeal and excitement that came with the flush of agricultural reform, there returned to the Worthington Valley a wariness of expert advice and government interventions. The Smith-Lever Act of 1914, a direct legislative outcome of the Country Life Report to Congress in 1909, promised to nationalize extension under the USDA and land grant universities. A rapid expansion of standardized programs, some underwritten by large corporate agricultural interests invariably resulted in increasing levels of bureaucracy and noticeable commercial promotions that urged farmers to invest in the latest technological and mechanical wonders. Farmers generally distrusted extension agents, believing that they worked more to promote the interests of corporate and manufacturing sectors. World War I would soon change this impression and farmer's relationship to extension.<sup>131</sup>

Liberty Hyde Bailey, by now well retired, invested in his own botanical research at a Cornell lab, railed against the new government-commercial-institutional relationships as a threat to regionalism and rural democracy. Lord observed local farmers' skepticism that grew out of a

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<sup>129</sup> Lord (1931), in: "Working in the Dark," pp. 118-131; Carlson, *The New Agrarian Mind: The Movement to Decentralist Thought in Twentieth Century America* (2004), describes an acceptance of modern technology as an important principle of the new agrarianism as defined in the tenets of the Country Life Association, pg. 20.

<sup>130</sup> Lord (1962), "Mining and lumbering of this sort brings with it, or is perhaps in some part brought about by, a miserably poor agriculture on run-down and degraded soil," pg. 457; Thompson, "Convergence in an Agrarian Key" (2009), describes a budding ecological awareness and holistic thought derived through attentiveness to natural and social landscapes, an important shift of the new agrarianism 1900-1920, pp.167-184.

<sup>131</sup> Danbom (1979) speaks to the resistance of farmers to the Smith-Lever Act expansion of state and federal extension, pg. 23; Roth, "The Country Life Movement" (2002), also describes the initial suspicions of farmers for an expanded extension and elaborates on the shift in farmer trust once war seemed eminent, pg. 5.

mistrust of over-organized, large expert entities.<sup>132</sup> “In four short years I had seen a rural community made over along model lines by all the specifics prescribed by rural sociologists under the general head of ‘community building’ – short courses, home talent shows, corn congresses, field days, summer camps, farm demonstrations of new practices, boys’ and girls’ clubs, and what not. And in the three years I was at Cornell studying how specifics would remake rural America, I saw all that had been built there at home lapse to the same old comfortable, stupid level.”<sup>133</sup>

### **The Countryman and the Advent of War**

There is no better way to understand the experiences of Russell Lord at Cornell than to glean through the pages of *The Cornell Countryman*. The student written and produced publication was issued monthly during the academic year, each packed with long descriptive articles, pages of student and alumni news, regular columns, and featured stories from every department of the College of Agriculture and Natural Sciences. Front-loaded with full page advertisements from equipment dealers, the articles that followed were richly illustrated and amended with photographs. It is easy to spend hours, if not days, browsing issues archived at Cornell online to get to know intimately the important issues and developments of the day, but for the purposes of this research only the issues that were published during Lord’s undergraduate residency were closely read in order to see and understand his college experience and his experience of a wider world, at the time he was there as an undergraduate 1915 – 1918.

In overview, during the years that spanned Lord’s enrollment, the magazine was awash in stories about progress in chemical and mechanical sciences. Advancements were swept forward to the front third of each issue to announce and explain important improvements in farm machinery and technologies, to herald progress in plant genetics, and feature the latest in livestock and poultry breeding. These were usually followed by shorter by technical articles in chemical developments for pest control and fertilizers, mechanical engineering and packaging, and new ways to harness and use energy on farm and in home. Sometimes featured near the front, but mostly in the busy, meaty middle, were articles on forestry, fisheries, game, and conservation. These were the shortest but in the three volumes examined the conservation-related articles became longer and more frequent. Nearly the entire back third of each issue was dedicated to student, faculty, and alumni news, poetry, field trial results, and as the war approached, pages of long lists naming the students of agriculture and natural sciences who had

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<sup>132</sup> Lord (1939) states that the Smith-Lever Act promised to nationalize agricultural extension, a concept that bothered Bailey to the point of openly criticizing the results, pp. 46-47; Bailey (1918), in: *What Is Democracy?* protests throughout against the rapid expansion and standardization of agriculture education through efforts of the Farm Bureau, federal government, and land grant universities, and he feared loss of and appreciation for variation in and practical solutions for local and regional problems in farming, which he described as a concerning drift away from democracy; Minteer (2006) describes Bailey as suspicious of the power of industrial and governmental to corrupt through the infusion of non-democratic policies on the farmer and rural society, pp. 46-48, and describes the negative response of farmers to the Smith- Lever Act of 1914 as a building resistance to overly optimistic country lifers and unwanted intrusion into their everyday affairs in farming and community, pg. 26.

joined the military. At times, the paper seemed giddy with excitement and pride, and for all but one issue, Russell Lord is there as a contributor, assistant editor, managing editor, and in his senior year Editor-In-Chief.

In 1915 the growing mass market for home and farm products in petroleum, metals, and plastics dominated the front advertisement section. If electrification had not yet come to one's community, and in most of rural America it had not, one could purchase a complete acetylene home lighting and heating system, to include a home generator, pilot plant, a full set of pipes, a beautifully large cook stove, and all the "handsome lighting fixtures" to modernize a rural home in one easy-to-install package, boasted the Oxxweld Acetylene Company of New Jersey. The "gas producing stone Union Carbide" available from the coal and gas country of central Pennsylvania was all that was required to make your home bright and warm.<sup>134</sup> The Holt Caterpillar Company of Peoria, Illinois, promised that its continuous track tractor (available in three sizes) had proven itself over ten years of "severe service with four European armies." The large Watson gasoline-powered orchard sprayer, the size of a hay wagon, still needed the draft horse to pull its heavy bulk tanks but the Field Force Pump Company promised that the trouble with horses would balance out with a pest free orchard crop and higher yields.

In the fall of 1915 Lord joined the paper as a part-time assistant copy editor. In the spring of 1916 Russell Lord made *The Countryman* with his poetry debut "The Road To Anywhere" signed only with his initials R.L. that announced to his audience that his literary and journalistic adventures had at long last begun.

Ho! roll your pans in your ponchos and swing them upon your backs;

For Anywhere is a day ahead, and we must be making tracks.

Whither or whither we do not know, and whither we do not care;

Wanderers we with footsteps free to take up Anywhere!

We toss our coins at the crossroads and follow the way they fall,

Or turn our back to its chosen track; it matters not at all

Whether our road run high or low, shaded it be or bare,

Since those we be whose footsteps free fall blithe toward Anywhere.

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<sup>134</sup> Electrification was very slow to come to rural America due to competing energy interests and legislative lags. In comparison, by 1935 electricity to rural Japan had been available to 90% of farming and fishing communities and to coastal and inland communities in Holland (100%) and Denmark (85%), while only 10% of American farm and coastal communities had substations but for a few direct household linkages. See: Robert T. Beall "Rural Electrification," *Yearbook of Agriculture USDA, 1940*, pp. 790-809.

Our feet are free and our hearts are free, and we talk to the folk we meet.

Wonderful human adventures fall at our questing feet.

Thought for thought to the men we meet, and a word to the maiden fair:

These mark the way and make a day on the Road to Anywhere.

So now we swing at a four-mile clip through the breezy, sunny day;

And now we sprawl by a mountain stream to hear what the waters say.

Then again along to a marching song or a slower stroller's air,

Our footsteps fall to the errant call of the Road to Anywhere!<sup>135</sup>

The poem foretold of a long career ahead traveling across the nation and overseas, gathering the stories of country folk, reporting on the impact of rural policies and world events, and of making a living in journalism on the road. For his first published piece, the poem laid the path of the dream he was determined to realize. His initials also appear at the end of numerous book reviews, field trial reports, alumni and student news, and faculty interviews. In his spring semester Lord had been elected to *The Countryman* Board to serve as a rookie managing editor. In addition to writing and editing, he participated fully in the hard but exciting work of formatting and layout, and securing guest authors from local, state, and national agricultural sources.<sup>136</sup>

Throughout 1915-1916 *The Countryman* was peppered with ads and short articles on the need for rural electrification, research discoveries in the hybridization of grains, and livestock breeding progress that promised bigger, meatier animals and for dairy, more milk. Strangely but not surprisingly, there are some mentions of the savagery that had recently engulfed Europe. Advertisements for barbed wire touted its effectiveness on the cattle range as well as the on battlefield. The Rex Company of Rochester, New York, staged an ad with the large print heading of "HORRIBLE!" first to catch the reader's eye, then to provide social commentary, followed by a sales pitch for chemical orchard treatments. It read:

To think that Europe is destroying the lives of millions of its best manhood in this crazy, unnecessary slaughter and paying billions of dollars to do it! If people must suffocate, mutilate and annihilate lives, why not make it a profitable and humane slaughter. Instead of spending billions of dollars, save millions of dollars! We have the

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<sup>135</sup> Lord (1916), in: "The Road to Anywhere," *The Cornell Countryman*. Vol. 13, No. 8, pg. 660.

<sup>136</sup> Lord (1916), in: "The Countryman Board," *The Cornell Countryman*. Vol. 14, No. 9: pg. 771.

dangerous, drastic dope that destroys - and a great many fruit growers that have been shooting from the damp, dismal trenches for years are on the firing line THIS FALL! Pretty soon now, with tanks loaded with REX Lime and Sulphur Solution, feeling satisfied they can and determined they will destroy the much hated Jan Jose Scale and Peach Leaf Curl!

Agriculture, the art and science of cultivation and prosperity, now became linked directly to the science and barbarity of war. The same chemical and industrial processes used to make and run farm machinery, to amend soil and treat crops, could also be utilized to manufacture and deploy weapons of war, incur mass destruction, and kill millions.<sup>137</sup>

The number of articles that urged war preparedness and suggested the possibility of U.S. engagement increased through the academic year 1916 - 1917. The establishment and training of the Cornell Cadet Corps, as reported in "Campus Notes," was at the ready with three full standing companies "equipped for field service." Competitions for marksmanship, field maneuvers, and cavalry drills were dutifully reported upon. A photograph of the university main filled with pup tents and students in uniform milling about in friendly groups nearly took up an entire page.<sup>138</sup>

The 1917 "War Issue" was filled with articles that warned farmers to prepare, especially on the home front. President Wilson's very short address "A Call To Farms" was featured prominently behind a lengthy table of contents.<sup>139</sup> During this time, university leaders urged students to not abandon their academic training to take up arms.<sup>140</sup> In an effort to subdue a rising

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<sup>137</sup> See advertisement for the Rex Company, Inc., in: *The Cornell Countryman*. Vol. 13, (1915) No. 2: pg. 86; Smart, "Chemical and Biological Warfare Research and Development During the Civil War" (2014), describes the early development of chemical weapons during the Civil War Era that included calcium hydroxide (lime) and sulfur combinations (similar manufacturing by the Rex Co.) to produce a type of pepper-spray. Though never deployed (it was on hand, however) during the Civil War, it was mass produced and deployed in the Great War in Europe as a "suffocating smoke cartridge" to clear trenches and tunnels, pg. 4.

<sup>138</sup> *The Cornell Countryman*. "Campus Notes", Vol. 14 (1916), No. 8: pg. 769.

<sup>139</sup> *The Cornell Countryman*. "War Issue" Vol. 15, No. 9 (1917); Lord, "This Land and Time" (1962), in: *The Care of the Earth: A History of Husbandry*. Agricultural production ramped up to prepare for inevitable war in Europe. The domestic American agricultural landscape suffered. "They made war on the rank fertility of the soil," wrote Frederick Jackson Turner, pp. 250-252.

<sup>140</sup> Throughout pre-war issues 1915-1918 *The Cornell Countryman* included appeals by administrators and faculty who attempted to calm students with short articles about the patriotic duty of farmers at home and the need for more men in plant and animal research. Some students and faculty, however, joined foreign forces or the Ambulance Corps prior to the U.S. declaration of war on Germany. Those who returned to Cornell offered to speak to classes about their experiences and were given tiny announcements, sometimes barely noticeable, in several issues.



war hysteria and focus efforts on war relief food programs, the university and USDA propaganda exhorted citizens and students to grow food, to plant window boxes if they must, even if to just grow a potato plant. Farmers were encouraged to break more land, raise more livestock, grow more cotton, shear more wool sheep, plant and harvest more rope hemp.

Remarkably, embedded with the same issue and bookended by heady war preparedness copy, is an appeal by Liberty Hyde Bailey to form a “Society of the Holy Earth,” appearing completely out of place, more as a protest for peace than a call to war. His bold hand-written and graceful signature streamed fluidly across the bottom of the page looking nothing at all like the very serious type font that filled nearly every other page. The call for a Society of the Holy Earth made the claim for an unorganized and democratic association, and surely influenced Lord’s thinking about assembling a similar society decades later as the Society for the Friends of the Land.

Its principle of union will be the love of the Earth, treasured in the hearts of men and women. To every person who longs to walk on the bare ground, who stops in a busy day for the song of a bird, who hears the wind, who looks upward to the clouds, who would protect the land from waste and devastation realizing that we are transients and that multitudes must come after us, who would exercise a keepership over the planet, who would love the materials and yet not be materialistic, who would contribute his skill and his excellence to the common good, who would escape self-centered, commercial and physical valuations of life,—to all these souls everywhere the call will come. <sup>141</sup>

From 1917-1918 articles addressing forest and game restoration appeared as frequently those urging preparation for war. Ads from companies to sell books and pamphlets to enterprising young farmers promised readers that they would learn everything that needed to be known in order to raise deer, quail, turkey, or trout. For an additional fee, companies supplied pamphlets on how to restore and manage habitat to turn farmland into commercial game land. Foresters contributed glowing articles detailing the return of woodlands to the Northeast that replaced abandoned farmlands and held worn out soils. Short stories about trout production on the farm, how to build check dams to shore up eroded streams, and directions on how to squeeze roe from wild caught fish for at-home propagation, fit neatly between tractor ads and pictures of cream separators. <sup>142</sup> It was clearly an exciting time to be an agriculture and natural resources student at Cornell.

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<sup>141</sup> Bailey (1917), in: “A Society of The Holy Earth,” *The Cornell Countryman*, “War Issue,” Vol. 15, No. 9: pg. 730.

<sup>142</sup> Issues of *The Countryman* prior to 1916 contain few articles on game, fisheries, and forest restoration. Starting in 1916 this changed as short articles on restoration and stocking techniques appeared, often accompanied by advertisements by game rearing and hunting goods companies. E.A. Quarles. “Bringing Back the Game” and the Hercules Powder Company, Wilmington, Delaware, “When Our Land Is Filled With Game,” Vol. 14 (1916) No. 5: 387; pg. 446; W.S. Howard, “Fire Protection in New York State.” Vol. 15 (1917) No.2: pp. 73-74. The American Game Protection Association, “A Cornell Game Farm” Vol. 15 (1917) No. 1: pp. 39-44.

When the school year ended in May, publication of *The Cornell Countryman* was suspended for the summer. Russell Lord returned home and worked as a milk tester and inspector in northern Maryland for summer breaks from 1915 to 1917. That he needed to work in order pay his own tuition spoke to the uncertainty of the farm situation at home. Lord conducted bacterial counts on milk samples and checked cows for bovine tuberculosis bacilli. He noted that through the wonders of chemistry he preserved “innocent babes and other consumers from disease and death.”<sup>143</sup> The need for milk testers increased from 1914 to 1918 as domestic urban and overseas demand for whole milk and whole milk solids, free of deadly typhoid, tuberculosis, and other milk-borne diseases, increased dramatically.<sup>144</sup> By 1917 the Baltimore Milk Ordinance was enacted that regulated only pasteurized milk could be sold to Baltimore’s large public school system, public hospitals, and to urban distributors. In Washington D.C., Baltimore, and Philadelphia, the regional dairy market for Mid-Atlantic dairies, millions of school children were served fresh milk twice daily in hygienically single use paper cups while families purchased milk from markets or had it delivered in sterilized glass bottles.<sup>145</sup>

Lord, knowledgeable in disease transmission, partook of his share of complaints in the political firestorm that surrounded his inspector’s job and weathered the grumblings of dairy farmers with patience as he tried to explain the science of infection and hygiene to his clients. The agricultural chemist, Harvey Washington Wiley, who quite literally wrote the book for agricultural chemistry that Lord and his classmates used in coursework and labs, served as

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<sup>143</sup> Lord (1962), in: “Points of Difference,” pg. 340.

<sup>144</sup> Lord (1947) describes how even as late as 1920 the dairy industry resisted scientific suspicions that diseases could be transmitted through raw, unpasteurized milk and worried that if undeniably proven, it would have hurt business. Even when dairyman and future Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace and his family suffered severe bouts of tuberculosis in 1916 from drinking from their own herd’s raw milk. In the throes of high fever, respiratory distress, and after four months in bed, Wallace suggested to friends (though personally knowing otherwise thanks to his doctor’s insistence that it was indeed a dairy-borne disease) that his condition was simply the result of a poor diet, pp. 187-189; Atkins, “School Milk in Britain, 1900-1934” (2007) pp. 395-427. Powdered milk and milk solids were shipped to the U.K. from the U.S. to help fight widespread malnutrition in school children and nursing mothers from 1904 – 1910. The war served to increase demand for an otherwise lagging market, pp. 6-9.

<sup>145</sup> Lord (1962) in: “Points of Difference” states that this was a time when “personal hygiene became rather a suddenly a fetish,” and fear of germs and disease permeated crowded urban areas, replacing shared metal cups and dippers with single use paper cups and drinking fountains, especially in city public schools, factory, and office lunch rooms, pp. 339-340; Czaplicki, “Pure Milk is Better than Purified Milk,” (2007), provides an account of the political and regulatory battles that occurred in Chicago starting with the 1906 passage of the Pure Food and Drug Act. A four year lapses in regulatory implementation led to numerous outbreaks and epidemics of deadly childhood diseases, transported (it is now known) in contaminated milk orders arriving from eastern dairy states, pp. 411-433; Baltimore Milk Ordinance, U.S. Public Affairs Information Service, 1917-1918, pg. 319.

principle advocate for and author of the U.S. Pure Food and Drug Act enacted in 1906. This legislation set many agricultural industries afire with prolonged protests and demonstrations against federal regulation and government intrusion. In his position, Russell Lord learned just how fiercely agricultural interests would fight food safety science and just how ignorant many farmers remained of it.<sup>146</sup>

He also sold dairy equipment, all manner of it abundantly advertised in *The Countryman*. Advertisers and salesmen promised “endless improvements” for herds and cow parlors, designed to increase milk safety, herd health and comfort, and potential profit for those farmers who could afford the concrete and steel.<sup>147</sup> Lord knew his way around the technology and how to promote it to doubtful farmers. Dairy in the Northeast was booming: production was high and prices per hundredweight were climbing.<sup>148</sup> But higher still was the chemical cost of growing grass and producing silage to feed the herds.<sup>149</sup> “Nowhere has the Great War hit the farmer much harder than it has in the cost of fertilizers,” wrote Professor E.S. Savage of animal husbandry. He explained in great analytical detail the cost benefit of returning to a more “permanent agriculture,” to utilize the natural product of cattle manure to replenish and restore fields rather than expensive chemicals.<sup>150</sup> Agriculturalists began to consider the concept of permanent agriculture” a term coined by Liberty Hyde Bailey in the early 1900s. In the pages of *The Countryman* the idea began to challenge, tentatively at first, chemically and mechanically dependent farming methods on the basis of rising costs and wartime scarcity.<sup>151</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Lord (1962), pp. 335-343; Wiley’s *Principles and Practices of Agricultural Analysis* is still in print as of 2007; See Harvey Washington Wiley biographical information at the Chemical Heritage Foundation <http://www.chemheritage.org/discover/online-resources/chemistry-in-history/themes/public-and-environmental-health/food-and-drug-safety/wiley.aspx>

<sup>147</sup> Lord (1962), pp. 340-341.

<sup>148</sup> Lord (1947) describes sales of dried milk and milk solids, along with other agricultural products to Europe in the early years of the war particularly to France and England, spectacular. “In the two years before America [had declared war there had been] an insatiable demand. There was virtually no limit to what governments of accessible foreign belligerents would bid or pay,” pg. 195.

<sup>149</sup> Lord (1916) in: “The Dairy Situation: Report on Frederick County, Maryland,” for the Women’s Civic League of Baltimore; Warren, G.F. “The Price of Milk” (1917) in: *The Cornell Countryman*. Vol. 15, No. 3: pp. 129-132.

<sup>150</sup> Savage, E.S. (1916), in: “War and the Manurial Value of Feeds,” in: *The Cornell Countryman*. Vol.13, No. 1: pp. 115-116.

<sup>151</sup> To suggest a more environmentally sustainable and conservative form of agriculture, the term *permanent agriculture* came into use during the country life movement, though it had been used earlier by deans of agricultural colleges in the late 1880s to mean a less transient and more settled way of during the years of agricultural expansion west. Franklin Hiram King published *Farmers of Forty Centuries: Permanent Agriculture in China, Korea, and Japan* (1911) that

After hours, when dairy inspections were complete Lord worked on articles for the fall editions of *The Countryman*. He penned his full name in a byline for the article “A Traveling School of American Civilization” in which he related the adventures of a group of agricultural high school students from California on a road trip to see the country by “tourist sleeper” with stops in twenty-six states and thirty-three cities. The trip was made by modern diesel engine train, a coast-to-coast excursion led by none other than B.H. Crocheron, still crowing, it seemed to Lord, with the expansive rhetoric of his old head-of-school days promoting the noble cause and greatness of the American farmer. Crocheron wrote with clear intent to connect his students to a great appreciation of and high admiration for the urban factory man, the Ironmaster, and the investor. The children of the agricultural West met the men of the industrial East. Industry and agriculture were now fundamentally and forever joined, so it seemed. As a flourish to the conclusion, Lord quoted but did not credit Liberty Hyde Bailey with the words that so inspired him at the Philadelphia convention that “we shall constitute a civilization that will be as complete and effective as other civilizations.”<sup>152</sup>

By 1917 the complex industrial linkages of farm to factory was widespread. At the national level U.S. agriculture was part of large trade mechanisms that included manufactured motorized farming equipment, efficient labor-saving machines that processed and safely packaged produce, meat, and milk, and the efficient means to transport billions of pounds of agricultural product from farm to table within days of its harvest. Compared to the years following the Civil War when in 1870 it took three hours to grow and harvest a bushel of wheat, in 1917 it took only three minutes.<sup>153</sup> Globally American agricultural commodities trade had expanded exponentially under favorable tariff rules imposed during Teddy Roosevelt’s Administration. No longer a struggling debtor nation as it been for much of its history America now shifted into the position of a powerful creditor by 1915, thanks largely to a decade high agricultural production and profitable trade. The war boom fueled a new phase in the American industrialization of agriculture.<sup>154</sup>

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served as a breakthrough book for new ideas and methods of soil restoration, conservation, organic growing regimes, and biological awareness in agriculture. See references, Lord (1962) pg. 60, 119, and 242.

<sup>152</sup> Lord (1916), in: “A Traveling School of American Civilization,” *The Cornell Countryman*. Vol. 14, No. 3: pp. 207-224.

<sup>153</sup> Lord (1947), pg. 173.

<sup>154</sup> Lord (1947) describes what he is careful to describe as ‘a revolution’ in American agriculture, part of ongoing worldwide technological advances that began well before and continued well beyond World War One, and provides USDA economic data as evidence to support this revolution occurring shortly before and as a result of the war, pp. 174-175; From an editorial in *The New Republic*, “Agricultural Mobilization” (1917,) reprinted in *The Cornell Countryman* suggests that as a result of America mobilizing her agricultural industry to assist England, which had not, the U.S. it stood to reason, was in a far better position of preparedness both economically and in food surplus and production, should it need to declare war on Germany. “But if war comes, our most effective contribution to a decisive peace will be to supply food at

In the final pages of the June 1917 edition of *The Countryman*, the future of Cornell students approaching graduation seemed uncertain, if not dire. For the rising senior Russell Lord, newly appointed Editor-in-Chief, war drums were growing louder by the day. Lists appeared in the paper naming hundreds of Cornell men who had already been sent off to serve in the first waves of American soldiers to arrive in Europe following the United States' declaration of war against Germany in April 1917.<sup>155</sup> The October 1917 issue featured a gloriously patriotic essay "The Sturdy Patriotism of the Farmer," published to encourage students who were coming of age to enlist in the military.<sup>156</sup> Letters from students serving in uniform were published, many writing from trenches, hospitals, and the decks of ships, and one from a prison camp. These seemed to be strategically placed among articles that featured the pressing domestic issues of the day; arguments for and against the rural women's vote.<sup>157</sup>

In the fall editions, one name on *The Countryman* staff disappeared. Over the summer, while at home to work his milk inspector's job, Lord stepped down from *The Countryman* Board as Editor in Chief. He felt it was his time to enlist and to do his part in a much bigger story. "Midway in my course I joined another Crusade and, sergeant of field artillery, serving bloodlessly on both sides of the water, discerned a world quite obviously beyond possibility of recasting, and began a detached interest in the spectacle of progress."<sup>158</sup>

### **Camp McClellan**

In later years Russell Lord would consider the Great War one in a long series of continuing tragedies framed by the upheavals that advanced technologies inflicted upon the world. He was careful not to use the word *revolution* because, as he states, each major advancement in energy, communication, manufacturing, or transportation could serve as the next one among hundreds of such leaps in technological and scientific progress. Faced with the very real prospect of becoming a victim of technological "improvements to warfare," he considered his place in "the cycles of change whirling and clashing faster and harder," around him. At twenty-three, Lord asked, and began to answer, the question: "If mechanization is the price of progress, what was the alternative?"<sup>159</sup>

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reasonable cost and in increasing quantities to our own people and to the Allies. Agriculture, in war as in peace, is at the basis of national security," pp. 556, 596.

<sup>155</sup> Editorial, "Those Who Left College for War Service." *The Cornell Countryman*, Vol. 15 (1917) No.9: pp. 749-750.

<sup>156</sup> Editorial, "The Sturdy Patriotism of the Farmer." *The Cornell Countryman*, Vol. 15 (1917) No. 1: pp. 11-13.

<sup>157</sup> E. May Butler (1917), in: "Why Women in Rural Communities Need the Vote," *The Cornell Countryman*, Vol. 15, No. 1: pg. 29; Everett P. Wheeler (1917), in: "Why Rural Women Do Not Need the Vote," *The Cornell Countryman*, Vol. 15, No. 2: pg. 80-81.

<sup>158</sup> Lord (1931), pg. 221.

<sup>159</sup> Lord (1947), pg.175.

On July 28, 1917, Russell Lord sat in a rocking chair on the porch of the Pikesville Armory at a rural crossroads twenty miles west of the Worthington Valley awaiting officers from the Maryland Field Artillery. The recruitment poster at the Western Run Turnpike tollhouse, pinned to the same bulletin board as the opening announcement for the Agricultural High School many years before, said to appear on this day dressed in “old clothes fit to wear.” During his wait Lord observed the many interpretations of that order and saw in the young men arriving from across the northern Maryland countryside those who represented families of great wealth and families of great impoverishment. Along came the sons of horse breeders, famous the world over for champion racehorses and hunters. These boys came in custom-made uniforms, purchased by their fathers, pressed and sharp, black boots polished and bright. Then there was the son of a tradesman, a farrier, in dirty coveralls, and the sons of farmers, relaxed in their worn jeans and floppy hats, smiling and joking.<sup>160</sup>

Captain Boyd arrived from the State Guard and took command of the newly formed artillery battery. The one hundred and seventy-five recruits gathered there seemed to like him, a fellow Marylander, and respected the way he treated them, but he promised they were to him all soldiers cut from the same cloth, “bums and bankers” alike. They were mustered in to federal service on August 5 amidst a swirl of crying, hand-wringing families and rumors that speculated where in the country they would receive artillery instruction. At Pikesville, a tent camp was constructed followed by a few weeks basic training, new uniforms, inoculations, physical exercise, and drills. And then on September 18 the train took them away, families wailing, waving, and cheering from the platform and from all the road crossings south, out of the Baltimore County to Camp McClellan, Alabama.<sup>161</sup>

There are large decommissioned sections of this once enormous artillery range and training camp that are now federal and state recreational areas, national forests, and national wildlife reserves rich in the unique biological communities of the southern Appalachian pine-oak region. To see it now, one would hardly recognize it as a once tremendous U.S. Army base and temporary home for company clerk Corporal Russell Lord, Battery F, 112<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, and the tens of thousands of soldiers stationed there. The first sight of it must have been a shock to many of the countrymen who stepped out of the crowded trains.

Camp McClellan was located the southern edge of the Appalachian Mountains, geographically defined as part of the scenic Valley and Ridge province of rolling hills and broad fertile valleys. It appeared in 1917 that a war had been underway here for much longer than any conflict in Europe. Mountains framed the view of a rough, raw valley that was once part of the vast traditional agricultural lands of the Choctaw, who had been forcibly removed by the U.S. government in the 1830s. Patches of thin pine woods stood out among shredded trunks of pines

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<sup>160</sup> Lord, *Captain Boyd's Battery A.E.F. An Intimate Account of an Outfit which Will Never Admit that it Won the War* (1920), in: “Pikesville,” writes of the general order to appear in old clothes, “how many things one simple phrase, plainly written, may mean to many minds.” He begins to appreciate a wide range of perspectives and comes to understand through his service in the military that motivation and meaning are derived from one’s own place and history, pp. 6-13.

<sup>161</sup> Lord (1920), pp. 7-15.

in a landscape cut over for lumber, quarried for stone, cratered by artillery fire, and bare hills gullied by heavy rains.<sup>162</sup> This was sacrificial land, acquired through coercion for military use, displacing yet again farmers, many of whom were descendants of those who claimed former Indian lands.

It is hard to imagine the rapid and devastating changes that occurred to some American landscapes as the United States prepared for and entered the war in 1917. Through the early 20<sup>th</sup> century the U.S. Department of Defense dramatically increased its demands for natural resources and land, making military claims on local resources and labor.<sup>163</sup> The land that became Camp McClellan started out as Fort Shipp, a small military installation to hold in reserve a state guard force should it be needed in Cuba following the end of the Spanish-American War in 1898. Close to a rail line and station, trains could deliver soldiers and materiel directly to the Port of Mobile within twelve hours. Instead, Fort Shipp quietly existed as a military hospital campus for soldiers infected with influenza. The beautiful environment, said the U.S. Army, was healthy and perfect for recuperating soldiers.<sup>164</sup>

In 1912, the Alabama congressman Fred Blackmon visited an artillery range in the Appalachian foothills of Tennessee. He was impressed with a perceived prestige and real economic activity that the military presence had brought to the sleepy little valley. He returned to his district and ordered up the installment of twenty thousand national guardsmen to occupy little Fort Shipp and in a show of display and patriotism, he orchestrated a grand attempt to catch the attention of military land speculators who were by 1916 cruising across the south in search of suitable and cheap land as the U.S. Army began ramping up preparations for possible war in Europe.<sup>165</sup>

The small town of Anniston, however, was not so impressed. It laid squarely in an ore-rich region that had fired its forges for over a century and was surrounded by sparsely settled but very productive timber and farm lands. This was the just the expanse of land that Congressman

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<sup>162</sup> Reed, Cantley, & Joseph (1996) in: "A Popular History," in notes from the Restoration Advisory Board, April, 2008, describe some of the legal wrangling that occurred to have large swaths of the Fort McClellan's former firing ranges, landfills, depot dumps, and munitions dumps decommissioned and placed into conservation land management. Arguments over EPA and U.S. Army responsibilities are exhaustive. The process continues, pp.5-7; Krichner & Morrison (1988) describe pine-oak forest as a semi-savannah open woods of the southern Appalachian Mountains. The forests found prior to and for the building of Camp McClellan, as well those that have since returned, are of low species diversity, mostly longleaf and shortleaf pine, valued for their lumber and resins, pp. 67- 70.

<sup>163</sup> Hooks & Smith (2004) document the upsurge in land claims and resource exploitation by the U.S. military especially upon southern landscapes and lands held in common by Native Americans, pp. 561-563.

<sup>164</sup> Reed, Cantley, & Joseph (1996), state that Fort Shipp was "lauded for its healthy environment and its unique training stage" as a field hospital for the Fourth Alabama Artillery, pg. 68.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid., pp. 68-69.

Blackmon had in mind as he envisioned northern Alabama's very own artillery range. The townspeople were joined by black, white, and Indian farmers and folks from hollows and valleys of the surrounding Choccolocco Mountains. They cried out in protest against the deal as corrupt and coercive. They were, however, quickly overwhelmed by pandering politicians, industry men, and bankers. On March 17, 1917, 20,000 acres were confiscated for pennies on the dollar and sold to the U.S. Army for \$247,000. The farmers and ironworkers were informed that it was time to move. On April 6 war was declared on Germany.<sup>166</sup>

By April 1917 the U.S. military nationwide had acquired 1.5 million acres to add its pre-1900 holdings. During mobilization 1917-1918 military land ownership increased with an additional 250,000 acres, mostly prime farm and forest land, the expansion of Fort Shipp now known as Camp McClellan included. The small town of Anniston was transformed into an urban center, a small southern city whose economic base rested solely on the military. The explosive growth of the military presence in an otherwise rural landscape was not lost on Russell Lord. Awed by the daily expansion and construction of military buildings, equipment depots, and massive tent cities, he observed the overnight expansion of a regimental encampment. In the space fit for a small village, an artillery regiment from New Jersey poured in the next day. "Now in your mind's eye multiply this until it covers the bare dirt floor of two big valleys and extends on all four sides to scrubby cotton fields and a mountain of horizon. This will give you some idea of Camp McClellan as our predecessors have named it."<sup>167</sup>

The men lived in vast canvas tent cities that stretched for miles across the fertile valleys. Contrary to earlier rumors that the south was always sunny and warm, early winter arrived with a series of autumn storms that plunged the Choccolocco Mountains into a pool of frigid Arctic air. The dirt streets and boulevards of the encampments became quagmires fringed with ice. Wood burning heaters could not be installed until the tents had solid wooden floors, which were installed in early November. The stove arrived in mid-December. Men dressed in all of their summer uniform clothes at night to stay warm as winter clothes had yet to be issued, and laid at night shivering under their single military issue wool blankets unable to sleep for the bitter cold.<sup>168</sup>

Many draft horses, lovingly cared for by devoted farm boys, developed hoof rot standing in ponds of sticky clay muck. Some horses became permanently lame, were

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<sup>166</sup> Reed, Cantley, & Joseph (1996), pp. 69-71; Hooks & Smith (2004) state that securing military land transfers were purposefully quick avoiding the normal process of real estate sale that might otherwise incur delays, pg. 564.

<sup>167</sup> Lord (1920), pp.18-19; Hooks & Smith (2004), pp. 563-564.

<sup>168</sup> Lord (1920), despite the challenges of the weather and long delays in receiving appropriate equipment and clothing, Lord writes with much brevity and humor throughout the winter. At times the experiences are quite funny, but he always counters the laughter with just the right reality of the situation, i.e. "With chattering teeth we squirmed between the miscellaneous junk and blankets and had our usual ridiculous conversation on serious subjects, such as our futures," pg. 30.



decommissioned and sent off to slaughter, as they could no longer pull the heavy guns on their carriages. The boys cried in protest. They wrote home, distraught, homesick, and bored.<sup>169</sup>

Every day there was a gas defense drill. Big gun horses and artillery men stood snug in protective masks. The soldiers often rushed to fit the horses first, much to the chagrin of the drill sergeants who knew how much the boys loved the heavy breeds. Live fire drills, mounted maneuvered drills, “eternal grooming,” long marches through the foothills, war games at night, and long hours cleaning and policing made up every week.<sup>170</sup> Despite all the activity the men were restless and impatient. There was hilarity and sometimes tragedy. Five lives were lost in training during the winter and there were untold injuries for both soldiers and horses. The land was steep and the slopes slick in mud and ice. There were short happy furloughs but there were also quarantines. Measles and influenza swept through Camp McClellan like grass fires on the firing range.<sup>171</sup>

In March, someone declared it spring but lingering winter storms delayed maneuvers. Despite the bitter cold, the stoves were taken out. Through April and May, Camp McClellan suffered through tornadoes, torrential rains, and near continuous mud. Finally came June, warmth, and with barely enough time to enjoy the sun, deployment orders for June 17.<sup>172</sup>

## To War

With soldiers packed three to each double day coach seat, the regiment was moved by train from northern Alabama through Georgia, Virginia, Washington D.C., Philadelphia, Jersey City, and finally to Camp Mills on Long Island, New York.<sup>173</sup> Two weeks of rest, including a twenty-four-hour furlough home, and then the entire regiment was taken back to Baltimore called to debark to the *Keemun*, an English freighter from the Pacific trade routes. The *Keenum* steamed down the Chesapeake Bay and into the Atlantic Ocean, across the Virginia Capes and past the beautiful sea island known as Chincoteague where Henry Lord purchased a tough little semi-wild pinto pony at auction for his son. The freighter steamed cautiously north, unescorted and unarmed, save for one six-inch bow-mounted gun. It crept through the Capes of the Delaware, recently mined by German U-boats. Two months prior several merchant ships had

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<sup>169</sup> Lord (1920), pp. 25 -36.

<sup>170</sup> Lord (1920) writes that boredom was the biggest threat they faced at camp. “It’s a great life, this rushing to the rescue of France!” pg. 21. “We are speeding along on a treadmill,” pg. 23, Care of the horses was paramount to the farm boys and there were horse shows and riding demonstrations for the townsfolk of Anniston and the stable sergeants, Lord writes, were well known for “talking horse” through long evenings in the company office tent as he was trying to work, pg. 23.

<sup>171</sup> Lord (1920), pg. 28.

<sup>172</sup> Lord (1920), pp. 37-47.

<sup>173</sup> Lord (1920), the regiment was moved mostly at night, with long delays by day between eastern cities, pp. 50-58.

been sunk here. *Keenum* churned northward along the coast in heavy seas and dense fog. The *Keenum* arrived in Halifax, Nova Scotia, July 4, 1918.<sup>174</sup>

Lord's experience of a new environment, the open sea, left him awash with fear. The same diesel technologies that made long distance overland travel by train possible were the same technologies that enabled submarines to travel across the ocean to lurk in the quiet bays and coastal rivers. German U-boats were a constant concern. North Atlantic convoys raced across the North Atlantic to the docks of Liverpool with "American destroyers dashing tensely up and down our flanks and three funny-looking little sub-chasers bobbing around all over the place." This was the Maryland 110<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery's first and only experience under attack. Two U-boats stalked the convoy a hundred miles from safe harbor and released torpedoes that luckily missed the freighter. The explosion of depth charges dropped by destroyers over the subs made the *Keenum* shudder and ring. The chase boats reported oils slicks and the regiment, lined up at the rails to watch and cheered in giddy relief. "It all seemed so easy; you almost felt sorry for poor old Fritz in his little mechanical shark."<sup>175</sup>

On July 17, one month after leaving Camp McClellan, the Maryland 110<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery prepared to board a troop train to Southampton. German prisoners disembarked, walking wearily past them. The prisoners were gaunt and slow. "We were all really hungry, more hungry than tired, and no food is available by issue, purchase, or theft. How do these Englishmen live?"<sup>176</sup>

Food shortages affected all of England and North Atlantic convoys were vital in moving American agricultural product to English shores where it was divided among civilians and the hundreds of thousands of troops transferring through to France. The troops passing through England's cities to camps in the countryside noted that malnutrition and starvation was common among the populace. Children especially were among the chronically underfed.<sup>177</sup>

Modernization in England, as in the United States, had drained the countryside of its farmers and their families. Industrial centers drew needed labor forces from agriculture, leaving much of the English countryside without the productive means to feed itself. By 1912 less than 10% of Britain's labor force was employed in farming. Although food shortages of the early

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<sup>174</sup> Lord (1920), pp. 65-78.

<sup>175</sup> Lord (1920), pp. 83-89. Lord writes of their two weeks aboard the *Keenum* as a time of darkness and hunger. The freighter, under orders to keep all lights out, night and day, ran mostly in the dark. It was never properly outfitted nor stocked to carry over 300 men to war. He writes of a mob mentality driven by hunger that threatened to undo the discipline instilled in them while at Camp McClellan.

<sup>176</sup> Lord (1920), pg. 98.

<sup>177</sup> Atkins (2007), in: "School Milk in Britain." England, under the Defense of the Realm Act and Maternity and Child Welfare Act of 1918, gave local authorities directives to assure that vulnerable populations were given priority access to imported dairy, cod liver oil, and solid foods moving by North Atlantic convoy from the U.S., pp. 9-10.

1900s did not materialize as feared in the United States, shortages became severe in England. Economic histories of Western Europe describe England's failure to fully modernize its food and farming systems in pace with its industrializing urban centers as a key reason for the food shortages just prior to importation of food relief from the U.S. Blockades of German and English ports, the devastating European crop failures of 1916, the ability of U-boats to target and destroy North Atlantic convoy food freighters from the U.S., and U.S. food embargoes against trade with Germany and its allies drove warring nations to near famine. Lord wrote throughout *Captain Boyd's Battery A.E.F.* how hunger was a constant companion during the transport to and while in England. The troops at least were issued daily rations of "monkey meat [processed canned beef and pork], beans, and hardtack," far more than the typical worker's family of Southampton could hope to acquire through closely rationed food programs. Hunger on the battlefield, especially for Germany's starving armies and civilian population, demoralized and weakened military campaigns.<sup>178</sup>

## Vouillé

The regiment was carried across to channel to Cherbourg, France on the evening of July 17, 1918. By train they were transported two hundred and eighty miles south to Poitiers, a Medieval town at the intersection of old Roman roads. On such a road, the troops, minus horses and guns (all had been delayed in England) marched twelve miles east to the small farming village of Vouillé where the rural people there greeted them with all the warmth and excitement of their own families at home.<sup>179</sup>

The fighting was not far off. At night, the skies flashed silently with gunfire and bombardments to the east and south. German prisoners streamed through in tattered lines to the prisoner-of-war camps in Poitier. Some men of the village returned from battle for a few days rest with harrowing tales to share with the boys. The young men of the village were all gone, they said, taken early in the war, leaving the old men to take their places at the front.<sup>180</sup> For a month, the regiment waited in anticipation of orders to move to forward positions. In the meantime, Captain Boyd gave permission for his men to assist the local farmers with the harvest.

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<sup>178</sup> Lord (1920), pg. 99 and pg. 103; Atkins (2007) notes that at the height of the food shortages U.S. dry milk products were used only for "delicate individuals" and then only for a week, pg. 8; Landes (2003) is careful to explain that food shortages were also a product of exploitative business interests in both the U.S. and Europe, "The war promised the biggest rewards of all... wherever the armies went the jackals of enterprise followed," pg. 417; Collingham, *The Taste of War: World War II and the Battle for Food* (2011), in: "Defeat, Hunger and the Legacy of the First World War." Hunger and starvation were the main drivers that ended the war. "To many who witnessed these events, it appeared as though hunger was the victor, and that it was starvation among the army and civilians which had brought about a humiliating defeat," pp. 23-25.

<sup>179</sup> Lord (1920), pp. 110-113.

<sup>180</sup> Lord (1920), pp. 106-107.

Missing their sons, the farmers “regarded us as their children,” and the countrymen from Maryland were rewarded with hearty soups and local wines every night as the work ended.<sup>181</sup>

Lord was equally enchanted and amazed. “The fields looked almost parklike in their prefect state of cultivation.”<sup>182</sup> The hillsides and slopes, carefully terraced and maintained by generations of farmers had been tended for over seven hundred years. The soil made rich by hand-turned and applied amendments included composts, livestock manures, and winter cover crops of clover and grass that turned under in spring for planting. Corn, grains, apples, grapes, sweet hay for cattle, and sweet potatoes came in from hundreds of small fields that lay in a patchwork across the land, divided by thousand-year-old hedges and the stone walls of stable and barn swards. Carrying their loads on shoulders and in carts on Roman roads lined with windbreaks of poplars, Vouillé’s adopted sons were celebrated each evening with suppers and harvest parties. “For every load brought in and stacked, a quart or so to toast the fact.”<sup>183</sup>

A month encamped in the barnyards and fields of Vouillé was a time that served as one of the most transformative periods in Lord’s life. He later considered the care with which the French farmers worked their land and how in return the small plots and fields fed families and whole villages. The careful management of livestock manure included daily cleaning of animal wastes and bedding. Farmers built steaming hills of composting of manures and urine soaked straw, turning piles frequently, monitoring for interior temperatures that were too hot or too cool. Application of finished compost was liberally applied to gardens, small grain plots, and grazing fields where for centuries soils had developed rich tilth and productivity. Peasant farmers took great pride in their deep black soils. Farming for soil health and replenishment involved knowledge of manure management passed down through generations.<sup>184</sup>

Intrigued for the rest of his life with what he saw there in 1918, he returned in 1930 to search for the farmers and families he helped in 1918. He met with Pierre Lafargue, the son of one of Vouillé’s farmers who shared with him an original title to the family land given in a last will and testament by ancestor Johannis Lafargue, signed and dated in Latin, August 20, 772. The idea of a permanent agriculture and a modern pastoralism gave him one alternative to his question about agricultural progress and mechanization. Upon leaving France the second time in

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<sup>181</sup> Lord (1920), “Their attitude is almost embarrassing; instead of treating us as rookies, they make more fuss over us than over the hard-fighting *poilu* who slips into town for his few days’ furlough,” pg. 111.

<sup>182</sup> Ibid., pg. 111.

<sup>183</sup> Lord (1920), pp. 109- 114: See also comments on the company newsletter, “The Mustard Roll” for reports on the daily harvests, after-work gatherings, conversations with farmers, pp. 115 – 117.

<sup>184</sup> Lord (1931), revisited the area where he was stationed in France in 1930 and interviewed several peasant farmers, sons of the men with whom his battery was billeted. “One can never have too many cows,” said Pierre Lafarge, of the manure producing qualities of a good herd of Jerseys, pp. 6-9.

1930, as when leaving Vouillé on August 25, 1918, the farmer “wept on our shoulders and called us his sons.”<sup>185</sup>

Entrained in third class compartments, the batteries of the Maryland 110<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery, still without guns and horses, moved closer to the front at Meucon. There they replaced the 111<sup>th</sup> and received the retiring regiment’s remaining guns and horses, “seventy-fives [cannon] and quarter equipment of gassed horses, a batch of forty new recruits, seven weeks from civilian clothes.”<sup>186</sup> For six weeks they practiced with live fire using the big guns of the 111<sup>th</sup> with little or no food. Bread fights ensued; guards were placed at the cook and provision tent. “The flu has hit us like a cyclone.” They buried some of their finest young men at field hospitals and infirmaries. The regiment, having lost almost all of their sergeants to illness, replaced them with substitutes from lower ranks. Lord was promoted to sergeant of a gas unit. Rumors of deployment to Argonne were rampant.<sup>187</sup>

News of the Kaiser’s abdication reached the regiment as they were loading for the front on November 10<sup>th</sup>. Doubtful of yet another rumor, they believed the news only when the late train at Vannes arrived with soldiers “without helmets or gas masks, and then we knew it was all over.”<sup>188</sup> Stationed in the rural town of Ormoy for the remaining four months of their deployment in France, Lord recalled the place behaving as if war and loss were just part of the fabric of the long history on the land. “The old shepherd in his big coat blowing his horn at the gates so the people would turn their sheep out.”<sup>189</sup>

The men of the Maryland 110<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Regiment were transported home to Baltimore in March 1919 and stationed at Camp Meade, Maryland, until mustered out-of-service on May 27. One hundred and fifty-nine men of the original one hundred and seventy five returned to the green pastures of the Worthington Valley and farms of North Central, Maryland.<sup>190</sup>

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<sup>185</sup> Lord (1931), pp. 1-13.

<sup>186</sup> Lord (1931), pg. 127.

<sup>187</sup> Lord (1931), pp. 125-131.

<sup>188</sup> Lord (1931), pg. 145.

<sup>189</sup> Lord (1931), pg. 157.

<sup>190</sup> Warfield (1920), in: “Report of the Adjutant General, State of Maryland,” notes that 52,000 Marylanders served in all branches of the U.S. Military in Europe for the War, 1918-1919. The 110<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battery, 5<sup>th</sup> Maryland Infantry served in reserve at the rear of the front, near Argonne, France and was scavenged to make up for losses suffered in forward battle positions. In September and October some members of the 110<sup>th</sup> were reassigned to serve with 117<sup>th</sup> Trench Mortar Battery and the 112<sup>th</sup> Machine Gun Battery, both involved in heavy fighting through November 1918. Twelve of the original 175 members sworn in at Pikesville, MD, in the summer of 1918 were casualties of the flu epidemics that swept the rear positions. Four artillerymen reassigned to forward units died of wounds received in battle, pg. 29.

In all, America's farmland provided over a million men for military service. Twice as many left their farms to work in burgeoning military manufacturing plants or entered civilian-military occupations. Some returned to the land but most did not.<sup>191</sup> America at the end of the war was a country transformed by industrialization, where for the first time in its history the majority of its citizens lived and worked in cities.<sup>192</sup>

In *The Wallaces of Iowa*, Lord interjects his reflections and core questions regarding World War One and mass industrialization into the biography of Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace, who he served as speech writer and Chief of Information for the USDA during the New Deal years. Wallace and Lord shared beliefs and opinions about the industrialization of American society and its effects on agriculture and rural communities. Lord acting as advisor and friend, helped Wallace address interconnected issues of soil erosion and rural poverty, and poor farm policy at odds with the aims of conservation. Wallace was never comfortable with public speaking, and sometimes at a loss for words, Lord stuck close by to help him navigate the political maze of Washington D.C. Though Wallace would enter government service at the end of the Great War, he played no direct role in it. Lord, however, used his own somewhat veiled experiences and insight as a veteran to enrich the Secretary's precautionary stance at a critical time in the formation of U.S. agricultural policy.<sup>193</sup>

## Conclusion

For Russell Lord, one of the alternatives to modernization and progress was found in the gentle kindness of farmers, land stewardship, and a kind of permanent agriculture discovered in the midst of war. But the idea of war and all it engulfed was in the eyes of the young student-turned-soldier, a hated and feared thing even though he tried dutifully to serve with courage and with honor. He tried to see past the waste and suffering to something more meaningful and hopeful.

Lord experienced directly the displacement of people from their land, men from their farms, and nations from their food supplies. He saw clearly the unraveling of the interconnectedness of land and society, and that industrial development substituted the interchangeable parts and functions of machines for human labor and raw materials. From college students coming home on holiday weekends by train through deforested Pennsylvania, to marching on old Roman roads in France that had withstood the violence of centuries of social

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<sup>191</sup> Lord (1962), pp. 250-251; USDA 1920 Census reported grimly "An alarming decrease in farmers and farm laborers was doubtless partly due to the fact that during the war large numbers of them left the farm for factories or the military service and had not returned," pg. 13.

<sup>192</sup> USDA Census 1920 shows that by a close margin, city dwellers outnumbered rural residents 51% to 49%. See Table 1: "Population, Farms, Farmlands, Farm Property, in the United States 1910 and 1920," pg.17. This major demographic shift happened in 1918.

<sup>193</sup> Lord (1947), pp.175-177.

upheaval and war, he traveled wide-eyed and attentive through sacrificial landscapes of industrial exploitation and battle.<sup>194</sup>

The rapid pace of industrial development during the early 1900s outpaced rural society's ability keep up in some areas such as vocational training and the shift from rural to urban society marked a distinct "break from the past; the migrant found himself afloat in a fluid society."<sup>195</sup> This the world in 1920 into which Russell Lord enters as both a product of and reluctant participant in the modernizing of American economies and landscapes that bear the invasion of well-moneyed corporations, rich off the war and eager to capitalize on new applications of technology in agriculture.

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<sup>194</sup> Lord (1920) observed broad scale destruction of working landscapes in Europe, noting that farmers tried to go about their work as best they could and, as in "Vouillé," that these landscapes seemed to absorb centuries of warfare through the daily work of cultivation and care, pg. 111; See also: Hooks & Smith (2004) and sacrificial landscapes to military use.

<sup>195</sup> Landes (2003), pg. 9.

## Chapter Three

### Education of a Journalist

#### 1920 – 1929

When the last living American old enough to mourn some lad lost in the War has been dead a hundred years, Americans still living will be suffering to some extent from wounds that War dealt our land. - Russell Lord, 1939 <sup>196</sup>

#### Introduction

During the 1920s, Russell Lord served first as an extension educator and later as a freelance farm journalist in Ohio. During this time, his thinking about social and environmental systems in agriculture deepened through his own direct experiences as a recorder and chronicler. He witnessed the continued, now accelerated decline of lands worked by descendants of pioneer farm families. He observed the near destruction of some of the most fertile soils west of the Appalachian Mountains.

As a journalist, Lord collected stories from his farm at home, farms in Ohio and from his time spent abroad. These stories enabled him to broaden his reporting to include investigations of interrelated system in domestic and international economic policy. What had once been the new frontier of American agricultural settlement in the west became a new frontier for him personally as well as he developed ideas of agricultural permanence based on concepts of community stewardship and conservation of both land and its people. But these conceptual breakthroughs for the young writer would only manifest after having come to terms with a growing skepticism and mistrust of large institutional systems.

Worster cautions that environmental history should pay close attention to the individual experiences of landscape, to engage perspectives social transformations through the eyes of those living and working on it. Agriculture agricultural thinking changed not so much as a panoramic improvement from labor intense agrarianism to highly efficient systems of the modern age, but at the level of personal relationship to the cultivated landscape he suggests. <sup>197</sup> Lord took note of the interactions of individual people with their land and how the rural landscapes in which he traveled shaped and made people who they were. This was a time when future Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace, then editor-in-chief of progressive journal *Wallace's Farmer*,

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<sup>196</sup> Lord (1939), pg. 102.

<sup>197</sup> White (1990), in: "Environmental History, Ecology, and Meaning," is a critic of Worster (1990) and warns against the use of themes such as agroecology that simplify environmental analysis and decouples concepts of environment from broader concepts of economic and social histories.



warned that farmers should “pay off their debts and batten down the hatches.”<sup>198</sup> In contrast to the huge optimism of post-war urban America and the glimmer and glare of the Roaring Twenties, Lord would see more scrapheaps than hope, and, wrote carefully, almost reverently, about what he was witnessing on the land.<sup>199</sup>

Lord’s writing from this period reveals a growing tension, keen skepticism, and mistrust in the idea of American progress and it is clear that he viewed Ohio as a microcosm of all that was going wrong from the High Plains to Prairie states, from the exploited American South to the postwar industrial North. His first extension assignment in Washington County in the northeastern section of the state was geographically most like his home in northern Maryland, a rolling landscape of Appalachian foothills and bucolic scenery, but on assignment in the southeast traveling through the Hocking Hills region, the young writer is awakened by a sense of sorrow, if not moral duty to an impoverished people. He begins to explore a deep current of an emerging environmental ethic as he witnessed the impact of unrestrained greed on the land.<sup>200</sup>

While working in the great western Ohio till plains, Lord witnessed the replacement of prairielands with vast corn and wheat monocultures. The stark appearance of an industrialized agricultural landscape challenged his agrarian tendencies and pitted his belief in the adaptability of farmers against the political power and economic interests of corporatism and commodity agriculture. Disillusioned, the young extension editor resigned from his position and became a student of democracy and accepted freelance assignments from popular home and garden magazines.

This chapter explores Lord’s pivotal experiences in Ohio and how they deepened the young author’s thinking about interrelated systems of environment, social and cultural function and value, economics, and institutional power. He recognized the need for a more rigorous way to think about and examine socio-ecological systems that included deeper understandings of governance and economies of scale. Lord honed the sharp edge of his growing skepticism against the claims and promises of agricultural industry and policy and what he was seeing for himself on the land. As the deepening agricultural recession drove the American economy slowly into the greatest economic depression in our country’s history, I examine how Lord’s direct

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<sup>198</sup> Lord (1947) observed that during the first year of his extension work in Ohio “land prices began to break, and so did farm commodity prices, sharply in some lines” prompting a series of urgent editorials in Wallace’s *Farmer* that compelled farmers to “Organize! Above all, Organize!” despite an overly optimistic outlook for American agriculture, pp. 214-215.

<sup>199</sup> Lord (1947), pg. 220.

<sup>200</sup> Lord describes Ohio as the true center of the nation, demonstrating natural and social attributes of the Northeast, East, South, North Country, and West. This theme emerges in two books of collected stories and reflections, *The Care of the Earth* (1962) and *Behold Our Land* (1938). Within the context of land use and conservation of soils, he refers to his years as an extension editor in Ohio as touchstone experiences for encountering the elements of national agricultural issues on a broad and varied landscape of production and husbandry.

experience inspired some of his most powerful writing on agriculture and conservation in the difficult decade to follow.<sup>201</sup>

## Twenty Six by Twenty One

By August of 1921 the working agricultural landscapes of Ohio's Allegheny Plateau and Appalachian hill country were early to show the effects of the economic boom and bust of the Great War. Despite rounds of controversial and hotly contested federal adjustments to manipulate production levels and fix grain and pork surplus prices, a sudden and painful deflation triggered the start of a long national economic crisis that began with America's farmers in the corn and hog belts of the Midwest. Though Ohio's urban centers would enjoy a level of prosperity and economic stability for some time after the end of the war, signs of something gone amiss out in the country were starkly visible to newly hired extension editor Russell Lord.<sup>202</sup>

Following his return from France in 1920 and the completion his Bachelor's degree at Cornell University's College of Agriculture, twenty-six-year-old Russell Lord packed his bags for Columbus, Ohio, in early summer 1921. His father Henry M. Lord was surprised that Russell had accepted a position of Extension Editor so far from home and asked, "What do you want to bury yourself out there in the West for?" It seemed Russell was more than happy to escape Tidewater Maryland's "Land of Gentry," where the "Sir-and-My-Man stuff" hadn't reached beyond the Appalachians.<sup>203</sup> His editorial and journalistic achievements while on the staff of *The Cornell Countryman* and the publication of his war memoir *Captain Boyd's Battery, A.E.F* (1920) had earned him some recognition as both an intelligent writer and talented editor. His book received warm reviews from Cornell readers who recognized that it served not so much as

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<sup>201</sup> Phillips (2007), *This Land This Nation: Conservation, Rural America, and the New Deal*, describes that in the decade leading up to the New Deal, some land economists and soil scientists noted that land use and the wellbeing of rural people were linked through natural resource conservation - or a lack of it. This new rural conservation idea gained little ground under Hoover's strict agricultural policies and contributed little to any sense of agro-environmental stewardship, pg. 46.

<sup>202</sup> Lord (1947), in: "Food Will Win the War," pg. 195, and "A Dispute with Mr. Hoover," pp. 197-211.

<sup>203</sup> Lord (1950), pg. 111; *Cornell University Register 1919-1920* in: *Graduation Index*, Russell Robbins Lord, College of Agriculture, pg. 289; Lord is listed in the October 1921 *Cornell Countryman* as contributor. A very short bio description reads "Upon graduation [Lord] became secretary of the Hampden County Improvement League, in Springfield, Mass. He remained there until last June when he was appointed assistant professor of journalism at Ohio State University," pg. 5; *The Campus Countryman*, "Russ Lord Drops In," describes a brief visit to Cornell in October 1921, pg. 61; Lord (1962) describes the "broken home" class returning from France to complete their Bachelors in 1920, pg. 275.

military history but a telling of the “charming relationships between the French people and American soldiers.”<sup>204</sup>

Under the supervision of J.E. McClintock, Ohio State Extension’s foremost agricultural communications expert and farm journalist, Russell Lord with his extension partner and ex-city reporter J.R. Fleming, travelled across Ohio almost continuously for the next three years. For the first six months of their assignment they travelled by rail and back road through the eastern and southern rural counties where the end of the war had left the region with “bursting barns and busted banks.”<sup>205</sup> They were assigned to help local county agents contribute to independent country and community newspapers stories that were unbiased and encouraging about how Ohio hill farmers demonstrated modernization in their homes and on the farm.<sup>206</sup>

The Ohio Farm Bureau (OFB), founded during the war years to lobby for farmers’ economic interests, was large and politically powerful and swiftly protested their efforts. OFB charged that Lord and Fleming had urged local agents not to “waste their time [writing] for little Farm Bureau monthlies,” and to give their best stories to the county presses. They couldn’t deny it. “When Fleming and I went afield to teach news, finding and news writing, we did not, after a few trials and errors, work with the Farm Bureau. The country newspaper, we held, was a community institution.”<sup>207</sup>

McClintock staunchly defended his young agents contending that they were extending good agricultural writing through independent country papers and were not to serve at the pleasure of Ohio Farm Bureau.”<sup>208</sup> OFB demanded they be reassigned, removed from the eastern counties. McClintock agreed that a reassignment was necessary and in a determined effort to annoy the OFB, added *all* of Ohio to their assigned territory. McClintock further

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<sup>204</sup> Lord (1919), “Farming a la Francaise,” served as *The Cornell Countryman* preview chapter to his forthcoming book *Captain Boyd’s Battery A.E.F.* (1920) that later received an honorable mention in *The Cornell Alumni News*, pg. 235.

<sup>205</sup> Lord (1939), and J.E. McClintock, pp. 115-116, and: “The Lean Years,” pg. 131. Lord points out that during his four year assignment in Ohio, the national gross farm income dropped from \$13.5 billion to less than \$6.5 billion affecting chiefly mid-sized farms like those in eastern Ohio; Johnson “postwar optimism and the rural financial crisis of the 1920s” (1975), provides an in-depth investigation of the causes of the boom/bust farmland devaluation 1919-1920. “Accompanying this rapid rise in farm real estate values was a similar rise in farm mortgage loans that involved numerous farmland owners and rural bankers. It was the misfortune of these borrowers and lenders that their postwar optimism was misplaced and that rapid agricultural recovery in Europe and elsewhere helped catalyze a sharp collapse of commodity prices and farmland values between late 1920 and the end of 1921,” pg. 178.

<sup>206</sup> Lord (1939), in: “Words and Action,” pp. 115-117.

<sup>207</sup> *Ibid.*, pg 116.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, “The agent’s first job was not to extend the Farm Bureau, but to extend farm news,” pg. 116.

defended his agents by specifying that Lord and Fleming were to serve the interests of the independent Ohio farmer, who he believed, was highly capable, intelligent and adaptable, and whose stories and perspectives needed accurate reporting without OFB political and commercial propaganda influences.<sup>209</sup> By the end of 1922, Lord and Fleming had visited all eighty-eight counties, conducted four large regional writers workshops, held classes in country correspondence, offered farm tours for aspiring farm reporters, and directed county news writing seminars.

McClintock, an Ohioan cattle farmer, was a critical journalist who questioned the motivations of large commercial agricultural industries and government policies that forced independent farmers to suffer the burdens of a collapsing farm economy. “He was a born dissenter. And whenever something new and perfect came forth from Washington, he inclined to dissent.”<sup>210</sup> Dissent born out of skepticism defined many of Ohio’s farmers who, distrusting generally all federal farm policies of late, were wary of anything decided upon and implemented without fair representation and by powerful, non-farming people, especially those in Washington.<sup>211</sup> Dissent was a useful attribute Lord decided. It informed his own developing brand of journalism by helping him to seek out rather than ignore or overlook farmers with ideas that did not jive well with institutional promotions and policies. Still, he fulfilled the role of optimistic extension specialist “propagating expansively the former dogma of boastful and disastrous mistakes.”<sup>212</sup>

Between conducting workshops and leading conferences, Lord and Fleming spent weeks riding with county agents on their daily rounds. They met with farmers, helped run their meetings, walked their pastures and fields and listened to their ideas. In doing so, Lord and Fleming taught agents how to find newsworthy stories in the course of their regular duties, how

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<sup>209</sup> Lord (1939). “The Ohio idea of news extension,” was suggested by Ohio Extension Director Seaman Knapp in 1908 as a “revelation and surprise to the farmer. He sees his name in the county paper as a selected demonstrator; he begins to be noticed by his fellow farmer, he is proud of his planting the best seed and having the best cultivation,” pg. 116.

<sup>210</sup> Lord (1939), pg. 124.

<sup>211</sup> Lord (1947) describes the confusion of and damage done to Mid-Western farmers who were ignored or misrepresented in formulating policy that attempted (and failed) to buffer production against falling post-war prices, 1918-1919. Harry Wallace, leading the Mid-Western ‘Farm Bloc’ wrote for *Wallace’s Farmer* that there was a lesson to be learned in “the extreme disadvantage under which the farmers labor in bargaining with others classes of society. It is hoped that as farmers learn to follow the example of keen business men and employ trained experts to look after their interests, and as farm leaders become better trained in statistics, this disadvantage will disappear,” pg. 200.

<sup>212</sup> Lord (1950), pg. 4; Lord (1962) notes that prewar ‘grow more and cut your costs’ dogma persisted well into the deflation period, 1920-1925 creating a critically damaging disconnect between the university and farmers whereby trust in and support for extension expertise suffered, pp. 259-260.

to listen for and spot a novel idea, and how to interview farmers with the aim of telling their stories to the local press. The goal was “not institutional publicity, but news of local growth.”<sup>213</sup>

Lord noted that farmers’ frustrations ran high particularly in the northeastern Allegheny Plateau and southcentral Hocking Hills region south of Columbus where extension agents regularly settled arguments and “the local snarls,” and calmed angry farmers’ concerns of economic instability.<sup>214</sup> Signs of environmental and economic distress were mounting quickly in the southern counties. The First World War was the defining event of Lord’s generation, had rendered many Ohio rural landscapes “stripped of fertility and of the soil itself.” While visiting Lord, fellow artilleryman and veteran Bentley Mackay from Louisiana, upon seeing a gashed and skinned landscape said, “We thought gullies were just naturally part of farming until we went to France.”<sup>215</sup>

Lord kept memories of the French countryside in mind as he traveled the eastern counties to conduct extension workshops and conferences. He made note of the patterns of wear emerging on the land. Heavily plowed fields put through four or five rapid rotations during the war years were showing more stone than soil. Overgrazed and gullied hillsides, stunted corn on thin soil, and local crop failures were common. New equipment purchased on easy credit during the war sat idle after war contracts cancelled and farm incomes dropped quickly by half. Ill-conceived national price supports, designed to prop up large commodity markets during a time of oversupply and falling demand, failed to support the farmers themselves out on the land which showed vividly in the southern counties. Land values plummeted and properties began to slip into foreclosure. Farm tenancy was on the rise as lands were bought up and consolidated into corporate outfits. “Prices lay shattered even as cost rose; yet there was little if any contraction of total acreage and operations because with income cut in half and costs doubled, man had to get out and hammer over more and more ground twice as hard in order to break even or go broke.”<sup>216</sup> Memories of his time billeted on French farms and learning that they had been in production for seven hundred years or more, offered Lord a strategic baseline for how to manage agricultural working lands to ensure they survived into the future. “It is ironic that many of the farm boys who were rushed to France in 1917 never saw a war-ravaged field until their return to base, in Iowa, on the High Plains of Texas, in Montana and to the far Northwest, another three to five thousand miles to the rear of actual combat. Even in well-thatched Maryland intermeshing gullies had appeared when I came home from the war.”<sup>217</sup>

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<sup>213</sup> Lord (1931), pg. 117.

<sup>214</sup> Lord (1931), pp. 113, 177, and 120.

<sup>215</sup> Lord (1931), pg. 275.

<sup>216</sup> Lord (1962) notes that throughout his travels across Ohio, the patterns of land and human exhaustion were similar. He writes of his cross-region observations in: “This Land and Time,” pp. 257-262; Lord (1947), in: “A Dispute with Mr. Hoover,” details the wildly unpopular price support schemes turned policy that laid quick waste to the Midwestern farming economy, pp.191-211.

<sup>217</sup> Lord (1947), pg. 258.

Fred Perry, a corporate hog farm manager assigned to routinely check on and advise eighteen tenant hog farmers, explained to Lord that the prevalence of recent farm foreclosures forced many once-independent and successful farmers into tenancy on their own land, some of which had been held proudly over generations. On rounds with Perry, Lord observed the steady drain of rural capital and farm labor as post-war wealth transferred from the countryside to prosperous Mid-Western cities.<sup>218</sup> “It was a time of sharp deflation for agriculture, with the cities still generally riding high. The old time soothing syrup did not go down with angry and bewildered farmers, up against it in the first bout with postwar agricultural depression.”<sup>219</sup> Lord was in the position to witness the slow and painful unraveling of Mid-Western farm economy and culture, a social and environmental decline that would lead to widespread depression and national misery in the years to come.

### **Appalachian Independents**

Lord noted that Ohio Appalachian farmers maintained many of the original lands cut from wild forest by their ancestors in the late 1700s and early 1800s. They were on the whole collaborative and democratic, and worked as communities to build small centers of rural industry vital to their farming enterprises while caring for their land. He wrote: “You see farms here, as occasionally in Pennsylvania, where strip-cropping and rotation have been practiced for three generations, where the steepest slopes have been kept in trees, and intermediate slopes have been lashed down and held for permanent use as meadow or pastureland.”<sup>220</sup>

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<sup>218</sup> Lord (1931), pp. 138-143.

<sup>219</sup> Lord (1939), pg. 122; Lord (1947) notes that even while the Farm Bloc fight, headed by Harry Wallace against Hoover’s Food Administration’s surplus commodity price fixing schemes intensified, the extension service resolutely continued to encourage more production from grain and hog producers. “The state-federal Agricultural Extension service, created by the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, had been technically invaluable in stimulating production, but the same educational system [Harry Wallace] found, was turning out to be just to be just so much soothing syrup when it came to helping farmers band together and getting a better price,” pp. 200-201; Lord (1962) criticizes the “grow more and cut your costs’ extension dogma inflicted on Ohio farmers who were suffering the falling markets already awash in surplus, adding to a “mounting rural restiveness and tension,” pg. 259.

<sup>220</sup> Lord (1938), pg. 175; No doubt Lord felt at home here as the people and the landscape reminded him of the hilly Maryland and Pennsylvania Piedmont. Many Scots-Irish, Welsh, and German Ohio Valley families had been on the land since the mid-1700s and who for the most part migrated from central Pennsylvania in the late 1700s. Though small, these hill farms were highly diversified, very productive, and supplied surplus meat, wool, and apples back across the Appalachians to markets in East Coast cities. By the mid-to-late 1800s product was sent downriver to Cincinnati on the Ohio River and as far south as New Orleans on the Mississippi. See Ohio Historical Society (Ohio History Central) online resources:  
[http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Agriculture\\_and\\_Farming\\_in\\_Ohio?rec=1579](http://www.ohiohistorycentral.org/w/Agriculture_and_Farming_in_Ohio?rec=1579)

Eastern Ohio hill farmers were not averse to modern technology, nor were they critical of progress, but as Lord travelled through the countryside of the Ohio River Valley he must certainly have drawn parallels between Old World agrarians and these Appalachian descendants of pioneer families who farmed in America's "first West." Their farms, though not large, were comfortable, well-cared for, diverse and productive, and the people he met through his work were engaging and proud of their history on the land.<sup>221</sup>

He collected stories as he went, especially drawn to poetry written by farmers and their wives. Country papers commonly solicited poetry as filler material to end a short column here or there, but gave no distinction or purpose other than as novelty. Lord, however, saw the value in poetry, especially for the voice it gave rural women. Thus, his poetry collection began here, and over the years he gathered works from all over the Mid-West and West and later published as *Voices from the Fields* (1937). He held that country poetry demonstrated "how pioneers overtaken by interdependence embrace their fate in prose, but continue to push back of yonder in song and rime."<sup>222</sup>

Lord had little time, however, for his own prose and poetry and concentrated wholly upon building the skills of other rural writers, namely the country correspondents who contributed for the independent press, village weeklies, and the farmer's papers. "Natural born country journalism, whether local or national, still keeps pretty generally the tone of correspondence between individuals," he observed and he saw the importance in it.<sup>223</sup> The various columns and departments published in hundreds of local papers represented a "printed meeting of country people," and though the country press editor cared not so much if his correspondents could write prose or poetry, they demanded that correspondents get names spelled right and to "get over the idea that the only news under heaven is 'Visits and Illness.'"<sup>224</sup>

There was a strong taste of the old Populism here, born of a general distrust of the exclusive agricultural interest groups like the Ohio Farm Bureau; organizations that hinted at the old mass politics used by trusts and monopolies of the 1890s.<sup>225</sup> Lord began to see the

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<sup>221</sup> Lord (1939), in: "The Midlands is Taken," Lord writes of early observations of French visitors to America in the early nineteenth century (De Tocqueville among others) during the drive for free land beyond the Appalachians which they characterized as wasteful and careless, 160. For hill farmers who resisted land drives of the mid 1800s and remained settled on the western flanks of the Appalachians, Lord in the 1920s observed a sense of land and cultural stewardship among multi-generational farm families that characterized their resilience and endurance, pp. 174-175.

<sup>222</sup> Lord (1937), in: *Voices from the Fields*. See "Notes on Sources," xvi.

<sup>223</sup> Lord (1937), xvi.

<sup>224</sup> Lord (1937), pp. 118-119.

<sup>225</sup> Summers (1996), in: "Putting Populism Back In: Rethinking Agricultural Politics and Policy," notes that the rapid rise of the Ohio Farm Bureau in political and economic power was reminiscent of mass politics and monopolized corruption that dominated the agricultural shipping and national trade markets in the late nineteenth century, pg. 395.

connections between the farmer's movements of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and an emergent neo-agrarianism that opposed agro-industrial wealth while asserting that economic justice was imperative for underrepresented farmers.<sup>226</sup>

Relations between farmers and their extension agents were often complicated, especially in the Appalachian counties. Funding for agents' salaries had been severely reduced from state and federal sources following the war and this provided the well-moneyed Ohio Farm Bureau (OFB) with an opportunity to not only fill salary gaps but exceed previous salary levels. John Hervey, a well-respected Washington County agent selected by town commissioners and the university before the war, suddenly found his modest \$1000 annual salary more than tripled to \$4800 in 1921 in essence an employee of the OFB.<sup>227</sup>

Hervey, a local cattle breeder who led a pre-war milk strike in Pittsburgh that earned him the great respect and support of eastern Ohio dairymen, was embarrassed by OFB maneuvers. He continued to energetically serve his county enthusiastically with a full suite of classes, workshops, farm visits, 4H club work, farm shows, and demonstration work, but the inflated salary in the eyes of his constituents made him a man beholden to the commercial interests of OFB.<sup>228</sup> But meeting attendance dropped and people whispered, and Hervey, who had been uncomfortable with the pay increase from the beginning, chose to resign his post and returned to breeding his beloved Jersey cattle on his farm in the gentle hills of Northeast Ohio.

On a ride-along assignment with Hervey weeks before his resignation, Lord listened to the agent's deep concern for the hill farmer's situation. They stopped at a Washington County farm on the verge of bankruptcy where the young farmer, a war veteran about Lord's age,

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<sup>226</sup> Lord (1947) describes entrenched lines of disagreement over the Food Administration mishandling of surplus and price fixing following the war, large regional commodity cooperatives fought to gain lobbying power in Washington, while farmer's coalitions agitated at the local and state level to restrict government and corporate influence, states "Even so, the farm coalitionists of the nineteen-twenties made better time and greater headway than had their fathers who tried to unite West and South during the Farmers' Alliance or Populist movement of the eighteen-nineties," pp. 266-267; Summers (1996) notes that Lord observed the stirrings of a new agrarianism that over the course of the deepening depression of the 1920s greatly influenced the New Deal agricultural programs of the 1930s and that in effect "were the fulfillment of Populist demands," pg. 399.

<sup>227</sup> Lord (1950), pg. 109.

<sup>228</sup> Lord (1939) quotes from Gladys Baker's 1939 thesis: "The county agents were not supposed to run membership drives for the Farm Bureau, or to keep books for the local cooperative creameries, or give special attention or services to the powerful local politicians; but quite a few had to do some or all of these things to keep their appropriations up, their salaries intact, and their programs running," pg. 110.



shouted in frustration at Hervey, “What can grow, anyway, on that blamed old hill of ours!” Hervey, a progressive farmer with strong reformist roots, shouted back, “You can!”<sup>229</sup>

## The Wounded Hills

When Lord and Fleming began to travel the state, they made comparisons to the eastern hill counties of their earlier assignments. In contrast to the Appalachian counties, the Hocking Hills Region of south-central Ohio was “wounded country.”<sup>230</sup> The war years had made severe changes to the land, some of it obvious in the deep gullies and yellow rivers that ran with thick silt year-round. In one of his first Ohio articles, published in 1921 in the *Ohio Extension News*, Lord begged the question “Why farm to fatten a delta far away?” It took little time for the postwar bust to transform the southern hill county people who “have taken an awful beating in the years since. You can see it in their faces and on their hills.”<sup>231</sup>

Between the Civil War and the Great War, the Hocking Hills region blossomed with seasonal industries in fiber milling, coal and ore mines, lumber mill, brick yards and glass works, all of which grew out of local agricultural needs. In the first decade of the new century, improved mechanization in manufacturing, the expansion of rural railroad lines, and an ever-improving road system allowed trains and trucks to carry off the region’s natural bounty to bigger cities to more profitable markets beyond the local crossroads.<sup>232</sup> As the U.S. began to

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<sup>229</sup> Lord employs this story as a cautionary tale in *The Agrarian Revival* (1939). He admired John Hervey as a model extension agent and spent much time with him when assigned to the Appalachian counties, pp. 111-115. Observing OFB tactics with the agents he shadowed and experiencing for himself loud OFB protestations over the work that he and John Fleming were doing for the country press, Lord understood well the distrust and suspicions of the independent farmers. “Farmers, once they grouped in county Farm Bureaus and similar county organizations, moved almost immediately into buying and selling; and soon many a county agent found himself engaged in business... This led to so much hard feeling that county agents caught in commercial embroilments, found no way out but to resign, pp. 105-106.

<sup>230</sup> Lord (1962) recalls that Hocking County land was “washed bare as sand dunes,” overgrazed, stripped of forest, and barren,” pp. 305-306; I used Camp, *Roadside Geology of Ohio* (2006), extensively while on a research trip through the areas where Lord traveled. I found that many of the landscapes he describes as ruined and exhausted during the 1920s that have since been incorporated into Metro Parks or Ohio State Park and Forests systems and have fully or partially recovered as natural areas, under conservation management. Many of the individual farms still in use are in agricultural land use protection, particularly in the Hocking Hills. See: “Western Ohio- The Till Plains,” pp. 35-143 and “Ohio Uplands – The Allegheny Plateau,” pp. 149 – 297 for descriptions of broken prairies of the 1920s, the Hocking Hills, and later (1940s) Bromfield’s Malabar Farms.

<sup>231</sup> Lord (1962), pp. 306-307.

<sup>232</sup> Johnson (1975) reviews USDA and rural sociology research of the 1920s that indicates that farmers of the Midwest had made significant purchases of farm trucks and automobiles before the war (1910-1915) and that sales accelerated rapidly as wartime production and international trade increased during the war (1916-1919). “Such things as automobiles and pickup trucks

supply Allied nations with war materials, food, and equipment for the war, small rural factories expanded to year-round operations and intensified their extraction of raw materials, doubled their yield in lumber harvest, and increased agricultural output by converting marginal lands to full cultivation. Strip mines widened, coal mines deepened, and farm fields were worked hard and often.<sup>233</sup>

Prior to the war, agricultural production in the southern counties had been much like that of the eastern hill region, where highly diversified farms provided meats, grains, produce, and fruit. Dairy and beef cattle, orchards, and herds of grazing wool sheep covered much of the pastured region by 1910, and most farmers owned at least a dozen pigs that foraged in numerous woodlots. During the years of American engagement in the war, demand for fats, leather, and oils skyrocketed, especially to supply Cincinnati's burgeoning Proctor and Gamble plants that manufactured Ivory soap and Crisco, popular fat and lard products in military supply. Tanneries on the outskirts of the city required vast amounts of leather to make shoes, boots, saddle and tack, gasmasks, aviation equipment, and military clothing. The farms of the Hocking Hills, well positioned for access to the great manufacturing and meat packing centers in Cincinnati, went 'hog wild' to help meet demands that would outfit and feed the American military.

Meat packers of Cincinnati received tens of thousands of hogs a week from the region by river barge and rail car. Farmers increased their swine herds from a dozen to hundreds and then to thousands, turning out as many rooting, digging, wallowing pigs as the woods could hold. The sparse forests, what was left of them after the logging and mineral quarrying, were full of hogs fattening on the natural wealth of the woods, in preparation for finishing on feed corn. The corn had to be shipped in from the western Ohio counties, since the Hocking Hills land had long lost its ability to support crops as hungry as corn. The western counties once rich in tallgrass prairie and oak savannah before settlement had tamed the last of the wild Ohio landscapes in the 1840s. What was once a diverse farm profile that included dairy, grains, and produce was converted into a vast corn monoculture over the course of ten years. As war demands grew for fats, leather, and meat, corn was highly profitable for a time as Ohio quickly became the center of the national swine industry. Some southern Ohio farmers like the iconic Evans family focused solely upon pork production to the exclusion of other agricultural products. One monoculture fed another.<sup>234</sup>

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enabled the farm and rural population after World War I to take advantage of the variety of goods and services available in large urban areas farther from home," pg. 190.

<sup>233</sup> Murdock (1988), in: *The Buckeye Empire*, describes the mining, farming, and manufacturing in Hocking County, as well as in other rural counties in eastern and southern Ohio, as fully integrated with national and international markets by the 1880s, stimulated in large part by the war industry of Civil War period and that expanded rapidly with the onset of the First World War. This was especially true in the Hocking Hills region for iron foundries, agricultural equipment manufacturing, coal mining, and the railroads that fed Cincinnati's "urban revolution," pp. 66-67.

<sup>234</sup> Murdoch (1988) notes that Ohio competed with Illinois and Indiana for hog production and for a brief time during the war led the hog belt region in hog production even though Chicago overtook Cincinnati as the center of hog processing, pp. 70-71. The rise to prominence of southern hill farm hog farms in the history of the Bob Evans Homestead (Old Wood Homestead)

A farm-to-factory supply chain evolved quickly in southern Ohio affecting in particular the Hocking Hills region that contributed substantially to the raw material needed to fuel the state's impressive manufacturing output in tanks, helmets, weapons, munitions, coal products, trucks, gas masks, uniforms, boots and shoes, and canned food.<sup>235</sup> These were good times for the Hocking Hills region, until Armistice Day. Touring the countryside after the war, Lord looked in amazement from his Pullman car window. It looked as if all of Paleozoic Ohio had been plowed, augured, mined, and stripped from the ground. Limestone, coal, shale, slate, salt, sand, and sandstone by the hundreds of thousands of tons had been removed from mineral banks, domes, and underground seams and shipped north and west. Traveling to yet another correspondent's workshop, he looked out on a landscape in ruin. "When the last living American old enough to mourn some lad lost in the War has been dead a hundred years, Americans still living will be suffering to some extent from wounds that War dealt our land."<sup>236</sup>

This was a pivotal time in Lord's career as an extension specialist, a time when he began to seriously question the methods and meanings behind what he began to view as propaganda. Well into the postwar years of severe agricultural price deflation extension agents were urged to continue on with wartime campaigns that encouraged farmers to grow more, even as the land lay wasted around them. Traveling the state for his workshops and writing seminars, he continued to search for those exemplar stories that would encourage farmers to work more efficiently, to modernize and invest in new equipment, or to demonstrate a promising and profitable innovation. But by 1924 finding farmers with good news to share had become difficult as the postwar agricultural depression deepened. "I had to travel an awfully long way for that in those years."<sup>237</sup>

The collapse of the farming economy resonated loudly with equipment manufacturers across the Mid-West. Congressman George Nelson Peek of Illinois, president of Moline Plow Company protested loudly in Washington that "You can't sell a plow to a busted customer."<sup>238</sup>

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National Register of Historic Places, Rio Grande, Ohio in: *Gallipolis Public Square and Garden Lots Historic District* (1980), pg. 19.

<sup>235</sup> Murdock (1988) states that the war and post-war years were good for Ohio, as rural and urban industrial expansion improved life for many at home with expanded job opportunities, year-round production and demand that translated into steady income, and access to goods and services unavailable or unaffordable before the war, pp. 123-137.

<sup>236</sup> Lord (1939), in: "Drumfire," describes how the war affected the Mid-Western domestic working landscape. Lord draws on his experiences traveling through Ohio 1921-1924 to help give substance to the grim statistics that he later brought together for this chapter. Observing firsthand the Hocking Hills area during this period of extension service seemed to be the pivotal experience of his early career that began his lifelong passion for conservation, pg. 102.

<sup>237</sup> Lord (1950), pg. 4.

<sup>238</sup> Lord (1947), describes the farm implement manufacturing sector as nearly desperate as the farmer, protesting at agricultural conferences and congressional meetings that as the farmer goes, so goes the national economy, pg. 231.

In the southern Ohio counties, there was little “cash money” remaining after shipping product to the cities. “The pressure of towns upon the farms for cheap food is merciless and constant and, deep down under all the Chamber of Commerce platitudes about mutual interests, the resentment of a considerable mass of farmers as to their own comparative inability to name a price and get it, is deep seated and grim.”<sup>239</sup> Lord had to look deep into the hills to find stories of farmers who were not affected by the growing economic crisis, deep enough as to be almost cut off from the complicated interconnected world of city and farm.

In Belmont County, a landscape so steep that the old timers would boast “men have been known to fall out of their cow-pasture three times in one morning,” Lord discovered Mr. Alva Hartley.<sup>240</sup> Mr. Hartley, a Quaker, farmed seventy-four “extra steep acres” deep within the Hocking Hills, and with his wife had built barns, a home, and outbuildings from the stone, pine, and oak found on his property. For all outward appearances, the Hartley place was a farm that Ohio forgot about inviting into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Lord discovered that the farmer and his wife may not have been fond of modern agricultural extravagances but they certainly knew their business in the conservation of land and the breeding of Jersey cattle.<sup>241</sup>

A man deeply interested in modern agricultural sciences to breed high quality dairy cattle, Hartley was using the Babcock test for determining butterfat content in milk, a method that involved a small lab full of equipment. With the help of a local boy whose job it was to carry the heavy black testing kit with its scales, centrifuge, and slim-necked bottles up the near vertical lane to a small milking parlor, he tested the milk daily.<sup>242</sup> Climbing the hill to the parlor, Lord noted that the land, some of the steepest he’d observed in the county, was thick with pasture grass and forest. He looked hard but could not find a single gully on the breathless climb up. The

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<sup>239</sup> Lord (1931), derides the political and commercial influences of rural Ohio counties to force back upon the farmer the high costs of transportation and taxes. “The late war made a newspaper hero of the [Ohio] farmer and put money in his pocket. But he has been paying ever since for those few years of economic and emotional expansion. Ever since 1919 he has been taking it on the chin,” pp. 134-136.

<sup>240</sup> Lord (1931), in: “Guardians of Herds and Flocks,” pg. 61.

<sup>241</sup> Lord (1931), in: “Cow-Racers,” pp. 61 – 64.

<sup>242</sup> *The Science News Letter*, (Oct. 11, 1930) a popular science magazine of its day (compare to *Discover* or *Science*), announced that Professor Babcock had finally been recognized for his invention in 1930. S.N. Babcock, chemistry professor and dairy researcher at the University of Wisconsin, invented the butterfat test that bears his name in 1890 after a decade of research. He donated the patent to the USDA and received no monetary compensation for its development or use until awarded a \$5,000 agricultural prize at age 87. It was lauded as the invention that saved the American dairy industry from itself as corrupt practices (watering down liquid milk and extending/whipping solids for butter). “It has made more dairymen honest than the Bible has ever made,” pp. 230-231 & pg. 239.

milking parlor attached to a fine slab-sided barn was clean and attractive and neatly tucked into the hillside.

“My wife and I did it all ourselves. I just got started; I was working on it at odd times when I had a bad fall – I was filling silo – and it put me on crutches for ten weeks. Winter was coming on and that cement work had to be done. I crawled and did it. My wife carried the water.” The property, purchased in 1910, had at first operated as a truck farm, but a local drought dried the soil and debt began to mount. He bought a Jersey cow and it had a calf. “It gave me something to build on.” He attended the county cow testing association meetings every month and learned how to use the Babcock test. He grew his herd and kept them cows out of the woods. He moved them across a series of contoured pastures daily. “My land has come up fine. The cows brought it up.”<sup>243</sup>

Lord was impressed but not nearly as much as when Hartley described how the cows were fed in winter when not on grass. “In 1913 when I put up that ten-by-thirty silo, it took seven and a half acres of corn to fill it. Now I can fill it and another one eight-by-twenty-eight from four acres of the same ground.” He supplemented with alfalfa hay and oats he bought off-season and gave them plenty of water. To the barn and house Hartley and his wife had run indoor pipes to deliver spring water directly to the watering trough and stone sink. Lord and his extension companion were astounded, if not still a little breathless from the climb. “I stay right here with them,” Hartley continued, stating that it was important to mind them well as the high-quality buttermilk they produced with the fine Jersey bloodlines he had produced over the years had not only paid off their debts but was allowing for a sizable nest egg. Showing his meticulously kept books to his visitors, Hartley pointed out the previous year’s profit from the sale of calves and bred heifers amounting to almost a thousand dollars. “Here’s four calves, three heifers, and a bull we sold last spring. Do thee remember?” he asked his wife. Then back to his guests: “I’ve got lifetime production and profit records on every cow I ever owned. If it wasn’t for those records, I’d never had known what I had here.” To Lord it made sense: the combination of careful animal husbandry, scientific testing and accurate record keeping, and healthy land put the Hartley farm on firm ground. Hartley and his wife not only adapted their farm to what the land would bear, but made it thrive by working with rather than against natural assets of soil and forest they hadn’t recognized in the beginning.<sup>244</sup>

### **A Shift on the Great Till Plains**

Historically, western Ohio marked the eastern-most boundary of America’s lush tallgrass prairielands but by the time Lord and Fleming made their way by train to the towns and farmsteads west of Columbus in the mid-1920s, the prairie survived only as a few small remnant patches along rail lines and in isolated cemeteries. Towns built on the glacial till and sod plains bore names unlike those in Maryland that claimed colonial ties and of which Lord was most familiar, Prince Georges, Baltimore, Queen Anne’s, and the Worthington Valley. Instead, the train stopped at Fort Laramie, Ottawa, and Defiance where local extension agents met Lord and

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<sup>243</sup> Lord (1931), pg. 63.

<sup>244</sup> Lord (1931), pg. 63 – 64.

Fleming for county tours and country correspondent's seminars.<sup>245</sup> Wheat, corn, and cattle spread from horizon to horizon and compared to the hill farms of eastern and southern Ohio the prairie farms of the western counties were vast, and by 1923, nearly completely mechanized.

In years leading up to America's engagement in the Great War, Ohio's corn belt and wheat lands on the plowed-up prairie sold upwards of \$325 an acre, yet by the fourth anniversary of Armistice Day, November 11, 1923, farms were selling for only \$125 an acre. Loans were nearly impossible to obtain as local banks struggled to contain their losses on short term loans. Foreclosure notices attracted the big cooperatives whose well-positioned managers competed for extra acreage at the foot of the auctioneer's block. Fire sales signaled not only the brittle nature of commodity agriculture's boom-bust cycles but an increasingly fragile capacity of Mid-Western banks to weather financial shocks. The rush to liquidate land forced a widespread recall of farm and commercial loans in an attempt to shore up liquidity. Fire sale discounts on the cost of land fueled collapses of local banks that rippled through state banking institutions.<sup>246</sup>

Riding out to a farm cooperative meeting in Putnam County, their host and driver, a corporate farm manager, pointed to a man walking along the road. "See that fellow?" he said, "They're selling him out. He's farmed for forty years." This *had* been good land, explained the driver. But during the war many western county farmers mortgaged their farms over and over again to accommodate farm improvements, increase acreage, and invest in new equipment. It was clear to Lord and Fleming that the land was suffering commercial exploitation. "It was deflated and depleted – distressed land," Lord wrote.<sup>247</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> Kenney (1988) in: *Maryland Place Names: Their Origin and Meaning*, includes the history of colonial place names in Maryland that Russell Lord mentions frequently in his articles and books to include Prince Georges County, named for Prince Georges of Denmark (1652-1708), Cecil Calvert, second Baron of Baltimore, for whom Baltimore City and Baltimore County were named, and the town of Princess Anne, county seat for Maryland's southernmost county, Somerset, named for the daughter of King George II. English-Welsh farmer Samuel Worthington (1733-1815) and his Welsh wife Susan Johns Worthington (my fourth great grandfather and grandmother) settled and built a manor farmhouse in the 1750s in the valley to which the Lord family moved in 1907 to take up farming when Russell was eleven. The Worthington Valley was named for this founding Baltimore County family through a royal land grant in 1738. Retrieved from the Maryland Historical Trust:

[http://mdihp.net/dsp\\_county.cfm?search=county&id=3286&viewer=true&updated=N&criteria1=B&criteria2=BA](http://mdihp.net/dsp_county.cfm?search=county&id=3286&viewer=true&updated=N&criteria1=B&criteria2=BA)

<sup>246</sup> Lord (1931), notes land values at the time of his tenure in western Ohio as having lost nearly two thirds of war time value, pg. 137; Ramcharan and Rajan (2014), in: "Financing capacity and fire sales: Evidence from bank failures," explore the phenomenon of agricultural fire sales and Mid-Western banking collapse prior to the Crash of 1929 using complex system analysis and archival, hand-collected data from local to regional banking records. Fire sales in the Mid-West during 1920-1929, defined as "a decline in the value of financial assets because of limited financing capacity in the [agricultural] market" forced distressed land owners and borrowers to liquidate real estate assets at greatly discounted terms to escape burdensome debt.

<sup>247</sup> Lord (1931), in: "The Coach of Buckeye Farms," pg. 138.

The driver stated that some farmers couldn't understand why now they had to *buy* fertilizer in the Corn Belt if only to raise a fraction of what the land had once supported without it. The western Ohio prairie soils, tilled, drained, and farmed intensely since the 1850s, had removed nearly all permanent, native cover of big bluestem and Indian grass and replaced it with annual crops of corn, wheat, and oats. "But I'm not here to prove a theory," said the driver, "I'm here to make money for my Company, and protect the investment. So far we've managed to make a go of it. Year in and year out we're making money. Every one of our farms has to make money or we let it go."<sup>248</sup>

The corporate commodity farms, well-capitalized and mechanized, epitomized efficiency and industrialization. These farms provided Lord and Fleming with plenty of material for their prescribed success stories. It was easier to overlook signals of collapse while traveling through the broad, open western counties to "propagate expansively the dogma of boastful and disastrous mistakes" when ranks of tractor-trailed combine harvesters rumbled profitably across the plains.<sup>249</sup> The transfer of technology from a mechanized yet horse-powered system to fuel-powered tractors and multi-function implements created a sense of optimism and pride here felt nowhere else in the state.<sup>250</sup>

Lord's encounters with the working landscapes of Ohio were always social experiences as shared rides, well attended field demonstrations, and crowded extension gatherings comprised mostly of farm company managers and workers. But in the broad expanses of former prairie where large farms spread out across the gentle rise of glacial till soils, the experience of traveling by train alone, or nearly so, without the distraction of crowds, gave Lord many opportunities to pause and think through the ecological scenario. Boundless but monotonous vistas punctuated by hulking grain elevators sitting heavily along railroad sidings had the quality of myth-making and half-truths fueled by enthusiastic commercial and technological promotions.

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<sup>248</sup> Lord (1931), describes how he and Fleming relied heavily upon local drivers to pick them up from train stations and to taxi them from meeting to meeting. Lord took every opportunity to interview the drivers as they traveled, gathering opinions, perspectives, and local history as they went. Outside of farm tours where he was able to interview farmers directly, his Ohio drivers provided broader perspectives of economy and land as a way of introducing outsiders to their respective regions. See: "The Coach of Buckeye Farms," pp. 138-143.

<sup>249</sup> Lord (1950), pg. 4.

<sup>250</sup> Turner (1982), in: "The Ohio Farm Bureau Story," describes a flush of newly established postwar cooperatives that hoped to reorganize and realign farmer control to accommodate large market demands, price negotiations, and legal maneuvers. Though the state had by 1922 a multitude of energetic cooperatives for managers of grain elevators, livestock, marketing, fruit and vegetable, wool, dairy, egg, sugar beet, and tobacco, Ohio Farm Bureau affiliations and influence often created turmoil and unrest. It was not a regional phenomenon, however, as at the national level cooperatives struggled to maintain farmer autonomy while limiting large commercial interests that threatened 'old guard' institutions like the Grange and National Farmers Union., pp. 79-97.

Consumerism was on the rise. Lord noted that farm wives attending Ohio Farm Bureau sponsored community programs in Lake County reminded their husbands that “home is part of the farm” and they formed extension agent-led committees to test appliances for “consumer research.” Time and labor-saving devices that poorer southeastern Ohio farms wives could only dream of owning, were purchased by the tens of thousands of units by wealthier western Ohio farmers. Toasters, stoves, electric ice-boxes, mixers, fans, and laundry machines poured into farm kitchens in Ohio and across the Mid-West and Plains states. Lord thought that the Ohio Farm Bureau and equipment dealers were rather cozy with county extension officers. New tractors, implements, and vehicles were promoted at county meetings, sometimes with discounts for mentioning the name of the agent. Speaking at an agricultural marketing conference in 1923, Ohio’s Director of Extension, H.C. Ramsower warned his agents to take care not to oversell the appliance-commodity marketing scheme: The Ohio Farm Bureau “promoters lost in the heat of their enthusiasm something of their sense of proportion. They make too great promises. The reaction is sure to come.” Though many thought him backward-looking but he proved right five years later when western Ohio counties plunged into economic crisis and farms with their new equipment, appliances, trucks, and tractors sat at auction.<sup>251</sup>

The Grange and the National Farmers Union (NFU), long established cooperative and democratic farming institutions in the Mid-West, had seen nothing like the rapid competitive advance of states’ Farm Bureaus into the social fabric of America’s farming regions. Lord described how they protested loudly over the Ohio farm Bureau’s funding of extension agents and asserted its political and social influence in ways that threatened the democratic process in rural communities. In Ohio, the state Grange and NFU pushed back against Ohio Farm Bureau funding and marketing tactics and political favoritism, reinforcing instead their own organizational positions for fair trade over free markets without undue and unfair corporatist influence.<sup>252</sup> NFU representatives spoke loudly at county extension meetings against the Ohio Farm Bureau. Both the State Grange and NFU positioned themselves as rural defenders against corporate power and wealth.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>251</sup> Lord (1939), describes the rising consumer demand for “household labor-saving devices,” among far-flung farming communities that demonstrated the merchant-corporate-political influence of powerful farm lobbies. Ramsower, speaking to his extension agents with Lord in the audience, seemed to many to be “a shade reactionary” to the possibility of bloated and overpriced markets resulting in economic trouble in the future, pp. 120-122.

<sup>252</sup> Lord (1930), pg. 109; See also Phillips (2007) who describes the small independent farmers attempts to push back against the growing cooperative lobbies, pg. 219.

<sup>253</sup> Hadwiger (1976), in: “Farmers in Politics,” explains that many organizations that pushed back against capitalists, politically connected merchants, political lobbies, and aggressive bankers during the agricultural recession that proceeded the Great Depression. Grange and National Farmers Union among these, populist farmer’s groups highlighted the increasingly difficult situations of underrepresented sharecroppers, rising numbers of tenant farmers, displaced farmers, and threats to rural values. Mid-Western farmers were generally ‘suffered a remoteness from national politics and a lower level of political involvement’ and this fueled the



Attending several lively western Ohio county farmers' gatherings, Lord took an interest in rural democratic strategy by studying the tensions between corporate commercial interests and the influence of capitalism and politics in rural communities. He read closely the powerful editorials issued by Henry A. Wallace, editor-in-chief of *Wallace's Farmer*, the most widely read and respected farm journal of its day. Henry's father, Henry C. "Uncle Harry" Wallace was serving as Secretary of Agriculture in Washington and left his editorial post to his son. Through Henry's editorials, Lord learned how farm relief and agricultural reform at the highest levels of policy and politics impacted wheat farmers, local granaries, cattle and hog producers, orchard and produce operations, dairy, and poultry farmers. He learned, too, the power of words to rally and inspire. Wallace's editorials were "brilliantly written" and had great influence on Lord's thinking about interconnected systems of policy and land use.<sup>254</sup>

An experienced agricultural statistician and scientific corn breeder from Iowa, Henry A. Wallace also created regional weather profiles, soils reports, and yield projections for the journal that reflected true cost analyses of drought years of the northern plains, flooding in the Mississippi Valley and the spread of corn diseases across the High Plains and Mid-West. Complex yet straightforward scientific articles aided farmers and ranchers by explaining and taking into account the complex interplay of environment, agriculture, economics, and the social needs and obligations of farm families and communities. It was a practical farmers journal that strived to educate and empower its readers. A devout Christian and a progressive, pragmatic thinker, Henry A. Wallace was an outspoken critic of corporate-industrial agriculture's threats to rural democracy. Lord became an ardent reader.<sup>255</sup>

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populist demand for greater democratic representation and local control over prices, banks, and commodity programs, pp. 164-166.

<sup>254</sup> Lord (1947), in: "The First Secretary Wallace," describes how Henry C. Wallace's reformist alliances with Roosevelt conservationists (Gifford Pinchot in particular) influenced his Farm Relief policies, challenging greatly the much-maligned Hoover administration's disregard for farmer equity and justice. By the time of the price break and start of the 1920 farmer's depression that began the spiral towards national depression in 1929, Secretary Wallace's staunch fight for farm reform and agricultural relief was well underway. Henry A. Wallace, newly assigned as chief editor for *Wallace's Farmer*, carried his father's calls for reforms and organizing into the heartlands through his brilliantly written editorials and speeches, and these had a compelling influence on the young farm writer in Columbus, pp.211-229

<sup>255</sup> Lord (1947), "Wallace's audiences listened to him "with almost painful attention" as he spoke to the farmers who trusted him "why a war that was over should reduce them here, over four thousand miles or more from the scene of the actual fighting, to ruin," pg. 274; *The Wallace's of Iowa* (1947) is a weighty biography that spans three generations of the Wallace family beginning with Scottish immigrant farmer John Wallace, Henry C. Wallace his son who served as Secretary of Agriculture for Hoover and Coolidge, and his grandson Henry A. Wallace who served as Secretary of Agriculture during the Depression and New Deal (1933 – 1940) years then as Vice President to F.D.R during World War II (1941-1945); See also Culver and Hyde (2001) for an updated biography of Henry A. Wallace that covers his life and career beyond where Lord's book concludes with Roosevelt's selection of Harry S. Truman for running mate in 1944.

Lord felt that his days working for an increasingly bureaucratic and ineffectual extension service were numbered. He grappled with institutional directives to promote commercial interests over the preservation of rural values. He was forced to decide what kinds of agricultural communications were “evangelical persuasion,” political lobbying, propaganda, or preaching and found little of it useful to continuing his career with Ohio Extension.<sup>256</sup> Influenced by Wallace’s essays, articles, and speeches the young writer reframed and reoriented his evolving worldviews on agriculture, environment, and rural life. He began to craft a career in agricultural journalism and found to his delight a traveling correspondence position with the Crowell Publishing Company, publishers of *Colliers Weekly*, *American Magazine*, *Woman’s Home Companion*, and *Farm and Fireside*. By mid-year Lord offered his resignation to the Ohio Extension Service and that fall married commercial artist and Army war veteran Kate Kalkman in Columbus.<sup>257</sup>

### **A View from the Precipice**

The Lazarus Department Store in downtown Columbus, Ohio, was as unlikely a place for Russell Lord to have met his future wife as any, but he often came to work in the press office at the Ohio State campus to file reports and approve proofs. The cafeteria at the Lazarus flagship store and headquarters building just down the street offered the most affordable meals around. Kate Kalkman, director of fashion and advertising dined there too, and it was in pleasant lunchtime conversation that each learned that the other hailed from Baltimore County, Maryland, and that each had served in the rural countryside of France during the war.<sup>258</sup>

Kate left a successful position at the New York School of Design for Women to enlist in the U.S. Army Medical Corps in 1917, attained the rank of captain at a hospital complex in Brest, and oversaw and taught in an art program for injured soldiers until the end of the war. Immediately upon returning to New York City in 1919, the Lazarus Department Store offered her a position as director of marketing at the national offices in downtown Columbus, Ohio, where she met Russell over lunch in 1923.<sup>259</sup>

Shortly after her marriage to Lord, however, Crowell Publishing requested that he report to the Park Avenue offices in New York, initiating a return to the city that Kate loved. Less thrilled about the move to a crowded urban environment, Lord credited her with his smooth transition to city life that would not have been possible without her enthusiasm, support, and knowledge of the bustling New York City landscape. She helped her new husband, five years her junior, navigate the confusing maze of districts and offices, transportation, and communications,

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<sup>256</sup> Lord (1939), pg. 108.

<sup>257</sup> Chrismer (2007), in: “Russell and Kate Lord, Harford’s Artists of The Land,” Harford Historical Bulletin, pp. 6-9.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., pp. 6-7.

<sup>259</sup> Lord (1950), pp. 4-5.

and soon settled into their first apartment together. But almost immediately Russell was called up for a travel assignment for the magazine *Farm and Fireside*.<sup>260</sup>

John Crowell established *Farm and Fireside* in 1877 and, as did many other magazine publishers of his day, found that good articles about agriculture and gardening attracted not only a loyal subscriber but plenty of paying advertisers for farm implements, land, fencing, tack for horses, and eventually, tractors, trucks, and machinery. *Farm and Fireside* competed admirably for readership with *Wallace's Farmer*, *Farmer's Voice*, *Prairie Farmer*, and more than forty other weekly and bi-weekly agricultural periodicals after the war, but Crowell's editors were less inclined to delve into political opinion pieces or economic speculations as were the others. The magazine maintained a rather neutral stance on critical issues of the day and concentrated instead on farmer profiles, crop and soil condition reports, weather observations, and crop production updates. It was a pleasant read with an attractive almost spacious layout designed for family enjoyment and it promised to make better farmers, more comfortable homes, and happier children of its readers.<sup>261</sup>

Lord's first assignment was launched from his new base in New York City. It was a cross-country excursion of several weeks, stopping in all of the great agricultural regions to find and report on "true stories of farmer's success." It was much the same as he had done for the Ohio Extension service and he knew it would be a challenge not to be so skeptical. "I found a few outstanding farm families here and there with two cars and a bathroom," he wrote, "Most of them were fine people. I wrote about them. But little by little the fact bit in to me that they hadn't made it farming. They had made it as topsoil miners and salesmen as a rule. Through a curious combination of ignorance, innocence, greed, and need, they were selling America and our future down the river; and here I was a Park Avenue farm reporter, taking as much as \$500 an article, to celebrate their success as farmers. It didn't make sense."<sup>262</sup>

During the next four years Lord covered the national agricultural scene, reporting from nearly every state on the success of the American farmer. Back at home in the city he shared the reality of what he saw with his editors and Kate. He'd spent four days in a fierce dust storm on the high plains of Kansas watching seed and soil and livelihoods carried away on winds that left nothing to spare. In North Dakota he was panhandled by impoverished and displaced farmers in downtown Fargo while just outside the city limits great stacks of wheat rotted in the sun. With the State Director of Extension of South Dakota at his side for an interview on agricultural progress and innovation, an irate farmer chased them off the land, whip in hand, claiming that extension was 'educating farmers into tenancy and serfdom!' A week later the same farm sold at fire sale. "Out on the land you could see the whole structure of our agriculture collapsing. The economic slaughter was bad enough, but it began to appear the trouble went deeper. Something

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<sup>260</sup> Lord (1950), pp. 4-5.

<sup>261</sup> For comparisons and full text reviews see complete digital collections of fifty agricultural magazine titles (1877-1949) housed in their entirety online in the *Farm, Field, and Fireside Collection*, Illinois Digital Newspaper Collections, University Library at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. <http://idnc.library.illinois.edu/cgi-bin/illinois?a=p&p=collections>

<sup>262</sup> Lord (1950), pg. 4.

had gone terribly wrong at the base of the whole structure of our being; and not just with our soil but with our sense of values.” His stories told in editorial offices and living rooms began to unnerve Lord’s editors.<sup>263</sup>

By 1928, signs of socio-environmental collapse were evident in the East. Soon-to-be governor of New York Franklin D. Roosevelt made the connection between the state’s intense rural poverty and its exhausted landscapes. Once in office, he called for a move towards restoration and a “permanent agriculture,” and introduced a massive program to purchase and reforest wasted land. These lands were placed into public ownership for conservation management and to find alternative work for displaced farmers as conservation workers who planted trees, built check dams, and repaired badly eroded ground. New reservoir lakes flooded barren farmed-out valleys and brought electrification and rural land planning to New York’s outlying western counties, where the pairing of extreme poverty and environmental degradation was keenly felt.<sup>264</sup>

The New Conservationist movement under F.D.R. in New York had as its foundation the Old Guard Conservationist utilitarianism of President Theodore Roosevelt’s national agenda. Forests were replanted and protected for the future use of society. Soil erosion strategies contributed to the promise that farming would return to the state as a major economic driver. But layered atop the familiar utilitarian framework was a new concept in the rehabilitation of rural people who, it was hoped, would again be ready to reestablish themselves in industry or agriculture as assets to a restored economy.<sup>265</sup>

In tandem with F.D.R.’s New Conservationist efforts in New York, Gifford Pinchot, former Chief of the U.S. Forest Service under Teddy Roosevelt, now governor of Pennsylvania, launched reforestation efforts to reclaim heavily logged and strip-mined lands that had fueled for a century the entire industrial corridor of the Mid-Atlantic. In addition, urban and rural planners from around the Commonwealth who worked closely with Pinchot’s administration to apply conservation principles to dual problems of rural poverty and exploited land, made provisions to restore agriculture through soil conservation practices. Soil conservation demonstrations were set up throughout state by Penn State soil scientist C.C. McDowell who taught farmers how to prevent soil erosion, proper use of fertilizers to protect water quality, and forest buffer planting along streams and rivers.<sup>266</sup>

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<sup>263</sup> Lord (1950), pp. 4-6.

<sup>264</sup> Beeman & Pritchard (2001) mark the first contemporary use of the term permanent agriculture, critical to F.D.R.’s New Conservation plans in New York. Though the term had been coined by soil scientist Cyril G. Hopkins in 1868, it had a much different meaning instead referring to soil fertility chemicals rather than sustainable practices, pp. 29-30.

<sup>265</sup> Phillips (2007) frames Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Conservation within the context of the “Old School Conservationists” of Theodore Roosevelt’s administration and as the next logical step in developing conservation strategies that include peopled, communities, and rural economies, pp. 21-22.

<sup>266</sup> Egolf (2008) in: “Keep America American: The Great Depression, Government Intervention, and Conservation Response in Somerset County, Pennsylvania, 1920-1940,” describes the

Morris L. Cooke, Director of Public Works under reformist Philadelphia mayor Rudolph Blankenburg, was among the first of Pinchot's urban planners to use improved hydrological and electrical infrastructure to better the working and living conditions of the city's laborers and families. Pinchot's administration hired Cooke to survey the entire state and then develop and implement a plan to reorganize hydropower and electrical resources to provide fair and affordable access to Pennsylvania's farmers and rural communities. Cooke and Pinchot believed that utilities should be made available to the state's farmers without discriminatory rates and fees. Pinchot, overcoming utilitarian conservation tendencies began to look at Cooke's large scale hydropower projects as natural retreats that served to restore worker's health as well as provide land and water to restore Pennsylvania's diminished wildlife and fisheries. Many of Cooke's rural project sites were added to the state's park and forest system.<sup>267</sup>

### **The Beginning of the Fall**

At the federal level the obstacle to employing New Conservationist initiatives nationwide was President Hoover himself. Though Hoover had won approval early in his administration for assisting farmers with issues of interstate water access, flood control, farm marketing, and continued funding of federal extension efforts in scientific agricultural methods, he appeared at first ignorant of the initial signs of impending rural economic and environmental collapse. New Conservation leaders, all fellow Republicans, schooled Hoover in issues of soil erosion and the economic fragilities of overproduction of pork and surpluses of feed corn. They made clear the environmental correlations to rural poverty and overexploited land. But Hoover remained staunchly opposed to federal intervention in such matters, pointing out that New York and Pennsylvania served as models for states taking control of their own conservation and agricultural concerns. Senator George Norris of Nebraska, a New Conservation proponent for rural electrification and land use planning, raised concerns that Hoover's reluctance to commit

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pioneering soil conservation education methods of Somerset County Penn State Extension soil scientist C.C. McDowell who eventually carried out his soil conservation work statewide and also introduced electrification to Pennsylvania farms and rural communities through the 1930s, pp. 214-216.

<sup>267</sup> Lord (1950), provides a short biography of Morris L. Cooke to include the mention that he would also serve as the founding president of the Society for the Friends of the Land in 1940, pp. 37- 40; Phillips (2001) argues that Pinchot overcame his utilitarian conservationist tendencies by hiring Cooke and other New Conservation planners to help address dual issues of urban and rural poverty and natural resource degradation. Pinchot is often mislabeled as a strict Old Guard conservation utilitarian without regard to his visionary conservation work as Governor of Pennsylvania during the 1920s, pg. 22.; Minter (2006) suggests that the urban-rural conservation planners of the 1920s relaxed the intellectual boundaries between the domains of environment, conservation, and social concerns, thus creating a seedbed for a new environmental ethic to arise during the New Deal years. See "Lewis Mumford's Pragmatic Conservatism," pp. 78-80; Beeman and Pritchard (2001) describe Cooke's definition of blended scientific conservation methods as first coming to terms with the idea that man does not nor cannot for long claim to conquer nature, that to realize interdependence as a new concept in cooperation with nature leads to a more permanent working relationship with it, pg. 20.

federal resources to soil erosion problems would later cause forced adjustments in policies that would cost the nation both irreplaceable natural resources and economic resiliency. Hugh H. Bennett, a very vocal soil conservation advocate from the U.S.D.A. urged Hoover to acknowledge that serious environmental degradation was observed in all parts of the country, all of it accompanied by associated regional economic slumps and that could lead to serious national economic repercussions. Hoover, however, remained rigidly opposed to federal assistance and involvement.<sup>268</sup>

Russell Lord, out on the land talking to farmers and seeing for himself what the President could or would not, felt tensions rising in the meeting halls of rural America as well as in the USDA in Washington. The editorials in *Wallace's Farmer* were increasingly heated. Henry A. Wallace wrote of Hoover's stubbornness as "having shut out any possibility for the farmer to get out of the mess he was in, except by long years of low prices," and that F.D.R., considering a run for the presidency "should attack Hoover as some extent the cause of the world-wide depression."<sup>269</sup>

Wallace and an emergency commission of corn belt state governors devised a pricing formula that would temporarily balance corn and hog price ratios and offered it to the Hoover Administration and the USDA.<sup>270</sup> Hoover, however, did not understand the formula, and reacted gruffly to its complexity. He was neither farmer nor statistician and despite attempts by his advisors to consider the plan, he chose instead to ignore the corn belt governor commission's work and institute his own simpler 13:1 hog-to corn price ratio. Across the nation hog producers jumped at the prospect of profit, a hundred weight of pork equal to the price of thirteen bushels of corn! Corn farmers getting pennies on the hog dollar protested loudly and marched on Washington. Lord noted that in Ohio hog farmers propelled production upwards almost immediately, even butchering breeder sows and family pigs to cash in. The Hoover Administration back-pedaled out of the alarming situation, dropped the ratio plan, and created hostilities between meat farmers and the government that would last the next twenty years.<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>268</sup> Phillips (2007), notes that two distinct groups of New Conservationists emerged during the late 1920s, the first as collaborations between urban and rural planners and state politicians, the second as a group of USDA officials who along with conservationist senators and congressmen merged their efforts to dislodge Hoover from his stubborn position opposing federal intervention in the farm crisis, pp. 21-25.

<sup>269</sup> Lord (1947), builds the case against Hoover's refusal to assist farmers as a major cause of the impending national depression, citing at length a series of passionate editorials published in *Wallace's Farmer*, pp. 312 – 325.

<sup>270</sup> Lord (1947), notes that as the emergency commission wrangled with solutions, Wallace traveled around the corn belt states "making speeches, crying shame that a time should have come when farmers must shudder to hear rain on their roofs at night, for fear that a bounteous harvest will bankrupt them," pg. 267.

<sup>271</sup> Lord (1947), pp. 195-199.

Lord crossed paths with New Conservation leaders in his travels and noted that early efforts to address the linked crisis of overproduction, rural poverty, and land degradation were contained primarily to a few Eastern states and that greater attention needed to be given across the Mid-West and Plains states to regain any semblance of stability.<sup>272</sup> With the hog-corn price ratio debacle raging, farms and urban economies connected together by the meat packers and processors in Eastern and Mid-Western cities began to crumble. “Dependent urban structures soon felt the trouble too,” he wrote, as Mid-Western and Eastern agricultural manufacturing declined precipitously in the late 20s.<sup>273</sup> Consequently, advertising revenues for *Farm and Fireside* could no longer support the magazine’s publication. The New York promotional offices of Crowell’s Publishing scrambled to save the venerated old farmers bi-weekly. Reinvented as a high-end home fashion monthly, *The Country Home*, was introduced to readers in 1929 in October of 1929.<sup>274</sup>

## Conclusion

Fifteen years after Lord resigned from the Ohio Extension Service, he published a small volume on the history of the American agricultural extension service and agricultural education, *The Agrarian Revival* (1939) based largely on his interviews and experiences during the 1920s. Working during the postwar years in agricultural extension gave him valuable insight into the complexities of policy, economics, and environment. Lord grappled with how post-war commodity price instability and farm credit volatility affected land health and farmer well-being and found Bailey’s ideas of interconnectedness remarkable for their simplicity and environmental foundations. In the book, Lord reconnected with Bailey’s philosophy of earth and human stewardship, a theme that had direct ties to the Dean’s leadership in agricultural education and country life reforms of the early 1900s.<sup>275</sup> During his early freelance career as agricultural journalist during the mid-1920s, Lord was applying Bailey’s framework of interconnectedness to many of the stories he developed for *Farm and Fireside* and other farm magazine articles.<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>272</sup> Lord (1950) noted that Eastern states, particularly New York under F.D.R. and Pennsylvania under Pinchot, were by the mid-20s starting to address serious issues of erosion and rural poverty just as urban centers began slide towards economic depression, pp. 6-7.

<sup>273</sup> Ibid., pp. 6-7

<sup>274</sup> Lord (1950), pp. 4-5.

<sup>275</sup> Bailey (1915) continued to inspire Lord’s agrarian thought throughout the 1920s with elements of Bailey’s philosophy of interdependence evident in his articles for *Farm and Fireside*; Lord (1962) mentions that Bailey’s writings from *The Holy Earth* and *What Is Democracy?* (1918) were lightly plagiarized in his reporting at the time, especially in pieces regarding “the economy of immensities,” pp. 236-269.

<sup>276</sup> Lord (1939) mentions Liberty Hyde Bailey throughout *The Agrarian Revival*. His self-prescribed course of study of democracy included Bailey’s *What Is Democracy?* (1918); Lord (1962) notes that during the years 1919-1929, “Bailey had been implanted in the back of my head,” from many readings and interviewing him in 1929, pg. 413.

Lord's reporting on the worsening agricultural crisis came by way of the personal interview. He traveled the country by train to gather the stories of policy-makers, farmers, ranchers, economists, and conservationists. By the end of the decade, as national farm incomes had dropped an average sixty percent despite postwar optimism in Washington, lofty expectations for export agriculture eroded quickly as overworked soils and rural poverty deepened. According to his detractors, Hoover's reluctance to intervene worsened some environmental conditions and the plight of all farmers connected to export commodity markets. Lord sharpened his writer's skills as political commentator and policy critic during these turbulent times, in the wake of Hoover's miscalculated policy decisions.<sup>277</sup>

By 1929, by age thirty-four, Lord had not only witnessed the unraveling of interconnected systems of man and nature, he began to consider scientifically how politics, capitalism, science, environment, and democratic society functioned as an integrated whole. "I did not see landscapes, rural and urban, and seascapes and clouds as a part of a unified organic, living structure until I was thirty, and not until I was forty did I see the American scene in its entirety - forests, farms, wildlife, gardens, streams, factories, fisheries, livestock, cities, and people - as a living structure going dead on us, running down."<sup>278</sup>

Like Cooke and Pinchot who were in positions to see broad scale changes as interlinked with environments and economies, Lord concentrated his attention on how agricultural and forest lands responded to exploitation and high production by focusing on the linkages between policy, science, the human story, and the countryside. The decade of his education as a journalist expanded into frameworks of systems thought, especially in the emerging field of ecology and the human condition, the dawn of a new agrarianism whereby the loss of individual "control has gone against the farmer's most cherished illusion, independence."<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Baker (1928), in: "The Great Fat Fight," a series of the same name for *The Saturday Evening Post*, attributed worsening conditions on the land to government insistence that production of hog, corn, and wheat be maintained at wartime levels to warrant building export surpluses that in turn depressed farm prices; Best (1971), in: "Food Relief as Price Support," described purposely glutted markets maintained by the Hoover Administration, even as European countries began to import cheaper agricultural staples from Argentina and Brazil.

<sup>278</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 276; Johnson (1975), pp. 174-178; Phillips (2007), pp. 45-46.

<sup>279</sup> Lord (1939) laments that by the late 1920s, independence, one of the last and most cherished bastions of 19<sup>th</sup> century American agrarianism had been surrendered "to no other choice," pg. 159; White (1990), in his criticism of Worster (1990), addresses the need for understanding how people framed and responded to linked problems of environmental degradation, economic collapse, and human health and welfare. This is the theme of Lord's *The Agrarian Revival* (1939) as not only a chronicle of agricultural education and the history of 20<sup>th</sup> century extension to date, but an autobiography of his own coming to terms with the end of the Jeffersonian mythology in modern American agriculture.



## Chapter Four:

### A Gathering of Expansive Ideas

#### 1930-1938

It is necessary and proper now to advertise this new calling – soil healing – and its needs young people who are wondering what to do with their lives. There is work here for you, if you will get the training. It will never make you rich, but it will support you; and it is real, vital and absorbing work.

- Russell Lord, *Behold Our Land*, 1938 <sup>280</sup>

#### Introduction

Tucked comfortably into popular twentieth century histories of American agriculture are the familiar yet otherworldly images of the 1930s: monstrous dust storms, dusty roads crowded with displaced tenant farmers, and ruined farms. These images stand as iconic representations of a period in American environmental history too easily reduced to stereotypical depictions of disasters that mask larger and much more expansive narratives of how thinking about the consequences of human impact on the environment shifted for individuals and society during this period of socio-ecological crisis. This chapter explores the personal narrative behind those images as agricultural journalist Russell Lord experienced firsthand and through investigative reporting and interviews the progression of events and conditions that led up to and resulted in the first continental-wide environmental crisis in our history.

The political and social accounting of the “Dirty Thirties” is well known in popular American history and many today attribute the era as serving as a philosophical seedbed for contemporary American environmentalism. I suggest that there is much more of the story yet to be examined, however, especially as years of economic and social depression, displacement, and ecological crisis impacted our core beliefs about relationships to land and each other. How did conservation thinking, emanating from a growing awareness of socio-ecological interdependencies, merge with economic and agrarian goals and values? How did long-held American beliefs about independence and economic opportunity change in response to environmental crisis? What events or ideas propelled a systemic change of heart and shifted the mindset of agencies and institutions to consider ecological crisis as a societal concern?

Russell Lord held a unique position within those agencies and institutions that were attempting to address critical situations in agriculture, environment, and society, and as such allows us to see inside the hearts and minds of many of those he considered colleagues as well as friends. As a storyteller and journalist, his reflections of these years and his appreciation for the

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<sup>280</sup> Lord (1938), in: “Back of Yonder,” pg. 307.

extraordinary access he had to the people, events, and processes of reform, recovery, and restoration during the Dust Bowl Era offers a legacy of ideas and personal insight to reveal how remarkable and revolutionary those years were for reshaping and re-envisioning our relationship to the land.

As an observer and communicator, the experiences of these years challenged Lord's own strong sense of agrarianism and moral obligation to the land. As agriculture moved deeper into environmental and social crisis following the market crash of 1929, Lord's role shifted from chronicler to active participant and narrator. "I gave up trying to keep my opinions out of the story. You can refer to yourself in a remote and stately manner as 'the writer'; yet there you are, just the same, a human bundle of unborn and acquired preconception, picking your facts, picking your words, in there pitching for your side all the time."<sup>281</sup> Lord became engulfed in a dynamic swirl of New Deal ideas, social and economic developments, and conservation actions derived from one of the darkest and yet one of the most hopeful times in our history. "Participation changes everything," wrote Louis Menand in *The Metaphysical Club*, a history of modern American pragmatism across decades of thought from the Civil War to the brink of the Great Depression.<sup>282</sup>

Lord was certainly changed through experience. He derived his ideas about science, governance, and environment from the center of a political and environmental storm, and earned his deeply rooted pragmatic approach to reporting and communicating to a non-farming public about rural issues by being out *on the land*, with farmers and rural workers, with agricultural thought leaders, and with other great communicators of his time, some of whom would become key figures in government and industry during the thick of the crisis. Ideas about economic interdependence, agricultural and natural science, and the uses of and impacts of new technology on the land were the focus of his writing. He facilitated on-going conversations through print articles, documentary film, and radio programs distributed to rural and urban Americans. Reading about and thinking through ideas of interdependence, he encouraged readers to consider the broader implications of large scale extractive uses of landscapes and included the environment as a key actor in understandings of society as socio-ecological community.<sup>283</sup>

The rise of the social pragmatism of John Dewey and Liberty Hyde Bailey of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century had set in motion a broader conceptual shift that fostered ideas of relationship to governance and environment. "Democracies are not just the sum of their constituent atoms because atoms are not independent of their molecules. They are always functioning as parts of a

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<sup>281</sup> Lord (1939), pg.10.

<sup>282</sup> Menand (2001) serves as a foundation in this research for understanding how Lord acquired and maintained his strong sense of pragmatism during such tumultuous times, adapting and modifying his personal philosophy to help make sense of what was happening around him and how best to communicate events and socio-economic conditions to his readers.

<sup>283</sup> Beeman and Pritchard (2001), in: "Soil and the Crisis of American Civilization," describe the ironies and contrasts of extremes of agro-industrial accomplishment and failure, pp. 9-11; Worster (1994), in: "O Pioneers: Ecology on the Frontier," *Nature's Economy*, pp. 189-221.

great whole,” explained William James.<sup>284</sup> Ideas of interdependency and the linked causes and impacts of social-economic-natural resource concerns reignited public interest in democratic process from New England to the Great Plains during the agricultural crisis of the 1920s. Broad socio-environmental concerns drove the collaborative and large-scale landscape projects of the New Conservationists of New York and Pennsylvania. Thinking in natural, agricultural, and physical sciences deepened ideas of disciplinary relationships, biotic and abiotic communities, and coupling of earth and social systems. What was needed to trigger a complete conceptual shift to a true understanding of how society was linked inextricably to its land, as Lord reflected in later years, was an act of God so devoid of the possibility of human criticism and rhetoric that there could be no other solution than to change the very paradigm of relationship of man to his environment.<sup>285</sup>

When catastrophic dust storms and floods of the mid-30s rattled nerves and opened minds, Lord was ready to communicate ideas of a new scientific agrarianism couched in models of landscape-scale conservation, private lands stewardship, and agricultural husbandry. He argued that such a conceptual shift in our relationship to the land could be nothing less than revolutionary, driven by the moral imperative to accept responsibility for and a dedication to repairing and restoring an environment of abundance and diversity through linked systems of agriculture and ecology.<sup>286</sup>

Contemporary historians Phillips, Beeman, and Pritchard regard Russell Lord as an agricultural reformer, but I think this is too simple a label for a life lived and transformed so profoundly during this period of constant and immense social and environmental change. Like the static black and white images of dust storms and dusty roads crowded with displaced and impoverished farmers, I suggest that the term ‘reformer’ seems too neutral and well-worn. Lord was one man among many thousands who participated in a revolutionary shift of scientific consciousness that required of them, through the events of socio-ecological and economic crisis, an innovative and holistic approach to whole community restoration and conservation. What sets Lord apart from those many thousands, however, is that he occupied a position of national influence in a broad public sphere of communication where ideas were synthesized and applied at all levels of human agricultural endeavor from the backyard garden and the worn-out hill farm, to the society cafes of New York and the halls of Washington. As a storyteller, he facilitated the

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<sup>284</sup> Menand (2001) explores pragmatism of the early twentieth century through shifts in societal values, beliefs, and decision-making influenced or changed by interlinked socio-economic and environmental circumstances, adapting as William James explained, to a new reality, pp. 351-358.

<sup>285</sup> Lord (1962) describes a stage set for a major shift in American thinking about land and our relationship to as the agricultural crisis of the 1920s exploded into full national depression, pp. 279-281.

<sup>286</sup> Beeman and Pritchard (2001) cite Lord and Leopold as two of the great communicators of the 1930s who helped transition ideas of land stewardship and ecology into public policy. Leopold would serve as a member of the Society of the Friends of the Land that Lord helped to establish at the end of the decade, pp. 64-72.

popular understanding of a new ecological approach to solving complex problems and as a communicator of ideas he helped lay the groundwork for a new applied ethic of relationship to the land through a new scientific agrarianism of the mid- twentieth century that unlike agrarian movements of the past, began to fully impact public policy.<sup>287</sup>

I think it is important for agricultural and environmental historians to look closely at the personal stories of those who navigated and influenced the course of public thought and policy of the Dust Bowl era and to discover a deeper yet different agrarian narrative that supports as well as contradicts the popular history of this era. The permanent agriculture movement that defined Lord's work during the 1930s and certainly during his tenure at Thorn Meadow Farm, was not a throwback to traditional agrarian values as some have suggested. The Lords embraced fully the modernization of their farm to include all the conveniences and technologies of the day as did those farmers who could afford them especially if those technologies were a solid return on their conservation and agricultural investments. The permanent agriculture movement embraced science and technology with the caveats that it be used appropriately and well for the health of the land.

As an environmental biography, this research is informed greatly by Lord's later recollections of 1930s written within the context of what was to come later: a second world war, the dawn of the nuclear age, and a new industrial era that developed alongside an emerging American environmental awareness. It is Lord's later work during the late 1940s and 1950s that gives substance and historical context to my understanding of Dust Bowl and Great Depression years as only an examined life could and, as one man's environmental history, it is important to understand how individual lives, livelihoods, and ideas understood through direct experience were transformed and transforming by crisis and recovery.<sup>288</sup>

### **Diminished Expectancy**

Married five years, Russell and Kate Lord lived close to the offices of Crowell Publishers in New York City. When not traveling on assignment for *Farm and Fireside* magazine, he enjoyed his walks through the canyons of streets and tall buildings to spend time at his department's editorial desks. Kate worked nearby too, walking daily to a teaching and graphic design studio where she continued to expand her career in illustration. Russell and Kate moved

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<sup>287</sup> Phillips (2007) refers throughout to Lord's books and articles, particularly those relating to F.D.R. and Henry A. Wallace during the New Deal, as promoting New Deal ideas and reforms, when in fact Lord was quite critical of New Deal and Agricultural Adjustment Administration actions and the impacts they had on rural communities and farmers.

<sup>288</sup> Thompson (1990) distinguishes several distinct agrarian divisions that developed throughout American history from the mythic Jeffersonian heritage to the new age of agrarian thinking of Wendell Berry. As is evident throughout Lord's work, technology and science were not in conflict with the new agrarian philosophy, in fact, these were embraced when appropriately used for the uplift of farmers and rural communities, but used not to exploit land or man nor to enrich another removed from the land at the expense of those who worked and cared for it. From personal discussion with Curt Meine, Longwood Gardens Conference on The Land Ethic, March 2014.

from Ohio in 1924 to the bustling city to advance their careers in a more hopeful urban environment than that of the depressed rural landscapes of Great Till Plains and the Hocking Hills where Russell spent three years with Ohio State Extension.<sup>289</sup>

In their daily walks to and from work the street scenes revealed a changing urban landscape where the polish and optimism of the city's high times during the early and mid-20s had worn dull and become worrisome nearing the end of the decade. The effects of a slow-motion agricultural depression of the post-war years had radiated steadily into industrial and business centers affecting millions of common laborers, mill and factory workers, skilled blue collar personnel and their white collared employers. The visible effects of underconsumption, high debt costs, depressed profit and investment, and increasing social instability were no longer unique to the rural landscape so familiar to Russell but were now permeating the core of Kate's beloved New York City. The Wall Street market crash in the autumn of 1929 plunged the nation into a downward swirl of depression and for agriculture, "having taken it first and hardest, had to take it hardest all over again."<sup>290</sup>

"As the depression spread and deepened, we Crowell staff men were given wide latitude to find and report on wilder and stranger cures," wrote Lord. He was assigned to California to witness and describe variations of Hoover's Farm Board recommendations for reducing acreage and consolidating production. He arrived on the West Coast and was given office space at the University of California, Berkeley Campus courtesy of his old high school agriculture teacher, now director of California Extension, B.H. Crocheron. Less an enthusiastic educational reformer and more a hardened agricultural economist, Crocheron offered Lord "every opportunity to see in all frankness the method and intent of the proposal," and accompanied his former student to some of the hardest hit agricultural areas of the state. Reinforcing Hoover's insistence that farmers themselves could reverse the course of the agricultural economic crisis by improved marketing and research, reduction in production became a condition of agency loans and grants offered by the USDA. Lord witnessed many ways the ideas of reduction were interpreted by farmers. He witnessed the plow down of every third row of California expansive cotton fields and the uprooting of thousands of acres of productive peach and citrus orchards. Harvests were left to rot on the ground. "Destroy and gain!" was the rally cry for organized farm cooperatives

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<sup>289</sup> Lord (1950), in: "Journey of Discovery," pp. 4-5.

<sup>290</sup> Lord (1947) mentions how the young reporters (speaking of himself and a few friends) who walked to their offices dressed less professionally and did not carry their walking canes lest they be besieged by the unemployed panhandlers who thought them as having money and means, pg. 292; Devin (1983), in: "Underconsumption, Over-Investment, and the Origins of the Great Depression," argues that the "long boom" of 1910-1920 led to the eventual collapse of U.S. economy in 1929, hinging on deepening post-war underconsumption as rooted in a consumer-driven, capitalist economy. Underconsumption theory derives input from global and domestic economic factors to forecast recessions and depression, but in the late 1920s Devine focuses on changes in domestic spending, in particular working class consumption habits that were based largely on installment credit; Phillips (2007) supports underconsumption theory to describe a decade of worsening agricultural depression that caused a slow-motion cascade in the cities until the market collapse of 1929, pg. 3.

that penalized members for attempting to market more than was allowable by loan terms. From the well-funded coffers of the wealthier cooperatives bounties were paid to members who voluntarily destroyed their crops, yanked trees from the ground with tractors and chains, left fields unharvested, or worse still, turned in their neighbors for violating the rule of reduction. Lord's reporting attracted the attention of *Fortune* magazine. He was offered a freelancer's contract to expand and serialize the story. They sent a co-writer and a photographer who stayed with Lord for a week as the article was prepared for publication. For Crocheron, Lord, and his *Fortune* magazine colleagues, the immediate results of incentivized reductions in production "in a mad sort of way did make sense."<sup>291</sup>

The California experience helped to expand Lord's understanding of the full impact of poorly developed agricultural economic policy and how linked economic incentives were tied to serious socio-ecological consequences. During his months in the West, he followed closely the editorials in *Wallace's Farmer*, drawn particularly to the lengthy but philosophically rich articles written by Henry A. Wallace, chief editor and son of the late Harry C. Wallace, former Secretary of Agriculture under Harding and Coolidge. Upon hearing him speak at a farmer's picnic in South Dakota on a return trip east, Lord observed Wallace's gift for connecting with his audience on matters of political, agricultural, and economic complexity. "He was simply there, talking, slowly, entirely extemporaneously, trying to tell those people who trusted him and his family and their paper why a war that was over, eight years after it was over, should reduce them here, four thousand or more miles away from the scene of the actual fighting to ruin." That Wallace's narratives of interdependency could be thought of as a kind of life science to united social, economic, and living systems fascinated Lord, but moreso did the idea that men were having to redefine their own ideas of what it meant to be a farmer in the context of a now widely connected and interdependent world.<sup>292</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> Lord (1950), pp. 6-7; Soth (1983), in: "Henry Wallace and the Farm Crisis of the 1920s and 1930s," describes Hoover's 'awakening' concerning ineffective tariffs and continued surplus dumping overseas as coming too late to have any real effect on the problem of overproduction. 1928-1931 incentivized Farm Board programs had, as a condition of loans and grants, the requirement for reduction in production acreage to address surplus at the level of the farm, pp. 203-205.

<sup>292</sup> Lord (1947) took a keen interest in how the Norris, McNary-Haugen, and McKinley-Atkins bills of 1926 affected farmers and their land through the cheap export dumping of surplus grains overseas as explained by Wallace in his address to angry farmers, pp. 273-274; Lord (1950), in: "Remarks of a Ghost," writes of his disgust for misapplied and ill-informed policies that "went against the farmer's favorite picture of himself as the generous guardian, the bountiful provider who alone and uniquely feeds and clothes harum-scarum humankind. The plowdown and the succeeding planting limitations imposed went against farmer's most cherished illusion, independence," pp. 8-9; Soth (1983) explains U.S. trade policies in agriculture and manufacturing contributed greatly to the severe market crash of 1929, resulting in further agricultural instability and resulting 'purge' tactics to stop overproduction in an attempt to correct market imbalances, pg. 8 and pp.10-12.

The idea of interdependence became somewhat of a catch-phrase during the 1920s when expectations across economic sectors in American industry, to include long-suffering agriculture, could no longer be held to the prosperous wartime standards of high production and big profit. Farmers and rural agricultural industries recognized an ever-increasing and complicated relationship with urban business and populations, while as a result of the war the United States became intractably interwoven in the affairs of other nations through trade and post-war assistance. On this theme, Wallace wrote intelligently and prolifically in articles and editorials for his popular family farm paper and attracted large audiences at public speaking venues across the Midwest. His popularity as a speaker reflected the sort of celebrity that was bestowed upon many of the country's best writers and publishing men at the time, for whom the mass media served to promote their ideas widely in print and on the air.<sup>293</sup>

Wallace's ideas of interdependency stemmed largely from his work in agricultural economics, agronomy, and as a close advisor to his father at the Department of Agriculture.<sup>294</sup> But there were other important influences that helped Wallace imagine and frame interdependency in terms that made pragmatic and cultural sense to him as well as to his audiences. As a successful Iowa corn breeder and founder of the Hi-Bred Corn Company (later as Pioneer Hi-Bred) Wallace was a wealthy man. He understood how capitalism worked and what its weaknesses were and he raised ethical questions concerning income disparity, the rural poor, unrestrained growth, and the use and meaning of wealth. While attending Iowa State College he was influenced by the work of William James, George Herbert Meade, and by courses in alternatives to Christian faith and eastern spiritualism. In 1925 he joined the Theosophical Society with a particular interest in Agni Yoga and began a long correspondence with its Russian founders Nicholas and Helena Roerich, who emphasized a spiritual tradition based loosely on Eastern religious concepts of 'living ethics' and the interconnectedness of all life. That same year Wallace helped establish the Des Moines branch of the Liberal Catholic Church, a very small Christian sect of less than 2,000 mostly Mid-Western members that during the 1920s encouraged a progressive and tolerant approach to all religions. The common core of Henry A. Wallace's beliefs, whether in economics, science, or religion, however, was a commitment to discover the unifying principles of the interrelatedness systems. A soft spoken,

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<sup>293</sup> Lord (1947) notes that the merger of the nationally renowned *Wallaces' Farmer* merged in 1929 with Wisconsin's great farm paper and rival *The Homestead*, increasing circulation to 250,000. The merger, remarkable for its timing and two million dollars deal three days before the October 29 Wall Street crash, added a million-dollar modern printing plant to the Wallace publishing empire, and for Henry Wallace, spacious new offices. The merger tripled the number of subscribed readers and speaking engagements that year, pp. 291-292; Pritchard and Beeman (2001), "The concept of interdependence enjoyed a virtual cult status from the 1920s through the 1940s," pg. 21, and "Americans began to reconceptualize how their society operated, pg. 20.

<sup>294</sup> Soth (1983) describes Henry Wallace's dual role as Department of Agriculture speech writer for his father on topics of unfair and destructive protective tariffs, surplus management, and international trade while also serving as the director for the Corn Belt Meat Producers Association, a position held by Harry, its founder, before his appointment to Secretary. Henry often posted the entire text of speeches written for and given by his father to Wallace's *Farmer*, pg. 199.

reserved speaker in public, Wallace was a more forceful writer by comparison, but when he spoke about entwined natural and social structures and interdependent processes in which farmers and farming played a vital role in the biological, spiritual, and economic health of their communities, crowds listened intently, even reverently.<sup>295</sup>

More than any other public speaker or writer during the 1920s, Wallace drove home the idea of interdependence. He weaved it through the biological and geological sciences, faith, business, rural culture, and national policy. He united concerns of impoverished farmers to those of the city's factory workers. He warned against protective isolationism in global trade, and firmly linked the American grain farmer to the economic health of other nations. For critics, Wallace's ideas bordered on a strange mysticism. "To me there is nothing mystical about the fact that a soil and all its products, including the people, and all the thoughts and spirit of the people, are completely interrelated parts of a live going concern," wrote Lord, "And when you look at it that way, it seems to me, this thing that we call a coordinated approach to agriculture, and to conservation, becomes a living principle of conduct and a live subject."<sup>296</sup>

### **On the Move**

Lord traveled back and forth from the West Coast to the East almost continuously from 1929 through 1931 to research and file reports of diminishing expectations in American agriculture. Building upon his experiences in California and Ohio's differentiated farming regions, Lord sharpened his sense of how physical landscapes transformed the people who worked them and noted the effects increased use of agricultural technologies had upon rural communities. There was a "tremendous, even tragic back-up of unwanted young people on the farms. Youngsters who used to go to town for jobs find no jobs there now. Many a farm that once could keep three boys busy provides now, with a faster, rubber-tired tractor, hardly work enough for one."<sup>297</sup>

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<sup>295</sup> Culver and Hyde (2001), in: *American Dreamer: A Life of Henry A. Wallace*, describe Wallace's long-awaited pamphlet and 1931 editorial in *Wallaces' Farmer*, "The Causes of Worldwide Depression of 1930," as a rail against ill-conceived and politically misguided economic policies that caused the moral and ethical demise of rural America, p. 92 – 92; Soth (1983) explains that though Wallace was highly critical of "hard money policies" he was a staunch capitalist as well as a passionate moralist, 205; See also: Culvert and Hyde (2000) in: "A Revolution ...Is Coming," pp. 66-85.

<sup>296</sup> Lord (1941), in: "As I Remember," a letter to Cornell's agricultural science students, pg. 383; Soth (1983), "His concern for social justice and fairness was not limited to the farming population," pg. 206; Culver and Hyde (2000) in a discussion of Wallace's spiritual philosophies in: "A Revolution is Coming," described an encounter with a reporter, who asked Wallace "directly whether he was a pantheist." The reporter stated that pantheism was "the belief that nature, science, and religion are as one." Wallace replied, "If that's pantheism, I'm for it," said Wallace, 'You can put in some economics, too,' pp. 76-82

<sup>297</sup> Lord (1939), pg. 140.



Lord continued to collect poems and short stories submitted by rural folk, a long tradition with farmers' papers, although the *Farm and Fireside* had been remade as *Country Home*, a slick make-over that did not survive the 1930s. The long train rides afforded him plenty of time to read through hundreds of letters sent to his New York office describing from the farmer's perspective what was happening on the land. He pored through articles published in *Fortune*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Vanity Fair*, *The Baltimore Sun*, *The New York Times*, and *The Nation*, publications to which he was now contributing, building a wide and receptive audience who were primarily urban, non-farming readers. Increasingly drawn to books and articles in economic and scientific theory, Lord kept up with trends in scientific research, new applications of agricultural innovation, and the emerging science of ecology. His voracious on-board reading included devouring Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1775), Stewart Chase's *The Tragedy of Waste* (1925) and *Your Money's Worth* (1927), Liberty Hyde Bailey's *What Is Democracy?* (1918) and he gave serious consideration to the work of New England economist Stuart Chase.<sup>298</sup>

Traveling west to interview a "wild sounding Plains economist, one M.L. Wilson," Lord's train stopped for a short time in Des Moines, Iowa. He had a three hour wait for the connection to Minneapolis, so decided to chance a visit to Donald Murphey, managing editor for *Wallaces' Farmer*. Murphey had given him story tips and ideas in the past and may have pointed the editors of *The Nation* and *Fortune* to Lord's recent work in California. Lord found Murphey in his office, happy to see him. Henry A. Wallace listening to the conversation about Wilson and rural economics from a pass-through office next door came in to join the discussion and to meet this freelance farm reporter who had been traveling the country. Shop talk ensued. The conversation moved to a tea room down the street. Hours passed and Lord missed his connection to Minneapolis.

"I can still remember Henry Wallace's amused horror at anyone laying himself open to reading tons of amateur poems, or poems of any sort. But he agreed that the closer you get to a whole farm paper into the tone of unstudied personal letters, the better," Lord wrote of this first meeting.<sup>299</sup> With his recent onboard reading of Stuart Chase's *Prosperity, Fact or Myth* (1929) fresh on his mind, Lord engaged Wallace in a long conversation concerning the advancement of science and technology in agriculture and the shifting ground of traditional agrarianism. Wallace countered Chase's distaste for farm machines explaining that problem was complex, that adopters of technology show little or no restraint to grow all they can when government policies

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<sup>298</sup> Lord (1950), writing of his frequent coast-to-coast trips in "Journey of Discovery," became widely read in economic and scientific theory while destinations and stops along the way afforded him many opportunities to meet authors and thought leaders who were shaping the New Deal platform, pp. 2-8; Lord (1939) as a chronicle not only as a historical development of agricultural extension but as an accounting of Lord's enriched thinking influenced by his readings of historic and contemporary economists as he interprets the uneven collapse of American economic structures leading up to and following the 1929 panic, particularly in "The Lean Years" and "New Dealers," pp. 128 – 169; Beeman and Pritchard (2001) "Stewart Chase elaborated on this new way of thinking..." pg. 23.

<sup>299</sup> Lord (1947), pg. 280.

continue to encourage large surpluses in cotton, wheat, corn, hog, and beef. He launched into a sharp criticism: “I still think that Hoover’s ideas about helping agriculture recovery and general recovery about ninety-nine percent wrong. They bypass the tariff issue, they sidestep the debts. They’ll never work. The smash we’ve had already isn’t anything to the smash that will come.”<sup>300</sup>

Wallace drove Lord ten miles out of town to the family farm for a demonstration of the mechanized seed dryer he’d invented, recently patented, and that was now in mass production. With enormous pride, he gave Lord a grand tour of his corn breeding operation from the cab of the truck, then bumping through fields, coursing around the many barns, giant grain bins, and silos, and finally rumbling along a dirt tractor path Wallace came to a quiet wooded glade and stopped. He climbed out for a stretch, Wallace mentioned that it was here as a boy he accompanied Iowa Agricultural College horticulture student George Washington Carver on his plant walks, where he learned to love the intricacies and beauty of the natural world.<sup>301</sup>

Carver frequently roomed at the old family home in Des Moines at the invitation Harry C. Wallace, his professor, friend, and future Secretary of Agriculture. Carver credited Henry’s father with providing him not only a home while attending college, but as serving as one of his greatest teachers. “A master of soils who set me to thinking along lines practically unknown at the time,” Carver saw agricultural systems as intimately interwoven systems of earth, atmosphere, and biotic life. Together, Henry’s parents regarded young Carver as one of their own sons and one of Henry’s closest friends. The glade was the scene of many of their walks that

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<sup>300</sup> Lord (1947). Henry A. Wallace railed against the trade policies of the Hoover administration as being out of touch and aloof from the ground truth of farmer’s issues, but understood that Hoover, without the perspective of the farmer and the rural economy, could be forgiven for his ignorance but not his stubbornness. Wallace continued, “But I am coming to believe that Hoover honestly thinks he is right, and is trying to do the best he can for agriculture and for the country.” 285; Culver and Hyde (2000), in: “The Fight Will Go On,” suggest that the near legendary battles between Secretary of Agriculture Harry C. Wallace and the powerful Farm Bloc/American Farm Bureau lobby against Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover under the Harding-Coolidge administration became a personal legacy for Henry A. Wallace to carry forward. Henry blamed the administration and even Hoover himself for the situation and the conditions that led to his father’s death while in public service. Hoover, even after his adversary’s untimely death, continued to threaten that should he have the power to do so, the Department of Agriculture would be reduced to a glorified extension department with the federal government, pp. 44-65; Chase (1929), in: *Prosperity: Fact or Myth*, delineates carefully the distinctions between the income levels for farmers of large and small acreages, claiming the large-scale farmer on thousands of acres of fertile land with machinery and labor casts the small-scale farmer into economic disadvantage with the use of machines. “... the machine has enormously distressed most farmers. It has made a few rich, but thrown agriculture as a whole completely out of step, and disrupted its time-honored rhythms...machines are the agony,” pp. 107-108.

<sup>301</sup> Lord (1947). “The first teacher to make an enduring imprint on his mind and character was not in the strict sense of the word a teacher, but a tall, shy Negro student, later research assistant there at Iowa,” pp. 120 – 125.

led to further explorations in the fields, the deeper woods, and even into the riotous collections of flowers, shrubs, and small trees of the family gardens. The gardens in particular were where Carver “introduced me to the mysteries of plant fertilization.”<sup>302</sup>

Henry A. Wallace was no remix of early twentieth century ideals, however. It was clear to Lord, bouncing along in the chief editor’s pick-up truck that Wallace had taken what was useful from the past and jettisoned the rest to become a new kind agrarian of his own making. He spoke about the recent family merger of *The Homestead* farm journal and *Wallaces’ Farmer* and how he found the almost sanitary white tiled Homestead office that he now occupied as somewhat off-putting in its cleanliness. As he tended to the move from the old family offices occupied for thirty years by both his father and grandfather, founders of the family paper in the late 1890s, he removed the old pictures from the wall to be put into storage. Collected and hung there by his grandfather “Uncle Henry” Wallace, who at one time had a small editors desk in the corner of the old editorial room, the pictures represented the Old School era of social Progressivism. “There were autographed photos of [Theodore] Roosevelt, Gifford Pinchot, Liberty Hyde Bailey, et al.” he remarked. Lord noted that the walls of the new office at the Homestead Building, however, were bare. “There are no pictures to remind me of the past and I must set my face towards the future,” explained Wallace. The merger inspired Wallace to change the motto for *Wallaces’ Farmer*, revised from “Good Farming, Clear Thinking, Right Living” to “A Weekly Journal for Thinking Farmers,” but the content essentially remained the same in its progressive advocacy for rural issues and promotion of Christian values, “all things held dear by rural folk.”<sup>303</sup>

Out among the rows of hybrid corn Lord screwed up the courage to confess to Wallace that he had been assigned as research assistant to George Barr Baker, author of the controversial *Saturday Evening Post* two-part article “The Great Fat Fight” that in essence defended Hoover against his Midwest critics, the powerful Farm Bloc. The article had caused uproar among hog and corn farmers and “haters of Hoover” all over the Midlands. “By the time both articles, which Mr. Hoover read and verified in manuscript, had been published and circulated, Iowa foes of The

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<sup>302</sup> Lord (1947). “Because of his friendship with my father and perhaps his interest in children George Carver often took me with him on botany expeditions, and it was he who first introduced me to the mysteries of plant fertilization,” pg. 125; Hersey, *My Work is that of Conservation: An Environmental Biography of George Washington Carver* (2011), describes a long and fruitful friendship between Carver and young Henry Wallace, and the important peer-mentor relationship that evolved between Carver and Henry’s father, Harry C. Wallace. During Carver’s second year studying horticulture at IAC, Harry joined the faculty to become one of Carver’s professors in horticulture. Nearly the same age, Henry C. Wallace and Carver proved influential and supportive friends to each other throughout their lives, but Carver credits Henry C. Wallace with sharpening his “political thinking and agrarian values, as well as thinking in scientific agriculture,” pp. 24-32.

<sup>303</sup> Culver and Hyde (2001) describe *Wallaces’ Farmer* before the merger with *The Homestead* and after to include the ever-present but small ads for the Hi-Bred Corn Company, pp. 19-21 and pg. 89.

Great Engineer were fit to be tied.”<sup>304</sup> Walking out from the corn, Wallace gave the matter some thought. “I hope never again to feel as intensely antagonistic toward any one as I did then. I felt for a while there, I felt, almost, as if Hoover had killed my father.”<sup>305</sup> Lord later recalled,

We drove back to Des Moines and I took a later train. I had not the remotest idea that I would ever be writing a book about him and his family, but what he had said about his father and President Hoover had so impressed me that I made some notes about our conversation on the train. I did not see him to talk with again for nearly four years, in March of 1933, when he came to Washington as Secretary of Agriculture for Franklin D. Roosevelt. Much had happened in the meantime as he foretold.<sup>306</sup>

Whether providential or by chance, the meeting between Henry A. Wallace and Russell Lord was fortunate for both men. Wallace’s vast curiosity, scientific mind, spiritual searching, and firm grip of the worsening farm crisis encouraged Lord to delve deep into complex issues of agricultural reform. Wallace would remember Lord’s intense interest and talent for communicating complexity to a growing popular readership and later offered him a post at the Department of Agriculture as his personal ghost (speechwriter) and biographer. Despite Wallace’s optimism, however, the realities of the farm situation were grim in Iowa and across the country at the time of their first meeting. No amount of confidence or progressive thinking could change the present course as wasted landscapes began to blow skyward, rural hunger and poverty intensified, the rampant rate of farm foreclosures increased, and an unsettling anger arising from farmers and farm communities added to the foreboding.<sup>307</sup>

### **The Only One A Farmer**

Milburn Lincoln Wilson awaited Russell Lord in Montana, ready to give his first interview to the journalist who had so impressed Henry A. Wallace just hours before. He preferred his college nickname “M.L.” for any correspondence and future articles and cautioned Lord to not make of him more than he felt he was, given the history and set of circumstances that had brought them together. “I’m just a Montana farmer who saw hard times ahead of time.”<sup>308</sup>

M.L. Wilson, born in Iowa in 1885, moved to Montana as a free land homesteader in 1909 after completing his degree in agronomy at the Iowa College of Agriculture. He recalled that the early years were good ones with seasonal rains almost every year that lasted until the war years when a cycle of long drought began again. That the land seemed free was illusory,

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<sup>304</sup> Lord (1947), pp. 277-278.

<sup>305</sup> Lord (1947), pg. 285.

<sup>306</sup> Lord (1947), pg. 285.

<sup>307</sup> Culver and Hyde (2001) describe Wallace’s dozens of public speeches and hundreds of articles written during this time as optimistic and forward-leaning, even as the Iowa farm economy was crumbling, poverty and hunger increasing, and one out of every five farms in Iowa foreclosed upon, pg. 99.

<sup>308</sup> Lord (1947), pg. 295.

however, as the great prairies and plains had once before been broken and then abandoned by the first wave of sodbusters of the 1880-90s. Following the jubilant calls of land speculators to break new farms out of the endless seas of grass, Montana settlers in their confident enthusiasm to tame and remake nature for the farming of wheat, had instead abused the land so badly that when the catastrophic drought of 1893-94 occurred the landscape simply emptied out of its farmers and ranchers, themselves as broken and impoverished and the exhausted landscape. Wilson represented one of thousands of a second wave of hopeful young men who returned with the rains and government assurances that another boom was in the making.<sup>309</sup> But by Armistice 1919 drought returned and after years of government urgings to grow a million acres more in wheat and corn to win the war, the fertility of the land again collapsed. Settlers, however, most of them inexperienced or failed farmers from the East continued to come. Railroad posters that urged “Montana or Bust!” said Wilson, were scratched over with the new slogan “Montana *and* Bust!” as the misled and disillusioned searched unsuccessfully for the Promised New Land.<sup>310</sup>

M.L. Wilson, who by then had been appointed Montana’s first county extension agent, rested his land in 1920 and returned to school in pursuit of a Master’s degree at University of Wisconsin in land economics. This was a period of graduate schooling, Wilson recalled, when he learned new ideas and theories that expanded his interests beyond agronomy and economics that included anthropology and philosophy, opened his mind to integrated systems of human societies and land use. He talked enthusiastically about all he learned both at Wisconsin during the academic year and at the University of Chicago where he attended summer school, all the while traveling back and forth to his Montana farming community to try out what he had learned. “He thinks in cycles,” Lord noted, “but the cycles link, and in the end the point is made with force and cleanness.”<sup>311</sup>

Interestingly the catch phrase of interdependence was not mentioned in Wilson’s interview, but his story of ideas included the intellectual legacy from which he drew his genius for systems thinking.<sup>312</sup> At Wisconsin he studied institutional economics under John R. Commons, a progressive labor advocate and social justice activist whose views on social change labeled him a radical socialist and cost him a professorship at the University of Syracuse in 1899.

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<sup>309</sup> Worster, *Nature’s Economy: A History of Ecological Ideas* (1994), describes the cycles of agricultural boom and bust that correspond to cycles of rain and drought throughout the Great Plains and High Plains states 1870-1925 and establishes that the sodbuster, once a hero in the traditional American lexicon was “now a menace” to the land, pp. 223-229;

<sup>310</sup> Lord (1947), “He came to Montana in the good years,” pp. 297-298.

<sup>311</sup> Lord (1947), “I recall how I labored to keep the talk on what I thought was the main track; how Wilson would pause and stare out the window and then take the talk on some wide circuit that seemed to have nothing to do whatever to do with the theme...in a sort of conversational spiral that adorned the argument and lifted it a notch,” pg. 302.

<sup>312</sup> Lord (1939) states that Wilson was sometimes labeled a dreamer, but considered by almost all who worked with him and for him a genius in agricultural systems reform and policy. He was among all of F.D.R.’s brain trust, the only real farmer of the New Dealers, pg. 135; See also: Culver and Hyde (2001), pg. 101.

At Wisconsin since 1904, Commons' theory of collective action had gained attention from labor unions and agencies and his ideas for worker's compensation had been adopted by many state and federal agencies. From Commons' framework Wilson derived the concept of domestic allotment and adjustment, a farm relief program that could control production, reduce surplus, retire marginal lands to rest, and compensate the farmer for lost wages through "allotment payments." With Commons' ideas of labor reform and economic recovery as a foundation for planning, Wilson overlaid the crisis of agricultural surplus, low farm prices, and land exhaustion. "I began to make some applications to the field of agriculture," he said, "[But] I didn't want to get too far off the ground with my ideas."<sup>313</sup>

To test his ideas in farmer compensation and relief, Wilson took a research assignment under George Warren in Cornell's farm management department during the summers of 1923-24. Warren applied a "distinctly philosophical approach to the physical and physiological attributes that influence farms and farming," said Wilson. The department served as a seedbed for many graduate studies and Wilson could not have found a better place in which to incubate his ideas of controlled harvests by domestic allotment and subsidence homestead experiments.<sup>314</sup>

Warren who had come east from Nebraska to Ithaca to study under Liberty Hyde Bailey in the College of Agriculture in 1903, had become a national figure in farm economics, advocating and testifying in Washington on the farmer's behalf during the war years. Considered visionary in his holistic approach to farm management he stressed the need for knowledge of geography, soils, watershed dynamics, local and state tax structures, land pricing, local farm labor costs, and appreciating regional environmental attributes. Warren's massive textbook *Farm Management* quoted Liberty Hyde Bailey on the title page in respect to his mentor and professor:

*The requirements of a good farmer are at least four:*

*The ability to make a full and comfortable living from the land;*

*To rear a family carefully and well;*

*To be of good service to the community;*

*To leave the farm more productive than it was when he took it.*<sup>315</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> Lord (1947), from interview notes with Wilson, "I had been sitting under John Commons, and institutional economist in the field of labor," pg. 299; Culver and Hyde (2001), "Wilson was afire with an idea, a genuinely radical idea that was to profoundly affect the course of American agriculture," pg. 101; Commons and Andrews (1920), in: *Principles of Labor Legislation*, a labor policy analysis.

<sup>314</sup> Stanton (2007), *George Warren, Farm Economist*.

<sup>315</sup> Stanton (2005) describes Warren's books, *The Elements of Agriculture* and *Farm Management*, and his philosophical stance in his articles and speeches as strongly influenced by Bailey and his work with the Country Life Movement, pp. 165 – 169.

M.L. Wilson, speaking of his mentor and friend George Warren, suggested that as a graduate student in Warren's farm management department he was personally far removed from the history and legacy of country life philosophies in the East and attempts at traditional agrarian revivalism and focused instead upon creating prototypes of programs that offered solutions to large scale farm issues more familiar to western farmers and ranchers that included tenancy, absentee landlords, large scale land retirements, soil conservation, and control and application of appropriate technology. To Wilson the old agricultural traditions of the yeoman farmer and the heroic sodbuster were more a threat to the survival of modern agricultural landscapes than a help. Clinging to outdated and nostalgic beliefs about farming hampered a farmer's ability to adapt and remain flexible in changing conditions. "In formulating new working compromises between our agrarian and commercial hopes and influences, he proved a most productive social architect," Lord wrote of Wilson in *The Wallace's of Iowa*, "In a continuing sense he was Wallace's chief collaborator in evolving a new economic-democratic social mechanism that would stand up in the field."<sup>316</sup> Wilson spent three summers at the University of Chicago taking James Hayden Tuft's summer intensive "Evolution of the Idea of Justice" and Eustace Hayden's rigorous graduate courses in comparative cultures and religions that added further to his capacity for a broad vision of complex social and environmental systems. "When I would get back home, out to Montana, and go out among my old friends there, I was so struck with new slants on two contrasting cultures, Indian and White, existing side by side there, that I could see Montana with new eyes."<sup>317</sup> Inspired by fresh philosophical ideas in culture and land use, Wilson visited the farming communities of the Cree and Blackfoot and spoke to hundreds of native farmers about dryland farming. He covered thousands of miles in the extension agency's old Ford truck to reach them. They gave him seed and in return he gave them full recognition for teaching him and other stubborn wheat farmers who knew no other way to farm, save for brutalizing the land, how to adapt crops and practices to the cycles of nature on the high plains. His discoveries and associations with dryland farmers soon made him into a regional expert on adaptive farming techniques and in demand as a speaker and writer throughout the western states.<sup>318</sup>

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<sup>316</sup> Lord (1947), pg. 300.

<sup>317</sup> Lord (1947). Wilson described in detail how each course he took throughout his graduate career, especially the summer courses at University of Chicago, helped shift his perspective wider to include whole systems of human and natural process, pp. 300 – 301.

<sup>318</sup> Lord (1939) in: "Lean Years," describes M.L. Wilson's experiences during the second devastating round of cyclical droughts in Montana and his turn to native farmers. "It was plain that none of us was farming right in this new country," he said, and inspired by courses in anthropology and comparative cultures "went among the Indians," pp. 132 – 133; Lord (1947) wrote of the Wilson in the days before he was recruited by F.D.R. working "an extraordinary job, away off there in distressed Montana, working almost alone...with time and money extremely limited," as his ideas received national attention through various articles written for the farm papers, pg. 308.

Wilson himself was discovered through a series of published speeches and articles by policy advisors to Franklin D. Roosevelt who in 1932 was preparing his platform for a presidential run against Hoover. The ideas of the then little-known extension professor at Montana State Agricultural College held great appeal to Roosevelt's in his quest for new ideas and innovative programs to provide much needed farm support. "A mild man with wild ideas," Wilson's designs for domestic allotment, to become the Agricultural Adjustment Act under Roosevelt, would check the downward spiral of American agriculture. His ideas were in demand, and the logic of production limits, land retirement, and incentivized allotments even made sense to members of Hoover's economists. Among those invited to counsel F.D.R. on future options in farm policy, Wilson was the only farmer until, with persistence and gentle persuasion, he was able to convince Henry A. Wallace that he too should join as one of Roosevelt's agricultural consultants. Wallace reluctantly agreed to make the trip to Hyde Park with Wilson, an accomplished feat considering that Roosevelt's campaign advisors had already been hounding Wallace to the point of distraction. After days of fruitful discussions with F.D.R. it seemed the candidate's farm program was coming together under Wilson's domestic allotment agenda and Wallace's leadership.<sup>319</sup>

With continued reporting on Wallace and Wilson the year following the 1929 interviews, Lord gained new perspectives with which to view the deepening agricultural and environmental crisis. Expansive and interconnecting in ways that surprised even Lord, Wallace's pragmatic and holistic views of the multi-storied economic farm disaster was enriched by Wilson's systems-based outlook that offered cultural, environmental, and social justice angles that carved out new channels of conservation thought and challenged directly the old yeoman traditions of independence and the conquest of nature.<sup>320</sup>

Wilson passed through New York frequently 1932-33, promoting his ideas for the domestic allotment and explaining the need for adaptive farm management. He was now a valued member of Roosevelt's new Brain Trust. "It was wonderful to see New York discovering the soil and the farm problem," Lord wrote as he reported on Wilson's engagements with some of the most powerful financial men in the nation. Lord's articles detailing Wilson's ideas caught the attention of the chief editor of *Vanity Fair* and he was asked to write a long conversational piece that translated for urban readers why the farm and environmental crisis should matter to them. "Birth Control in the Fields" described the need for controlling agricultural surplus and made the case for a more adaptive farming culture depending upon region. Published in May 1932 the article became the talk of tea rooms, lecture halls, and the café society of New York's upper crust readership. Lord's piece was placed in proximity to other stories of political and social concern, book-ended by billowy articles on theater and the arts. It was strange

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<sup>319</sup> For greater detail on the recruitment of Wilson and Wallace to F.D.R.'s Brain Trust see: Culver and Hyde (2001), pp.100-102.

<sup>320</sup> Thompson (1990), challenging the yeoman myth in: "Agrarianism and the American Philosophical Tradition"; Worster (1994), "Holistic values everywhere challenged private, atomistic ways of thinking," pg. 232.



placement for a discussion of M.L. Wilson's dryland farming techniques and financial incentives.<sup>321</sup>

### **Excessive Despair, Excessive Hope**

F.D.R.'s inaugural address was delivered on March 4, 1933 to one hundred thousand citizens gathered at the U.S. Capitol and to broadcast listeners across the nation and around the world. The speech was adorned with all the catchphrases of the day, delivered with a particularly ambitious flair for the restoration of the economy, agriculture, and an almost biblical command to put people and rural landscapes back to work. "If I read the temper of our people correctly," he declared, "we now realize as we have never realized before our interdependence on each other; that we can not merely take but we must give as well; that if we are to go forward, we must move as a trained and loyal army willing to sacrifice for the good of a common discipline, because without such discipline no progress can be made, no leadership becomes effective." Roosevelt was rallying the citizenry with all the moralistic and militaristic rhetoric he and his speech writer Raymond Moley, assembler of the Brain Trust, could muster.<sup>322</sup>

Moley, a political science professor from Columbia University, entered F.D.R.'s inner circle of consultants at Hyde Park in early 1932. At the time, M.L. Wilson and his hand-picked group of assistants, almost all from Cornell, were traveling about the country pressing for agricultural relief and reform with versions of the domestic allotment plan. Lord, now a founding staff writer for the upstart *New Yorker*, continued to promote and describe Wilson's general framework for marginal land retirement and production controls as essential to national economic recovery. *The Nation*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, *Vanity Fair*, and *Fortune*, had all run similar articles by Lord, and Moley liked what he read. The agricultural crisis was "the obvious beginning of our discontent in this country," said Moley, and the Depression would continue until "the persistence of the delusion that the nation could prosper while its farmers went begging."<sup>323</sup>

Lord's conversational style and knack for drawing from interviews good narrative and intriguing story lines appealed to Moley's criteria for interpreting complex social and scientific

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<sup>321</sup> Lord (1950) in: "Remarks of a Ghost," pp. 8-9; Lord (1947), in: "Professional Brainstormers," pp. 305-312; See Jack Doyle's excellent pop culture blog *Pop Culture Dig* for issue reviews and political history of *Vanity Fair* New Deal articles 1932-1936, including the May 1933 issue containing Lord's article on farm support:  
<http://www.pophistorydig.com/topics/tag/vanity-fair-franklin-roosevelt/>

<sup>322</sup> Lord (1947), Dr. Raymond Moley, inaugural speechwriter, pg.310 and 318, and Moley's condemnation of Wallace as a 'renegade statesman,' pp. 514-515; Houck, *F.D.R. and Fear Itself: The First Inaugural Address* (2002), provides an in-depth examination of the F.D.R.'s inaugural speech through the six-month preparatory work of speech writer and political scientist Raymond Moley.

<sup>323</sup> Corddry (2007), review of Lord's freelance articles, book reviews, translations, and edited volumes 1930-1934; Moley (1939), pp. 12-13.

ideas to non-expert but educated audiences. Moley recruited Lord to serve on a large staff of hand-picked journalists and communications writers stationed in Washington. By the time of F.D.R.'s inaugural speech, Lord was "removing to Washington to cover the agricultural show from there" as a speech and ghost writer for the U.S.D.A. "I was one of a battery of ghosts with typewriters lined up almost touching like seventy-fives in a barrage. I wrote speeches or articles designed to be read or signed by every New Deal mouthpiece from Franklin D. Roosevelt to the Licensing Commissioner of San Francisco and from Rex Tugwell to George N. Peek."<sup>324</sup>

Philosophically, Wilson's "wild Cornelians" did not mesh well with Moley's own more measured approach to communicating ideas of land reform. Closest to the President among the inner staff, Moley understood Washington political theater well, especially in relation to labor, financial, and social reform, and he tried to soften what he considered dangerous leanings towards communism and radical liberalism that might create dramatic backlash in Congress. He coached his writers to use more restrained tones and to be wary of charismatic evangelists of New Deal doctrine with a wary eye cast towards the work of Brain Truster Rex Tugwell, a fellow Columbia professor and principle architect of Roosevelt's farm programs. Writing from the center of the frenzy, Lord wrote extensively on Tugwell's ideas and experienced from the core of the New Deal communications center just how ideologically powerful and politically controversial Tugwell would become as he walked a fine line between populism and communism.<sup>325</sup>

Native of rural Chautauqua County, New York, son of an orchardman but not himself a farmer, Rexford Tugwell was a former student of socialist Scott Nearing at the Wharton School of Finance and Commerce, University of Pennsylvania. In protest to the school's "red hunt" that led to dismissals of faculty who were deemed sympathetic towards Communist ideas, Tugwell resigned his own professorship in the aftermath of Nearing's firing. Later at Columbia he developed and promoted bold social management theories that combined initiatives in human resource planning with technological and industrial tools for large scale economic recovery. His ideas aimed to engineer a balance for what he proclaimed was a "deranged" relationship between urban and rural economies that he felt could only be repaired by restoring the purchasing power of farmers as consumers to reignite urban manufacturing. Tugwell's designs for agricultural reform captivated F.D.R.'s attention and when combined with the politically powerful New Conservationist's enthusiasm for government-sponsored forest, water, and soil conservation

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<sup>324</sup> Lord (1950) describes a battery of good journalists recruited by Moley to serve as writers for the new administration, on loan from private publishers in New York City, "hopeful that somehow the New Dealers would somehow lift the depression and lead us all into lush pastures in years of peace," pp. 8-11.

<sup>325</sup> Lord (1947). Moley's measured approach to "wild Cornelians" in "Outsiders" and the process of turning Wilson's domestic allotment into the Triple A in "When the Deal Was New," pp. 326-332; Moley, *After Seven Years* (1939), became an opponent of New Deal reform tactics and left F.D.R.'s inner circle before the Second World War broke out to serve instead as an embittered critic; Philips (2007), pp. 64-65.

programs, the professor's concepts of rural-urban interdependencies and balanced exchange provided a critical way to link natural resource and social management.<sup>326</sup>

F.D.R. appointed Tugwell Assistant Secretary of Agriculture. But Senate and House confirmation hearings became a New Deal inquisition as the fanatical response of suspicious politicians, determined to sniff out a Red in their midst, ignited a deep hatred among conservatives for radical reformers like Tugwell. It was an ordeal that brought to light Tugwell's academic interest in the Russian transition period from czarism to communism to include a research trip to Russia in 1927. Lord dutifully assisted with U.S.D.A. policy statements to calm the nerves of those wary of Tugwell's plans and produced a steady stream of news releases that constantly flowed from his desk to city papers.<sup>327</sup>

Living in Washington D.C. in a small loft apartment, sweltering in summer and frigid in winter, the Capitol scene was hard on both Russell and Kate. When not holed up in the journalist's rooms at the USDA he worked on a steady stream of freelance articles and book manuscripts, perched at small cluttered desk that overlooked embassies and government offices. Working on articles for *The Nation* and *The New Yorker*, Lord became intimately familiar with the work of Hugh Bennett, soil scientist and pioneering soil conservationist. Bennett's ideas of conservation promoted a community-based approach to soil and land protection that complimented economic recovery but was not central to it. Soil loss, Bennett believed, was the greatest environmental challenge the country faced and at the rural community level, local agricultural recovery depended entirely upon protecting the working and natural landscapes that supported farming. Bennett promoted soil conservation with a singular focus on the rural community and advocated soil conservation districts that mirrored M.L. Wilson's commitment to local participatory engagement. Bennett envisioned local, non-governmental soil districts that were assisted by the Soil Conservation Service (SCS) but not regulated by it. Through SCS partnerships soil conservation districts could secure seeding, mowing, and fencing equipment to loan or share, create and maintain demonstration projects for contour plowing, strip planting, windrow and hedgerow construction, and pasture grass conditioning, and if needed, exert authority to enforce conservation plans drawn up by farmers and their district offices. Bennett was an occasional visitor to Kate and Russell's small, homey apartment where discussions often lasted long into the night.<sup>328</sup>

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<sup>326</sup> Lord (1947) understood the political gamble Tugwell was taking with his enthusiastic promotions of restoring the common good through state-sponsored economic reforms. Though friendly with Tugwell and a speech writer for him, Lord regarded him as another of the "strange new species of New Deal political animal [that] was not only unbearable to the orthodox species, but in some ways, rightly so," pp. 350-351.

<sup>327</sup> Lord (1947), pp. 341-360; Phillips (2007) on the New Conservationists to include F.D.R. as Governor of New York broke from Hoover's rigidity on rural electrification and agricultural reform, pp. 21-25. Tugwell helped F.D.R. to address the linked problems of rural underconsumption and urban unemployment, pp. 65-67.

<sup>328</sup> Lord (1947) explains that Bennett, at the time of his appointment as chief of Soil Conservation Service, had been already been advocating for soil conservation districts and warning of a looming soil crisis for nearly twenty years, pp. 372-373; Phillips (2007) describes

Lord was reacquainted with Henry A. Wallace, now Secretary of Agriculture, and the two came to regard each other as old friends. He traveled easily within the inner offices of the Department of Agriculture and was recognized for his own scientific understandings of working landscapes and rural culture. This set him apart from the journalist's battery and he was sought out by Wallace to help assemble speeches and talking points that combined the Secretary's complex working knowledge of agricultural science and concepts of agrarian democracy. Wallace, like many New Dealers who occupied the Department of Agriculture, struggled with the ideological tensions between the old political machine of Washington (which Henry believed contributed to the death of his father Harry when he served as Secretary of Agriculture) and a revival of populist and progressive ideals that supported more liberal plans for agricultural reform and restoration. Lord's talent for translation across ideological lines resulted in requests for hundreds of articles, speeches, manuscripts, and scientific bulletins from USDA, U.S. Forest Service, the Tennessee Valley Authority, the Commodity Credit Corporation, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, and the U.S. Extension Service. "I worked full time and overtime," he wrote, "I was enjoying the whirl as much as any of the headliners; but there was too much work, along with outside writing; and I did not discover within myself the makings of even a semipublic man."<sup>329</sup>

In 1934 Russell Lord was promoted to Chief Information Expert of the Triple A and from his busy desk ensconced in a storm of Washington bureaucracy and New Dealer commotion, he witnessed the sweeping political, social, and economic fall-out of that first year of action taken in agricultural adjustment: the great cotton plow down, the sensational six million suckling pig kill, a mandated culling of the nation's beef herd, escalating milk wars, and a massive subsidization of farmers who participated in massive cuts to production of cotton, beef, corn, pork, and grains. If agricultural conservation was to be an instrument to stimulate economic recovery, it certainly took a myriad of surprising forms and elicited waves of anger from demoralized farmers across the country. Within states and regions farm lobby groups began to observe positive economic effects and fell in to support further reduction strategies while national farmer's unions and the

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Bennett and Lord's collaborative projects to promote soil conservation to the public through the books *To Hold This Soil* and *Behold Our Land* (1938); Summers (1996) creating partnerships between government agencies like the Soil Conservation Service and regional/local farmer's interest groups to accomplish paired goals of conservation and economic revived Lord's desire to see a return to the old Populist demands of the great farmer's struggles of the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, pg. 399.

<sup>329</sup> Lord (1950), speechwriting for Henry A. Wallace 11; Lord (1947), speech writing for Wallace included the famous radio speech "Declaration of Interdependence", pp. 393-394, and on tensions between conservative and progressive ideologies, pp. 400-401; Harford Historical Bulletin (2007), pg. 9-11; Shi (1985) in: "Prosperity, Depression, and Simplicity," describes the transition away from progressivism and populism during and after World War I, as mass production, consumerism, and materialism overtook agrarian and social reform. The depression and agricultural crisis forced a revival of these ideals much to the chagrin and suspicions of industrial and political establishments, pp. 215-247.

American Farm Bureau Federation railed against what they saw as needless slaughter and waste in the fields.<sup>330</sup>

Lord and his staff communicated to the non-farming public with weekly press releases that confidently explained how retired sub-marginal lands removed from cultivation were retired to fallow and how participating farmers received a crop benefit and land rent payment in return. With measured advocacy and an appeal to the agrarian heart of the American farmer, Lord and his writers conveyed through the farm papers to union farmers, independent producers, agricultural lobbies, and corporate agriculture that production control was as much a patriotic effort as well as an economic one. But for Lord this was philosophically challenging work. “What is the answer? How is our *land* to be regarded? Strictly as a business proposition, with only the largest most efficient operators encouraged, and the sign up ‘Keep Out Except Business’? Or should we follow such policies as regard the land primarily as homeland, a refuge from the extractions and strains of business, with the business side of the enterprise considered as secondary?”<sup>331</sup>

Triple A assured distressed farmers that their salvation would be found in reduction not production. Voluntary participation in the corn and hog reduction program was high for producers in the Midwest, while in the South landowners made the plowdown of cotton compulsory for their tenant farmers. Western cattlemen and Northeastern dairymen begrudged the slaughter of their herds but participated nonetheless as thousands of tons of surplus meat and milk flowed into social programs to feed the urban unemployed and their families. Agricultural adjustment became one of the largest efforts at socio-economic control in the history of the country accomplished without use of force, claimed *The Nation*, as program managers trusted that farmer’s collective agrarian tendencies would ensure participation, appealing to their sense of patriotism and duty for doing what was right for their hard-worked land. But what Russell Lord, Hugh Bennett, and many others could plainly see, various surplus-busting programs did little to address the problems of increasing tenancy and achieved few meaningful results in soil conservation.<sup>332</sup>

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<sup>330</sup> Lord (1947), in: “When the Deal Was New,” pg. 366. Henry A. Wallace stated “The plowing under of ten million acres of cotton in August 1933 and the slaughter of six million little pigs in September 1933 were not acts of idealism in any sane society. They were emergency acts made necessary by the almost insane lack of world statesmanship during the period 1920 to 1932. To have to destroy a growing crop is a shocking commentary on civilization.”; See also Lord’s accounting of emergency surplus control actions and farmer response, pp. 362- 363; Summers (1996), in: “Putting Populism Back in: Rethinking Agricultural Politics and Policy,” describes bitter disagreements and attacks between the Ohio and Iowa Farm Bureaus and the National Farm Bureau Federation as well as between local farm cooperative groups and their national organizations, pp. 403-404.

<sup>331</sup> Lord (1947), pp. 416;

<sup>332</sup> Lord (1947) explains that M.L. Wilson emphasized with Lord and his writers, that farmers could be convinced rather than coerced into participation by appealing to rural community patriotic spirit by instilling broad concepts of conservation and public service, such as conveying large surpluses to “the weak and needy,” pg. 368; Hibbard “The Drought and the AAA

The effect of allotment payments on southern tenant farmers was disastrous, driving tens of thousands of landless families deeper into poverty and displacement, while land owners eagerly collected their government checks. “No one who knows the South denies that the usual annual bargaining, scrambling, and often fruitless migration of tenants and field hands from hut to hut, from place to place, is bad. With large sums of money flowing out to landlords, everyone saw the danger that this might strengthen landlord bargaining and increase displacements,” Lord wrote. The contradictions of New Deal programs were becoming too obvious to ignore yet he found it difficult to communicate his concerns, especially to the young planners and New Deal intellectuals who, experiencing the rural nostalgia for Jeffersonian ideals promoted and held dear by F.D.R., could not or would not appreciate the destructive impact agricultural adjustment was having on a growing sector of American displaced farmers in the South and elsewhere. Twenty-five years later farm program architect Rex Tugwell wrote “There was a kind of homesickness – a historic homesickness, for the simple days of the past when such terrible troubles were still unknown. This was largely imaginary, but it had reality in people’s wishes.” The homesickness for a time and way of life that may have never existed, as Tugwell remembered, was in large part a reaction to the new mass production economy and the glorification of wealth that tipped the economic balance in favor of corporate capitalism. The landless tenant farmer and the unemployed factory worker benefitted very little from the early New Deal efforts that, to Lord and other early critics of New Deal adjustment programs, increasingly favored those already financially well positioned to accept government subsidies.<sup>333</sup>

“What had not been foreseen was the remarkable behavior of the bear,” wrote Lord of the resistant and now subdued large commercial farmer’s collectives and powerful political farm lobbies. “Starved and bewildered at the outset, the rampageously individualistic American farmer, having now tasted bread and honey of adjustment payments and a mild inflation with a

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Program,” in: *The Nation*, (July 4, 1934), pp. 15-16; Rasmussen (1999), in: “Never A Landlord for the good of the Land: Farm Tenancy, Soil Conservation, and the New Deal in Iowa,” pp. 81-83; Meine (2010) describes the frustrations of foresters and the U.S. Forest Service with the poorly planned and executed soil conservation efforts of the early CCC years that left Aldo Leopold “a lasting skeptic of the New Deal,” pg. 306; Shi (2007) on Tugwell: “Prosperity, Depression, and Simplicity,” pg. 234; Summers (1996), explains that regional farm group politics disappeared during and after the war and that as the agricultural crisis deepened during the 20s political forces that deemed Populist ideals as akin to communism and “dangerous mass politics” were challenged by elements of New Deal farm programs to accept or find compromise with a resurgence of populist thinking, pp. 399-400.

<sup>333</sup> Lord (1947), in: “Action,” pp. 360- 369; Hibbard (1934), in: “The Drought and the AAA Program.” *The Nation*. (July 4, 1934), pp. 15-16; Minter (2009,) in: “Agrarianism to Policy,” describes as dependable the traits of modern agrarians “strongly motivated to ensure the stability and defense of their country,” qualities that planners in the New Deal depended upon as they managed compliance to the new allotment programs under Triple A. If there was any coercion or force at all to convince farmers to comply it came from the farmers themselves to pressure their peers and rural community members to join in the effort, pp. 177-182; Rasmussen (1999), in: “Never a Landlord for the Good of the Land,” describes increasing farm tenancy for Iowa and the Midwest during the early 1930s, pp. 70-95.

resulting rise in braced prices, sent delegation upon delegation to Washington demanding that the Department have done with such mild tail-twitchings and other gentle gestures of guidance, and assume absolute control!” While the hungry stood in bread lines in America’s cities, wheat farmers now stood poised to receive their share of the phased allotment payout as they too prepared to reduce production and retire lands across the Southern and Great Plains states. The wheat reduction allotment program was undermined and negated, however, by worsening drought and the specter of monstrous dust storms.<sup>334</sup>

### **Challenge to Ideology**

The contradictions of New Deal farm programs were masked by the hopeful work of land and social planners who flocked to Washington to design new patterns for country living. Rural industries, they claimed, would attract the urban unemployed and their families to areas of green and organized rural communities located far from distressed cities. The New Agrarians reasoned that small, independent farmers, who in 1934 averaged half of the income they earned in 1929, would benefit from the close proximity of new agricultural factories filled with skilled industrial workers, who upon working their full shifts and fifty-hour weeks, would come home to a small homestead of a few acres to till their soil, tend their home flocks, and live off the land. Department of Interior programs that aimed to create small farm and business communities in the west were assigned to M.L. Wilson now Director of the newly established Division of Subsistence Homesteads. Midwestern planner and educational reformer Arthur E. Morgan was assigned to the Tennessee Valley Authority to build commonwealth communities in the southern Appalachian states that committed to restore a traditional Appalachian craft economy, revive subsistence farming, and introduce rural industry hubs operated by redistributed urban workers. During the New Deal years of 1934 – 1938, over a hundred subsistence and commonwealth communities were created, but all were short lived. Expensive, perennially over-budget, and inundated with unexpected problems, the projects stood out as “ideal plans for ideal people rather than practical plans for real people.”<sup>335</sup>

In his new position, Chief Information Officer Russell Lord was given opportunity to travel with Tugwell, Bennett, and Wilson cross country to observe firsthand the successes and failures of New Agrarianism, the domestic allotment program, and the growing specter of large-scale, persistent drought. Lord wrote home to Kate, who continued her work to commute regularly between her New York job and their Washington apartment home, that he was witness to an “act of God that embarrassed New Dealers in the spring of their second crop year.”<sup>336</sup>

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<sup>334</sup> Lord (1947), pg. 360 and pp. 370-380.

<sup>335</sup> Lord (1947) discussions of labor redistribution, pg. 314; Shi (2007) describes the full suite of back-to-the-land and redistribution programs of the New Deal era including non-governmental programs, the Catholic Rural Life movement, the Nashville Agrarian homestead movement, and Ralph Borsodi’s School of Living, among others, disenchanted with government-backed programs that agrarian critics felt were pandering to corporate interests, pp. 230-247;

<sup>336</sup> Lord (1947), pg. 370.

“The natural cover of grass, deranged in the First World War plow-up, had not been restored. Vast withered stretches of land lay bare, abandoned by ranchers and farming companies that had gone broke. Sandstorms crawled along the ground, cutting at all things living, biting at eyes and nostrils. Storms of lighter soil blew high to shroud the sun and life became a torment.”<sup>337</sup> He talked to farmers and ranchers at stops along the way from Iowa to Montana west and on return in Nebraska, Kansas, and Oklahoma. “Plainsmen,” he said, “made jokes about it, wrapping their noses in dirty handkerchiefs, spitting soil. ‘A raindrop hit a fellow over in the next county yesterday,’ they told each other, ‘and they had to throw three buckets of dirt on him to bring him to.’ ‘We’d better get out,’ some would say more somberly. ‘We’ve just about wrecked this country and God is sore.’ But if anything like that got into the newspapers, the Chambers of Commerce protested and so did the people. ‘There’s nothing the matter with this country that a little rain won’t cure!’ they cried.”<sup>338</sup>

Optimistic plans for planned rural recovery and agricultural reform were forced to ground as a long drought ravaged the country East to West. The homestead projects of the TVA as well as those of non-governmental homestead projects scattered along the Appalachians from Maryland to Georgia suffered set-backs as intense drought conditions withered community gardens, wasted pastures, and killed young orchards. Dairy cattle unable to graze small barren pastures were sold. Plowed-down cotton fields in the South, laid bare to searing sun, were hurriedly planted in dryland grasses with tons of seed purchased by tenant farmers out-of-pocket in desperate attempts to anchor the soil from wind and the rains they knew would follow. Throughout the Atlantic Piedmont and Midwest farmers adopted and cared for abandoned farmland that without protective cover crops would blow or wash away. Farmers of the Southern Plains pleaded with the government for funding to help them “re-condition lands in this section of the country which have been ravaged by constant high winds and drought.” Soil conservation associations appealed to county and state governments and they in turn appealed to the USDA to take control. Wallace was not swayed to change current agricultural reform measures, concerned no doubt that a new Dust Bowl Authority would increase government ownership of private lands and add layers of bureaucracy and funding demands to programs that were already under scrutiny by congressional budget committees. States and regions, each with its own set of soil, moisture, and production characteristics and constraints moved regionally to address the most serious problems as best they could with what funding and knowledge they had within their own reach. It was a forced turn to regionalism and local environmental response that began a clear shift in how states expanded ideas of conservation that placed human communities and industry within the context and constraints of natural environment.<sup>339</sup>

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<sup>337</sup> Lord (1947) describes what I consider one of the most important journeys of his professional career in: “Dry and Stormy,” pg. 371.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid., pg. 371.

<sup>339</sup> MacLean (2009), in: “Environmental Ethics and Future Generations,” *Nature In Common: Environmental Ethics and the Contested Foundations of Environmental Policy*,” suggests that regions experience large-scale environments differently making local experiences of environmental challenge more personal and valued, pp. 118-141. I argue that Wallace’s initial refusal to federalize drought response had the effect of removing the impersonal, institutional



Seasonal storm systems trained north in the autumn of 1934 and winter of 1935 originating from warm Gulf of Mexico and equatorial Pacific. Torrential rains drenched dusty farmlands, lifting and carrying the powdered soil with great pulses of flood water that filled empty reservoirs with mud, silted closed shipping channels of the great Midwestern rivers and buried riverine and coastal estuaries and bays. Lord accompanied Hugh Bennett and M.L. Wilson with staff photographers to Wisconsin, Ohio, the Southern Plains states, and the Deep South to assess the damage and record the events. Images of mutilated landscapes were unbelievable to those back in Washington. Men on horseback standing along gullies fifty or more feet deep showed the scale of humanity against the overwhelming magnitude of the disaster that to some were not entirely of nature's doing. The photographs and articles that were generated during these tours described once verdant prairies and plains of America's wheat belt as otherworldly, alien, and powerfully haunting. Emboldened by what he saw, Hugh Bennett implored Americans in articles, speeches, and radio programs to consider the idea of interdependence as critical to understanding the origins and solutions to the soil crisis. Bennett was passionately vocal and demanded that action be taken. With Lord's help to craft concise yet evocative appeals to Congress for the release of reserve funds to address the worsening crisis with redirected conservation efforts, he was not alone in his evangelization. As the brutality of larger and more damaging dust storms intensified during the spring of 1935, Bennett's voice was joined forcefully by Henry Wallace, Rex Tugwell, M.L. Wilson, the new AAA Chief Chester C. Davis, and even bureaucrat architect-administrator of the early AAA, Howard A. Tolley, who "took the whole [AAA] plan to pieces and displayed grave weaknesses in its development."<sup>340</sup>

For America's wheat farmers whose fields flowed expansively across the Plains States the agricultural adjustments that promised relief were derailed by the dust storms of 1934. Rex Tugwell projected that the intensification and acceleration of storms "was out of control and that there would be famine and suffering on the High Plains and mountain ranches."<sup>341</sup> Forecasts of wheat yields fell off dramatically in the early spring of 1934 and the 40 million additional acres of cultivated wheat land that American farmers had added during World War I to feed the troops and suffering post-war citizenry overseas was subjected to broad scale no-fee reduction by the AAA, an area the size of Illinois taken out of production. An economic and environmental mistake Tolley argued to Congress, unless new efforts for replacing destructive cultivation practices with scientific soil conservation methods that promised sustainable, long-term, permanent results for farmers and the land. Cover crops did, in some areas, green the wasted plains temporarily, but from these scattered conservation attempts the farmer gained no economic benefit or incentive to comply. What was needed was a scientific-agrarian philosophy

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response option that farmers and states at first demanded, which in turn strengthened their regional and local conservation commitments; Riney-Kehrberg (1992), in: "From the Horse's Mouth: Dust Bowl Farmers and Their Solutions to the Problem of Aridity," on Alfred Landon's appeal to the Kansas legislature, pg.141 and Wallace's refusal to form a new Dust Bowl Authority, pp. 143-145.

<sup>340</sup> Lord (1950) suggests that Tolley was concerned about serious weaknesses in the allotment and retirement system, pp. 380-393; Beechman and Pritchard (2001), pp. 11-13.

<sup>341</sup> Lord (1947), pg. 371.

that paired the moral incentive for land stewardship with technological and ecological strategies that went beyond contour plowing and cover crops, Tolley insisted to Wallace. In Senate committee hearings in the spring of 1935 Bennett estimated that the previous year's drought and winter storms had removed three hundred million tons of top soil from the Great Plains states alone, and in a thinly veiled criticism of unrestrained corporate capitalism, beseeched his audience to reconsider an economics-only approach to addressing the farm crisis. What was needed, he said, was an integrated attack on the physical and social conditions that lead to cycles of drought and flood, rural poverty and hunger, and an enormous socio-environmental crisis that resulted from industrial corporate greed. Committee members listened but were unimpressed. Wallace called for the establishment of an ever-normal granary to check future overproduction and ensure a steady and secure supply of American wheat for domestic use derived from well-managed land. But it was no easy argument as farm lobbyists in Washington howled in protest against the emergency actions taken by AAA, influencing Republican legislators who held the purse strings tightly against the release of reserve funds for what they considered yet another conjured up New Deal crisis. The political storm weakened however as "tawny clouds of clay and humus flew over Maryland" and for those watching the skies over the District of Colombia one could see that "the wind was blowing the heart out of some of the richest soils in the Southwest."<sup>342</sup>

Hugh Bennett petitioned before the Senate Public Lands Committee on April 2, 1935, for the passage of Public Bill 46, an act to reestablish the Soil Conservation Service and increase its budget by \$15 million under the Department of Agriculture. The battery of journalists in attendance, Lord among them, wasted no time in relaying to the country through press releases, radio spots, and newspaper editorials what had happened that day on Capitol Hill as if some "dreadful miracle" seemed to shock stubborn legislators into action. In an interview with Lord, Bennett recalled:

I recall wishing rather intensely, at the time, that the dust storm then reported on its way eastward would arrive. I had followed the progress from its point of origin in northeastern New Mexico, on into the Ohio Valley, and had every reason to believe it would eventually reach Washington. It did – in sun-darkening proportions – and at about the right time for the benefit of Public [Act] 46. When it arrived, while the hearing was

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<sup>342</sup> Lord (1947) describes a complicated and intricate political-economic tale of how Congress and the U.S.D.A. dueled and argued along ideological lines while Tolley and Bennett pleaded for the release of reserved funding to address a worsening agro-environmental crisis, pp. 370-472; Phillips (2001) describes M.L. Wilson on tour through the Western states in 1935 where he acknowledged the tremendous efforts of farmers to utilize conservation tillage in contouring and terracing but warned that these strategies were not yet a permanent solution the worsening environmental crisis, pg. 127; Thompson (2009) suggests that this period was a pivotal time for a new pragmatic agrarian resurgence that appealed to farmer's 'habits of practice attuned to specific place-specific attributes such as soil type, drainage, patterns of drought and flooding, and specific flora and fauna that thrive at different seasons of the year,' pp. 176-177.

still on, we took a little time, off the record, and moved from the great mahogany table of the Senate Building for a look. Everything went nicely after that.<sup>343</sup>

The Soil Conservation Service appropriation was raised \$25 million with an emergency committee vote to immediately release reserve funds and quickly enact Public Act 46 which went into effect of April 27, 1935. Washington's theatrical taste of western dust represented the culmination of a series of social and environmental tragedies that forced a change of heart in Senate halls of Washington D.C. and challenged, too, the entrenched economic relief programs at the USDA. As the largest of four gigantic dust storms to reach the Eastern states soared out to sea, the realization that agricultural policies that permitted and promoted practices that "plowed men into the streets" resulted in a broad political and public criticism of the pioneer attitude that had enabled this crisis of such enormous proportions and broad socio-economic impact to have occurred. There was growing recognition, although still not entirely supported by legislators or industry that humans were in fact quite capable of altering landscapes to such a degree that weather and hydrology were impacted at scales once thought impossible, and this cleared the way for conservation programs that did not focus exclusively on restricted production. The scientific-agrarian conservation policy that resulted from the shift in mindset, writes Sarah Phillips in *This Land, This Nation* (2001), transformed inadequate economic relief efforts of the federal government into an integrated suite of private, state, and federal actions that approached more specifically regional attributes and social needs through collaborative conservation planning and environmental community restoration. This integrated approach drew heavily on the emerging field of ecology for which Lord wrote extensively upon in articles, editorials, and government pamphlets.<sup>344</sup>

### Thorn Meadow

During the crisis years of 1934-35, Kate and Russell Lord withdrew from the exhausting environs of Washington D.C. to an abandoned farm in rolling Piedmont hills of Harford County, Maryland. After years of city living in Columbus Ohio, New York, and the nation's capital, the Lords turned their attention to the restoration of post-Civil War era stone and frame farmhouse

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<sup>343</sup> Lord (1947), pp. 373-374.

<sup>344</sup> Lord (1947) explains that the shift from purely economic assistance programs to production restriction was not an easy one at USDA but Wallace vigorously promoted "action programs" that featured land and soil conservation as taking priority over those which paid farmers to destroy crops, hogs, cattle, cancel seeding contracts, or plow down standing harvest. In a widely distributed fifteen-thousand-word pamphlet "America Must Choose," Wallace (assisted by Lord) composed what many considered to be a manifesto of the American agrarian agricultural conservation ethic. The Foreign Policy Association and the World Peace Foundation, co-publishers of the pamphlet, waived copyright making the material freely available to all newspapers, magazines, and radio programs where it was printed or read widely 1934-35, pp. 380-393; Beechman and Pritchard (2001) suggest that as a direct consequence of the Dust Bowl events felt in Washington and elsewhere the synthesis of interdependence and agricultural policy was made. This synthesis recognized that it was not just conservation policy to be administered and measured, but a way of living on the land that had to be learned, pp. 40-41; Phillips (2001) on the denouncement of the American pioneer, pp. 123-124.

and leased for low cost their twenty acres of overgrown briar-filled fields to a local farmer on the condition that he grow good pasture and graze good cattle upon it. They petitioned the local power authority to run electric lines, the first ever to reach the Deer Creek Valley, to light their own and neighbors' homes and barns. "Ours was the first house wired, and when, the first night after, we turned on every light in the house and went out to sit on a hilltop to admire the extent and modernity of our improved situation, the whole valley rejoiced." Here, Lord explained to Kate, they would grow a crop of words and pictures, writer and artist, removed from the commotion of urban living.<sup>345</sup>

One could argue that Kate and Russell were following a back-to-the-land instinct but the Thorn Meadow project certainly did not make their lives any less frantic, although it was by all accounts much more pleasant. The sprawling farmhouse afforded both the space and inspiration that their cramped city apartments could not. Finally, at home in their native Maryland, Thorn Meadow was situated in the verdant Deer Creek Valley that flowed east to the Susquehanna River that became the Chesapeake Bay at Havre de Grace, a beautiful Upper Bay colonial era town a short drive from their home. Already working cooperatively to restore and preserve the Deer Creek Valley, well-established farmers, many of whom were from families farming the valley since the early 1700s, were actively employing soil conservation measures such as contour plowing, terracing, and field-to-pasture conversion to replace highly erodible cultivated land with sod grasses for cattle, horses, goats, and sheep. The Lords, drawn to the valley because of its visual charm, highly productive dairy and beef farms, and quaint agricultural villages, understood that the picturesque views and thriving farm communities spoke to decades of rural community engagement in land preservation and conservation, and Russell gave his new community credit for demonstrating what he considered was an example of permanent agriculture.<sup>346</sup>

Agricultural lands preservation and conservation of soils in the Deer Creek Valley watershed began as coordinated rural community endeavors following the 1893 agricultural depression when Harford County farmers experienced a brush with economic recession and a wave of farm abandonments swept the county. During World War I the U.S. Army evicted dozens of long-established tidewater farmers who migrated north to the valley and bought abandoned farms to reclaim and start again. The land evictions and sacrificed farms embittered tidewater families who because of lack of political support were unable to mount a successful

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<sup>345</sup> Lord (1950) describes the purchase and renovation of Thorn Meadow, pp. 11-13.

<sup>346</sup> The Lords had considered several rural areas in which to conduct their home search that included the agricultural districts of their childhoods in Baltimore County, MD, and among the Amish farm communities of southern Pennsylvania. Proximity to Washington was important, however, and the Deer Creek farm communities of Churchville and Darlington in Harford County appealed to them most of all as good roads leading to train stations in Aberdeen and Bel Air and the National Road (Rt. 40) to Washington were within a thirty-minute drive. Lord's references to Harford County and specifically the Deer Creek Valley farmers as practitioners of a permanent agriculture are abundant throughout *The Land* journals, especially in the "Personal Mention" columns and editorials; Chrismer (2007), pp. 12-13; Lord (1950), in: "Five Quiet Years," pp. 11-17.

protest to the siting of the proving ground. Their sacrificed historic properties and highly fertile soils acquired by the federal government were cleared to build mustard gas factories and munitions test ranges there, rendering the land useless and their family histories on the land erased. The effect of farm abandonment, federal evictions and farmer relocations plus the driving forces of increasing population in exurban developments to house workers and military personnel in Aberdeen, Edgewood, and Halls Crossroads to the south of the Deer Creek Valley rallied local farmers to work cooperatively to defend and preserve their heritage and soils. It is no surprise then, that the Harford County Soil Conservation District was one of the first soil conservation districts in the country to form under the Soil Conservation Service and that its rural heritage zones, watershed associations, local land preservation and easement programs, and rich history of community agricultural conservation serve as models for national and regional studies of successful rural lands preservation.<sup>347</sup>

Proponents of permanent agriculture, Liberty Hyde Bailey and Hugh Bennett among them, began to see movement among farmers in long-established rural areas to practice widely innovative farming techniques that validated measurable improvements in soil fertility, water quality, and crop yield. Through the use of highly efficient methods based in understandings of biological processes, farmers who could validate their improved yields and restorative results with data and evidence began to write about their work. Lord fielded and reviewed hundreds of submissions from small farmers in Pennsylvania, Maryland, Ohio, and New England and published many of them in more widely read farm magazine columns for which he served as editor. Enthusiastic with what he saw happening in the Deer Creek Valley, he encouraged Harford County farmers to write about their techniques for newspapers and general interest magazines. Charles Bryan who owned and restored Mount Pleasant Farm near Havre de Grace wrote multiple articles for Lord about how he employed a reclamation plan using conservation methods on what been a severely eroded property. With years of diligent adherence to his plan, Brayan composted, terraced, seeded in meadow grass, and tended to 250 acres under cover crop. Orchard trees planted ten years prior responded with heavy yields and high profits during the dark days of the Depression. Lee Linkous agreed to be interviewed for a story on how he and farmers of the Black Horse community upstream from Churchville had received help from the Civilian Conservation Corps to improve water retention capacity on steep lands by reforesting eroded soils and instituting conservation plans that were agreed to and attentively followed by all the farmers in his area. Measuring yield and price data, Linkous was confident that conservation

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<sup>347</sup> Auch et al. (2012), in: “The Driving Forces of Land Change in the Northern Piedmont of the United States,” includes Harford County farmland preservation history and specific land use drivers that historically and presently challenge farmland conservation and rural heritage efforts to include exurban development, expansion of transportation corridors, and federal land use (military and parks), pp. 53-72; For a review of national sacrifice areas and federal Department of Defense land acquisition on rural communities, see Hooks and Smith (2004) and specifically for Aberdeen Proving Grounds, the Historic Building Survey and history of the area contained therein, National Park Service and Historic Building Survey (1982). A land use map of Harford County showing federal lands and land use designations within the county, courtesy of Harford County Soil Conservation District:

<http://www.harfordcountymd.gov/PlanningZoning/Download/172.pdf>

farming had saved and even improved his situation. “I advise other farmers to investigate,” he suggested. Lord used many of the farmer’s stories in numerous USDA pamphlets, regional reports, government books, and news releases. These were more than stories, however, as farmers now had the data to prove conservation farming worked.<sup>348</sup>

Thorn Meadow, overlooked the conservation farming communities of the Deer Creek Valley was a productive, inspiring, and beautiful landscape in which to live and work. Throughout the first year, Lord was busy on multiple articles, government publications, and three books of his own, yet Washington was only a two hour drive south by car and ninety minutes by train and he split his time between the small apartment which they kept in the city and his Maryland “word farm.” Thorn Meadow at times could be as busy with visitors coming and going, or in the case of Hugh Bennett or M.L. Wilson, house guests staying on a few days to get work done. With productive landscapes all around, it was a farm that generated ideas as well as words.<sup>349</sup>

From the large post-mounted wooden barrel that served as Thorn Meadow’s RFD mailbox, Lord received dozens of newspapers, magazines, and professional journals along with hundreds of letters a day, all stuffed into a canvas mail bag and shoved into the barrel’s mouth by the rural carrier. It required some effort to dislodge. On some days two full canvas bags were tied together like saddlebags over the barrel. In his new library addition and writing room, built by local carpenters and stonemasons, Lord sorted through the mail each morning to separate the unsolicited poems, farmer’s letters, and newspaper clippings sent to him from an admiring rural readership. He continued to serve as a country forum editor for several country and farm magazines and included some of the poems and stories in forum columns while reserving others for inclusion in his book *Voices From the Fields* (1937). This was important material. “Carefully read and considered at leisure those bushels of letters, poems, and postcards from all over the country provided more pertinent information as to what was actually going on at the grassroots and in the minds of the people farming than what could be gathered in any book.” From publishers, he received copies of new books to review for *The Nation* and *The New Yorker*. Kate

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<sup>348</sup> Lord (1938), in: “Two Hundred Years Later,” shares dozens of local farmer’s stories including Linkous and Bryan, in a publication for the Soil Conservation Service, pp. 32-45; See also Lord’s collected stories in: *Behold Our Land* (1938).

<sup>349</sup> Lord (1950), pp.11-17; The Deer Creek Watershed Association and the Harford County Soil District emerged from the early farmer conservation cooperatives at work in the valley from the 1930s. Still heavily farmed (although since the 1930s the county has experienced a 40 % reduction in agricultural operations) the land owners within the valley continue to protect natural and agricultural resources across an 86,000-acre watershed. According to Gary Davis, Harford County Soil Conservation District, Charles Day, Harford County Forestry Board, and Frank Lopez, State Forester, the Deer Creek Valley farmers of the 1930s were employing the watershed conservation model long before this method of cooperative conservation gained attention with USDA and Soil Conservation Service program managers. From email and in-person conversations, 2010-2012 and a panel discussion, August 18, 2014 on Leopold’s legacy in Harford County. See also the Deer Creek Restoration Action Strategy (2007): <http://www.dnr.state.md.us/irc/docs/00013868.pdf>

received illustration requests from authors and graphic design commissions from marketing firms. The mailbox was the most important feature of the farm, Lord wrote. “All of our living came out of it – and more.”<sup>350</sup>

In the spring of 1936 Lord received from Hugh H. Bennett while visiting Thorn Meadow, a copy of Paul Sears’ *Deserts on the March* (1935) and a recent issue of *American Forests* magazine. The magazine, marked for the article “Coon Valley: An Adventure in Cooperative Conservation,” by forester and wildlife biologist Aldo Leopold, included an enthusiastic side note that requested Lord order five hundred copies for Soil Conservation Service staff and planners. In a letter to the author, Bennett commended Leopold for his criticism of early AAA efforts and for having created a new watershed model for agricultural and natural resource conservation. “You have certainly packed into this brief article a great deal of profound thought and you have expressed these thoughts in a way that will appeal to the people.” The Coon Valley Project, one of four combined private cooperative land management projects Leopold was involved in as an extension scientist from the University of Wisconsin, was the first to utilize a holistic watershed conservation approach and most importantly, did so with the combined managing effort of private landowners. Leopold’s criticism of AAA and earlier soil conservation attempts centered on this point as he knew well enough that private landowners, not the federal government, were responsible for the care and management of most of the country’s cultivated, grazing, and forested acreage. Earlier experiences with large-scale landowners of the Southwest during his years as a government forester-liaison influenced greatly his personal philosophy on the limits of government responsibility and intervention and the responsibilities of private landowners to the common good and health of the land. In 1935 Leopold, too, had purchased an abandoned farm and with the help of his family, graduate students, and neighbors, he began a restoration of those worn out agricultural lands that like Thorn Meadow, had grown thick with brush given up by previous owners, struggling farmers deep in debt and unpaid taxes. Unlike Thorn Meadow which by the end of the year had indoor plumbing, electricity, and a new oil burner for heat, Leopold’s land included only a small unheated chicken coop that served as the family cabin. Leopold and his work impressed Lord and he began a correspondence with “The Professor” to hear more about his ideas of land restoration and community-based conservation. Leopold was a strong proponent of permanent agriculture and suggested that as a movement its methods demonstrated standard concepts in applied ecology. The corner of the writing library reserved for material on interesting agricultural conservation projects and correspondence from scientists like Leopold began to overflow beyond the new addition into the new kitchen.<sup>351</sup>

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<sup>350</sup> Lord (1950), feeling the weight and stress as Chief Information Officer at Soil Conservation Service, Lord gave up his position to pursue more freelance opportunities including serving as forum editor for McMillen’s *Farm Journal* and Poe’s *Progressive Farmer*, book reviewer for *The Nation*, *Salon*, *The Saturday Evening Post*, and *The New Yorker*, although the government still provided plenty of contractual work, pp. 14-15.

<sup>351</sup> Lord (1947) describes Leopold’s work on combined projects for the Biological Survey under conservationist J.N. ‘Ding’ Darling and private landowners who worked cooperatively to restore and protect large landscapes for diversity and agricultural use, pg. 341; Beeman and Pritchard (2001) Leopold and permanent agriculture, pp. 82-83; Laubach (2014), *Living A Land Ethic: A*

Thorn Meadow was far from being a back-to-the-land homesteader's shack. Outfitted with all the modern appliances of the day including telephone and abundant indoor and outdoor electric lighting, hot and cold running water, flush toilets, and electric icebox, the Lord's renovated farmhouse attracted less neighborly attention for its modernity than for what happened inside the art studio and writer's den. Farmers and their children made excuses to stop by or peer through windows at this self-described word and picture farm to watch Kate at work on her woodcuts and Russell poring over articles or pounding out pages of reviews and manuscripts. Instinctively skeptical that writing and art could feed a family much less support a twenty-acre farm, neighbors in time accepted the idea that the Lords were important names in the wider world of communications and culture, and this is simply how they made their living.<sup>352</sup>

The idea of homesteading itself had taken on new energy as part of USDA's re-envisioned plan for agricultural reform. Dust storms, drought, and depression had forced additional tens of thousands of small farmers into tenancy and landlessness. Rex Tugwell, for whom homesteading had been a vital social New Deal component, had originally designed settlement programs to address urban unemployment through labor redistribution to rural areas. With reconfigured and realigned resettlement initiatives that accommodated the rural poor and displaced farm worker instead, critics who once made charges of utopianism and socialism (the latter a common charge whenever Tugwell was involved), now rested their complaints. It made more sense to assist farm laborers, share croppers, and small holders who were replaced by agro-industrial technologies, displaced by land consolidations, or cast-off land by discriminating tenant contracts than to relocate unemployed city workers who lacked skills and motivation for working land. A high percentage of the rural poor in the High and Southern Plains were themselves failed homesteaders from previous land drives who like thousands of small farm Southern Plains families now bore the brunt of the intensified economic and environmental impact of depression and blowing dust. Edward Asbury O'Neal III of Alabama, former president of the American Farm Bureau Federation and 1933 visitor to the Secretary of Agriculture's office, who argued fiercely against Tugwell's earlier attempts at government subsidized subsistence homestead programs, now softened his abrasive tone when conditions in the Deep South continued to degrade while increased numbers of displaced tenant families moved throughout the region in search of work or a plot of land to rent.<sup>353</sup>

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*History of Cooperative Conservation on the Leopold Memorial Reserve*, provides an excellent history of this historic cooperative.

<sup>352</sup> Lord (1950) describes the curious visitors to his "word farm" to include two small boys whose heads Lord could see bobbing below a large picture window in his study. "We heard you were a writer. We wanted to see you write," pp. 12-13.

<sup>353</sup> Lord (1947) describes the criticisms of previous resettlement programs in the early New Deal as coming primarily from commercial and corporate agricultural sectors, namely the American Farm Bureau whose past president shouted loudly in Henry A. Wallace's office that "young men who bothered about share croppers and tenant rights were well meaning but soft-headed do-goodies who simply did not understand the limited opportunities still open to all comers- free, white, and twenty-one in that spacious land, the Cotton South," pg. 412 and pp. 409 -430; Hanson and Libecap (2004), in: "Small Farms, Externalities, and the Dust Bowl of



The new Resettlement Administration was established April 30, 1935, went quietly about its business for the next few years to establish four regional resettlement zones to address displaced farmworkers, unemployed rural industry laborers, and ruined farmers in Austin, Texas, central Minnesota and the Dakotas, and near Dayton, Ohio. Additionally, resettlement areas were established in the central Appalachians for evicted mountain farmers forcibly removed from the newly established Shenandoah National Park located in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Virginia two hours west of Washington, D.C. The Resettlement Administration assisted western farmers and ranchers to permanently retire properties that suffered from drought conditions and to reestablish them as irrigation farmers in Montana, Colorado, and Wyoming. Building on the early homestead programs M.L. Wilson began under the Subsistence Homestead Division of the Department of Interior (which the new agency had just as quietly absorbed), Wilson was appointed its new director. Having learned lessons from previous resettlement projects, some programs aimed to keep farmers on their land and were made available to those with demonstrated prior agricultural knowledge and experience in trades associated with rural living. Refashioned as such, Wilson argued against his critics that the new programs were not “a middle-class movement for selected people – not at the top, not the dregs.” Lord, arguing on Wilson’s behalf in editorials, described as “not an escape, but an opportunity.”<sup>354</sup>

Important to resettlement commitments was to provide farmers in their new communities and resettlement zones an education in conservation farming. Lord’s contributions to Resettlement Administration educational pamphlets included conservation methods that he’d previously used in other government materials, but with a richer understanding that farmers must know the ecological constraints of their land. Having read through Sears’ *Deserts on the March*

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the 1930s,” suggest that with thousands of High and Southern Plains counties surveyed, the small farmer and tenant farmer in these states were the most likely to suffer displacement as a result of the great dust storms of 1934-1938. Small acreage farms and small plot shares tended to cultivate their lands more intensely and rest their land hardly at all in attempts to derive profit from it. Soil conservation strategies such as contour plowing and terracing when used, did not have the desired effect if these strategies were not adopted by entire farming communities (as they were in the East and Midwest).

<sup>354</sup> Phillips (2007) describes western resettlement projects as offering opportunities to those farmers who experienced the dust storms most directly in Oklahoma, Colorado, Wyoming, the Dakotas, and Montana, pp. 124-126; Wilhelm (1982), in: “Shenandoah Resettlements,” provides an excellent study of the Shenandoah National Park resettlements which proved the most troublesome of all the Resettlement Administrations projects. Culture shock, refusal to move, loss of tightly structured cultural bonds, and lack of economic opportunity made this project a dismal failure for which the mountain farmers of the Shenandoah paid dearly. On a personal note, my great uncle Russ MacDonald, orchardman, and great aunt Virginia Smith MacDonald were one of these families, who like the majority of evicted farmers, relocated from on their own rather than participate in government resettlement programs. They moved to family-owned Smith Mountain in West Virginia upstream from Harpers Ferry to be near relatives and started a new orchard business there.

<http://www.nps.gov/shen/learn/historyculture/historicaloverview.htm>

several times, Lord knew that ecological concepts taught as part of a permanent agriculture education made a strong case for learning from the land and from the environmental crisis at hand how farmers could create thriving farmsteads within the parameters of regional climate, soils, and hydrology.<sup>355</sup>

Paul Sears was working at the time of the great dusters in Oklahoma, one of a group of Midwestern-born conservationists, who offered concerned and distressed southern plains farmers and other private western land owners new ways to think about the biological function of their land using ecological concepts. In *Deserts on the March*, Sears compared the fate of other regions of the world where farmers had learned too late the lessons of poor and unrestrained land use to what was happening across the continent during the crisis years 1934-1935. Sears and others contended that it was the American pioneer and a century-long desire for expansion and greedy resource extraction that served as the root cause of the worsening dust storms, prolonged drought, and torrential flooding then plaguing the country. Using Frederic Clements' climax theory to argue that landscapes ultimately adapted to natural regional climates, soils, and rainfall patterns were best left in place. Farming carefully selected lands using appropriate technologies while leaving some of the surrounding landscape in a wild or semi-wild state, ensured a sustainable living for the farmer and an intact and biologically functional system that supported the farmer's work. Maintaining an ecological relationship between the farmer and his land, assured Sears, would not only provide balance and resilience in times of environmental stress, but agricultural abundance as well. Diversity for cultivated crops as well as management of diverse wildlife habitat, he argued, provided insurance to the farmer against overuse of soils and outbreaks of pests and disease. Sears later wrote "Most of the problems facing man's ability live happily and survive on this planet are largely his concerns with environment, which is closely allied to his renewable resources. His ability to obtain enough food, clear water, and clear air along with his needs for leisure, recreation, and aesthetics involve sound ecological understanding and action."<sup>356</sup>

The book was widely popular among American readers as well as readers across the Atlantic in Great Britain where Albert Howard was beginning to publish and earn recognition for his work in composting, soil health, and non-chemical farming. Lord began to use research conducted by Howard in new organic methods of production to promote similar studies on farms in the U.S. Sears' use of comparative histories of landscapes interested Lord greatly for it was in France that he first encountered traditional methods of manure farming on lands farmed continually for hundreds of years. Lord began correspondence with Albert Howard and drew his

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<sup>355</sup> Lord (1938), *To Hold This Soil*, for rich examples of Sears' influence on Lord's government publications, used in large part as educational materials for teaching conservation agriculture.

<sup>356</sup> Beechman and Pritchard (2001), in: "Ecological Inspiration for Agriculture," pg. 105; Riney-Kerhberg (1992) explain that farmers who cared for abandoned lands during the Dust Bowl years often did so in the interest of stabilizing soils, but saw too the benefits to wildlife and fish populations, even though the idea of diversification for crops was difficult to achieve during the worst of the drought years, pg. 140; Sears *Deserts on the March* (1935) in: "Pests" and "The Way Through," pp. 185 – 195; Worster (1994) on Sears and the legacy of ecological ideas that he built upon and founded in conservation, pp. 233-234 and pp. 360-361.

work and personal interest into the permanent agriculture movement at home. Connecting with researchers and agricultural scientists in Europe, Lord was able to transform for American readers the permanent agriculture movement as a global effort to heal a damaged planet. Inspired by this Trans-Atlantic conversation in 1936, Henry A. Wallace approved funding the Pare Lorentz film *The Plow That Broke The Plains*, financed by the USDA for the Resettlement Administration. Employing an historical context which Sears used so expertly in *Deserts on the March*, the Lorentz film popularized core tenets of permanent agriculture through a chronological telling of the events that led up to the present time of crisis. It was viewed by tens of thousands of school students and theater goers. Wallace then called for a broader application of applied ecological methods in government and private land management and re-released a popular radio speech broadcast originally in 1933 to re-invigorate and convince farmers through articles and pamphlets how to use the science of ecology in making decisions about what and how to farm. “No more land worth taking may be had for the grabbing. We must experience a change of mind and heart,” Wallace reminded his listeners in the original broadcast at that point appearing in print in newspapers and farmer’s magazines, “The frontiers that challenge us now are of the mind and spirit. We must blaze new trails in scientific accomplishment, in the peaceful arts and industries. Above all, we must blaze new trails in the direction of a controlled economy, common sense, and social decency.”<sup>357</sup>

Walter P. Taylor, southwestern ecologist and naturalist, inspired by Wallace’s call for a land management standard based upon an interdependent, ecological framework summoned fellow ecologists to meet the soil conservation challenge, to engage in large-scale conservation planning with land owners, counties, and the federal programs. In an article written for the journal of the American Ecological Society “What is Ecology and What Good Is It?” Taylor defined ecology as “the science of all the relations of all organisms to all their environments.” In large-scale game management projects, he said, ecology already played a vital role in wildlife conservation and landscape restoration. So, why not in soil conservation? Ecological principles understood and heeded in agriculture, he wrote, would “help assure the basic essentials of a more

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<sup>357</sup> Lord promoted and was very familiar with Albert Howard’s work as noted in many mentions in various articles, reviews, and books from 1935-36 onward, and Howard was a valued advisor to *The Land*, but all correspondence between Lord and Howard, as well as between Leopold and Lord, was lost in an estate sale following Lord’s death in 1964. “Probably taken to the dump, as very people knew about the sale or even that he had passed,” Henry R. Lord, personal email correspondence and phone conversation, Summer 2014; Beeman and Pritchard (2001) describe the mass communication of permanent agriculture to include Lorentz’s films in “Lessons from History,” pp. 13-18; Culver and Hyde (2000) in: “Whose Constitution?” state that the “Declaration of Interdependence” speech was one of Wallace’s finest, driving home the points that all sectors of the economy and environment were linked to agriculture. Lord, personal aide to Wallace at the time, recalled that reporters didn’t quite yet understand its implications, “They wrote that he was simple, but he exceedingly complex; that he wavered between ardor for the utmost advance of an interdependent civilization, with an abundance of material goods and gimcracks for everyone, and the simple desire to lie on the soft green grass and be left alone.” Lord assisted Wallace with parts of the book *Whose Constitution?* as well, a fiery attack on a High Court decision that temporarily impounded funds for AAA programs in 1934, pp. 147-186.

abundant life.” A year later, Taylor delivered an address to the American Ecological Society as its new president. Interdependence is a concept that unites sciences and the sciences to society, he urged. “There is as much need today for a Declaration of Independence as there was a Declaration of Independence in 1776.”<sup>358</sup>

With ecology, history, social justice, and agriculture thus enjoined, the permanent agriculture movement found firm footing in the midst of nation’s worst socio-environmental crisis. What was needed now for the movement to gain acceptance in larger worlds of public policy and economics was a continued, intensified pursuit for the scientific data and proof that supported claims by permanent agriculture that its practices and methods could heal and restore the earth.

## **Conclusion**

During the blissful but busy early years at Thorn Meadow Russell Lord helped to position permanent agriculture within a growing national environmental consciousness as a dynamic set of viable, restorative solutions with which to address aspects of the socio-ecological crisis that continued to unfold in 1935-38. Eroding soil could be held in place by converting cultivation to pasture. Exhausted soils could be restored to health with the applications of humus and compost. Rain and snow melt could be captured and saved by increasing the soil’s capacity for moisture retention. Lord advocated through stories and reviews as many of the core concepts of permanent agriculture of healing, restoration, and abundance as he could fit into the dozens of columns, pamphlets, and books he produced from the start of the Great Depression to end of the first year at Thorn Meadow. His work caught the attention of farmers, policy-makers, publishers, and city folk. He became known as America’s greatest farm journalist and remained a close friend and personal aide to the Secretary of Agriculture, Henry A. Wallace. He was at the height of his career.

Lord guarded the idea of permanent agriculture from being considered just another fad or overblown idea and he did this by ensuring that the test of history, ecological science, and data-driven results were the bedrock concepts from which the movement derived its credibility. The drought intensified, however, across much of the High and Southern Plains and while the winds seemed to accelerate ever faster and the cloud banks climb ever higher with every new storm that blew up from the broken land, Lord knew that there were two important challenges that he and other proponents of permanent agriculture had to face, time and scale.

Ecological understandings of drought cycles, environmentally adapted plant communities, and soil fertility came too late to be of practical use during the most critical years of the Dust Bowl Era. Conservation applications that addressed multi-layered complex interdependent systems of weather, economics, biota, soils, human, and environmental health were long term solutions that could take years or generations to mature. Farmers who contributed articles and interviews to Lord’s columns, books, and reviews admitted that restoring their lands to abundance took time; Charles Bryan’s orchard had finally produced a bumper crop of apples

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<sup>358</sup> Beeman and Pritchard (2001), pp. 41-42; Worster (1994), in: “Declarations of Interdependence,” pp. 316 – 338.

and peaches the year he turned fifty-six, twenty years after he began the restoration of Mount Pleasant Farms. History revealed that some of the best farmland in the U.S. and abroad was the result of cultural practices passed down from father to son over decades, even centuries. The gigantic dust storms of spring and summer and the torrential autumn and winter Mississippi Valley rains and floods, however, occurred in just days, weeks, and months and in the foreshortened span of just a few years, created more despair than ever before.<sup>359</sup>

Permanent agriculture was also a practice that worked best within the human scale of farming on plots and pastures and a few fields where experimentation and results could be observed and measured. The problem of scale, as Paul Sears and Walter Taylor knew well, was a problem of the landscape itself. The wide-open rolling prairies of the Midwest and West and the flat expanses of rangeland and the wheat belt of the West would require large-scale strategies and new ways of observing and collecting data for which scientific technologies had yet to produce. Additionally, restorative agricultural strategies applied at the scale of landscape required collaborative and cooperative action, as Leopold demonstrated with the Coon Valley project, the kind of action that demanded more than a signed contract or agreement.

For all that had happened since his years in Ohio where he first witnessed large scale impact of mechanized farming and industrial expansion, Lord understood the environmental implications of human stubbornness, denial, and hopelessness. To promote the promise of permanent agriculture he created demand in new mass media, film, literature and journalism that combined with the power of advocacy in public policy to capitalize on and communicate emerging theories and practices in conservation and long range thinking. And like Dewey a generation before, in a swirl of action and reaction, Lord navigated as best he could between institutional and individual response to layered crisis of the mid-1930s.

The challenges of the worsening weather, issues of time and scale to fully implement permanent agriculture methods, and the increasingly desperate plight of America's most vulnerable farmers were by degree the most serious obstacles to full scale adoption of restorative strategies. But there were other obstacles as well. Ecologists who promoted their field so vigorously in soil conservation and land management distanced themselves from economic measures. Agrarianism split into factions as "new agrarians" fully embraced technology and science while pragmatic agrarians focused almost exclusively on economic programs and the logistics of resettlement. USDA and the Soil Conservation Service were undergoing internal and programmatic changes to include a purge at the hands of Congress to root out men like Rex Tugwell whose social programs and collectivist leanings drew the ire of New Deal critics. "It was a tragic chapter in American agriculture," lamented the narrator for *The Plow That Broke The Plains*. At height of the Dust Bowl crisis Lord approached the pinnacle of his journalistic career, but Thorn Meadow could no longer serve as a full-time retreat for his writing.<sup>360</sup>

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<sup>359</sup> Lord (1931) celebrates farmers long on the land and the resulting rich soils their generations of toil and stewardship. Lord devotes chapters to the Pennsylvania Amish, the manure farmers of Tarn-et-Garonne, France, and the "Keepers of Groves and Gardens" of Appalachian Ohio, but four years before Sears' *Deserts on the March*, mentions not at all concepts of ecology.

<sup>360</sup> Lord (1950), "Thorn Meadow the days flowed smoothly with every outward appearance of a continuing serenity; but almost everything that you heard or read had a tone of crisis,

Familiar images of monstrous dust storms and farms smothered in blowing sand mask the complexity of these years as people and institutions struggled to respond to environmental and economic crisis. The next chapter will transpose the socio-ecological complexity of the mid-1930s upon growing political and social forces that Lord and his colleagues found difficult to navigate. Notions of ecology had penetrated agricultural and conservationist minds, yet the greatest challenges at hand for Lord as communicator and advocate were how to change agriculturalists' behaviors and beliefs to impact land management policy.<sup>361</sup>

There is much more to the legacy of ideas that defined the 1930s beyond the scope of this work but for Russell Lord, well-positioned to receive and communicate them, he served to associate ideas considered fresh, even radical, as inheritors of ideas rooted firmly in the country life and back-to-the land movements, Midwestern populism, and social democracy of the pragmatists of the late 1800s and early twentieth century. His encounters with the men of Roosevelt's Brain Trust did not result in the simple influences of being easily inspired or swayed to become another convert to the New Deal, though he did promote the ideas in many of his articles. For even when the effect of the most charismatic speakers and leaders seemed to be most directly addressing agricultural and environmental crisis, Lord maintained a safe distance from their articulated designs and doctrines, propaganda and near religiousness. He knew full well that the weight of his articles and speeches for and about these ideas would help to shape public opinion and policy, but he left it to experience to witness through his travels how their ideas would play out, whether they would become mythologized or instructive, scrutinized or illustrative of what should or should not be followed.

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increasingly frantic," pg. 22; Beeman and Pritchard (2001) explain that the worsening environmental crisis was occurring faster than new programs and ideas could be applied, pp. 33-34; Lorentz (1936) *The Plow That Broke The Plains*; Worster (2004), in: "Learning From Nature," the most severe years of the Dust Bowl helped bring ecology to national attention, but as conditions continued to degrade and despair deepened, ecologists who promoted agroecology distanced themselves from the economic measures and corrections that were as critical as the scientific understandings were to soil conservation, e-reader reference: 3417-3489 and 5731.

<sup>361</sup> Padau (2010), in: "Theoretical Foundations of Environmental History," explores the intersection of social history, environmentalism, and complexity in environmental history. The "internal movements in the universe of knowledge as a whole," argues Padau can be examined through three changes that converge in this research: 1.) Human activity has a substantial impact on the natural world, 2.) Revolutions of chronological milestones that shift our understandings of a complex world, and 3.) Nature as history is a social construct and reconstruction over time, pg. 83.

## Chapter Five:

### Sacrificial Land

#### 1938 - 1941

Geographers draw maps flat, inert, with fixed edges. Poets sing of the everlasting hills. Man likes to think of solid ground beneath his feet; but there is no such thing on earth. This world is cast of solid rock, but the weather grinds the surface into little pieces, and the pieces travel. If accurate land maps were scientifically possible they would more nearly resemble something living – bodies of land changing their skin, changing their outlines and positions, squirming with life and change.<sup>362</sup> - Russell Lord, *To Hold This Soil* (1938)

#### Introduction

Ideas of permanent agriculture and forestry, first considered by conservation leaders during Theodore Roosevelt's administration, were tested by two decades of environmental and socio-economic decline following World War I. Postwar agriculture was entirely dependent upon the fertility and stability of wasting soils. Large-scale soil and forest conservation projects begun in the 1920s in New York and Pennsylvania, became the models for large New Deal programs administered throughout the nation.

Strongly influenced by the philosophy of Country Life reformer, Liberty Hyde Bailey, Russell Lord carried his mentor's ideas of agricultural permanence forward in articles, books and reports published during the Depression and Dust Bowl years, bearing witness to the recovery and repair work of the Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Forest Service, and the Resettlement Administration. He noted, however, that there were points of departure between plans, action, and effects, on both land and people. Skepticism seeped into his work for the USDA.<sup>363</sup>

In the historical context of permanent agriculture, Pinchot's early 20<sup>th</sup> century ideas of promoting sustainable yields in forestry and the long-term preservation of legacy landscapes during Theodore Roosevelt's administration were refined by New Conservationists during the

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<sup>362</sup> Lord (1938), in: "The Film of Life," pg. 1.

<sup>363</sup> Lord, *Forest Outings* (1940) and *To Hold This Soil* (1938), commits to identifying disconnects between areas of policy and practice; Merchant (2007), *American Environmental History*, describes the importance of Gifford Pinchot's Progressive Era definitions of resource conservation and the working landscape to prioritize the wellbeing of people who depended upon healthy landscapes for sustenance and livelihoods, pg. 143. Pinchot carried broad concepts of permanence and interdependency forward as a founder of New Conservationism during the 1920s.

1920s to include work programs and rural redevelopment.<sup>364</sup> Lord had witnessed Pennsylvania and New York countryside at their very worst when a student at Cornell in Ithaca N.Y., traveling to and from Baltimore for home visits and summer work. The sights had sickened him. With full-on restoration efforts underway in those states, however, even as the Great Depression bore down, F.D.R. quickly adopted state programs as templates for New Deal conservation programs and agencies. Perhaps too standardized or inflexible, Lord observed from his position at the USDA, that the larger the project, the more prescriptive the response to a dynamic socio-ecological crisis. He watched intently as Eastern models of soil, watershed, and forest conservation were applied to the whole country, from the severely gullied Deep South to the wind ravaged High Plains. He noted that the local folk, many of them farmers and agrarians long on the land, were the first to experience the inefficiencies and oversights of well-intentioned policies. Relationships of rural communities to place mattered, argued Lord, who had long held a respect for the local wisdom of innovators and problem-solvers. Marvin Oren, the poor Maryland farmer who enriched the soils of his chromium barrens farm with specially bred grasses and manure hays, appeared in his chronicles throughout the 1930s, as an early landmark in his own experience of the practice of permanence.<sup>365</sup>

The SCS theme that “poor soils make poor men” broadened its meaning as rural medicine and military recruitment medical staff noted “deficiency diseases” common among young men from the country. Social insecurity, distressed local economies, and lack of nutritious food resulted in a deep poverty that soil conservation alone could not address.<sup>366</sup> Could concepts of permanent agriculture, operationalized as large-scale soil conservation and reforestation works, hope to check human desperation and slow or stop environmental decline? More importantly, could emergency conservation efforts transition into sustained resource protection policies that demonstrated real progress and promise? Lord’s experiences of the Deep South, Northwest, and Southwest argued that a change of heart was needed. This chapter explores several of Lord’s encounters with regional conservation projects where he argued that prescriptive programs ran roughshod over the needs and knowledge of agrarians, and that federal planners and experts needed to acknowledge land histories including indigenous and settler wisdom, as well as recognize the institutional underpinnings of the plantation system still at work on southern soils.

Ideas of permanence included addressing the uncomfortable fit of rural social planning to agrarian lifeways, even and especially as manifest as grinding poverty. Lord struggled with this,

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<sup>364</sup> Wilkinson (2015), in: “The Greatest Good of the Greatest Number for the Long Run,” describes Pinchot’s belief that good planning for forest restoration and harvest management, “organizational alignment,” served as the origins of sustainable yield practice, pp. 75-77.

<sup>365</sup> Lord (1931) is dedicated to retelling Oren’s story in “Soil Builders and Managers,” as if a marker for his own evolving ideas of permanent practices, pp. 118-131.

<sup>366</sup> Lord (1962) describes Rutgers University studies by Lipman of the 1920s that identified “deficiency diseases” that resulted from poor diets of young rural men rejected for military service during World War I in the U.S. and Britain. Stemming from “soil decadence” or loss of mineral fertility in washed out soils, Lipman’s studies would later be confirmed by Dr. William A. Albrecht and the use of new spectroscopy technologies in the late 1930s and early 40s, pg. 308- 310.



especially as the metaphorical language of war he and others used in USDA promotional materials, meant that certain social frameworks such as tenancy and the landless laborer were considered a form of modern peasantry and in the way of progress. He understood that many of the SCS and Resettlement Administration's plans for rural renewal simply reinforced an already entrenched belief in the backwardness of the poor white or black farmer for whom relocation and exile seemed akin to a refugee crisis in wartime.<sup>367</sup>

Up until 1938 the almost unstoppable loss of land (and smothering of rivers and ports) triggered a "wash-out and sell-out" economy that threatened not only the physical landscape but tore apart the cultural underpinnings of rural society. Unlike other writers working in public relations and information for the New Deal, however, Lord infused his work with an almost evangelical zeal to promote a more vigorous effort to beat back the common enemy, erosion. He paired the physical work of landscape restoration with a moral imperative to accept and take responsibly for addressing the crisis with intense effort. "It is something to think about really," he wrote, "the complacency and blindness of American farmers and agriculturalists who let this soil run down under our very feet, with attendant symptoms of decadence appearing at every hand, without ever seeming to realize what was going on."<sup>368</sup>

Lord understood that new findings in ecological and watershed sciences offered an integrated approach to writing about the restoration of natural processes on working landscapes. In early 1938 he resigned from his post as Chief Information Officer for the USDA to go freelance, assignments aplenty from admiring federal agencies. His language changed. War metaphors put aside, he began to bring together the scientific language of an elegant interdependence of biotic and abiotic worlds. Paul Sears, Aldo Leopold, Stuart Chase, and his beloved rural poets informed his rhetoric and prose, while Liberty Hyde Bailey's *The Holy Earth* served as inspiration to refine and redefine earlier definitions of agrarianism and permanent agriculture. In *Behold Our Land* (1938) Lord synthesized the work of conservationists, agronomists, hydrologists, ecologists, and social planners to demonstrate that New Deal efforts were only a *start* towards long-term solutions. "What has been done by way of defense amounts to but random scratches far scattered over vast areas, undefended. But what has been done does show, I think, that soil erosion can be controlled."<sup>369</sup> What was needed next was a sustained movement to ensure the full recovery of biological function to America's soils, he declared, a

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<sup>367</sup> Lord (1962), in: "Journey of Discovery," Lord described how promoters of SCS conservation and RA economic policies, 1936-1938, framed their reconstruction programs as "battling the elements and ignorance." Lord describes the intentional militarization of language to promote agricultural controls thus saving soil and urging "new social mechanisms as defensive retrenchment from headlong overexpansion of production," with little consideration for poor and landless farmers, pp. 280-281.

<sup>368</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 276.

<sup>369</sup> Lord (1938), *To Hold This Soil*, pg. 306.

“living rule of conduct” that offered steady improvements towards permanent ecological and social health.<sup>370</sup>

This chapter explores the physical-biological landscapes that were important to this next phase of Lord’s career and thinking. The widespread industrialization of natural resource extraction in the late 1800s and through World War I, the years of Lord’s education and military service, had turned Pennsylvania into a domestic war zone. The conservation platform designed by Governor Pinchot, reissued an old theme with new vigor, “to do the greatest good for the greatest number in the long run,” and he ensured that the men who once worked for the companies that ravaged the Commonwealth were now paid by the state to restore it.<sup>371</sup>

Things were looking up in Pennsylvania in 1938 as the state was greening with a decade’s worth of new growth across its reforested mountains while its creeks and rivers benefitted from hundreds of flood and erosion control projects. Wildlife species, extirpated due to overhunting and habitat loss in the pre-war years were being reintroduced by the State Game Commission. Conservation protocols were working in the Commonwealth with a decade’s jump on the process of engineered restoration, but what about the windblown West and the gullied South? Readers might imagine Russell Lord pounding the keys on his typewriter, cigarette smoke swirling around his desk, demanding to know “How can people do such things to their own country – weaken its base, befoul its beauty, darken its future- how can they do such things and seem never to realize what they are doing?” he asked. “How can a people work themselves into such a squirm of patriotism when some misguided schoolchild refuses to salute the flag, this lands symbol, yet countenance and join in a continual defacement and destruction of the body of land itself?”<sup>372</sup>

Witnessing working landscapes under reconstruction, renewal, or that were failing to conform to the contour and terrace, Lord discovered synergies in economics and environment that defined the character of degraded or recovering land. These convergences of direct experience of the land, reflection, and literary-scientific influence were the precursors to the development of the philosophy and practice of sustainable agriculture, and that as the permanent agriculture philosophy evolved, Lord understood that the ecology of America’s working landscapes were a product of wartime economies and the repair and rest of peacetime. The deep

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<sup>370</sup> Lord (1938), *Behold Our Soil*, pg. 303.

<sup>371</sup> Wilkinson (2015), explains that Pinchot reissued his trademark slogan aggressively in his home state of Pennsylvania during his second term as Governor. New Conservation policies included labor programs to achieve at home “the greatest good for the greatest number in the long run” that resulted in a new state park system, vast reservoir and flood control projects, and hundreds of thousands of acres protected as State Forest and game land, pp. 72-74.

<sup>372</sup> Lord (1938), pg. 26; Merchant (2007) describes the importance of Gifford Pinchot’s Progressive Era definitions of resource conservation and the working landscape to prioritize the wellbeing of people who depended upon healthy landscapes for sustenance and livelihoods, pg. 143.

sense of stewardship that permanent agriculture maintained was grounded in an earthward pacifism, a *holy earth* indeed.<sup>373</sup>

## Points of Departure

By the mid-twentieth century most U.S. citizens had the ability to travel great distances by rail, highway, or air. Intercontinental and transcontinental flight offered travelers, laymen and scientists alike, new perceptions of time and space. Some had taken to the air in their own light aircraft like south Ohio country physician and gentleman farmer Dr. Charles Holzer. An avid reader of Lord's work, he shared his aerial perspectives with Lord and wrote in awe of the visible interconnectedness of landscape features from several thousand feet above wasted, gullied fields, cut-over forests, and muddy rivers.

These were landscapes still reeling, exhausted and damaged, from the supply demands for food, fiber, timber, and coal to meet the needs of the U.S military during World War I. Unlike Pennsylvania to the east, Ohio did not soon attend to its war wounds. "Things were none too rosy for the farmers and woodsmen, the miners and subsistence homesteaders of the Hocking Valley," wrote Lord after a visit to Ohio in April, 1937. "But they were managing somehow to get along without work aid programs from the outside and without relief. They have taken an awful beating in the years since [the war]. You can see it in their faces and on their hills."<sup>374</sup>

Aerial photography, with which Kate Lord would be soon become intimately familiar as an Army cartographer, gave laymen and scientists new ways to see how human activity impacted the land. With expanded ways of seeing, the simple act of walking a pasture or rambling down a backroad offered deeper insights and greater meaning to ideas of conservation with the knowledge that farms and woodlots were part of and participants in larger ecological systems.<sup>375</sup> Dr. Holzer's letters and pictures were different, however, from the government reports and official documentary photographs that Lord had interpreted for his readers. A country doctor concerned with the health and welfare of his rural patients and their families, offered deeper considerations of how land and its people flourished or sickened as one community. "Dr. Holzer," Lord explained, "had worked on wrecked land and on bodies brought down from the

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<sup>373</sup> Bailey (1918), in: *Universal Service*, promoted deep stewardship as analogous to pacifism, to which he was devoted as a man of Christian faith.

<sup>374</sup> Lord (1962) from field notes published for and excerpted for *The Land*, pg. 306; Lord (1950) in: "An Unlearned Society," describes the contributions of Holzer, a long-term committee member who served the Society's executive board from its inception in 1940 to its disbanding in 1956, p. 37-41.

<sup>375</sup> Simons (2015), in: "Aviation's Heartland: The Flying Farmer and Postwar Flight," describes how relationships to land shifted towards a more holistic and unified understanding of landscape structure and function as people gained new perspectives through aerial technologies. "Historian Richard White describes railroads spanning the region a century earlier creating hybrid space; simultaneously abstract and physical, the imagination of it fueled new ideas of time, distance, the landscape, and human relationships. Air travel expanded and intensified the experience of this hybrid space and helped link, for example, a wheat field in the great Plains to both food aid recipients on the other side of the globe and the threat of nuclear annihilation," pg. 228.

hills just above floodwater there along the lower reaches of the Ohio River for more than thirty years.”<sup>376</sup> When Hugh H. Bennett stopped by to visit the doctor at Lord’s suggestion, Holtzer encouraged him to set up tours for the SCS which he offered gladly to lead through the stricken hills and valleys. These were places forgotten or ignored by large government project planners. “There’s flesh and blood and vigor washing out of here in the mud of that river,” he told Bennett. Frustrated that not all of America’s heartland received the money and attention being afforded the more dramatic ruined lands of the west, Holzer had worked through the Depression to push for legislation that would secure the funds needed to set up the Muskingum Conservancy District there.<sup>377</sup> These were the stories that touched Lord, that drew him away from the agricultural production and labor reports that dulled the edge of his thinking and writing, and turned him towards exploring the potential of local case studies and local knowledge about how best to repair land and men.

“Things are stirring which may help make conservation not a formulated word of vague meaning but living creed of conduct,” he wrote in his field notes.<sup>378</sup> His skepticism of government conservation planning, prescribed one-sized-fits-all solutions, bound up in red tape and layers of bureaucracy, was soothed with stories of farmers, innovators, poets, and scientists whose letters filled the five-gallon barrel mailbox at the end of the farm lane. Lord had long held concerns, even during the 1920s while working in Extension in Ohio, that government centralization of rural programs stifled the promise of local conservation responses. He worried that prescriptive solutions that addressed surplus or wasting soil were often directed from a central office far removed from the physical and social understandings of local problems. Central management overlooked or ignored specific environmental attributes and local knowledge that would help ensure long term success. He was interested in local innovation, the adaptations of science and technology that improved upon standardized government-approved actions, or that “broke the rules.” He delivered sharp criticisms of the system of regulatory penalties that punished farmers for not following prescribed methods, even if those farmers hadn’t the wherewithal to do so.<sup>379</sup> Like the earlier concerns of his philosophical mentor Liberty Hyde

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<sup>376</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 300.

<sup>377</sup> Ibid., pp. 300-301.

<sup>378</sup> Lord (1938), in: *To Hold This Soil*, describes from field notes throughout, the conservation work occurring in the Pacific Northwest, High Plains, and Southwest, regions and people new to his research in landscape restoration. He gives attention to innovative approaches that suited unique situations that “break the rules” of standard conservation strategies of contour tillage, windbreaks, and reforestation. This is an important book that documents conservation projects that escaped the attention of the government press.

<sup>379</sup> Lord (1938), *To Hold This Soil*, delivers a scathing criticism of regulatory penalties leveled against farmers who did not follow prescribed conservation actions. The system needed to be changed, he argues, pg. 121

Bailey, Lord found centralized regulatory power that directed and enforced conservation policies that threatened the very heart of rural democratic society.<sup>380</sup>

While on official assignment in the South to document the progress of government soil conservation projects, Lord noted that when there was lack of collaboration between farmer and government, poor farmers suffered *because* of agricultural conservation methods rather than benefitting from them. Conservation projects that required large equipment for terracing was unaffordable for black tenant farmers, who still plowed with “little eight hundred pound mules.” Black sharecroppers in Tallapoosa, Alabama, whose mule-plow attempts at terracing had failed with the first tropical downpours of the season and, with no help from land owners (who received the large adjustment checks), made their own deep terracing drags and secured second-hand older tractors to pull them with their own money.<sup>381</sup> How could extension engineers tasked with soil conservation work in the South begin to understand the needs of the farmers if they couldn’t understand the economic and political systems that constrained them? But in communicating the frustrations of both Extension men and the tenant farmers, he was careful, if not evasive, to deflect the painful truth to the margins, neglecting to point out that white landowners who benefitted from handsome New Deal payouts were threatened by the idea of changing the archaic, abusive, economic system based on the subjugation of landless, black farm laborers for fear of losing their way of life. And land owners were backed by powerful representatives in Congress who voted to maintain New Deal funding exclusions.<sup>382</sup> This was tricky journalistic ground for Lord and he never quite came close to calling out institutional inequities in the report for fear, perhaps, of still being bound to government funding and having to cast in the best light the work of SCS programs throughout the South.

Speaking with confidants and colleagues who were perhaps just as frustrated, Lord delivered a proposal to Hugh H. Bennett, Chief of the Soil Conservation Service, to suggest that a new conversation about soil conservation and broader ideas of stewardship was due. Bennett agreed. “One has only to reread the initial Farm Act of 1933 to realize that it was not only an omnibus measure but a fantastically overloaded omnibus, a package deal designed to accommodate practically all conceivable, often conflicting, cures,” Lord explained. The result on the ground, in the fields, and in the agricultural markets, he argued, was a “confusion of means

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<sup>380</sup> Bailey (1915), *The Country Life Movement in the United States*, worried about the institutionalization of agricultural thought and the loss of democratic expression. Bureaucratic red-tape, centralization, and “factitious legislation” could snuff the promise and life out of creativity and innovation that addressed rural issues. “If it is important that the administration of agricultural work be not overmuch centralized at Washington, it is equally true that it should not be too much centralized in the States. I am inclined to think that here at present lies one of our greatest dangers,” pp. 100-103.

<sup>381</sup> Lord (1938), *Behold Our Land*, describes (with frequency) the inability of poor black farmers, who still plowed with mules, but who terraced as best they could and that these attempts seemed always to fail. Some were offered second hand tractors by enterprising equipment dealers to rent by the hour to do the work that their “little eight hundred-pound mules” could not, pp. 172-173.

<sup>382</sup> Linder (1987), in: “Farm Workers and the Fair Labor Standards Act: Racial Discrimination in the New Deal.”

and purposes among all the contending principals and characters,” with the American farmer and the rural laborer suffering even more for it.<sup>383</sup> “I have tried to stand in the clear and write objectively. My idea has not to glorify professional soil conservators, but to tell of actual situations they are attacking.”<sup>384</sup>

Bennett and Lord agreed that meaningful and fair collaborations and effective local conservation partnerships were crucial. Dr. Holzer in Ohio, who joined in the discussions by phone, and stressed that community health and well-being should be a consideration at every phase of a project. They imagined a non-governmental group that could act as advisory to the SCS. What was needed, with or without the assistance of government-run programs, were communities of “thinking farmers” committed to creating and maintaining agricultural conservation and permanence. Morris L. Cooke, Pennsylvania New Conservationist turned New Dealer, joined the conversations as did several government men to talk about forming a partisan, non-government organization.<sup>385</sup> But for Southern states, recovery on the scale of Pennsylvania or New York would take time and careful attention. “Little has been done. The work started late. The need of erosion control has so suddenly become so plain and urgent that it is necessary to *plead* for adequate appropriations.”<sup>386</sup> A non-governmental agro-conservation organization, they agreed, must be able to approach problems that the government and entrenched institutions could or would not address.

Collaboration and cooperation posed some problems, however. Western farming culture placed heavy emphasis on independence, and for collective efforts to work at the level of landscape restoration, some sacrifices for how individual farmers chose to manage their lands would have to be made. Lord reasoned that enough sacrifice of land, water, forest cover, and human health had already been made. Farmers understood that restraint was a necessary conservation method when and if wartime economies returned and when the commodity production rush resulted in exploitation and degradation of vulnerable working lands. Recent experience of the previous two decades had been a powerful lesson that tested the ideas of independence.<sup>387</sup>

Culturally, independence and autonomy were important attributes of rural society, but the specter of unwieldy government programs dictating “the cure” for environmental problems was enough, Lord thought, to convince even the most staunchly independent of farmers to find ways

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<sup>383</sup> Lord (1962), pp. 372-273.

<sup>384</sup> Lord (1938), *Behold This Soil*, speaking of the need to have conversation around new solutions to frustrating situations faced and caused by New Deal conservation programs, pp. 306-307.

<sup>385</sup> Lord (1950) describes the frequent in-house gatherings of (mostly) government men to talk about forming a non-governmental organization, pp. 37-42.

<sup>386</sup> Lord (1938), *Behold This Land*, pg. 307.

<sup>387</sup> Lord (1938), *Behold This Land*, is mourning the loss of land to wartime “rush” economies. Wartime acceleration of productions and the post-war economic supports for surplus during the “wheat rush” as contributed to the end of the collapse of High Plains agriculture, pp. 201-202.

to collaborate, communicate, and to achieve community conservation goals. Lord was not suggesting that SCS programs, Rural Resettlement, or agricultural adjustments, each with their own, often competing and conflicting conservation goals, be eliminated. There was some progress coming from them, even if imperfect and slow. Nor was he suggesting that farmers be given full control over executing their own conservation plans. Certainly, there was a time coming, sooner than later he feared, when war fever would strike again and the economic incentives for wartime profits and production would threaten the integrity of rural landscapes and people anew. “Surely land is vested with a public interest,” he said, “But that does not mean necessarily that we must abolish private ownership to have land better treated.” It was ultimately the decision of the farmer and his community to engage in long-term, engaged stewardship, that required committed collaboration. “The essential change comes slowly in the accumulated experiences of men and women. Generally, it comes under a pinch, or conditions which impose a reasonable thrift and care.”<sup>388</sup> But what of the farmers or the farm laborer who had no means or incentive for collaborative engagement with government programs?

### **A Walk of the Heart**

In the spring of 1937, the Farm Security Administration (FSA) was established and Secretary of Agriculture Henry A. Wallace had been named as FDR’s running mate. At the same time Lord resigned as Chief Information Officer. His leave-taking was a quiet affair but calculated. Having enough of government work he wanted to be an outside observer of it, not to add to the already mounting criticisms of agricultural policies, but to engage dialogues between institutional conservation programs and the people to which they were directed. He and Kate desired to travel again. He was eager to investigate, interview, and to document the efforts of people to save and restore land without the constrictions of government project objectives. A freelancer, Lord became, an asset to Secretary Wallace.

To serve both as an FSA promotional trip and campaign circuit through the Deep South, Wallace engaged in the meticulously planned two thousand-mile “Tobacco Road” tour. Lord, unhitched from government protocols and restrictions, would make a good independent pressman to report honestly on what the tour might encounter, and Wallace knew that Lord would provide a fair assessment of the situation on the ground. It was an ambitious tour and at first Wallace was excited for the opportunity. “What a trip!” he exclaimed as the motorcade began in Arkansas then moved on to the Mississippi Delta.<sup>389</sup>

Traveling mostly along backroads, many of them unpaved and rough, Wallace “was watching everything, asking questions of whatever R.A. man who was with us.” The Resettlement Administration had planned the route and plotted every stop to impress upon Wallace and other officials that the South was still struggling, even after years of New Deal assistance, to regain a level of stability. “They challenged him to go afield to the Cotton South, to get out beyond the big houses with tall white pillars into the shacks and roadside slums, to look at the work that the Resettlement Administration had already accomplished, before making any

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<sup>388</sup> Lord (1938), *To Hold This Soil*, describes the tensions between government regulation and local autonomy in land use decisions and argues for more collaborative solutions to maintaining conservation gains, pg. 121.

<sup>389</sup> Lord (1949), pg. 460.

budgetary decisions.” Lord noted that before long Wallace simply stared out from the open backseat window of the well-appointed touring car and sighed. The sight of overworked fields, muddied rivers, clear-cut forests, and ruined rural communities set a somber tone. A man of deep Christian faith, prone to long periods of introspection, Wallace was deeply troubled by what he saw.<sup>390</sup>

Wallace saw that attentions of southern land grant colleges was almost entirely absent from land worked by renters and tenants. Sharecropper land, mostly decimated cotton fields, plowed down to control surplus, were brown and bare, without cover crop or conservation mechanisms like terracing or contours to stop the ongoing erosion. Where were the substitute plantings for cotton that the land grant research men had promised would come? Absentee landlords who owned vast tracts of former plantation lands, benefitted handsomely from government cotton reduction payments. For tenant farmers and sharecroppers, however, the decision to abandon cotton lands and seek opportunity elsewhere was a viable alternative to the grinding poverty endured by staying in place. Impoverished farm laborers and their families streamed across along the shoulders of roads, many making their way west to join migrations of displaced farm workers in the Southern Plains. Determined tenant cotton farmers who simply made do with what they had (which was very little or nothing) were overlooked or deemed ineligible for agency assistance. “Incredible,” Wallace murmured as they rolled through a panorama of poverty, “just incredible.”<sup>391</sup>

Tour planners called for numerous stops at county extension offices, county farm bureau meetings, and infrequently at demonstration fields where farmers who had the assistance to invest in new equipment were eager to display the latest machines and technologies. All stops included a full cadre of reporters, both government and independent, to record the Secretary’s daily activities and interactions with select audiences. Wallace dutifully followed the itinerary at first, but became increasingly troubled by a general lack of interest in the plight of the poorest farmers and the landless. He sometimes stole away from the suit-and-tie delegations to walk alone across the brown and ochre landscapes of droughty Alabama and Georgia and spoke directly to the sharecroppers and the rural poor.<sup>392</sup>

“Nobody seemed shy of Wallace,” Lord wrote while interviewing his former boss after one such stroll, when worried officials found him miles from an uninteresting meeting, sitting in the front yard of a black farmer’s sharecropper shack. Local tenant farmers and their families were gathered around him and had no idea who they were speaking to or even that an official delegation was in the area. “He asked the kids how much milk they drank, how often they had

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<sup>390</sup> Lord (1949), pp. 460-462.

<sup>391</sup> Culver and Hyde (2000) describe the Tobacco Road trip as journey that served several purposes to include a pre-election stump tour shortly after Wallace had been tapped by FDR to serve as his running mate. The trip was billed as a fact-finding mission to discover how Resettlement Administration programs were backfilling the void left by the defunct Triple A, and as a personal exploration for Wallace who had spent little time in the Deep South during his time as Secretary of Agriculture, pp. 169-171.

<sup>392</sup> Lord (1949), pp. 460-462.



fresh fruit or vegetables. He asked the elders about TB, malaria, their crops. All answered with perfect dignity, black and white. What he learned didn't cheer him. He saw more than he could bear."<sup>393</sup>

On occasion Wallace had the opportunity to speak with outgoing RA director Rex Tugwell, with whom he had vehemently disagreed on issues of rural reconstruction, displacement, and reallocation of land to more successful (white) farmers. Wallace urged that farming communities be kept intact and defended his position to Tugwell's successor Dr. Will Alexander after the tour ended in Washington D.C. Alexander worked to this end during his tenure with the FSA.<sup>394</sup>

Overall, tenant farmers were considered wasteful, unkempt, and expendable. Corporate and partisan interests considered sharecroppers, migrant workers, farm laborers, and tenant families as undermining the image of the wholesome and hardworking American farmer. Powerful political institutions such as the American Farm Bureau promoted the general belief that independent farmers served as a source of national virtue while those who did not own their own land or were subservient to landowners were undeserving of their consideration. Wallace became painfully aware of the social stigma that tenancy and poverty carried. He observed social and environmental influences greater than his authority to abolish even as Secretary of Agriculture, that created class and economic barriers to fair access in conservation programs.<sup>395</sup> Any talk of permanence or interdependence from this point on was hollow and meaningless unless conservationists were willing to consider the impact of poverty on land use and the institutional structures that ignored or supported it.

Lord observed that when Wallace returned from his walks in Georgia and Tennessee, the reports he gave to the delegates were often more honest and accurate than those of the "handlers of public opinion."<sup>396</sup> Families who could not meet income qualifications for a resettlement home or a farm loan to invest in tractors and implements to install contours and terraces, voiced their desperation and frustration to him. He took notes and relayed, nearly word-for-word, to RA and conservation program directors the most heart-wrenching conversations with the rural poor. Lord describes one frustrated but grateful sharecropper's discussion whose shack Wallace had come upon while walking. The poor man's farmland was just beginning to show signs of recovery. The farmer's shack "had neither doors nor windows. There was no stove and there were gaping holes in the roof, floor, and ceiling. The Secretary was surprised to learn that the occupant was a client of the Resettlement Administration under its rehabilitation program. The man had borrowed three hundred dollars to buy a mule and farming equipment. From the standpoint of social advancement, he appeared to be one of the worst clients, but the loan had

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<sup>393</sup> Lord (1947), pp. 460-461.

<sup>394</sup> Lord (1947), pg. 462.

<sup>395</sup> Rasmussen (1999) and Cronon (1990) describe the stereotypes and discriminations tenant farmers and sharecroppers faced as part of a wider institutional preference for landowners and independent farmers.

<sup>396</sup> Lord (1947), pp. 447-448.

been repaid and the barn had been repaired. The cropper had terraced his heaviest slopes and carried out the Resettlement Administration plan set for him.”<sup>397</sup>

More out of curiosity than of concern, a few members of the press corps began to accompany him on his walks. Their reports confirmed both the compassion Wallace had shown to those he met as well as confirmed his findings. The delegation took on a more sensitive tone and thus became acutely aware of policy misalignments and effects upon tenant farmers, sharecroppers, and laborers. “We put up for the most part at little country hotels,” wrote Felix Belair, a *New York Times* reporter. “Wallace would slip off and walk out into the country alone, stopping people, talking with them, visiting with them in their homes. One Sunday he slipped off and walked up into the hills and was gone all day. He said he had gone to church with the people up there and just visited around afterward. At Memphis, in the lobby of the Peabody Hotel, he started to talk, and answer some of the questions I had to ask him. He said he was going to make some changes in the setup of Resettlement.”<sup>398</sup>

Large scale conservation efforts, agricultural production controls, and rural rehabilitation goals had indeed run roughshod over poor rural communities. Lord was certainly aware of this during his years of government service to the USDA but he was unable to articulate his concerns at the time due to agency communication constraints. The Tobacco Road Tour assignment, however, opened the way an acknowledgement of rural poverty, human displacement, and other unintended consequences of misguided conservation policies. Wallace pressed for systemic and institutional changes to USDA programs and focused emphatically on the Resettlement Administration. He wrote articles for popular magazines and gave a series of speeches at land grant universities, some of which were broadcast to national audiences. Lord assisted as an independent consultant, in effect Wallace’s ghost writer, to communicate that the concept of interdependence was never so as important as it was at this juncture, that human poverty and poor land were inextricably linked.<sup>399</sup>

Six months after Tobacco Road Tour in 1937, the final report of Wallace’s “Special Committee on Farm Tenancy” was presented to the Congress. The report called for radical changes in the policies of the Resettlement Administration. The Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenancy Act to restore credit to underserved tenant farmers became law. Resettlement programs that were not reconfigured to address issues of rural poverty were dismantled. In an overhaul of priorities and strategies, the Resettlement Administration was recast and renamed the Farm Security Administration (FSA). The FSA remains the strongest rural poverty relief and aid agency in the USDA.<sup>400</sup>

### **Sacrificial Landscapes**

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<sup>397</sup> Lord (1947), pg. 462.

<sup>398</sup> Lord (1947), pp. 460-461.

<sup>399</sup> Culver and Hyde (2000) in: “Up in Smoke,” pp.169-190.

<sup>400</sup> Culver and Hyde (2000), “He returned from the South with a willingness to engage his department in the politics of rural poverty...” pg. 170.

In the winter and spring 1937-38, weather patterns shifted over much of the continental U.S. and winter rains returned to the parched West and High Plains. A shift occurred as well with Lord's perceptions of agricultural permanence following the Tobacco Road tour. Interlinked issues of the impact of poverty and power on the working southern landscape were critical forces that worked against conservation aims. Hugh H. Bennett determined that by the 1930s the south had lost ten million acres of soil. In a century's time a quarter of all arable land in the Carolinas, Georgia, and Alabama had been washed away, clogged rivers, buried wetlands, and filled harbors and ports.<sup>401</sup> The southern institution of plantation agriculture, its twentieth century manifestations, and enormous social costs, had to be considered a major driver of human displacement and poverty, as surely as the heavy winter rains washed away even more human potential.

With his fifth book, *The Agrarian Revival* (1939), Lord attempted to link a century of soil loss to the history agricultural education. Awarded a Carnegie Foundation Grant to pursue research for the book, he was rarely home and traveled extensively while also on freelance field assignments for two new investigative reports commissioned by the SCS and U.S. Forest Service.<sup>402</sup> Kate joined her husband for the next year, traveling by car and towing their portable office-camper. She helped him transcribe interviews from his notes and managed his correspondence with dozens of newspaper and magazine editors. She helped Russell look at the land with fresh eyes, through an appreciation of pattern and design, to see the imprint of people over time. Many of the small woodblock prints she crafted while on the road were used in future publications, but did not appear in the government-funded reports which were heavily illustrated with SCS photographs.

For *The Agrarian Revival* Lord assembled a history of agricultural extension education that drew upon his twenty years in agricultural journalism and early years as an agricultural student. Eschewing libraries and archives, the traditional route for academic research, Lord mapped the locations of all the living elders of Extension and the deans of America's land grant institutions, and set out to speak as many as he could meet. He reconnected with old supervisors and mentors, and the extension men he had worked with in the 1920s. Some interviews were conducted while on the Tobacco Road tour, as Lord was expert at working on multiple projects at once, which made Kate's company all the more critical.

Like *Men of Earth* (1931), *The Agrarian Revival* was written with strong autobiographical elements that tracked his own development alongside the advancements of agricultural education and extension. Beginning with Justin Smith Morrill of Vermont, father of the land grant college system who died when Lord was three in Baltimore, Lord threaded himself into the stories of trends and leadership in agricultural education as a student, Extension worker, and journalist. With this approach, he provided critical assessment of Extension activities during the New Deal. He made no apologies for those programs in disarray or operating on the misguided premise that agricultural education be offered to some and not all. Lord interwove

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<sup>401</sup> Sutton (2010), in: "What Gullies Mean: Georgia's Little Grand Canyon and Southern Environmental History," from Hugh H. Bennett's *Soil Conservation*, pg. 600.

<sup>402</sup> Lord(1938) *To Hold this Soil* and *Forest Outings* were published within a month of each other as commissioned field assignments accepted after his formal resignation from USDA.

interviews of living deans with a historical narrative that sauntered like a pasture walk through a century of agricultural change and educational reform.

Eugene Davenport was seventy-six at the time Lord interviewed him, long retired from the University of Illinois. When he left his position as Dean of the College of Agriculture in 1922 he purchased an abandoned farm and restored its two hundred acres to productivity. Davenport had done battle with Hoover during and after the Great War, as had many agricultural leaders, arguing that export dumping overseas had triggered the great slide into economic distress for American farmers. He walked along a pasture path with Lord and reflected on his tenure as Chief of the Illinois Experimental Station. He expressed disappointment with the New Deal. “Instead of seeing agriculture thrust itself further toward larger units, restricted production, centralized management, and other commercial devices,” he said, “I gather would rather see a reasoned retreat toward smaller farms and more of them.”<sup>403</sup>

Bill Baker, county extension agent for Cimarron County, Oklahoma spent an afternoon interviewing with Lord. They walked through a 4-H irrigation demonstration field located in a dust-driven plain of crackling grass and yellow sky. A veteran of World War One and long-time 4-H director for his county, he reached down and plucked an arrowhead from the ground. “When I pick up an arrowhead,” he said, turning it in his hand, “I think of the airplane, for before me I see man’s first development of mechanical skill. When I see the picture writing on stone walls, I see the result all over the country – libraries; and I love that man who first tried to put down a written language.” He tried hard to keep out of partisan politics he told Lord, but not the development of land use policies, being vocal at the ground level to support the plains farmers who bore the brunt of the environmental collapse.<sup>404</sup>

Gertrude Warren and Fannie Buchanan of Iowa described how they fought to protect children from rising commercial exploitation during a period of rapid agricultural industrialization just fifteen years prior. Now they worked to increase music and art education in 4-H clubs and partnered with rural libraries to increase collections in children’s literature and promote family library use in those same counties.<sup>405</sup> In over a dozen such interviews with field agents and country extension men and women, Lord found fierce dedication to farmers and their families. Some agents got angry, others were discouraged, and all expressed concern when questioned about current government programs and the effect these had on their own rural communities.

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<sup>403</sup> Lord (1939), pp. 38-39.

<sup>404</sup> Lord (1939), pp. 172-173.

<sup>405</sup> Lord (1939) describes women’s role in extension throughout *The Agrarian Revival* but gives emphasis to their changing status and expanded programs in “Lean Years,” pp. 128-141. Included in this chapter are interviews he collected during the 1920s and their updates during the 1930s for Minnie Price (interviewed originally in 1924 when Lord worked with Ohio Extension), Grace Frysinger, trainer for women extension educators in home economics (originally interviewed in 1931, Washington D.C.), Gertrude Warren and Fannie Buchanan (Iowa Extension).

None was angrier than J.L. Bateman, Director of Extension in Louisiana with whom he spent several days touring cotton country near Baton Rouge. Lord was on his way to meet the Tobacco Road tour in Mississippi but had set aside time with Bateman to look at resettlement communities established in the wilderness of the bayou country. "I recall a husband and wife working at both ends of a crosscut saw," he wrote, "felling timber while children were off at school, carried thither by a bus that would bring them home at four in the afternoon to the palmetto-roofed hut in a swamp. These settlers said they would make a bale to the acre on that cleared patch of virgin soil and pay for all their and labor that year. But it is damp and heavy going. Home demonstration projects and programs were forming in this patch of cleared wilderness. So were 4-H clubs, stressing cotton, corn, pigs, and milk. Especially milk." He observed all of Tensas Parish "struggling with swamp water, felling timber, and cotton allotments." <sup>406</sup>

Scenes of rural poverty from the agent's car window, rushing by at sixty miles an hour over lowland roads, was nothing compared to the explosive lecture Lord received when he inquired about the accessibility issues of agricultural extension education for the region's poorest rural workers. The topic was a flashpoint for Bateman and he pounded the steering wheel and pointed to poor black children walking single file up the dusty road wearing nothing but rags. One carried a roadkill 'possum home to eat. Lord left nothing to chance and laid out Bateman's full description of the ugliness of discriminatory extension educational practices against the poor, white and black, which he described as a sin of intentional omission. Bateman swung the car off the main road and drove at high speed to view a "colored agricultural school in which [Bateman] had taken special interest." The school had been promised "trailers," wagons pulled by mules, to take black extension educators into the countryside to teach home, garden, and farming skills. "That was the idea, but it didn't come off," Lord noted. "What do you think they did with that money?" demanded Bateman. "What *did* they do with it?" Lord asked. Bateman pounded the wheel. "They bought more books! More philosophy! Books without work! God! How I hate books!" <sup>407</sup>

Bateman's anger was justified. Much of his New Deal funding had been squandered to bureaucratic confusion, misappropriation, and political favoritism, but capital for southern extension education programs, where he saw the most potential to benefit his community, was at the mercy of local white administration elites who unabashedly siphoned off and deflected funding to other uses. The 1890 Land Grant Colleges throughout the south were already severely understaffed, underfunded, and underutilized, and plans for long delayed projects went unfulfilled. Illiteracy rates were extraordinarily high for black agricultural workers throughout the state, and nowhere was access to extension education as difficult as in the American South, especially Bateman's rural Louisiana in the 1930s. Despite rural school reforms brought about in many states by the Country Life movement during the early 1900s, most Deep South states had witnessed little improvement in agricultural training and education. The plantation system

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<sup>406</sup> Lord (1939), pp. 177-183.

<sup>407</sup> Lord (1939), in: "Various Areas and Instances" Lord minced no words in recording Bateman's angry tirade, but he avoided delving into the larger context of racial division and denial of access to agricultural services and extension funding, pp. 170-187.

was intact and would not fully collapse until after World War II. Its continued institutional presence on the land was painfully felt among black farming communities as repression, segregation, and unbearable poverty.<sup>408</sup>

The Louisiana Farmer's Union, one of several organized black farmer's unions in the Deep South, took up as its main cause the issue of education for rural children and agricultural workers. The LFU fought especially hard to topple white supremacist social structures that starved black communities of critical agricultural extension services. Tuskegee Extension professor George Washington Carver, who had tried a generation before to circumvent the racial hierarchy of the southern plantation system with a suite of progressive extension outreach programs in Alabama, had little influence over New Deal extension reform. The Nashville Agrarians and the Southern Tenant Farmers Union failed too in their aggressive challenges against unfair New Deal extension policies. Lord understood that Jim Crow and plantation-style political structures were firmly ensconced in southern agricultural society, but in the book that gave him ample opportunity to voice these criticisms of the New Deal, he deflected the topic to Bateman's interview and barely mentioned it again except to acknowledge that out of nearly 5,000 extension educators in the country only 450 were "colored men and women working as agents on a somewhat 'separate' basis with Negroes in southern counties."<sup>409</sup>

From Baton Rouge Lord drove east to catch up with the Tobacco Road tour coursing along back roads of Alabama. Lord organized his manuscript through the Southern Piedmont leg of the journey, through Georgia, Tennessee, and the Carolinas. He noted places along the tour route he wished to revisit, sites with dramatic stories to tell, to study when time and opportunity permitted. Among these was a locally famous deep gash in the Upper Coastal Plain hear

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<sup>408</sup> Lord (1939), pp.170-187; Hersey (2011) cotton plantation systems and environmental impact, pp. 60-63; Reading (1973), in: "New Deal Activity and the States, 1933-1939," offers analysis of New Deal funding activity by states; Linder (1987), in: "Farm Workers and the Fair Labor Standard Act: Racial Discrimination in the New Deal," describes "the badge of second-class citizenry of black farmer and agricultural workers," pp. 1377-1380.

<sup>409</sup> Lord (1939) approaches the topic of New Deal discriminations against black tenant farmers very obliquely in "Various Areas and Instances" with a singular mention of Carver and southern farmer union activities, 170-187; Hersey (2011) treats the failure of New Deal farm programs as an ethical issue. He argues that New Conservationists of the 1920s shaped New Deal programs to shoulder the burden of reform at the federal level which southern plantation anti-federal culture resisted. Even with the work of the Nashville Agrarians and Southern Tenant Farmers Union that challenged Jim Crow and which attempted to join the causes of rural poor white and black farmers against unfair New Deal policies, was thwarted by poor federal extension funding for 1890 schools, 175-176; Jong (2000) describes the work of the Louisiana Farmer's Union as breaking the first ground for the southern civil rights movement. It gained momentum after World War II. See also Adams and Gorton (2009), in: "This Ain't My Land," a critique of the Louisiana Delta resettlement programs to "modernize" southern farming systems that advanced white sharecropper and tenant farmers to the detriment of displaced black farmers.

Lumpkin, Georgia.<sup>410</sup> “Those whose voices rise and snap and quiver when federal encroachment upon education is discussed are not simply seeing bugaboos,” he wrote in his field notes. He added these to the book’s introduction as an admonishment and a hope that

“...they stand to defend something actual and real. A good deal of bugaboo stuff comes in, I think, as the argument progresses, but the basic differences are as real as our varying soil and weather. When it comes to questions of agricultural education, you enter directly into the fields of the human spirit; you deal first hand with the very source of democratic and individual free play. So I think there is something sound and just in the zeal and anger with which free Americans defined their right to be free and different, at the source, by states and regions.”<sup>411</sup>

### **(Re) Introducing Bailey**

While *The Agrarian Revival* introduced many important leaders in the history of extension education, it served to revive interest in the ideas of Liberty Hyde Bailey whose story is threaded throughout the small volume as both agrarian visionary and a man rooted firmly in science. Lord had read all of Bailey’s books and was certainly influenced by *The Holy Earth* (1915) which called for the establishment of a society of earth stewards, peacemakers, and democratic thinkers. *The Holy Earth* was certainly the conceptual foundation for Lord’s vision of a Society of the Friends of the Land. With *The Agrarian Revival*, however, Lord redefined contemporary agrarianism as no longer a nostalgic wistfulness that urged people back to the land, but as a thoroughly modern and ever evolving approach to rural studies steeped in conservation science and good governance.

By detailing and intertwining Bailey’s extensive scientific work in plant genetics (with more than seventy peer-reviewed papers in plant breeding), his authoring or editing over fifty books in botanical sciences, textbooks in rural civics, nature study, and horticulture, Lord established Bailey’s unquestionable credentials as a scientist and brilliant educator. He made a serious contention, however, that what Bailey accomplished *after* his career as dean of the agricultural school at Cornell was what mattered most to mid-century readers. Bailey, in his retirement, consistently and boldly questioned the present structure of democracy in America as he had in 1918 and pointedly challenged the authority of the USDA. “I know no reason why projects of rural community work in New York or California should be approved by the Secretary of Agriculture,” said Bailey, “All such efforts rest on the idea of a perfect scheme, devised by superior intelligence and controlled arbitrarily as a matter of form. They do not allow for the free play of local needs and personal variations on which democracy, as distinguished from government, must rest.”<sup>412</sup> This was an important point, a furthering in the evolution of the

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<sup>410</sup> Lord revisited many of the Tobacco Road sites in the months that followed and was impressed most of all by the Providence Cave (now Providence Canyon) site near Lumpkin, Georgia. The tour and follow-up visits inspired the illustrated book, *Behold Our Land* (1938).

<sup>411</sup> Lord (1938), pp. 10-11.

<sup>412</sup> Lord (1938), pp. 46-47.

notion of socio-ecological permanence, that it needed to be flexible, adaptive, and managed organically at the grassroots, community level by those with local knowledge.

Lord reviewed *What is Democracy?* (1918) and revived Bailey's core concerns within the context of a nation now stumbling through the Depression and struggling with enormous challenges in soil and water conservation. Bailey argued in 1918 that agricultural standardization was impractical for farming across highly diverse landscapes with regard to climate and soils. He protested the federalization of Extension and the expansion of corporate influence with the American Farm Bureau lobbying hard in halls of government. Lord forced the parallel on his readers that the USDA and government planners, however well-intentioned in matters of recovery and relief, represented "a powerful, impersonal, and antidemocratic shift."<sup>413</sup>

A new American agrarianism was due for a redefinition if for no other reason, Lord explained, then to remove it from the dangers of utopianism and outright rejections of the fundamental social and economic order of the modern era. "Despite an accelerating sweep of powerfully centralizing forces, commercial and governmental, the United States is still a rather loose confederation of various soils, climes, region, and people," Lord wrote, "We stand variously situated, with natural and basic differences instilled throughout our country, differences of ways and aims."<sup>414</sup> None of those interviewed for the book suggest reviving romantic Jeffersonian definitions of the independent yeomen and self-sufficiency, nor did they infer that the ideas of 19<sup>th</sup> century agrarian anti-capitalists offered anything useful to the current complexity of socio-environmental issues. Instead, Lord revitalized the ideals of Extension as envisioned by Bailey the American horticulturalist, who promoted the spread of democratic principles as unique and adaptable to regions, climates, and soils.<sup>415</sup>

Despite agrarianism's various political and historic meanings over centuries, the term has always been defined by botanists to mean the adaptive capacity of wild and some domestic plants to form flourishing biological communities.<sup>416</sup> Bailey's definition of agrarianism combined social and biological adaptive capacities to flourish within environmental constraints as opposed to socio-economic mechanisms enforced by federal government. "All that I am fairly

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<sup>413</sup> Lord (1938), pp. 42-49.

<sup>414</sup> Lord (1938), pg. 10.

<sup>415</sup> Lord (1938) recalls his disillusionment in the 1920s with Ohio Extension educators as passing for glorified salesmen, pg. 204.

<sup>416</sup> The use of *agrarian zones* in botanical texts of the 19<sup>th</sup> century include descriptions of regions that describe plant communities unique to a certain soils or climate. See a more recent use of agrarianism in its botanical context in Piggott (1981), in: *The Agrarian History of England and Wales*, to include local adaptations of farming communities in Europe to certain climatic and geophysical environments. From the 1913 edition of the Merriam-Webster Dictionary: (botanical) Latin, *agrarius*, growing wild in the field, acre.  
<http://machaut.uchicago.edu/?resource=Webster%27s&word=agrarian&use1913=on&use1828=on>



sure of is that the real story is not in Washington,” wrote Lord. “The real story is developing in terms of an increasing participation by farm men and women in changed ways and methods, and in planning and action group forming at the grass roots, out on the ground.”<sup>417</sup> The new American agrarianism embodied the biological adaptive response, and that for Lord, supported the evolving idea of agricultural permanence as dependent upon on a socio-ecological system’s ability to change in order to overcome challenges while maintaining integrity.

### **Providence vs. Permanence**

Just as *The Agrarian Revival* was going to press, Hugh H. Bennett invited Lord to travel with a contingent of SCS men cross-country to interview and solicit advice from non-governmental scientists, soil district managers, independent foresters, and farmers. Bennett, one of Lord’s closest USDA colleagues and reader of many of Lord’s manuscripts, believed that the SCS needed greater input and assistance from America’s rural citizenry. Lord arranged a series of field meetings to speak to hydrologists, foresters, wildlife managers, crop and animal breeders, extension workers, plowmen, and ranchers. He knew the places and people that would impress Bennett’s staff and he suggested a tour of a few weeks to cover the ground necessary to hear from a diverse mix of conservation stakeholders.

In Kansas, Lord and the SCS detail watched a Saturday morning parade to celebrate the drilling of a new shared deep well designed to irrigate crops and grains with “underground rain.” Though expensive, some farmers preferred to risk the cost of new technologies rather than participate in what they considered costly and intrusive federal irrigation programs. They observed how some farming communities in Oklahoma and Texas, bastions of independent thought and decision-making, voluntarily banded together to enter into soil conservation districts where groups of ranchers and farmers worked with each other to design landscape-scale conservation plans that benefited all members. Irrigation committees made up of multiple land use partners included forests, parks, townships, farms, and rangeland managers considered the implications of creating and enforcing voluntary water usage guidelines to include the federal government, that in the west had become the largest landowner of agricultural and timber land. Cooperative conservation whether driven by SCS initiatives or formed at the grassroots demonstrated the ability of rural communities to organize, innovate, and adapt.<sup>418</sup>

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<sup>417</sup> Lord (1938), pg. 169; Govan, (1964), in: “Agrarian and Agrarianism: A Study in the Use and Abuse of Words,” argues that taken within centuries of historical context, the usage and meanings of the word and concept of *agrarian* has included dozens of interpretations according to economic and political controversies across hundreds of years. It is the botanist’s definition that, despite a multitude of social and political philosophical meanings, has consistently over time, been defined as “rooted and coming from the ground.”

<sup>418</sup> Lord’s government report, *To Hold This Soil* (1938), contains essays by leading conservationists including Aldo Leopold and Paul Sears, which were not include in Lord’s adaptation of the same in *Behold Our Land*. Concerning the Kansas irrigators, Riney-Kehrberg (1992) suggests that the early adoption of irrigation technology by farmers who could afford the financial and practical risk was preferred over participation in federal programs. “The vision of irrigated lands, which proved such hope to beleaguered farmers of the 1930s, has proven in the long run to be a mirage,” pp. 148-150; See: Reisner (1986), *Cadillac Desert: The American West*

Lord met with determined county soil conservation managers in Florence, Washington, where wind driven dunes marched across once fertile coastal grasslands, destroyed by overgrazing. Soil conservation district managers there recalled how decades ago, small scale cattle farming was carefully managed by Clatsop County ordinance. “They could see what would happen if their operations broke through the topsoil into that sand,” wrote Lord in his report. Communal grazing rules limited the number of heavy animals treading across delicate soils to graze. With the introduction of large commercial cattle outfits before and during World War I, local farmers were displaced and local ordinances ignored. Within a few years the thin soils and protective cover of grass were compromised and all was swept up in heaving hills of sand.<sup>419</sup>

The marching dunes, strangely beautiful and majestic, were as wild as any found on Capes Hatteras which at the same time was being developed by the CCC and Department of Interior as a National Seashore Reserve in North Carolina. While wild dunes of Hatteras were being preserved and touted as a national treasure, the dunes-gone-wild on the Oregon coast were threatening long established livelihoods and settlements. Miles of drift fencing, newly planted windbreaks, and hundreds of acres of European beach grass (*Ammophila arenaria*) did nothing to stop the loss of valuable, irreplaceable grasslands. Unlike the natural dune ecosystems of Cape Hatteras, the Oregon dunes were a manmade disaster that showed no signs of slowing as they threatened to overtake farms, fill rivers, and bury roads.<sup>420</sup>

Tensions between diverse federal agencies tasked with conservation brought important questions to light: Why preserve some landscapes for their natural beauty and conserve others to restore human use of natural resources? How are conservation decisions made regarding human-impacted landscapes that attempt to restore productive economic capacity (such as for agricultural uses), or that sacrifice future potential to let “nature take its course?” Lord grappled

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*and Its Disappearing Water*, and Worster (1985), *Rivers of Empire; water, Aridity, and the Growth of the American West*, for descriptions of the socio-ecological implications of irrigation on the southern and western plains.

<sup>419</sup> Lord (1938), *To Hold This Soil*, quote, pg. 298, and an assessment of the efforts to stop the inland-marching dunes, pp. 296-298. This area was later visited by Frank Herbert, a freelance writer researching the success of European beach grass stabilization SCS program for a magazine article in 1959. Thirty years after Russell Lord had inspected the area, the dunes were still marching. This otherworldly landscape being consumed by sand, inspired Herbert to learn all he could about dune ecology, invasive plants, coastal soils, and the effects of the large-scale cattle industry in fragile dune environments leading to the eco-science fiction book *Dune* (1965).

<sup>420</sup> Cooper (1958), in: “Coastal Sand Dunes of Oregon and Washington,” describes the process of acceleration of Oregon dune movement precipitated by human disturbance of soils and reduction of thatch grasses, pp. 22-23; Cape Hatteras, on the Outer Banks of North Carolina, was declared a National Seashore in 1937 during the same month that Lord visited Florence, Washington. As the CCC was working to install boardwalks, a visitor center, parking lots, and picnic pavilions at Hatteras, CCC detachments were fighting the gone-wild dunes in Washington with erosion barriers, beach grass plantings, and fencing, strategies that all failed to stop the march. In 1963 the area was declared a National Recreation Area and managed for its natural beauty.

with these tensions while his skepticism for centralized federal conservation management included uncertainty and doubt for the effectiveness of “the expert” increased.

He reflected on a visit to Navajo-managed grazing lands in Arizona, compared to the now-destroyed communal grazing systems in Oregon, and drew insight from an interview with the SCS Chief of Conservation Research for the Southwest, formerly of the Northwest Region. M.E. Musgrave, a working ecologist, had worked with both Navajo and Klamath tribes as well as the local cattlemen of Florence, Oregon. It wasn’t until technology, “improved breeds,” and “progress” had interfered that “ecological maladjustments” to their desert and coastal environments suffered. When certain cattle breeds, selected for their ecological compatibilities with the unique environments of each locale, were replaced by “improved breeds” at the suggestion of bovine experts, herd sizes exceeded the carrying capacity of the dune grasslands. The land suffered. The Navajo rejected Herford cattle introductions after witnessing rangeland degradation and herd starvation and returned to their preferred, drought-adapted breeds. The Oregon dunes case, however, demonstrated the consequences of ecological ignorance and greed.<sup>421</sup>

The problem was not that nature was absent from the working landscape, but that some eco-cultural relationships to natural resources (soil, forests, minerals, grazing lands) had changed as technological improvements made exploiting them more efficient and profitable. Railways, improved roads, and meat processing and packing technologies made keeping large cattle herds possible and profitable on Oregon’s open coastal grasslands. The environmental costs of repairing damaged grazing land could be absorbed by federal conservation programs, while cattle interests moved their herds to new grazing lands elsewhere. Residents, for whom the landscape represented important social histories and eco-cultural adaptations, were often ignored, or worse, displaced.

While conservation agencies grappled with large-scale landscape stabilization challenges, little attention was paid to the conservation value of local established socio-ecological associations. The descriptors for traditional environmental relationships, important to an evolving permanent agriculture philosophy, included an appreciation for the customs of farmers and herdsman to promote long-term health of the land through restraint and agro-ecological adaptive methods. This appreciation came too late, however, for many communities for which the capacity of war-time economies to degrade land and people sacrificed both relationships and landscapes.<sup>422</sup>

In preparation for the return trip to the Piedmont South, Lord read the technical reports of economic geographers, agronomists, and agricultural historians to help create a timeline of despoiled landscapes he observed in Alabama, Georgia, and South Carolina while on the

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<sup>421</sup> Lord (1938), *To Hold This Soil*, offers regional comparisons of cattle management case studies in his report for the SCS. Insightful comparison on indigenous and agrarian cattle management provided by dryland ecologist and Pacific Northwest native, M.E. Musgrave, also a “specialist skeptic,” pp. 107-111 and “Defensive husbandry” and the beginning of dune blow-out crisis in 1917 on Oregon dune-grasslands, pp. 115-118.

<sup>422</sup> Agro-ecological relationships that Liberty Hyde Bailey promoted as sacred in *The Holy Earth* (1918) were later redefined as new agrarianism by Lord in *The Agrarian Revival* (1939).

Tobacco Road tour. On the list of SCS sites to visit was the magnificent and horrifying Providence Cave, near Lumpkin, Georgia.

According to locals, the whole affair began innocently enough with rain dripping from a barn roof that grew over time into a gully. The gully grew into a ravine and then into a network of canyons. Though the local creation story was quaint, if not a nod to the mythical romance of southern agriculture, the SCS men knew very well that the origin story was much more complex. A combination of 18<sup>th</sup> century deforestation, single crop commodity tobacco and cotton farming, and poor farming methods had created this catastrophe. Unconsolidated coastal plain soils slipped easily away with every burst of precipitation and during years when seasonal rains poured monsoon-like from tropical systems feeding off of warm Gulf waters, tremendous swaths of land thundered into the growing abyss. “These great raw gulches throw out branching arms and claws. They are like malign living structures, creeping, feeding on the soil, on the habitation of the living, on the bodies of the dead,” Lord wrote for the SCS report, referencing the disappearance of an entire cemetery, coffins and headstones of two hundred buried, all swept away in one massive slumping of a canyon wall.<sup>423</sup>

Since the years before World War I and especially in the high cotton production years that followed, fourteen canyons and dozens unnamed finger gullies had swallowed homes, barns, cabins, and roads. There was a CCC camp nearby and young men were actively working in the area to stem the creep of erosion, but the returning rains came in torrents to southwestern Georgia and the great fingering gullies feeding water and sliding earth into the main canyon stems outran their efforts. The FSA photojournalists who accompanied the tour took hundreds of pictures. Hugh H. Bennett proclaimed that in all of his experience, the Providence Caves were the worst erosional land feature he had yet seen.<sup>424</sup>

During the 1930s, Providence Cave, the name for the entire complex, had become a tourist destination with Stewart County actively promoting it as such. The bright red, yellow, orange, and white bands of clay, sand, and kaolin were stunningly beautiful punctuated with dramatic pinnacles and sinuous slot canyons. It moved admirers to proclaim the area as an act of God, a natural wonder. A committee formed to lobby for the canyons to be named a national park. Entrepreneurial tour guides led gawking tourists through a maze of trails at the bottom and impressive views from safe fenced-in platforms at the top. They told harrowing tales of intense tropical rains that caused entire cattle herds to be swallowed screaming into the yawning pit. Locals eagerly described the booms and roars heard in the night as the blocks of land exploded off the cliff face. “When such a gully throws an arm across a road, that road is gone. When it turns an arm towards a farmstead, that family has cause to consider moving.”<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> Lord, *To Hold This Soil* (1938), pg. 49; Joyce (1985), in: “Geological Guide to Providence Canyon State Park,” pp. 8-13.

<sup>424</sup> Sutter (2010) describes Hugh H. Bennett’s assessment of the gully system, pg. 592.

<sup>425</sup> Lord (1938), *Behold Our Land*, pp. 169-170; Sutter (2010) on the campaign to declare the Providence Canyon a national park to generate tourism dollars from sacrificial land, pp. 387-388.

As a sacrificial agricultural landscape, a manmade catastrophe, the paradox of declaring the site a natural wonder was not lost on Lord nor on the SCS men. Peering down a hundred feet or more into bright bands of sediment laid down by Cretaceous seas, lakes, and rivers in a canyon system almost seven miles long, the conservationists could not help but notice that all around the gaping chasms was working farmland. People arriving by car and on foot to take in the natural splendor of the canyon certainly didn't look wasted or impoverished. They brought picnics and dressed in their Sunday clothes.

Searching for gullies had become something of hobby for conservation-minded folk who traveled throughout the Mid-Atlantic and South to spot them. Probably the most famous of these gully spotters was the popular New Deal economist Stewart Chase who toured the Appalachians and Alleghenies in the mid-thirties to find and write about the waste of natural resources following World War I and into the Depression years. Providence Canyon proved the "supreme exhibit" and he was disgusted by what he saw, noting too that the locals seemed to think the canyon was just bad luck. "Oh, don't get too close to the rim," a local guide said, a little bored. "Sometimes whole acres will fall in." Chase inquired of the guide what was to be done with it. The guide shrugged. "Well, sir, I'd have the government buy up the whole county and turn it into a national park – with plenty of railings."<sup>426</sup>

When once productive southern agricultural lands, whether forest, orchard, or field, lost ecological function to due human activity, bio-physical degradation quickly followed. Simplified growing systems of cultivation and intensive grazing eliminated the protective cover of trees and shrubs. As roots rotted away the soil-holding capacity of living ground was lost. Expanding wartime agricultural economies ruined many Southern working lands already stressed by long histories of plantation agriculture. In Stewart County, Georgia, as the last of the great longleaf forests were converted to cultivation, rich understory grasslands were lost. Monocrop cycles of cotton and tobacco intensified during the build up to World War I and sacrificed the most fertile soils and richest resource lands to such extent that no traditional SCS conservation method could hope to restore them during the interwar years. To slow the extreme and rapid erosion of Providence Caves (now Providence Canyons) the SCS planted kudzu, a fast growing and invasive introduced plant promoted by the agency as an emergency response to deep gullying of the land.

Russell Lord had experienced sacrificed landscapes as an artilleryman in World War I. He trained on the barren grounds of Fort McClellan, deforested, shelled, cratered, and muddy, but that once held extensive long leaf forests and rich soils. Once land had been claimed for military purposes, the land had been removed from its working past, farmers and woodsmen relocated, and made into an enormous training facility that made doubtful its return to a farming culture. Later as an extension worker in Ohio, he witnessed the Hocking Hills, despoiled by extensive logging and mining, and pushed to the limit by new industrial farming methods to meet the demands of wartime production. Could any conservation technique hope to restore those soils, that for thousands of years slowly developed under the protection of forest and grass, to pre-war fertility? Or were these lands forever stripped of their ecological and agricultural potential? Lord adopted the geological scale to describe how in so short span of time, a human

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<sup>426</sup> Chase (1936), in: *Rich Land, Poor Land*, describes his encounter with the local guide at Providence Canyon (then called "Caves") and the paradox of ruin and beauty, pp. 94-96.

generation or two, the natural work of the ages had been sacrificed by greed and ignorance. He explained at great length in *To Hold This Soil* and *Behold Our Earth* (1938) the enormity of geological time and how erosion had been a natural and predictable soil building process over eons, but technologies and the furious demands and pace of wartime production caused mass wasting of soils. “That is what has happened, and what is happening, with a menacing, accelerating, and all but incredible speed, to this land, the United States.”<sup>427</sup>

### **The Impact of a Good Read**

In both books, Lord used geological definitions of soil building processes, matched with human-induced soil loss terms like fragility, scarcity, and restraint. He tempered his reader’s expectations that there is always more beyond the next horizon. To anchor conservation to the agrarian fabric of the country’s founding, he cites from George Washington’s journals, passages written in his very late years of farm management, of a farmer obsessed with soil stewardship, plowing techniques, and crop management. Washington died leaving a rich, and fertile land to his heirs. Jefferson, ironically and by comparison a favorite agrarian icon, “lost Monticello, his farm and home, in the end; and died still in residence there only by sufferance of his creditors and a grateful nation.”<sup>428</sup> Tobacco and corn contributed to the ruin of Monticello long before Jefferson was able to fully employ scientific methods of crop rotation and his substantial debts could not be serviced with the plantation’s diminishing and unreliable returns.<sup>429</sup>

The narratives of both are based largely on the reports submitted by SCS field workers. He depicts their stories to heal gullied hillsides and recover silt-filled reservoirs set against geological time to emphasize the scope and scale of the soil crisis. The CCC is ever on the scene and appear like heroic against ongoing battles to save soil, restore forests, and preserve waterways. The official volume, *To Hold This Soil*, included essays from SCS and Forest Service men written as progress reports to readers. Professor Aldo Leopold proudly estimated the quadrupling populations of ground birds, bobwhite quail and pheasant, in his essay, and he gave credit to the men of a dozen different fields, including agricultural engineers, field technicians, biologists, hydrologists, and agronomists who set out to plan and execute such an ambitious project. “Underneath the facetious conversation one detects a vein of thought - and attitude towards the common enterprise- which is strangely reminiscent of the early days of the Forest Service,” Leopold wrote, “Then, too, a staff of technicians, all under thirty, was faced by a common task so large and so long as to stir the imagination of all but dullards.”<sup>430</sup>

The common theme for both *To Hold This Soil* and *Behold Our Soil* is that the key to reclaiming and saving our valuable soil and natural heritage is not easy, but doable. It may take less time than we imagine compared to the vast amounts of time earth and geological processes

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<sup>427</sup> Lord (1938), *To Hold This Soil*, pg. 20.

<sup>428</sup> Lord (1938), *To Hold This Soil*, pg. 31.

<sup>429</sup> Lord (1938), *To Hold This Soil*, pp. 29-31.

<sup>430</sup> Lord (1938), *To Hold This Soil*, pp. 61-62; Meine (2010), *Aldo Leopold: His Life and Work*, pp. 201-210.

have required to build our soils, but it will take far more cooperation and combinations of talent, knowledge, physical effort than we have in the past allowed.<sup>431</sup> Lord promotes the promise of technology, mainly in large earth moving machines preferred over shovels, to restore land at the scale of watersheds. Both volumes are illustrated heavily with SCS photographs of machinery, degraded landscapes, and aerial photography.

Bennett was impressed with *To Hold This Soil* and quickly ordered copies to all members of his staff and colleagues in the field. Thousands of copies were distributed. For lay readers as well as government men, the report served as a collection of accounts that promised encouragement in the fight to save the land. For many, it was the first to consider the scientific conservation work of ecologists, hydrologists, agronomists, engineers, and foresters on the front lines of environmental restoration. For fellow conservationists, the book placed their decades-long work within the context of American environmental history and honored their efforts to reclaim and restore a nation's natural and national heritage.

Bennett saw that the book served as a conservation manifesto, a foundation for their ideas of a new conservation society. He suggested that if such an organization were structured like the American Forest Society, formed without government ties or corporate influence, it might serve well as non-partisan, unbiased source of informed advocacy for a national movement in permanent agriculture. He, Cooke, and Lord cultivated the idea Bailey's plan for a *Society of the Holy Earth* laid out in *Universal Service* (1919) could serve as a template, but there is no evidence that Lord consulted directly with Bailey in these early stages of organizational development.<sup>432</sup> Before accepting his next freelance assignment, which came soon after the publications of *To Hold This Soil* and *Behold This Soil*, Lord began to plan for a meeting of colleagues, many of them contributors of *To Hold This Soil*, as an invitation for those interested in advancing the idea of a society of land conservation.<sup>433</sup>

## Forest Outings

The summer of 1939 brought a third odyssey of nearly ten months of continuous travel around the country to research and write *Forest Outings*, a U.S. Forest Service publication

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<sup>431</sup> Lord (1938), *To Hold This Soil*, explores Leopold's work in the Gila Wilderness Area, even as severe erosion continued unabated upstream on irrigated and poorly managed grazing lands outside the boundaries of protected federal lands, pp. 111-114.

<sup>432</sup> Bailey produced a four book collection, *The Philosophy of the Holy Earth* (1919), to include *The Holy Earth*, a reprinting of the original 1915 publication, *Wind and Weather*, a book of collected poetry, *Universal Service*, in which the blue prints for holistic, interdependent society were laid out (and from which Lord borrowed heavily for the Friends of the Land manifesto), and *What Is Democracy?* a reprint of the 1918 book.

<sup>433</sup> Lord (1950) identifies his initial list of 'invitees' to the Friends of the Land first gathering, many of whom later served on its Board of Directors and as advisors. These sixty or so people, most of whom attended the first meeting of the group in Washington, D.C. included Paul Sears, William Albrecht, P. Alston Waring, Stewart Chase, Aldo Leopold, Gifford Pinchot, J.N. Darling, J. Russell Smith, pp. 21-22.

modelled largely on the successful *To Hold This Soil* project. Kate and Russell again took up a series of residencies in or near several national forests and included interviews with thirty foresters from the Southwest, Great Lakes Region, Deep South, Eastern Appalachia, and New England. It was in part an education in Bailey's botanical definition of agrarianism, local adaptation and place-based knowledge, as well as a detailed report in forest management strategy and technologies for the 1930s.

A sampling of local forest knowledge included Appalachian lifeways, *jibaros* subsistence farmers of the Puerto Rican rainforests, careful mention of native occupations, when at the time indigenous people were still thought of as primitive if not expendable. After touring the high desert forests of New Mexico and a stay in the bayou woods of Louisiana, they wintered at the Choctawatchee National Forest in northwest Florida to write at Camp Pinchot, the district supervisor's summer home. While an especially worrisome fire season occupied rangers and their CCC firefighting teams across hundreds of thousands of acres of government lands, the Lords became interested in the "the woods people" who lived illegally, per U.S.F.S. policies, in isolated subsistence farming and fishing camps deep in the forest.

Creek-Seminole camps existed far from the patrolled boundaries and interior roads of the Choctawatchee National Forest. To outsiders, the people lived in wretched poverty, but the isolated camps protected deep inside the forest holdings helped support family members on the outside with income generated from fishing and small farming operations. Of particular note to Lord, the farmers of these semi-tropical woods manufactured their own soils that over generations expanded in area and deepened in fertility to support thriving patches of corn, rice, many varieties of squash and beans, as well as the standard southern fair for garden crops with tomato, cucurbit, pepper, and spice herbs.<sup>434</sup>

The Creek-Seminole were often accused of causing the great dry season conflagrations that occupied firefighting teams for weeks at a time, but Lords who were discretely allowed to visit a camp at the invitation of a Seminole forest laborer, observed that the woods farmers

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<sup>434</sup> Lord (1950), in: "With the Forest Service," mentions the "woods people" in reference to Creek-Seminole families who resisted U.S.F.S. removal during the early 1900s and continued to live in forest camps, pp. 17-21; The managers of the Choctawatchee National Forest, established in 1906 by Theodore Roosevelt, turned somewhat of a blind eye to their continued presence although they were harassed for and accused of setting fires in dry season in violation of strict fire prevention rules. By 1938 a land deal between the U.S. War Department and the U.S. Forest Service to sell 30,000 remote acres to the U.S. Air Force for the building of Eglin Air Force Proving Grounds completed a decades-long removal of native farmers, fishers, and hunters. In 1940 the land was ceded to the Air Force. See Department of Defense Legacy Resource Management Program, Bulletin 306-15, (Dec. 2007) for overviews of Eglin A.F.B., pg. 12, and the Seminole Tribes Overview, pg. 116; Riley-Taylor (2013), in: "Losing Home: Why Northwest Florida Needs to be Saved," offers contrast in land and cultural values to include Seminole removals during the 1930s and 40s; See also: Spoehr (1944), in: "The Florida Seminole Camp" for an ethnology of the Seminole camps of southern and northwestern Florida from field research completed by the author in 1939, the year after the Lords had been in residence at Camp Pinchot in the Choctawatchee, pp. 117-150.



intentionally set and controlled low ground fires to clear away dry tinder fuel and collected the char for their gardens. The controlled fires starved the forest of its fuel and in effect created buffers around their camps and farming grounds. The Lords were schooled in how forest farmers made rich, black garden soils by combining the char from the burns with wetland muck, mineral sands, and composted marsh hay and grasses. The char-soils were cherished, protected and inherited by children and grandchildren of the camp elders.<sup>435</sup>

One such elder, a rainmaker of some local reputation, was invited by the beleaguered forest service manager to call up the rains to put the big burns out. His spotters, dispatchers, and fire crews were exhausted and had gone many weeks with little sleep as the fires flared up and raced through vast expanses of forest. The rainmaker came from her isolated camp to Camp Pinchot, the retreat and residence of the forest manager, and sat for days alongside a dried up lake in trance and prayer. Nothing happened that week or the next, but long after the woman had returned to the woods, weeks of torrential downpours ensued and deadly floods followed drowning scores of Floridians in the panhandle counties. All credit and blame was given to the rainmaker by local newspapers and residents, but it was an extreme weather pattern distinct from the lore; a pattern that USDA meteorologists had noticed emerging within droughty across the west, plains, and south that seemed to confirm an old southern farmer's adage that great floods follow long droughts. If the torrential rains that fell across the south, mid-west, and east were any indication that the cycle of drought was finally breaking, however, it satisfied only those on the High Plains for everywhere else the floods washed away whatever soils were left to lose.<sup>436</sup>

The strategy for *Forest Outings* was much like *To Hold This Soil* and Lord conducted dozens of interviews and collected thirty written reports from leading forest managers. Contributors included master firefighter Elers Koch, Gila Wilderness Area manager Rex King (who worked with Leopold in the early years), Homer L. Shantz, Chief of the USFS Wildlife Division among a long list of other groundbreaking conservationists. Working at the forefront of forest land conservation, contributors demonstrated their efforts via essays and personal interviews that Kate and Russell travelled far to collect. Together with Althea Dobbins, another freelancer in conservation journalism and partner in the year-long project, the three logged four times the miles required by *To Hold This Soil* and held residencies in all ten Forest Service Regions.<sup>437</sup>

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<sup>435</sup> Lord (1940), in: "Camps," describes the physical state of a "poor but beautiful forest" largely cut over by private timber companies and stripped of natural fertility by private ownership. In this publication, however, he is careful not to mention the indigenous people who continued to live in the most inaccessible areas and mostly ignores their presence in favor of recreational and tourism for the official narrative, pp. 89-92.

<sup>436</sup> Lord (1940), pp. 167-172; Lord (1950), in: "Rainmaker," while stranded in the flooded city of Keene, N.H., pp. 19-21.

<sup>437</sup> Elers Koch, one of Pinchot's trainees in early years of the Yale Forestry School, was approaching the end of forty years of service at the time of Lord's US Forest Service interview for *Forest Outings* (1938). Homer L. Shantz came to the USFS after serving as President of the University of Arizona. He retired in 1944. His career work as a desert botanist and life-long pursuits in wildlife and landscape photography gave him tenure as Chief of USFS Wildlife

The book's narrative circled around four themes: economics, recreation, fire, and the science of forest management. Sometimes the text got lost in pages of statistics and policy statements, and frequently Lord smudged over the themes with haughty regards for nature writers, newspapermen, and journalists who, like himself, were inspired by the grandness of American wilderness. Reading sometimes like a travelogue and other times like a scientific paper, the U.S.F.S. report didn't hold together as well as its S.C.S predecessor, but for today's readers it does serve as a unique chronicle of U.S. Forest Service history. The reader gets the sense, too, that the author-editors were happy to have it finished!<sup>438</sup>

Home finally, after a year of travel, the Lords made the decision to sell Thorn Meadow. Their frequent travels allowed the place to run down, and though beautiful even if unkempt, it was no longer practical to maintain. They sold the farm and moved back to the small apartment they had first rented that overlooked Embassy Row. Mirroring his father's return to Baltimore when the farm experiment had run its course, Lord accepted that its upkeep and care was better left to another family. The final editorial work on the manuscript occupied all Russell Lord's time, while in the last haul of mail forwarded from their former farm, were more requests for article work.

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Division. He offered a much broader approach to whole-systems management than had previous, more specialized program managers. Biographical sketches of all *Forest Outings* contributors, as well as a pdf version of the book can be found at The Forest History Society, [www.foresthistory.org](http://www.foresthistory.org).

<sup>438</sup> Lord (1940) is weighted down with a penchant for the literary review and sometimes overwhelming use of statistics of interest only to forest products industry and resource economists. In "Sand, Sun, and Air," the reader is taken on a twelve-page romp through nature writing criticism that has little to do with forest history, pp. 269-282.

## Chapter Six

### An Unlearned Society

#### 1941 - 1955

#### Call for Assembly

Morris L. Cooke resigned his post as director of the Rural Electrification Administration in 1938 and began an ambitious period of travel leading a U.S. hydrological engineering consulting team in Brazil under the Office of Production Management. His job required long flights to project sites thousands of miles away with flight paths over watersheds that afforded expansive views of the massive flooding events the Lords were witnessing on the road. Whereas travel by train or car afforded a panoramic, even participatory view of the landscape at ground level, the new age of commercial air travel helped broaden perspectives of many concerned scientists who witnessed the effects and implications of large-scale disasters from above. For Cooke, the expansiveness of visual scale caused a profound shift in thinking about how watersheds functioned and how they failed.

Born to a Quaker family in Carlisle, Pennsylvania, Cooke was raised to appreciate the spiritual and practical relationships of people to land. Quakerism fostered faith-based holistic understandings of man's relationship to earth, an integral part of the Friends worldview that would inspire the mission of the soon-to-be-established Society of the Friends of the Land. Cooke noted that from the air it was unavoidably apparent that widespread flood devastation was caused by the combined effect of improper farming methods, deforestation, long drought, and a loss of the human spirit. In a report for the Mississippi Valley Commission he proposed significant federal coordination across agencies and increased funding of intra-agency soil conservation and water control projects. "Engineering does not exist for its own sake. It is of little use to control rivers if we cannot thereby improve the quality of human living," he wrote to Lord. "While reservoirs were silting up, human health was washing away."<sup>439</sup> He suggested that it was time to seriously consider the formation and implementation of the conservation society they had spoken of months before.

While Cooke was organizing his thoughts on how to launch the new conservation organization seated in the passenger cabin of an international flight, Russell and Kate were trapped by severe flooding on the second floor of a tourist house in Keene, New Hampshire. At work on *Forest Outings*, the Lords certainly understood Cooke's alarm. Their perspective of the massive flooding that followed in the wake of the catastrophic Hurricane of 1938 was one of both amazement and fear. To ease their minds while stuck above the flood waters, Kate sketched

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<sup>439</sup> Morris L. Cooke Papers, "To Russell Lord, Friends of the Land," Box G, 144; Phillips (2007,) in: "Rural Electrification, Soil Conservation, Water Control, and Farm Security," describes Morris L. Cooke as a visionary, a practical engineer, and a crusader of sorts who understood not only how land, water, economy, and people were connected but that others needed to understand this as well. From the Mississippi River Commission Report, 1934, pp. 132-135.

and Russell read aloud Paul Sear's *Deserts on the March* and Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*. They tried not to look out the windows except to watch for the mail, delivered by rowboat. Cooke's initial letter arrived as the waters rose. There would be others. But the Lord's worried that there was little money to invest in a new conservation organization and the timing was bad. Lord replied to Cooke that it was worth serious consideration, however, and that they should move quickly ahead. Letters were drafted and mailed from the inundated town, sent to a core of colleagues and friends who had shared their interest in such an organization.<sup>440</sup>

Cooke, Lord, and Hugh H. Bennett had imagined "a national organization of non-technical people, working voluntarily, outside Government, to interest more and more city people in the conservation of our indispensable soil."<sup>441</sup> Informal discussions and telephone conversations ensued. Bennett called for a winter gathering in Washington, D.C. to develop a timeline and organizational framework.

On January 23, 1940, the group gathered in the Department of Interior's Office of Land Use with Bennett presiding. Among invited guests were Charles Collier, one of the SCS aides who traveled with Lord in 1938, Charles' father John Collier, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, M.L. Wilson, Dill Meyer, Lord's assistant chief from the U.S.D.A. Information Office, and Harry Slattery, former executive secretary of the American Conservation Society. They laid out broadly the formation of the new society which Cooke suggested be named the Society of Friends of the Land.<sup>442</sup>

An important point of discussion was how to set the Friends of the Land apart from other conservation organizations. They understood the risk of launching such a society as the country was poised again for war. They worried that recent advances in agricultural conservation strategies and new ecological applications in practical farming might be lost to pressures of wartime economic expansion. Their vision, therefore, included two important aspects of the new Society that not been given consideration by established conservation organizations. First, they recognized that agricultural and ecological education should be open and shared with the public and was integral for broad support of the protection of nature and the working landscape.

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<sup>440</sup> Morris L. Cooke Papers, "To Russell Lord, Friends of the Land." Cooke strikes an urgent tone prompted by what he has seen from the windows of his plane; Disinger (2010), in: "The Role of Ecology in Conservation," describes Sear's ecological perspective on conservation policy and the role of humans in nature.

<sup>441</sup> Lord (1950), pg. 39.

<sup>442</sup> Lord (1950), in: "Getting Organized." Lord describes in detail the first meetings and outcomes, including what to name their new society. "Possibly because of his Quaker background, Mr. Cooke suggested that we call the organization Friends of the Soil... I argued that "Land" has greater sweep and scope than "Soil" and better suggests what we were out to do. So that is how Friends of the Land was named," pp. 37-42.

Second, the Friends of the Land believed in strong foundations of engaged stewardship couched in deeply held convictions of democracy, duty, and service.<sup>443</sup>

By comparison, other conservation groups remained focused on their own specific problems in 1940. The National Audubon Society remained singularly focused upon the protection of birds and breeding areas, while the Boone and Crockett Club aimed chiefly to promote the shooting sports through lobbying efforts for game laws that favored their pursuits. Lord noted that even more recently formed county soil conservation districts seemed to emphasize only the physical work of terracing, windbreaks, contour plowing, and local water controls minus the more holistic considerations of working landscape ecosystems. The Friends of the Land, therefore, incorporated at their founding the ideas of holism and interdependence that Henry A. Wallace eloquently described in his 1934 speech “Declaration of Interdependence.”<sup>444</sup>

While considering organizational models, Bennett promoted the American Forestry Association that maintained a strict agenda aimed at creating an American forest reserve on the strength of interdisciplinary thinking. It maintained an open membership that was equally represented by lay and scientific interests. Importantly, it was distinctly untethered from government influence and agendas. The group studied and admired the American Forestry Society’s mission and goals while Lord had begun to draw up a manifesto that described the rationale for an “unlearned society.” The group approved its statement of purpose and a developed a seventeen-item list explaining its goals and objectives to give conservation, modern farming, and the advances of science equal standing. The manifesto was a masterful blend of Liberty Hyde Bailey’s call for a Society of the Holy Earth modelled on the American Forestry Society’s mission. Approved by the group, copies of the Friends of the Land manifesto were sent to farmer’s weeklies, popular magazines, and newspapers across the country. It included an open invitation to the first formal gathering to be held in Washington, D.C.<sup>445</sup>

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<sup>443</sup> Lord (1950). The founders knew very well the gamble they were taking setting up a new conservation group at this time. The incorporation of “service” and “duty” connected conservation goals of the Friends of the Land to service to the country, their own “war drive,” pg. 70.

<sup>444</sup> Beeman and Pritchard (2001) explain that while ideas of interrelationship had long been recognized in the agricultural sciences of the early 1900s, Wallace’s 1934 speech that Lord may have ghost written, elevated the concept of interdependence to nothing less than a rallying cry for a merging of ecology and agriculture, pg.21.

<sup>445</sup> Lord (1950), in: “Manifesto” states in the Society’s Statement of Purpose (Section II) “We therefore now intend to organize and to bring quickly into action a non-profit association of society to support, increase and, to a greater degree, unify, all efforts for the conservation of soil, rain, and all living products, especially Man,” pp. 43-46; Lord (1950), “The seeds of Friends of the Land and consequently of The Land were sown by a wide variety of unrelated people of like impulse, but the most purposeful sower, I believe, was an indomitable and unorthodox bureaucrat in Washington, Hugh Hammond Bennett.” Bennett had long admired the American Forestry Society as a model of non-governmental and public participation advocacy, pp. 38-41.

As a conservation concept, the idea of permanent agriculture had been in common use during the Dust Bowl years. Wallace and Bennett urged farmers, agencies, and planners to incorporate ecological thinking into agricultural best practices. Permanent agriculture was, in part, an ideological reaction to the waste and devastation of blowing soil and massive floods of the 1930s, but it was also a pioneering concept that blended revelations of interdependence with the promise of science and technology. The manifesto captured both lines of thinking. It declared that the organization was to serve as a think tank for theory as well as a clearing house for innovative conservation practices, “a moral equivalent of war against wastage of soil and water.”<sup>446</sup>

In March of 1940, a two-day gathering was assembled at the Wardman Park Hotel in Washington, D.C. A group of sixty interested farmers, scientists, government workers, and plain citizens were drawn into the idea of the new organization with a full schedule of speakers and opportunities to speak their minds on topics and issues important to them. Jay N. “Ding” Darling served as keynote speaker and he applauded the group’s decision to avoid the “chaos that so-called government experts” and political wranglers might bring to an otherwise functional, democratic conservation organization. The son of a Congregationalist minister and 1895 graduate in liberal arts from Benoit College, Darling had served twenty months in public service as Chief of the U.S. Biological Survey during the height of the soil and economic crisis. His bulldog tactics did not win him many friends except those who, like colleague and Friends of the Land supporter Aldo Leopold, appreciated his no-nonsense approach for cutting through bureaucratic red tape. He shared the philosophy of interdependence with the new Society and, as a deeply dedicated conservationist and outdoorsman, made clear the connections between farming, wildlife, soil conservation, and human prosperity.<sup>447</sup>

“We have already more conservation organizations than we have conservation!” Darling declared. “They have failed in the past because of their general habit of bird specialists talking only to bird conservationists, forestry experts only talking to those who are tree conscious, soil technicians talking to those interested in land, and water conservationists, if any, talking in terms of hydraulic power and urban uses to people whose chief interests lies in exploitation of natural resources than balanced management! May the Friends of the Land succeed where others have failed in arousing an apathetic and self-satisfied nation to the tragic consequences which are certain to follow the continued debauchery and ignorant mismanagement of our continental resources.”<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>446</sup> Lord (1950), in: “An Unlearned Society,” from the Manifesto, Part III, pg. 8; Beeman and Pritchard (2001), in: “The Call for Interdependence and Permanence,” pp. 20 – 24.

<sup>447</sup> Lord (1950), Darling’s speech to the newly assembled Friends of the Land in Washington D.C. pg. 65; Meine (2010) established Leopold’s friendship with and high regard for “Ding” Darling while serving together on the 1934 Beck Committee to address threats to the Biological Survey from political interests, pp.315- 316.

<sup>448</sup> Lord (1950), pg. 65.

Economist and new Friends of the Land member Stewart Chase followed Darling. He framed the emergence of the new organization as the product of a beleaguered American consciousness at odds with the promise of new economic prosperity brought on by war. He warned of serious conservation implications during wartime economic expansion, specifically aimed at a new boom period for agricultural enterprise and possible impacts on just-recovering agricultural landscapes. Drawing from his book, *A Tyranny of Words* (1938), Chase discussed ideas of holism and an individual's relationship to land as a commitment to the conservation of combined natural and human-managed environments. "Nature always comes into the equation at base," he proclaimed to an almost breathless crowd, "Science cannot save us this reckoning. Science can help us meet it, only if it recognizes basic realities and the unified order of enduring life. We are creatures of this earth, and so are a part of all our prairies, mountains, rivers, and clouds. Unless we feel this dependence, we may know all the calculus and all the Talmud, but have not learned the first lesson on this earth."<sup>449</sup>

The double keynote was well received, followed by statements from all of the founders and new members of the society, except for Lord who remained seated to the side recording all of it in the quick short-hand of a seasoned journalist. After opening remarks, the floor opened to any audience members who wished to speak. A bevy of farmers, foresters, and gardeners from around the country stood in line to contribute comments and tell their stories, each limited to ten minutes at the podium. With each speaker, Lord saw potential for future contributors to the society's journal, yet unfunded and unpublished, but already named *The Land Quarterly*. The testimonials were rich and from the heart, offered by veterans who had turned to restoring land to "work off the war," humanitarians and pacifists, and farmers.<sup>450</sup>

Quaker farmer P. Alston Waring spoke lovingly of Honey Hollow, his nine-hundred-acre farm in New Hope, Pennsylvania. Like many Quakers, Waring had served with the Society of Friends War Victim's Relief Committee in post-World War I Europe. As one of the few documentarians to photograph the raw strife of war refugees, many of them displaced farmers and their families in Eastern Europe, Waring spoke of a cautious role for science, the need for government assistance for farmers working to restore soil fertility using holistic methods, and his personal quest to discover the deeper meanings of land stewardship.<sup>451</sup>

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<sup>449</sup> Lord (1950), in: "Remarks and Passages," Lord identifies Stewart Chase as a groundbreaker for discussions of faith and science in the public sphere due to the popularity of his books and essays, pg. 64; Beeman and Pritchard (2001), Stewart Chase and his elaboration of biological interdependence, science, and man, pg. 22; See also Chase (1938), *A Tyranny of Words*.

<sup>450</sup> Lord (1950). See transcriptions of many of the audience speakers appear in "Remarks and Passages," pp. 52- 65.

<sup>451</sup> Waring's personal papers and photographs of World War I relief work with AFSC are housed in special collection at Haverford College, Haverford, PA. His wife and fellow relief worker Beulah Hurley Waring directed major hunger and poverty relief efforts in Europe and Russia following the war, and turned to farming in New Hope. They continued to travel widely especially to India, Burma, China, and Japan.

Honey Hollow had once been wasted land, abandoned, and infertile. Inundated with soil washed from the treeless hills of Southeastern Pennsylvania, Waring had worked tirelessly to restore it to health and productivity. “The Soil Conservation Service has been very helpful. It has been a cooperative job and that, to me, is the most important part of it,” said Waring, “But it can’t be done by the government services of farmers alone. The farmer realizes it is a job for himself, his neighbor, and his government to do together. If the farmer can do anything, we want to find it out. When they came, they put a soil auger on my bottomland and it went through *12 inches* of subsoil before they came to topsoil. We [alone] can’t stop this loss; it is too big; but we can do it if we cooperate.”<sup>452</sup>

Gardeners, relief workers, doctors, farmers, teachers, outdoorsmen, and extension educators rose to express the need for a society of like-minded thinkers and doers. The majority of speakers were not experts or highly trained professionals and represented, on the whole, the “unlearned society” Friends of the Land hoped to nurture as an open assembly of practitioners and thinkers. Some speakers reminisced and elements of earlier rural reform movements emerged often harkening back to programs initiated by the Country Life Commission. Some reflected upon how their own thinking about ideas of progress had changed since the Great War. Farmers who struggled through the long slow burn of the agricultural recession of the Twenties felt they had been sold a poor bill of goods and that earlier attempts to glorify farming as a path to financial independence had been nothing but promotions. “I won’t try to lead you through the years of disillusionment we encountered,” stated Mr. Hackney, a failed crop farmer from Maryland who had turned to pasture grass and beef farming instead. “I know a little about contours, terracing, stripping, furrows, and water diversion as methods of erosion control, but I’ll take good sod.”<sup>453</sup>

Many rural speakers worried that the continued rural migration to cities threatened the social and economic stability of farming communities even more than a generation ago. “Today this landowner – this farmer – is going out of business. Instead of producing food, he is asking

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<sup>452</sup> Lord (1950), in: “Remarks and Passages,” pg. 61. Lord knew P. Alston Waring (1895-1978) from previous contributions to *Harpers*, *The New Republic*, and *The Nation*. Alston was an outspoken anti-war activist, keen on agricultural relief, farm labor rights, and stewardship. He and his wife, fellow relief worker Beulah Hurley, travelled the world after the war and felt particularly drawn to India and its land traditions. See: The Collection of Beulah Hurley Waring and Alston Waring, Haverford College Library, New Hope, PA. and Waring’s *The Story of Honey Hollow and the Origins of the Conservation Movement in Pennsylvania* (1973); See also Wes Jackson’s remarks concerning Waring’s suggestion to advise the government in the preface to Pittman’s *From the Land* (1988): “Think of it! This was a people’s organization to help the government conserve land, people, and community, uncynical in their belief, in their ability to influence their government!” ix.

<sup>453</sup> Carroll E. Hackney, agricultural land preservationist and noted breeder of Black Angus beef cattle, shared many of her father’s articles on cattle breeding and grass farming as a soil conservation method, including his hand-written remarks of the first meeting of Friends of the Land where he stood to speak. Personal conversation, January 2008; See H. Hamilton Hackney “Go to Grass for Feed and Ease,” *The Land*, Vol. V, No. 3 (Autumn 1946): pp. 311-315.



someone else to produce the food he himself needs. No one is replacing him,” declared farmer B. Jordan Pulver of New York. Lord made note of his remarks and later recruited him to write for *The Land*.<sup>454</sup> Pulver, like many farmers of the post-war years, had been caught in the post-war surplus trade debacle of 1918 and was one of a handful of area farmers who did not quit the business despite twenty years of marginal earnings. In his sixties, Pulver worried about the continuity of farming and looked to the next speaker, J.E. Noll, a soft-spoken banker from Missouri to finish his thoughts. “I sometimes wonder if we are going to stay an agricultural nation,” he said to Pulver, “We are not going to be here long as individuals. We have to see that the support of future generations is assured.” A round of applause erupted while the banker and the farmer took their seats.<sup>455</sup>

Many speakers vigorously expressed their fears and concerns for the future of small and independent farming and for the national potential for repeating past mistakes. To reassure the group, Morris L. Cooke read the manifesto aloud and anchored the aims of the Friends of the Land to the pragmatic agrarian ideals of Washington and Jefferson. “Washington and Jefferson, and many others, speak to us in our own terms; they talk about things we know about; they give us ideas we can use. We, friends of the lands are the living inheritors of their vision and aim.” The meeting continued for another day with impassioned speeches, heart-felt testimonies, and productive conversation.<sup>456</sup>

To conclude the meeting the enthusiastic crowd was asked to contribute to the organization and to join as members. The hat was passed. Lord and fellow founders were somewhat dismayed, however, to discover that barely five hundred dollars had been collected, hardly the amount needed to fund future meetings, publish a journal, and pay its editor. The first serious and persistent challenge for Friends of the Land was at hand. “Do we first start a magazine that hatches a membership, or start a membership that supports a magazine?”<sup>457</sup> For Lord, this was no small obstacle. The idea of a literary journal had been his primary concern to

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<sup>454</sup> Lord (1944), in a convocation speech for University of Georgia, Jan. 11, 1944, Lord shared his notes from the first meeting of Friends of the Land as farmers and business men together voiced concern over the long-term viability of farming in the U.S. including Pulver and J.E. Noll, *The Land*, Vol. 3, No. 2 (1943-1944): pp. 216-221; See also B. Jordan Pulver, “The High Cost of Farming,” *The Land*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (Autumn 1946): pp. 306-309.

<sup>455</sup> Lord (1962), in: “Experiments and Conflicts” Lord highlights the plight of farmers like John Pulver who endured decades of marginal return for his product as a result of surplus dumping after WWI. “That did not work out so badly when we still owed Europe money and could pay off with an outpouring of our excess farm production, but the real catch came around 1918, when we no longer owed the Old World money – it owed us; and by the end of the war, owed us vastly more. But still we declined to trade. And so, to a dangerous degree, it seems to me, we are living and rearing perhaps insupportable standards, “out of the world,” pp. 359-360.

<sup>456</sup> Lord (1950), in: “Remarks and Passages,” a collection of statements and speeches made at the first meeting of Friends of the Land at the Wardman Park Hotel, pp. 32-65.

<sup>457</sup> Lord (1950), in: “The First Year,” pp. 66-67.

further the aims of the organization. The founders had hoped that subscriptions and membership dues would support his work as the journal's chief editor. Despite the excitement and emotion of the first meeting, staff funding was and would remain a sobering limitation for the Friends of the Land until its disbanding in 1956.

The first meeting of the Friends of the Land received mixed reviews from reporters, some of whom no doubt would have preferred to cover war preparations and news from Europe. It was a different approach to conservation, noted Gerald W. Johnson of the *Baltimore Sun*. "Nothing sensationally impressive happened at the Washington meeting," he said, unimpressed. "It was frankly a meeting of visionaries, and of extremely long-range visionaries, at that." He noted that "even if the catastrophe they dread overtakes the country, it will not be complete next November, or next year, or within the next generation. Persons whose sole interest is 'peace in our time' therefore have little reason to waste attention on the Friends of the Land. The project appeals, rather, to the kind of man who plants an oak tree, or endows an orphan's home."<sup>458</sup> Johnson's review certainly picked up on a shift in agricultural thinking, however, that signaled thinking for the long term rather than by reaction to crisis with waste and haste. Bailey, a founding member, had he been present (he was in South America collecting plants for his herbarium) would have been very pleased with such an observation.<sup>459</sup>

The shift was palatable and real. Paired with Bailey's abhorrence of reductionism, the rise of ecological worldviews in the late 1930s was supported by a growing number of scientists and writers who became advocates for long-range considerations for sustained use of natural resources. Long-term thinking emerged inherent to philosophies of interdependent and permanent agriculture. With awareness of erosion and the loss of soils, scientific concepts of geologic time were enriched by historical studies of agricultural practices in India and China. Sir Albert Howard, whose work in India had sparked great interest among American farmers and gardeners during the 1930s, had suggested that permanent agriculture was not only a scientific but a social solution to long-term problems of soil and societal health. The new society promoted this long view.<sup>460</sup>

"We, too, are all of one body. We all live on, or from, the soil," Lord wrote into the manifesto that declared long term thinking couched as an ethical foundation of the Society. Drawn largely from Bailey's *Universal Service* (1918), the manifesto held great appeal to the first gathering.<sup>461</sup> Service and duty, core concepts of the new society, reflected not only Bailey's

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<sup>458</sup> Gerald W. Johnson, "The Wasting Land," *The Baltimore Sun*, March 27, 1940.

<sup>459</sup> Beeman and Pritchard (2001), in: "Crisis as an American Affliction," and Liberty Hyde Bailey, pg. 9.

<sup>460</sup> Orr (2014), in: "Systems Thinking and the Future of Cities," anchors long-range thinking firmly to the early ideas of Bailey and Howard whose concepts of permanence in agriculture are the foundations of today's ideas in sustainability, pp. 54-61.

<sup>461</sup> Lord (1962) describes Bailey's Society of the Holy Earth as simply renamed by M.L. Cooke. Not quite an admission of more than a little borrowing on Lord's part as he assembled the

Country Life ideas, but echoed, too, Pinchot's dedication to those who worked to restore landscapes for the greatest good in the long run.<sup>462</sup> Like the appeals for long-term conservation commitments in *Forest Outings* (1940) and *To Hold This Soil* (1938), the Friends Manifesto echoed Bailey's unifying language of holism and democracy with Pinchot's ideas of commitment, civic duty, and sustainable resources.

The impending war, however, deflected and decelerated the new organization's next steps. "We were so absorbed in forwarding our own small drive as to remain for a month or two more somewhat insulated against the shattering impact of world events. Germany invaded Norway and Denmark in early April and Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxemburg in early May."<sup>463</sup> Momentum for launching the Friends of the Land was lost. "One hundred days after its founding, our high-hearted little society fell flat on its face," Russell Lord wrote after the Friends of the Land executive committee voted to suspend operations until matters of national defense could be sorted out."<sup>464</sup>

The founders met again in July 1940 with the sobering realization that the Friends of the Land would have to wait. "Morris [Cooke] put the figures by, then opened to discussion. "We picked a bad time to start," he said. This raised a laugh, the only one of the afternoon. We laughed at ourselves a little, a solemn little sense of grievance, half-expressed, that another world war and the immediate or imminent death of millions should have burst upon us from across the sea to upset our plans for conservation."<sup>465</sup>

In December Japan attacked Pearl Harbor. Many of the Friends founders and early members were called back into for volunteered for government service. Kate Lord volunteered for secret classified duty with the U.S. Defense Department's cartography department. Russell continued to incubate and nurture the ideas of the Friends of the Land while keeping to a busy schedule of freelance writing for farm journals and popular magazines, while volunteering with the War Bonds Department.<sup>466</sup>

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manifesto, but Bailey finally does receive credit for the inspiration and basic floorplan for the Friends of the Land, pg. 290.

<sup>462</sup> Wilkinson (2015) describes Pinchot's ideas of permanence to promote long term thinking as a foundation of conservation of natural resources, thus sustainability. "The permanence of the resources of the preserves is therefore indispensable to continued prosperity . . . always bearing in mind that the conservative use of these resources in no way conflicts with their permanent value," pg. 72.

<sup>463</sup> Lord (1950) in: "The First Year," pg. 70.

<sup>464</sup> Lord (1950), pg. 72.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid., pg. 72.

<sup>466</sup> Lord (1950), pg. 70.

Wartime expansion in manufacturing and production worried many conservationists that restorations and repairs made to the land during the past decade would be soon undone. While waiting for the membership journal's debut, Lord cultivated potential contributors who had spoken at the first gathering. He courted the attention, too, of scientists and policy makers who had worked with him in the past and with whom he had built respectful working relationships while serving in the USDA. Lord maintained his inborn sense of caution towards the ideas of unbridled progress, however, explaining to potential science and technology contributors that their theories and ideas would have to demonstrate clear conservation value.<sup>467</sup>

With the United States fully engaged in the new world war, nearly a year passed before membership fees provided a meager basis from which to begin publishing. Contributors all the while mailed their manuscripts to Lord. No one knew how long the war would last and whether industry and society had learned anything from its recent brush with socio-ecological disaster caused in large part by the previous war, but the growing stack of manuscripts contained the core voices and ideas for an emergent American environmentalism.<sup>468</sup> Writers were concerned for the land and the long-term effect that this war would have on farming and nature long into the future. Lord was hopeful the Society could soon begin publishing. But until the journal could be properly funded, there were the practical matters of keeping the new organization functional.

### **We Come To Life!**

"I was named Editor-Intendant to go to work as soon as I had anything to edit," Lord wrote, admittedly a little disappointed. Recruitment of new members and correspondence with Society founders kept Lord busy for the next six months as he answered inquiries as to when they might see the first journal, where the next meeting would be held, and whether he might read some aspiring farm writer's unsolicited piece for the possibility of future publication in a journal that did not yet exist.<sup>469</sup>

One such inquiry came from Liberty Hyde Bailey. He wondered why the group did not consider resurrecting his Society for the Holy Earth in the first place. Lord replied, "I am leery of that word 'Holy.' We want to attract pagans along with church people; and the conservation movement is more than sufficiently plagued with an excess of fervor that often mounts to

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<sup>467</sup> Beeman and Pritchard (2001) discuss how permanent land proponents suggested that advances in farming technologies were to be tools to heal war torn areas and bring them back to prosperity and peace, pp. 61-63; Lord cultivated writers from his network of almost thirty years of journalism in agriculture and conservation from the end of World War I to 1940. When reading his books and articles published before 1939, his list of prospective contributors to *The Land* becomes obvious, drawn largely from previous interviews and assignments.

<sup>468</sup> Beeman and Pritchard (2001) suggest that *The Land* journal and the educational activities of the Friends of the Land events served as "the basis for postwar environmentalism," pp. 82-83.

<sup>469</sup> Lord (1950), pg. 67.

fanaticism and engenders schisms and cults,”<sup>470</sup> Bailey in turn sent Lord a collection of essays and books in return for his reasoned response.<sup>471</sup>

Morris L. Cooke searched for a local printer in Washington and Baltimore when Lord pointed out the number of irate letter writers demanding refunds if the journal, promised with annual memberships, didn’t arrive soon. Without an operating budget, and likely without organization compensation for his efforts, Lord began to compile and edit the first issue of *The Land* shortly after the Pearl Harbor attack. “Having started an office without a magazine, and failed, we now planned to start a magazine without an office – or without paid office and staff.”<sup>472</sup> Boxes of manuscripts, poetry, essays, and books were stacked in a small three-room Washington apartment that he and Kate had rented while she volunteered for the Department of Defense. “I had a desk and a typewriter in one of the rooms and Kate had her drawing board in another.” They ate, slept, and entertained guests in the third.<sup>473</sup>

An inquiry arrived from Louis Bromfield, a Pulitzer prize winning author and gentleman farmer from Ohio. After fifteen years living and writing in the French countryside following the war in which Bromfield served in the medical corps, the Bromfield family moved back to the states in 1939 when it was decided that their beloved rented farm sat squarely in the path of German invasion forces on the way to Paris. He wrote to Lord that he was actively engaged in a large-scale farm recovery project and his work might be of interest to the Friends of the Land.<sup>474</sup>

Restoring Malabar Farm, claimed Bromfield, was equal parts an agricultural experiment as well as path to recovery for him and his family, and that war had been predicted early on. “I think that no intelligent American living abroad during those years between the wars wholly escaped the European sickness, a malady compounded of anxiety and dread, difficult to define, tintured by the knowledge that some horrifying experience lay inextricably ahead for all the human race.”<sup>475</sup> He was correct in noting that the long-simmering bitterness of German politicians and military towards the Allied post-war treatment of the German people resulted a growing and threatening nationalism. The decision to move home to Ohio was a painful one for

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<sup>470</sup> Lord (1950), pg. 108.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid., Lord mentions the many inquiries and best wishes for the new society, including Bailey’s letter to Lord asking “Why do you not recall my old proposal for a Society of the Holy Earth?” pp. 108-109.

<sup>472</sup> Lord (1950), pg. 73.

<sup>473</sup> Lord (1950), in: “The Society Publishes,” wartime duties mixed with influx of correspondence and preparations to publish, pg. 67 and pp. 73-76.

<sup>474</sup> Lord (1950). Lord first came to know Bromfield’s work and felt deep connection especially to *The Farm* written while the author and his family were living in Switzerland in the winter of 1932. It was Bromfield who made the suggestion that the society begin a tour series and visit Malabar as part of a field gathering, pp. 69-70.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid., pg. 70.

the Bromfield family, but they threw themselves whole heartily into restoring the old family farmstead making repairs to the home and barns. They began an ambitious project to repair highly eroded slopes, reestablished a dairy herd, and started a new beef operation on reclaimed grass pastures. By the time Bromfield had learned of the Society of the Friends of the Land, the successes of the family farm restoration project had already become something of a local sensation.<sup>476</sup>

Bromfield admitted to Lord that he purposely did not attend the March 1940 meeting in Washington for the simple reason that he abhorred the city and all the bureaucracy it represented. Bromfield's intolerance for Washington D.C. was legendary, especially for the "small fry New Dealer" that reminded him of French *fonctionnaires*, "small-minded, pompous, and self-authoritative without initiative or much ability, always taken care of by government political machinery."<sup>477</sup>

Bromfield was a decentralist and wrote vigorously on the domestic problems and threats of concentrated wealth, power, and influence, particularly in Washington politics and American cities. His greatest criticisms, however, were reserved for American foreign aid programs that endeavored to stamp out Communism and Marxism with a "militarism of trade" in food and agricultural capital. A self-styled internationalist, Bromfield's criticisms of government interventions derived from years of experience overseas bearing witness to post-World War I programs in the U.K., Europe, and India.

Government during the past generation has become itself one of the greatest propagandists, all the way from the professional elements in the armed services, who hire thousands of press agents at taxpayers' expense to sell their own particular bill of goods, down to the smallest bureau which sends out mimeographed sheets concerning the wonderful humanitarian work it is doing and how indispensable this work is to the welfare of the nation and the above all how indispensable it is for the political party in power to be continued in office. One of the great evils of bureaucracy is that it tends increasingly to become self-perpetuating at the expense of the country. The armed forces represent our greatest bureaucracy and our most powerful all-pervading lobby.<sup>478</sup>

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<sup>476</sup> Collingham (2011), social and political effects of Allied economic blockades upon post-war Germany that helped to stoke political and military plans for invasion, pp. 26-32. Bromfield, *Malabar Farm* (1948), details the restoration and recovery of production potential of Malabar Farms, and the steady stream of visitors who came to observe and help. His connections in the overseas press and publishing industry often paid visits of a week or more to report on the "experiment" that Bromfield was conducting there. By the time of Bromfield's association with the Friends of the Land, Malabar was already something of a sensation both here and abroad.

<sup>477</sup> Bromfield's disdain for New Dealers and political corruption was legendary, reflecting not only his general distrust of government-sponsored programs but the societal and environmental problems that often came as a result. This was extremely unfortunate for "permanent services in agriculture and forestry where there are many excellent, intelligent, and devoted servants of the people," in: *Malabar Farm* (1948), pp. 384-385.

<sup>478</sup> Bromfield (1954), *A New Pattern for A Tired World* (1954), pg. 1-2.

Like Lord, Bromfield entered Cornell just before the Great War to study agriculture. Shortly thereafter, however, he decided he wanted to pursue a career in international journalism and transferred to Columbia University in 1914. Within months he joined over 2,500 university men who volunteered to serve with the American Field Service (AFS) as ambulance drivers and hospital care givers. After a brief orientation, Bromfield was cast directly into harrowingly dangerous duty on the front lines. Decorated by the French government for heroic service, Bromfield became part of a community of American writers for whom the experience of war launched and defined their literary careers. Returned from the battlefield he began a career as a novelist, first in New York City he then returned to the French countryside to live on a rented farm. He became an important member of the European American expatriate community and counted Sinclair Lewis, Gertrude Stein, and Ernest Hemmingway as friends and colleagues. He was celebrity and from the first inquiry Lord knew that Bromfield would serve as the charismatic voice of permanent agriculture. Bromfield asserted his commitment to speak for his methods at Society gatherings. “What happens on this farm, we cannot credit to what somebody else does in the valley or above us. We sit against the skyline. Whatever results we get we can judge absolutely as laboratory experiment.”<sup>479</sup>

In addition, Bromfield committed to write regularly for *The Land* and he offered Malabar Farm as a conference site for future tours. Lord was confident that his name as one of America’s most renowned novelists and screen play writers would attract readers and new members for whom farming or soil conservation was entirely new. He wasn’t wrong. In the years following the launch of *The Land*, Bromfield spoke enthusiastically to large audiences at the farm and across the nation about soil and water conservation. The Friends of the Land had a true American celebrity to advance their cause to “unify all efforts for the conservation of soil, rain, and all the living products, especially Man.”<sup>480</sup>

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<sup>479</sup> Lord (1950) reflects that had Bromfield been part of the organization from the start “we might have bypassed some wishful thinking and wasted motion” for as much an agrarian romantic as he was perceived to be, he was even more so a realist and practical businessman, pp. 68-70; See: Olsen (2013), in: “Evolution of the American Field Service and its effect on American engagement in WWI, 1914-1917,” for history of the American Field Service and the generation of American writers who as young university men from Northeastern colleges defied President Wilson’s call for neutrality to participate in the European conflict beginning in 1914; “What happens on our farm...” Bromfield in: “A Piece of Land,” *The Land*, and included in *Forever the Land* (1950), pp. 103-106.

<sup>480</sup> Lord (1950), in: “Manifesto” Statement of Purpose, pg. 44; To truly understand the power of celebrity that Bromfield brought to the Society, see two short films that feature Bromfield at his best in his role as chief communicator of conservation methods and the preservation of the American rural landscape: News Magazine on the Screen “Malabar Farm,” archived with WOSU Public Media, retrieved from: <https://youtu.be/AEBoAEb7Opw> and “The Man Who Had Everything,” a documentary film produced by WOSU Public Media, available through WOSU and The Ohio History Connection (Ohio Historical Society).

With Bromfield aboard, Lord approached the executive committee to argue for the release of the first edition of *The Land*, even if the organization could barely afford to have it printed and mailed. “It throws down a root this way, puts out a bud, twig or branch that way, and scatters new seeds of thought and response over all sorts of fields which are not really separate,” wrote Morris Cooke in support of Lord’s request to the executive committee, “A magazine built to response is a live magazine, it reacts to living stimuli; and it grows.” The committee agreed to publish.<sup>481</sup>

With the *The Land Quarterly* ready for distribution, Cooke sent a letter dated February 15, 1941 to over 1,500 members that announced the Society’s new journal. Though the war was first and foremost the reason for the journal’s delay, he explained, he did not apologize for its slow debut. Instead, Cooke gave the announcement moralistic emphasis to stress core commitments of the society.

Direct human killing is bound to deflect attention from the slower tragedy of soil killing. War refugees from war-blasted homes command our sympathy and aid more readily than do migrant refugees from weather-blasted farms and ranches here in our home land. This is natural; but the need of doing the sort of work and teaching that we set out to do is even greater in times of world strain and confusion than in times of peace and ease.<sup>482</sup>

### **The Land Quarterly**

The first issue of *The Land* was in reader’s hands by spring of 1941. Russell Lord’s role as editor of the society’s quarterly journal was secured. He would serve as the first and only editor over the journal’s fifteen-year lifespan. Throughout the war years he maintained a heavy schedule of contractual work for the U.S. Treasury Department in war bonds promotions and contributed many articles and reviews for popular magazines that included *The Nation*, *Country Life*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and *The New Yorker* among others. The extra work paid the bills, but the Society was hard pressed to compensate Lord during the war years, even as America’s agricultural industry sector boomed and sponsorship could have been secured to fund his work. The executive committee was in sore need of a development officer and membership coordinator, but instead relied on a few reliable donors, including Dr. Charles Holzer, the Ohioan country doctor, to support Lord’s small salary.<sup>483</sup>

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<sup>481</sup> Lord (1950), from a letter distributed to the executive committee December 31, 1940 co-written by Lord and Morris, pp. 74-75.

<sup>482</sup> Ibid., from the letter “We Come To Life,” pp. 74-76.

<sup>483</sup> Collingham (2011), in: “American Boom,” describes the war years for American farmers and agricultural industry as welcomed relief from the Depression Era, with surplus cotton sold at top price for uniforms and incentivized programs that urged farmers to “grow as much as they could,” pp. 75-76.



Complete collections of *The Land* are very rare but the privilege of having a set available close to home allowed me ample opportunity to study all fifteen years of the journal editions, 1941 through 1956.<sup>484</sup> Looking through the journal during the war years, 1941 – 1945, full and half page advertisements for tractors, implements, fertilizers, and other equipment were common. New advanced farming machinery was showcased and indicated that agriculture was moving rapidly into a new era of modernization and efficiency. The war effort redirected raw materials to agricultural equipment manufacturers as well as war materiel production. Incentives and higher incomes allowed farmers to purchase new tractors, combines, and other apparatus. New granary systems appeared across the wheat-growing regions. New feed and grain mills, along with processing plants, replaced decrepit or inefficient facilities across the Mid-West, South, and Plains States. Lord sold full page sponsorships for modern dairies that featured photographs of gleaming new milking equipment set against bucolic scenes of busy, beautiful farms. The war increased demand for American agricultural products both at home and abroad, yet American citizenry and their fighting forces were well fed and never lacked for food or fiber.<sup>485</sup>

Kate's top-secret cartography work for an embedded branch of the National Weather Bureau intensified as Allies relied more heavily on air forces and bombing runs over German industrial and military targets. She worked long hours among rows of artists in crowded studios creating color-coded maps and navigational charts to be used by bomber crews. Yet, despite full work schedules day and night, she provided hundreds of illustrations for the journal, created in her small work space in the apartment. She helped Russell with editing articles, proof-reading galleys, and formatting photographs and artwork.<sup>486</sup> Scanning through the *The Land* today, one cannot help but admire her woodcut and linoleum prints of peaceful country scenes, lush pastures, thick forests, and stately barns. Hundreds of decorative and lyrical line drawings graced the print breaks and transitional spaces between articles. If this work served to counter the frenzied pace and purpose of a wartime military cartographer we cannot know, but there is an undeniable joy, even humor, in her art of *The Land*, even as secret duties contributed to destruction abroad.

The layout and format of the journal tightened with each issue. Lord organized regular and special themed issues anchored with articles by Bromfield, Sears, Bennett, Wallace, Wilson, Chase, and E.B. White, whose family and coastal farm in Maine had become a favorite retreat of Kate and Russell. The journal expanded quickly from 1942 to 1944 with new departments and columns for international agricultural development, scientific thought and theory, biodynamic

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<sup>484</sup> A complete set of the *The Land* journal is housed at the Historical Society of Harford County in Bel Air, Maryland. Thorn Meadow, owned by Kate and Russell for just over five years in Harford County, is less than ten miles east of town.

<sup>485</sup> Collingham (2011), in: "American Boom," describes the high profits and large international customer base many American farmers enjoyed during the war, made possible by military and civilian food, fiber, and fats demand, pp. 76-77.

<sup>486</sup> Chrismer (2007), pp. 14-15; Lord (1962) recognizes Kate's contributions to the magazine as his co-editor, pg. 16.

and organic agriculture, health and nutrition, and of course, the prose and poetry submitted by everyday farmers and countrymen (and women) that seemed to balance the sometimes-weighty articles. “Some of the highest quality materials we have ever published have come from men and women who were virtually self-educated and little known. Quality in country writing knows no boundaries in place training, or subject,” Lord said, to emphasize the wisdom and knowledge of country people.<sup>487</sup>

## Poets of The Land

Poetry published in *The Land* could not have been delivered from a lectern. It was, however, meant to be shared across kitchen tables or read aloud at farm club meetings. These poems were intimate glimpses into the lives of rural people, who might have been neighbors or friends in conversation with readers. The poets of Lord’s choosing were at once quite ordinary and exceptional, invited to participate in the discourse of each issue. His ear for poetic narrative served as the binding for sets of complex articles, judiciously placed to provide interludes that pulled readers safely back to ground. No mere filler, each poem was carefully chosen from a collection of country songs gathered from farm journals or that arrived unsolicited in the mail.<sup>488</sup>

Byron Herbert Reece, having a year before published a well-received volume of his work *The Ballad of the Bones and Other Poems* introduced himself and his work in a letter to the editor. Lord published both the letter and, in nearly every issue thereafter the young farmer’s poems.<sup>489</sup>

“This isn’t a complaint,” wrote Reece in his first letter to Lord. “I’ve got a lot of country things on my mind. I keep hoping that in one way or another I’ll get the important ones done in one way or another. I am first of all a farmer. I am not as good a farmer as I know how to be, but finances are largely to blame here: and I enjoy life on the land and mean to stay here... True, farming takes up too much of the farmer’s time. It will be good when farm families can have an eight-hour day, like industry. That time is not far-off, and when that day comes the farmer and his wife and family need not grow old before their time from working their daylights out, as we say here in the hills.”<sup>490</sup>

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<sup>487</sup> Lord (1950), in: “The First Year,” Morris Cooke to the executive board, pg. 75.

<sup>488</sup> Based upon Lord’s knowledge and appreciation of rural poets whose work he collected prior to the publication of *The Land*, his book *Voices from the Fields* (1937), demonstrates his keen ear for the deep emotional tie to land and landscapes, and though he drew much from his published and unpublished collections, he continued to discover and introduce to readers new and powerful poets who represented a new generation of post-war poets.

<sup>489</sup> Reece (1945), *Ballad of the Bones and other Poems*; See: *The Land*, Vol II (2): Winter 1946-47: pp. 518-520; See online biographical sketch and complete works and from The Georgia Encyclopedia (Georgia Humanities Council): <http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/arts-culture/byron-herbert-reece-1917-1958>

<sup>490</sup> Reece, in: “Communications,” *The Land*, Vol II (2): Winter 1946-47: pg. 520.

Reece reminded his readers that only a decade had passed since the long drought had broken men and destroyed their lands, and that these were men, like him, who had dreams and hopes that someday things would improve. He struggled to provide for his family through the 1930s and during the Second World War, he struggled harder as many poor farmers did, while the war boom enriched farmers around him of better means and better land. His love for writing poetry, however, served to release him from long days working multiple jobs and tending to farm work. He was hopeful when his collected works was finally published in 1945 but when he was nominated for a Pulitzer for his second collection, *Bow Down in Jericho* in 1950, Reece was fighting poverty. He struggled with tuberculosis contracted while caring for his dying parents and took on several part-time teaching positions to compensate for loss of farm income while sick. He continued to write through the 1950s and Lord saw to it that his work published in *The Land* earned him small honorariums. Tragically in 1958, Reece committed suicide at the age of 44, defeated, impoverished, and depressed. Remembered today as a beloved Appalachian poet and novelist, Reece's poems in *The Land* highlighted the tensions between simplistic, romantic perceptions of the American farmer and the deeply complex inner life of one who struggled daily to keep his farm and feed his young family. An early reviewer of his work in the *Georgia Review* noted that "... he believes that to have all strength is to have no strength at all and that occasionally to be weak is to be in the end stronger."<sup>491</sup>

The poems of Ben H. Smith, grain farmer from Jonesboro, Illinois, appeared in the pages of the *Farm and Fireside* when Lord was a contributing editor there in the 1930s. Like Reece, Smith offered little romance and much punch. Selected to counter the "patronizing 'folksy' farm programs" that permeated the airwaves of the war years, "edged with the rancid touch of Tin Pan Alley showmanship," Smith's poems represented to Lord what he judged to be a lived experience of the land.<sup>492</sup>

In addition to farming, Smith maintained a long-running popular column in the *Jonesboro Gazette* until the early 1960s. The column "Where the Hills Slope Upward," featured batches of farmer-poet's sonnets and verses, many of them from farmer's wives. Lord kept his eye on the small farm papers, especially Smith's column, and discovered many talented country poets there. Smith sent his favorites to Lord, poems that he found rang true to the farmer's perspective. Smith's column and his own work inspired generations of rural poets and essayists to write of their experience. Southern Illinois Writer's Guild member, author, and farmer's wife, Sue Glasco credits Smith's long-running column with inspiring her own desire to write. "Because I believe everyone's story is worthy of being written down and shared with others," Glasco wrote of Smith's influence. "I am especially delighted with the work of local authors. I am pleased with them all. I shan't try to play favorites. However, many people know my favorite

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<sup>491</sup> Davidson (1951), in: "The Poetry of Byron Herbert Reece," pg. 426.

<sup>492</sup> Lord (1950), "I confess a deep pleasure in bringing to life even this much of old Farm & Fireside, marching on through the years and season," pg.109; See also Lord's introduction of Ben H. Smith in *Voices From The Fields* (1937), pp. 68-70.

local poet as I was growing up was Ben H. Smith of rural Jonesboro, whose column "Where the Hills Slope Upward" inspired me and many other people."<sup>493</sup>

Lord recognized the genius in Smith's own work urged him to submit all he could to *Farm and Fireside* and later to *The Land*. Readers looked forward to finding Smith's poems tucked into the spaces between lengthy articles, left for them to discover like simple gifts. Smith couldn't see the attraction but sent his pieces in anyway. "I'm not much of a poet. I'm too near the dirt to fly among the clouds. I think that good poetry must be a slow- drawn out process. With me it must be written hurriedly or not at all. I only know what I see and feel; and it is a poem if I have time to write it; if not it gets away from me. I harder I try, the more muddled up I get. We had a full week's rain last week. Corn looks good and we're going to have enough of both kinds of potatoes to do us. And that's something! I am sending you some more poems."<sup>494</sup>

The work of Ozark poet, naturalist, and country paper correspondent Mary Elizabeth Mahnkey was also brought forward to *The Land* from earlier submissions in *Country Home Magazine*. Her powerful presence challenged perceptions that hill folk were unsophisticated and simple. Lord's appreciation of Mahnkey's deep rooted regionalism and honest depictions of strong work ethic and rural economy opened new avenues for thinking about rural issues including the tensions between religion, nature, and shifting values. "She remains in our opinion the finest country-weekly correspondent in these State," Lord wrote in an editorial on his favorite rural writers. Unfortunately for both *The Land* and readers, the promotion of rural women's poetry centered on Mahnkey to the exclusion of many others whose work remained in the domain of country papers and women's magazines.<sup>495</sup>

A single poem to a full page was Lord's use of the intentional editorial placement employed to punctuate a vital point or message embedded in an issue's theme. After a passionate speech by Bill Maudlin, delivered at a correspondent's forum in New York that laid bare the hypocrisy of war, Lord placed peace activist James Rorty's prayer-poem simple and stark against

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<sup>493</sup> Glasco (2005), describes those who influenced her poetry for the collection "Down On The Farm: One American Family's Dream," on her author's website:  
<http://sueglasco.tripod.com/id3.html>

<sup>494</sup> Lord (1937), from a published letter posted by Ben H. Smith of the *Jonesboro Gazette* to Russell Lord, soliciting for *Farm & Fireside*, September 16, 1934. In: *Voices From The Fields* (1931), pp. 75-76.

<sup>495</sup> Lord (1931), discovered Mary Elizabeth Mahnkey after a *Country Home Magazine* contest for best country correspondent (prize of \$50). Her work was unanimously voted the winner by four literary judges out of a field of 1,581 entries, pg. 106; Lord wrote that Mahnkey was a guest at Thorn Meadow while on her way to Washington D.C. to accept a literary award. "She remains in our opinion the finest country-weekly correspondent on these States," in: *The Land*, Vol. III, No. 3 (Spring 1944): pg. 329; Breaking from rural religions and tradition, see an excerpt from an unpublished novel "Ezra Leaves Home," in: *The Land*, Vol. III, No. 3 (Spring 1944): pp. 245-250. Mahnkey was selected as Poet Laureate of the Ozarks in 1943 and died of cancer in 1948. See: Warner (2012), *More Than Petticoats: Remarkable Missouri Women*, and Massey (1996,) *A Candle Within Her Soul: Mary Elizabeth Mahnkey and her Ozarks*.

the white page. The voices of war critics, peace activists, and conscientious objectors were important voices in the pages of *The Land*, but at the start of the Cold War with the development of atomic weapons and a new arms race, Lord expanded the scope of agricultural thought and ideas of permanence to include global implications of socio-environmental destruction.

...Give us, O Lord, at least to see

Our treason and our sin, whose idiot hand,

Serving an hour's quarrel, has dared to rend

The starry cloak of the eternal, panned

Immeasurable Oneness that is thine. (excerpt, James Rorty, *Winter 1946*)<sup>496</sup>

War economies certainly had revived the slouching U.S. agricultural sector and brought welcomed relief to farmers and rural communities. This had been “a good war” for Americans at home and prosperous times would not soon end. The end of World War Two, however, did not signal the end of conflict. Instead, “the terrible light” of the Cold War would shine long after *The Land* ceased publication in the mid-1950s and the voice of the peace movement would remain firmly embedded within a growing national environmental activism.<sup>497</sup>

## The Long Read

Walter Clay Loudermilk, a forester and former Soil Conservation Service flood control engineer, was a prolific contributor to *The Land*. After World War I he worked overseas with the Belgian Relief Effort, advised in China during the 1920s to help build agricultural infrastructure against famine, and traveled extensively throughout Africa and the Middle East to study agricultural and hydrologic histories. Lord gave Loudermilk his own column, “Foreign Correspondence,” that depending on issue and theme would span many pages. He was serious about permanent agriculture and used the work of F.H. King in the Orient to serve as benchmarks for his own expansive writing on cultural technologies and histories.<sup>498</sup>

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<sup>496</sup> “Land of the Noble Free,” transcript of a speech given by Pulitzer Prize winning editorial cartoonist and Army infantryman, Bill Mauldin (1921 - 2003) followed by “Winter, 1946” by committed pacifist and socialist, James Rorty. Pairings of such articles and poems at the end World War II and the beginning of the Cold War indicated a new civic path forged for *The Land*. See *The Land*, Vol. V (1): Winter 1945-46, pp. 39-41.

<sup>497</sup> Collingham (2011), Americans were lifted out of economic distress by the war, jobs returned, and agriculture experienced vibrant markets, pp. 416-419.

<sup>498</sup> F.H. King was the first to use the term “permanent agriculture” in field studies and articles written abroad in the late 1890s; a term he used intentionally to counter the U.S. Bureau of Soils theories of soil fertility that dismissed the importance of soil biology; See Sutton (2015), pp. 42-44.

While working for the SCS in the 1930s Loudermilk focused almost exclusively on promoting permanent agricultural methods derived from distant farming cultures as a set of ancient but well-proven techniques for terracing, composting manures (even human), and fertilizing with food waste, where fields were “still fertile after thirty centuries of cropping.”<sup>499</sup> The study of agricultural history of the Orient and Near East, he claimed, was important for American farmers and conservationists alike, on the chance that “some unheralded genius may have already found the solution to our problem, a solution in whole or in part if we know what we are looking for.”<sup>500</sup> During the 1940s and the early years writing for *The Land*, he took dangerous assignments to China to advise hydroengineering projects. His travels inspired adventurous essays for his column.

Following the war Loudermilk used his column to reflect on his field work and to re-examine ideas of historic agrosystems collapse. He identified systemic mismanagement or neglect of technological aspects of farming systems and complex interconnected factors between climate, soil loss, and water management as consistent elements of failed agricultural civilizations. Writing about a comparison of the irrigated plains of the Nile River Basin in North Africa and the Wei-Peh irrigated of the Wei River in China, for instance, he compared agricultural collapse to the aftermath of war. “Stoppage of the canals by silt depopulated villages and cities more effectively than the laughter of people by an invading army.”<sup>501</sup>

By the late 1940s he was traveling again through Asia and the Middle East, sending his columns to Lord from the field. Conservationist turned agricultural historian, Loudermilk crossed international boundaries as well as disciplinary borders, and through his work for *The Land*, readers glimpsed the complexities and promise of systems thinking. Determined to help countries prevent the environmental catastrophes that plagued the U.S. in the first half of the 20th century, he was called to work and write as an international conservationist. To serve in post-war international conservation and agricultural aide, Loudermilk wrote, was “heroic work.”<sup>502</sup> Lord, inspired by Loudermilk and free of the restrictions to travel imposed by the war, took the mission of the Friends of the Land to England in 1945.

In the spring of 1945 Russell Lord addressed the Royal Geographical Society in London, the scientific body responsible for soil mapping and influential in agricultural policy. The war

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<sup>499</sup> Sutton (2015), F.H. King in “Rough Gullied Land,” pg. 43

<sup>500</sup> Loudermilk, Walter C., “Preliminary Report to the Executive Yuan, Government of China, on Findings of a Survey of a Portion of the Northwest for a Program of Soil, Water and Forest Conservation, 1943.” (Soil Conservation Service History Office, Washington, D.C.), pg. 37; Helms (1984), provides an excellent biographical paper of Walter C. Loudermilk, forester-turned-conservation and agricultural historian for the SCS, in “Walter Loudermilk’s Journey: Forester to Land Conservationist.”

<sup>501</sup> Loudermilk, Walter C. “Conquest of the Land Through 7,000 Years.” Agriculture Information Bulletin No. 99 (1953), also in reprint Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1975.

<sup>502</sup> Loudermilk in: “Foreign Correspondence,” *The Land*, Vol. 5, No.1, (1945-46), pg. 85.

had changed much about the English working landscape yet farmers still relied heavily on plowing with little concern for soil loss and maintaining high quality pasture. “Most of our soil troubles have come from the unsuitable use of farming methods that we inherited from you,” Lord lectured. Some distinguished listeners begged to differ. Others took offense. “He was not there to tell Britishers *how* to farm,” wrote Loudermilk in “Foreign Correspondence,” where Lord’s journey was the subject of *The Land*’s international agricultural news. “He simply raised questions in the hope that men on the ground there have an eye to the long future – that they would themselves criticize the driven, booming state of wartime British farming.”<sup>503</sup>

Lord insisted that difficult lessons would be learned at the cost of agricultural permanence. The pressures of wartime production resulted in real and devastating losses for the nations soils, he warned. Dr. Dudley Stamp, one of Britain’s first soil conservationists rose to address his flustered colleagues. “The U.S. is the only country which has tackled soil erosion on a national scale,” he argued. “I think it is no secret now that during the last four years we have seen soil erosion here on a scale which ten years ago, we should not have believed possible. I have been in a dust storm not 140 miles from this building. I have seen the removal of old wind-breaks, and as farmer put it to me when he had been suffering wind erosion: ‘I sat on ye other side of where that old wind-break had been and caught brussels sprouts as they were blown from the ground!’ I hope that the economists who think along these lines for the future of our country *will* learn that less from the United States!”<sup>504</sup> Lord was longer on the sidelines at meetings and gatherings taking notes. He had earned his place among the international voices for permanent agriculture and working lands conservation.

Global travel had indeed brought new perspectives about global agricultural issues to the American reader, but Lord knew that stories and ideas from faraway places were inconsequential unless connected to local problems and concerns. After returning from his trip to England (and increasing international memberships by a hundred or more) Lord solicited progress reports from SCS men in the field. He asked for honest assessments – and got them. Some contributors were highly critical of TVA and other flood control projects. Lord gave them feature length articles to state their cases. Open debates erupted in the Letters to the Editor concerning how land had been acquired or retired and how much was yet to be learned about how some soil conservation methods and machines of modern agriculture would impact the landscape in the long term. Some letter writers received invitations from Lord to expand on their ideas by sending essays and articles.

Debates sometimes got the better of an issue or two, as authors and readers parleyed from season to season about adaptations to regional soils, experimental methods, and whether organic agriculture could hold its ground against conventional and chemically dependent methods. Farmers argued with university researchers. Agricultural economists took criticisms from farm wives. *The Land* became an open, democratic space where all views, well supported, were published. Even book reviews were just as sure to be assigned to rural correspondents as well as to noted professional reviewers from other magazines and publishing houses. “Some of

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<sup>503</sup> *The Land*, Vol. 5, No.1, (1945-46), pg. 85.

<sup>504</sup> *The Land*, Vol. 5, No.1, (1945-46), pg. 89.

our most interesting contributors are those who simply pick up an issue of *The Land* and decide that they would like to write for it,” said Lord. Among those were Edward Faulkner and Samuel Legg, whose controversial articles framed the post-war years for *The Land*.<sup>505</sup>

Faulkner’s 1943 book, *Plowman’s Folly*, fomented as much pointed criticism from agriculturalists as it did lavish praise. Small plot farmers and gardeners generally supported the author’s methods of replacing chemical fertilizers with composted green manures and cover crops. His main argument, however, was that the abandonment of the moldboard plow would benefit American soils more than any modern additives and chemical inputs. It was Faulkner’s direct shot across the bow of corporate agricultural chemistry that raised the ire of university researchers. Faulkner was a pragmatic and practical farmer who kept an eye on the bottom line as much as the bottom forty. He challenged conventional progressive farming by urging readers to consider the true cost of fertilizers and the plow. Considered “dangerously and disastrously unorthodox,” Faulkner’s feisty defense of restoring soil health with *less* technology and modern “improvements” became topics of heated discussion in the magazine.<sup>506</sup>

Open debates in the pages of *The Land* fueled democratic exchanges of ideas for how post-war agriculture should proceed. It also fueled new subscriptions and memberships. “Diversification in a magazine is as important as diversification in farming,” Lord stated in an editorial, defending argumentative pieces that had some long-time members concerned. “In time, a magazine such as ours stands in danger of simply exhorting the converted and repeating itself. That grows tiresome. Go over the same old ground in the same old way repeatedly – Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter, year after year; then what? Soon your outstanding Society becomes a bunch of old people nodding in shocked and dismal agreement, and there is no life in it.”<sup>507</sup>

Beyond Faulkner there was Samuel Legg, a religious conscientious objector from Vermont, who contributed an article that provided a chilling if not tragic experience in while serving in alternative service. Legg, a young Quaker man in his twenties had volunteered to take part in a “nutrition experiment” through the Civilian Public Service with the University of Minnesota in 1945. The aim of the starvation experiments claimed to inform international famine relief efforts, but raised instead, numerous questions concerning the ethics of domestic wartime

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<sup>505</sup> Letters from readers numbered in the dozens per issue, almost all given personal responses by Lord. “Some of our most interesting contributors...” *The Land*. Vol. 5, No. 2 (Summer 1946): pg. 290.

<sup>506</sup> Practical farmer Edward H. Faulkner was a regular and controversial contributor to *The Land*, given his “angry” writing style and evangelical passion for the topics of organics, soil health, and criticism. “Dangerously and disastrously unorthodox...” and “Organics Only? Bunkum!” in *The Land*, Vol. 5, No. 3 (August 1946): pg. 322.

<sup>507</sup> Lord, “From the Editor,” *The Land*, Vol. 5, No. 2: (Summer 1946) pg. 1.



experimentation even as the Allied occupation was discovering similar and more sinister experimental programs conducted by Nazi scientists in concentration camps.<sup>508</sup>

Following three months of highly controlled and systematic starvation with thirty-six fellow conscientious objectors living in secret quarters, Legg had been given permission to write broadly on the study, detailing only his personal account without violating the classified nature of the work. The article's publication in spring of 1945 coincided with a feature length photo essay in *Life* magazine, "Men Starved in Minnesota."<sup>509</sup> News of widespread famine in Europe deeply moved readers. "The American government, anticipating the Cold War, began taking a long look at the possibility and implications of widespread starvation. They wanted the post-war world rebuilt in America's democratic image. It would be impossible, as Dr. Ancel Keys would often point out, to teach starving people democracy,"<sup>510</sup> Legg's article raised the specter of controlled experiments designed to control people and nature itself. Starvation and the weaponization of food supplies served as a backdrop to the possibilities of postwar technologies that included nuclear bombs, incendiary warfare, and new and more powerful chemical weapons designed to inflict mass casualties on civilian populations.<sup>511</sup>

Problems and promises of war technologies, fighting poverty and famine, and the complicated nature of agricultural industrialism seemed to some readers to be out of place in a journal committed to permanent agriculture and conservation. Lord and his executive committee felt that these stories and the debates they generated were important for understanding how conservation and agriculture intersected with the realities of post-war issues. Tensions increased, however, between some reader's affections for essays drenched in rural romanticism and those juxtaposed against them that pitched hard arguments for scientific advancement, environmental ethics, and conservation policy. *The Land*, for better or worse, reflected the deep philosophical struggles between a permanent agriculture as described by Liberty Hyde Bailey on which the Friends of the Land Manifesto had been constructed, and an emerging environmental of awareness poised at the edge of a new techno-industrial age.

What did the threat of nuclear war have to do with agricultural progress? Was the editorial office overreaching the conservation mission of the Friends of the Land by promoting

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<sup>508</sup> Tucker (2006), *The Great Starvation Experiment: Ancel Keys and the Men Who Starved for Science*, details the top-secret starvation study and its potential for weaponizing the food system as an agent of war.

<sup>509</sup> *The Land's* publication of "How It Feels To Starve," Samuel Legg, (Spring 1945), coincided with a *Life* magazine special issue on famine in Europe (July 30, 1945) that featured a seven page photo shoot "Men Starved in Minnesota."

<sup>510</sup> Tucker (2006), notes that news leaked to the West of the Siege of Leningrad and the severe famine that accompanied it in 1943 so shocked government and humanitarian agencies that concerted actions to understand and alleviate hunger were quickly launched, pg. 8.

<sup>511</sup> Legg's 1945 in *The Land* article represented a small but important glimpse into highly classified experiments carried out by researchers by and for military deployment, in: "Total War," pp. 95-118.

an anti-war agenda? In some respects, yes, but a parallel publication, *News From the Friends of the Land*, a pamphlet-style newsletter mailed monthly to members, seemed to toe the line on matters of soil and water conservation much as a government Soil Conservation Service or Extension brochure. The newsletter featured soil conservation news including reports of the stellar performance the introduced kudzu vine and multiflora rose in soil stabilization, implement and tractor reviews, and test results of rototillers and sub-surface cultivators. The expense, however, of adding an additional publication and the cost of mailing could not be sustained. The newsletter ceased publication within two years.<sup>512</sup>

By 1950 the content and tone of article in *The Land* marked an important conceptual shift for the permanent agriculture movement, even as some readers questioned the relevance of some material. It was a logical progression from Progressive Era ideas about conservation and agriculture to the emergence of ecological thinking prior to World War II that allowed the permanent agriculture movement to mature during the 1940s. After the war, however, the complexity of issues and impact of man's activities on environment and society combined to forge a hybrid of agro-ecological thinking, a foundation for a new movement in environmentalism.<sup>513</sup> The shift did not sit well with some readers who preferred less controversial content.

Nuclear energy as a green alternative to silted-up reservoirs or smoke-spewing coal-powered plants seemed a viable argument and Lord noted that the newly formed Atomic Energy Commission's work promised peaceful, even beneficial, uses of nuclear technologies on the land. Jane Carter, a science writer who specialized in translating complex scientific research for public consumption, offered a defense of nuclear technology in the plant and food sciences. Her story on the use of radio isotopes to trace the uptake of important nutrients from soils and the discovery of new chemical processes in the cellular activities of plants helped introduce readers to the work of 1943 Nobel Prize winner George de Hevesy. His research launched new fields of pest control, fertilizer development, genetic testing, and food safety (irradiation).<sup>514</sup>

Early career aerosol scientist Harry Wexler raised the question of climate change with the realization that millions of tons of soil and ash were blown into the sky each time a nuclear device was tested on some remote atoll and desert plateau. A blanket of insulating dust could

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<sup>512</sup> Kudzu and multiflora rose were undoubtedly two of the most noxious and invasive plants imported by the USDA to help with soil stabilization. Farmers still complain, eighty years after introduction to soil conservation methods in the South and Mid-Atlantic.

<sup>513</sup> Beeman and Pritchard (2001) describe how earlier 20<sup>th</sup> Century ecological and agricultural reform movements, couched in the pragmatic conservation movement of the 1930s, evolved within the work of Friends of the Land by mid-century to form a foundation of environmentalism, pp. 82-83.

<sup>514</sup> Lord wrote hundreds of dozens of commentaries included mention of nuclear technology in agriculture and conservation. He was steadfastly against the weapon, but supported peaceful development. See Jane Carter's "Tagged Atoms and Green Blood" in: *The Land*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Autumn 1949): pp. 328 – 334. George de Hevesy would go on to win the Atoms for Peace Prize in 1959.

either warm or cool the planet, he argued, but in either case the stability of climate systems was uncertain. A nascent community of climate scientists, born out of the fields of meteorology and atmospheric sciences, noted gradual warming of surface temperatures. Agronomists questioned whether radioactive dust traveling around the globe was contaminating common resources. Numerous short articles by various scientists published in *The Land* focused on warming and cooling effects of high altitude aerosols caused by industrial pollution, weapons testing, and dust storms. Wexler, however, is credited with being the first climate scientist to make the idea of global warming a public concern. NOAA historians note that had it not been for his untimely death of a heart attack in 1962, the issue of climate change would have been an important scientific, social and political issue much sooner.<sup>515</sup>

*The Land* was breaking ground for new ways of thinking about the moral and ethical implications of exploitation of natural resources and rural communities. Writers spoke to the effects of fear on the American public, the threat of industrial and military collusion, and extreme political ideologies. As the Cold War deepened, the journal deepened its approach to environmental concerns far beyond permanent agriculture. As editor, Lord, too, was shifting away from cause and effect articles once common and popular in general press that explained, maybe too neatly why wind blows the soil away, to complex multi-layered essays that reflected the merging of socio-political and industrial-environmental topics. Lord was making demands of his readers to see beyond ecological underpinnings of interdependence and permanence, to accept the greater implications of the Society of the Friends of the Land's manifesto commitment to broaden ideas of conservation in a post-war world where "wartime psychology fixes attention on devices of slaughter and destruction. It diverts human effort and ingenuity from studies and devices to perpetuate the source values of humankind."<sup>516</sup>

Lord was taking editorial chances with his audience by combining political context and the power of the environmental witness to further the deep narrative of complex issues. The activism of Etter in "The Smogs of Donovan" demonstrated how far Lord was willing lead his agricultural readers into the murk of new battlefields, not in some far-off land, but here at home.

Photojournalist Alfred Etter, an aerial photographer during the war and life-long naturalist, recorded the environmental devastation caused by the Donora Zinc Works in western Pennsylvania. He photographed over time the dying of large swaths of the Monongahela Forest, the moon-like surface of toxic and eroded farmland abandoned by its farmers, and the day in October 1948 when an atmospheric inversion event trapped and killed 20 Donora residents while sickening 7,000 others. "We fight at Communism all over the world with money and strong words, with many threatening arms, yet at home we allow our own technological creations to crush and bare the lives of human beings that live on the hillsides of Pennsylvania. Perhaps not humans, not plants, but perhaps Communism might flourish best on such soil as that found in

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<sup>515</sup> Harry Wexler in: "The World Gets Warmer" in: *The Land*, Vol. 7, No. 2 (Summer 1953): pp. 133-135. Weart (2003) in: "The Discovery of Global Warming" (2003): Lord relates his own observations of changing climate of the Mid-Atlantic in *Forever the Land* (1950) in: "At Home on Earth" and "Christmas in the Country," pp. 173-177.

<sup>516</sup> Lord (1950) in: "Manifesto," pp. 43-46.

Donora.”<sup>517</sup> Though not the only photographer to document such tragedies of human-caused environmental disasters in Pennsylvania, Etter’s piece was startling even for conservation journalists like Lord who thought they had seen it all.

Etter’s photographs were used in government investigations to illustrate the long-term effects of heavy industrial pollution on rural landscapes and its people. “The Donora tragedy was really the first time that public officials recognized the direct link between air pollution and public health, and it was the first time they mobilized to do anything about it,” stated EPA spokesperson Ruth Podems at the fiftieth anniversary memorial service held in 1998. The open-air service on a hillside overlooked the town where at the public library Etter’s photographs, many from the article published in *The Land*, were on display. Alfred Etter would continue to build his career as a photojournalist to record the effects of DDT and predator poisoning in the 1950s.<sup>518</sup>

An effect of the Cold War in America was the start of an environmental push-back that countered military-industrial complex expansions. McNeill and Unger argue that this period in American environmental history is understudied and I agree that the intersections of environmental history and 20<sup>th</sup> century hot or cold wars are just beginning to gain serious attention.<sup>519</sup> *The Land* during the mid-1950s can provide a window into this intersection.

Writers in *The Land* were identifying environmental issues that tied industrial agriculture with its intensified use of monoculture, pesticides, and fertilizers to the degradation of fragile socio-ecological systems. Even America’s domestic landscapes, homes, towns, and villages, served as active battlegrounds on which we waged war against insects and germs. From the war years through the 1950s, homemakers were assured that the use of household products containing DDT would protect their children and properties from disease-carrying insects. By the mid-1950s, large-scale DDT spraying programs denied individual citizens control over the application of the product as municipalities and counties took to the air. Cold war fears about nuclear war and the spread of communism included now, by mid-decade, concerns over government programs. Lord published the early work of environmental activists, who, like

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<sup>517</sup> Etter, “Smogs of Donoran,” in: *The Land*, Vol. 9, No. 1 (Spring 1950): pp. 185-191.

<sup>518</sup> Alfred G. Etter was deliberate in his use of the word ‘smogs’ in the plural. The inversion event was often characterized as a rare, one-time event, by the Donora Zinc Company during federal investigations. Etter had documented the environmental effects of the Donora Zinc Works for years before the event, including the persistent valley smogs that hung thick for days, downwind from the plant. The plant closed for two days after the event but reopened. It was finally closed for good in 1957. The event (and the photographs of Alfred Etter) was instrumental in the formation of the National Clear Air Act. See: “Twenty Died. The Government Took Heed. In 1948 A Killer Fog Spurred Air Cleanup,” *Philadelphia Inquirer*, Jeff Gammage, (Oct. 28, 1998). I will argue, though not within the scope of this research but certainly worthy of environmental biography, that Etter was this country’s first historical ecologist.

<sup>519</sup> McNeill, J.R. and Corinna R. Unger (2010), *Environmental Histories of the Cold War*, in: “The Big Picture,” pp. 3-4.

Carson and Etter, were changing attitudes about scientific advances that seemed not so long ago to promise safety, security, abundance, and health. He was mindful of this shift towards environmentalism especially as agriculture's dependence on military-to-commercial/domestic use of wartime chemical agents grew greater.<sup>520</sup>

The late issues of *The Land* make for fascinating study of activist writers during the Cold War and should be taken up in future research. But the final years of the magazine, published as the Cold War was intensifying from 1954-1956, was losing valuable ground to a shift of perception among its readers, a loss of momentum in its activities and membership. The Society for the Friends of the Land was plagued throughout its organizational lifetime by a lack of financial stability and the most popular aspect of its outreach program was expensive and unsustainable. For all of its advances in environmental thinking and for serving as a cornerstone for a new American environmental movement, the journal suffered for the popularity and expense of the Society's outreach effort.

### **Troupes and Tours**

Certainly, the most popular aspect of the Society of the Friends of the Land was its ambitious schedule of field tours that Lord, ever the chronicler, published as reviews in *The Land*. These spanned a dozen or more pages per issue and served as field notes, transcripts of speeches, and photo essays that archived each event.

Lord's tour articles always included photos of caravans of vehicles, sometimes numbering a hundred cars or more, traveling the countryside with farm celebrity speakers waving their hats to long lines of traffic rolling along behind them. Two-day conferences were designed much like the Chautauqua series of the 1920s, and included gatherings at forestry camps and model farms that served as backdrops for seminars and workshops on soil, forest, and watershed conservation. The tours almost always included drive-by looks at poorly managed lands for comparison.<sup>521</sup>

Friends of the Land tours filled municipal auditoriums and high school gyms from Abilene, Texas, to Chicago. Contingents of Society speakers always included Louis Bromfield, a troupes and tours mainstay. Field sessions used loud speakers to amplify the voices of notable as well as local presenters. Whether indoors or out, women from the Garden Clubs of America turned out in large numbers to see their celebrity farmer. Bromfield's Malabar Farm in Ohio became a hub of Friends of the Land tours and people from across the country flocked to there for featured events. His passionate speeches about restoring soils, woods, and rural livelihoods served to rally audiences to the cause of permanent agriculture. George Hawkins, traveling companion and assistant to Bromfield at home, could barely stand the large crowds of women.

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<sup>520</sup> Russell (2001), *War and Nature*, in: "Backfires," describes the shift in public perception and scientific concern for chemical and nuclear advances that occurred in the early 1950s led to wide-spread environmental alarm, pp. 204-228.

<sup>521</sup> These long articles appear in nearly every edition of *The Land*, with some being quite lengthy. Examples are: "Seeing the Country," Vol. 6, No. 4 (Winter 1947-48): pp. 273-282 and "Field Notes," Vol. 6 No. 3 (1947): pp. 413-428.

Lord explained that he'd had "bitter experiences with busloads of bosomy sisters who tramped down the flowers and shrubbery to press their noses against the window screens of the study in which the Master of Malabar writes."<sup>522</sup> To facilitate the opening of local chapters of Friends of the Land, Bromfield would speak at Garden Club socials. At one such gathering, Hawkins warned Bromfield, "You, Mr. B. are getting to be nothing but the Sinatra of the Soil for middle-aged women!"<sup>523</sup> Politicians were rare at any Friends of the Land speaking engagement. Bromfield would not tolerate their presence.<sup>524</sup>

The overall message for conservation of human and soil health was carried to tens of thousands in person. "Conservation is not like an antiseptic or a new model of an electrical device which we can distribute and use with the help of a little advertising," declared Paul Sears in a speech attended by three thousand at an event in downtown St. Louis. "Conservation is a way of life, both for city and country people. And when you try to persuade people to change their ways of living, you need courage!"<sup>525</sup>

The tours were expensive to produce, however, and the head office established at Columbus, Ohio, had cast a worried eye towards the account books. The Ohio contingent of the society, "the first strong active state chapter" served as the base for the volunteer executive committee. At a March 1951 meeting, Ollie E. Fink, noted Columbus bank president who also served as the society's treasurer, reminded the group that he first raised concerns in the late forties. Dr. Jonathan Forman, M.D., executive director and regular columnist to *The Land* on topics of human health, organics, and biodynamics, offered to balance the short-term budgetary concerns with some simple solutions: increase membership with more outreach and promotions, particularly with the pages of the magazine. Lord suggested that the magazine offer tear-off cards for subscribers to share with their local libraries in hopes of getting more expensive institutional memberships. Chester C. Davis, former board member of the Federal Reserve System and Chairman of the Board of the Friends of the Land, agreed with Forman, but suggested "that what we need rather badly is to be a little more organized."<sup>526</sup> Davis was not wrong. Fundraising and organization had never been a strength of the Society and all executive

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<sup>522</sup> Lord (1950), pp. 195-196.

<sup>523</sup> Ibid., pg. 196.

<sup>524</sup> Lord (1950), pg. 206.

<sup>525</sup> Paul Sears, from: "A Living Landscape: It's All One," transcript in: "Soil: A Common Denominator, The Opening Talk at St. Louis." *The Land*, Vol. 2, No. 2 (Winter 1946-47): pp.158-159.

<sup>526</sup> Lord (1950) notes that Fink, Forman and Davis' concerns were repeated at executive meetings for years, but that expenses and income never balanced, leaving the society always precariously in the red, 196; See also notes from the semi-annual executive committee meeting held in March 1951. The treasure's report and accounting ledger show a membership standing at 5,811 paid (\$5/annual membership) at \$29,055. Gifts, donations, and gifts-in-kind totaled \$4600. Expenses, however, totaled \$65,880 for the year.

committee members were volunteers. Lord received compensation for his duties as editor but Kate gave her time as a volunteer as well. There was barely enough to fund a part-time assistant. Speakers stipends, travel costs, hall and hotel conference rentals, publication and mailing, office and secretarial expenses, and salary to *The Land* editor and staff at \$300/mo. for Lord, \$70/mo. for his assistant Mary Umbarger, weighed the organization down with barely met financial obligations. The treasurer's reports submitted by Fink show a consistent trend of serious underfunding.<sup>527</sup>

Lord was often away from his office for weeks, editing issues on the road and leaving much of the day-to-day correspondence to young staff member Mary Umbarger. She credited the fast-paced atmosphere of *The Land* office as giving her the "legs to stand on" in environmental writing. "I was fresh out of college, saw an ad in the local paper for a magazine in need of a secretary, and thought why not? I knocked on the door, Russell Lord answered, and asked if I had experience. I said yes, even though I didn't, and the arc of my career was set in motion! Those were incredibly busy times," she recalled, "I was everywhere at once, writing, reading letters, placing calls to the Lords wherever I could find them." Mary accepted, read, and proofed all manner of article submissions, forwarding on to Lord by mail or telephone her ideas and recommendations for their publication. Manuscripts from Paul Sears and Aldo Leopold crossed her desk, as did complicated scientific papers from researchers and journals. But tracking down her absent boss was at times a challenge.<sup>528</sup>

To accommodate their nomadic lifestyle while on troupes and tours, the Lords purchased a second-hand trailer to tow behind their car. They filled it with two typewriters, folding chairs and tables, kitchen and camping gear, art supplies, personal luggage, boxes of files and folders, and extra copies of *The Land* to give away. They followed or met the troupe wherever speaking and tour events were planned and often revisited familiar landscapes from Lord's days with the USDA. He noted that many situations once so dire, had vastly improved despite initial concerns that war economies would create another agricultural disaster on the land. The Deep South, which "had farmed itself down to bedrock in the aftermath of World War I," embraced many ambitious soil conservation and resettlement programs that transformed many highly-degraded regions. "I thought I knew something about zealots for conservation, but in Georgia we seemed to live among no other sort of people, who never tired."<sup>529</sup>

Touring TVA sites in 1948, the Lords listened to relocated farmers gave testimony to their better situations. "You Friends of the Land have come to the right place to study the effect of revived land on people," said T.V.A. Knoxville demonstration supervisor P.W. Worden. "Considering all the factors we had to contend with on 1933, all the distress and pressures, it

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<sup>527</sup> See ledgers in Friends of the Land (FOL), Collection 364, Ohio Historical Society, Box 2.

<sup>528</sup> Personal interview with Mary Umbarger Corddry, August 18, 2013, Historical Society of Harford County.

<sup>529</sup> Lord (1950), pg. 262.

surely is a tribute to the hardy spirit, the industry, the courage, and the frugality of these mountain people that they had they fighting spirit to take hold the way they did.”<sup>530</sup>

The transformation of degraded landscapes, particularly in the South, signaled both conservation success and rural reform failure. Retired agricultural lands rebounded quickly as reforested conservation lands with management transferred to state and federal parks, national forests and municipal watershed administrations. The mountain people of whom Mr. Worden spoke had indeed received compensation for their lost properties through relocation programs, had they been land owners before eminent domain. The landless farmer and agricultural worker, however, were given few options but to abandon farming and agricultural work altogether. The spectacular vistas of reforested watersheds and broad pastured landscapes were heralded as conservation triumphs and made for glorious stops along the Friends of the Land tours. If the continued loss of farmers troubled Lord, he did not write about it. The irony of continued out-migration of rural people to American cities, an overwhelming concern of earlier agricultural reform movements, seemed unstoppable long after the war ended.

Forty percent of poor white farmers had left the South by 1940 headed west to California along with two and half million Plains farmers. The western migration continued well into the 1950s. The Second Great Migration of African American farmers and their families to northern cities following the Dust Bowl increased through mid-century. By 1945, U.S. Census reports estimated that over a million and a half rural people had abandoned land, homes, and communities. By 1950, estimates soared to two million and showed no signs of slowing. For farmers and agricultural laborers of color, the permanent agriculture movement had failed to meet its core commitments. Save for a single feature article on black progress in agriculture education in Mississippi in 1953, the topic of how permanent agricultural concepts had improved the lives and lands of African American farmers was ignored.<sup>531</sup>

While the Friends of the Land troupes and tours celebrated the recovery of lands and livelihoods for some, America was in the throes of a “reconversion,” an economic transition from the demands and frenzy of wartime production to a new, robust, peacetime economy infused with the promise of scientific breeding of livestock, efficient and mechanized food processing, and modern equipment powered by cheap and plentiful petroleum-based fuels. Bromfield, ever the spokesperson for highly diversified small farms, heralded the wonders of the “powerful scoop caterpillars” that dug farm ponds in a days’ time and the efficiencies of the new bailers, small tractors and combines employed at Malabar Farm in Ohio.<sup>532</sup> Science and mechanization was not an enemy of good farming practice, nor suspect in its uses if for

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<sup>530</sup> Lord (1950), in: *Trouping and Touring*, pg. 200.

<sup>531</sup> 1945 US Census, “Farm Population and Farm Labor,” pg. 279; NRCS “Black Farmers in America” (2003) in: “New Deal agriculture was a bad deal for black farmers,” pp. 8-10. Stevens, “On the Up – A Sketch of Progress in my County,” in: *The Land*, Vol. 7, No. 3, pp. 207-211.

<sup>532</sup> Culver and Hyde (2000), in: “One World or No World,” pg. 403; Bromfield (1948), notes from summer tours to Malabar Farm, pg. 281.



conservation purposes, and tour participants were treated many demonstrations of new equipment in fields and forests. What was important, as they heard broadcast from tour leaders holding megaphones or microphone and loudspeaker, was the way technology was employed. Aldo Leopold, honorary member of the Society from its first meeting in 1940, helped to shape the field message in terms less mystic than Liberty Hyde Bailey and more pragmatic than most New Dealers had expressed, as statements of land and conservation ethics. With his passing in 1948, Lord made Leopold's ideas prominent in *The Land* as a cornerstone for the post-war era message for both readers and tour attendees.<sup>533</sup>

As impressive as the crowded gyms and auditoriums and the long lines of cars creeping down farm lanes and across the countryside on tour, were the small tours arranged by appointment with county agents for select groups Friends of the Land membership and invited guests to visit regional sites that amplified conservation planning at the large-scale, watershed level. Groups of forty or fifty were led into the bowels of new hydroelectric plants to compare the wonders of "clean electricity" to the old coal plants and factories that powered the war effort. "Turn a good architect loose to design new plants like this, and with the simplest of native materials he can rear a great and entirely workmanlike place to work, spacious, shining...gay and powerful," Lord gushed about the visit to Nitrate Plant Two, a former munitions plant in northern Alabama, converted under secret scientific process to the manufacture of fertilizers using the excesses of war chemicals left from the war. "Man is small and fragile here among these titanic machines that he has created and harnessed. But the plant is doing business, and Man is running it!"<sup>534</sup>

Faced with the wonders of modern chemical science and geo-engineering of large landscapes, some Friends members including Lord, were impressed. To settle the concerns of the few not as taken with such spectacles, however, tour organizers arranged for intimate meetings with "pilot farmers" afterward, meetings with relocated and re-educated small farmers moved from the sites of expanded military bases, manufacturing plants, and energy production sites to reclaimed government land. TVA worked with resettled and much smaller agricultural communities to expand their yields in cattle, hogs, wheat, and corn. These private tours included meetings with spokesmen of TVA programs and listened to the practiced but unpolished interviews with county farm agents. A pilot farmer, fresh from her chores in an expanded chicken house, "looked as if she had been crying but spoke with perfect composure," noted Lord. "Community spirit is the secret of the whole thing – the people working as a group," claimed Mrs. Gallaher of the resettled "Wheat Community" on the Clinch River near Knoxville, Tennessee. Tour members listened politely as she quickly described the benefits of electricity to her poultry business and that "the Wheat Community people appreciate more than anybody the

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<sup>533</sup> Aldo Leopold contributes "The Ecological Conscience: Land Health," in: *The Land*, Vol. 8, No. 3 (Autumn 1949): pp. 290-292; The sample chapter published in this issue appears in *A Sand County Almanac* as: "The Land Ethic," Oxford University Press Paperback edition (1968), pp. 223-226.

<sup>534</sup> Lord (1950) in: "Trouping and Touring," pp. 199-200.

help that has been given us. It will help to give us initiative to do things in other communities.”<sup>535</sup>

The small, private membership-only tours received as many pages of coverage in *The Land* as did the larger, more entertaining public tours. Lord revealed to his readers, maybe accidentally or possibly intentionally (as he did in *The Land Anthology Forever the Land*, 1950) serious philosophical and practical weaknesses that worked to unravel the permanent agriculture movement, even at its height of its membership and national public appeal. It was drifting towards an elitist brand, a club of wealthy bankers and financiers who appeared more frequently as members of the board or executive committee. Often supported month-to-month by the doctors and CEO's for gifts of expenses paid, “our slender organization creaked along on slight means and without any particular sense of direction much of the time. But we continued to operate and the really extraordinary thing was that the Society kept growing,” Lord wrote in the anthology. And it was true that the Society's founding principal to follow an “unlearned” path forward, an organic, revelatory evolution as an organization, seemed to communicate a sense of drift and directionless maturing. Perhaps its members had detected drift too far to an ideological left or right, a wandering from its roots in ecology and ideas of interdependence. Or was it the conceptual underpinning of interdependence that readers and listeners found off-putting in an increasingly competitive, consumeristic, and politically charged environment that caused a sudden drop in membership through missed renewals and cancelled subscriptions?<sup>536</sup>

## The Survey

In 1951, *The Land* had achieved its highest paid subscriber count at 7,352. A year later, however, despite popular tours and well-attended conferences, special offers, and drives, membership began to wane with 5,734 members renewed. Lord missed an editorial deadline and fell an issue behind. Still, he introduced new authors with fresh material, among them Rachel Carson and excerpts from her new book, *The Sea Around Us*, but he found himself having to make decisions based upon the costs of fees or honorariums to its authors. Government-employed writers in “Foreign Correspondence” under Loudermilk were asked to contribute more news of overseas agricultural aid. Lord began to republish material from other magazines, older poems he'd collected years before, and New Deal reminiscences by late mentors and old friends. Lord wrote much of the magazine himself disguised under various department and column headings. He traded book reviews in exchange for sample chapters and excerpts. By 1952, *The Land* was remarkably thin.<sup>537</sup>

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<sup>535</sup> Lord (1950), pp. 202-203.

<sup>536</sup> Ollie Fink's ledgers and membership records, FOL membership rosters, Collection 364, Ohio Historical Society, Box 2.

<sup>537</sup> An excerpt from Rachel Carson's *The Sea Around Us* appears in: *The Land*, Vol. 10, No. 3 (August 1951) and in book review Vol. 10, No. 4 (Winter 1951-52); See Fink's note in the 1952 membership ledger lamenting that 900 subscribers did not renew and that memberships in the society overall were down. See Fink's ledgers and membership records, FOL, Collection 364, Ohio Historical Society, Ollie Fink's ledgers & membership records, Box 9.

Readers wondered if the magazine had become for “rich farmers only.” The editorial committee took a drastic measure: ask readers what they wanted and didn’t want to see in the pages of *The Land*. Five-by-seven index card inserts requesting feedback arrived inside the magazine’s Summer 1952 issue. Some of the responses, both critical and approving, were published in the Winter 1953 issue.<sup>538</sup>

A farmer from Colorado wrote: “Come down from the landed gentry level. Skip some of the poetry – not all – and point up the facts of the poor returns of the farmer for the basic needs of life as opposed to a couple almost nonsensical industries, such as nine tenths of radio and TV, cosmetics, movies, all making dunderheads and nincompoops of our children!”<sup>539</sup>

A professional forester from Montana confessed “I enjoy *The Land* but I am beginning to have my doubts about the usefulness of your organization. It has lost its punch. Land in the West is growing worse and I can’t picture Friends of the Land doing anything about it.”<sup>540</sup> Also from the West, a cattleman in Wyoming complained “Your organization is top heavy with professional men in banking, merchants and people who write on conservation for pay. You need more dirt farmers on your Board.”<sup>541</sup>

For Lord, the most critical comment received was from a naturalist in New Hampshire. In part the lengthy criticism stated that *The Land* was “still confronting the dangers of the endless reiteration of the same old story about the dear old soil. People cannot simply maintain interest, ad infinitum, ad nauseam, in our ‘precious topsoil.’ Quality is what we are after and you have to entertain the customers and startle them a little occasionally to make your point. Can’t you get some great naturalists to write for you? And take an interest? Not the ivory tower kind, the *live* kind!”<sup>542</sup>

Lord explained the survey and its methods to readers matter-of-factly while the main editorial comments were provided by Dr. Forman, the Society’s executive director, who revealed

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<sup>538</sup> Up until this point in my research, I have relied heavily on Lord’s *Forever The Land* (1950) for its semi-autobiographical narrative describing the history of and his role in Friends of the Land. From 1951 onward to the end of the publication of *The Land* in 1954, I rely upon his editorial comments in the magazine to help me discover what was happening during the last three years of publication. His commentary, however, is greatly reduced and is missing the flare and exuberance of his earlier editorial writing for the magazine.

<sup>539</sup> The comment cards were printed exactly as written but editors gave their authors the option to sign their names. Spaces were provided for state of residence and profession. Farmer in Colorado, *The Land*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Winter 1953): pg. 355; See Comment Cards in FOL Collection 64, Box 9.

<sup>540</sup> Anonymous “USFS Forester in Montana” in: *The Land*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Winter 1953): pg. 355.

<sup>541</sup> “Cattleman from Wyoming,” *The Land*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Winter 1953): pg. 357.

<sup>542</sup> “Naturalist from New Hampshire,” *The Land*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Winter 1953): pg. 357.

its results in detail: Of the total number of respondents who returned their comment cards (no total was provided) 65% did not live on farms; 35% who claimed farming as their profession, 17% were dairy farmers, ranchers, cattlemen, or foresters and 86% of these owned their own land; 16% identified themselves as agricultural workers in the Soil Conservation Service, U.S. Forest Service, or Extension. Of those who owned land, 16% were small holders owning forty acres or less, while 52% owned from forty to thirty thousand acres. Forman explained that many comment cards contained messages of support for *The Land*. Readers either liked its current form or were sympathetic to its “reasonably lean” situation. To be fair, he noted, many magazines were undergoing changes in style and appearance, that advertising was becoming a lucrative industry in a growing consumer society and the slick glossy “look” sold copies. It was what the modern popular magazine reader wanted, he said, but these were not the concerns of the Friends of the Land.<sup>543</sup>

The most pressing concerns of the society and thus its ability to continue publishing *The Land*, claimed Forman, were economic. To compensate its noted writers and the small editorial staff fairly, they needed hundreds of new members, large donations, corporate sponsors, and the readers renewed support of the Society’s outreach mission. Without money, alternative solutions to keeping the society alive would have to be made, to include the possibility that *The Land* should be discontinued. Forman’s plea, however, was too late and member response too small. Within the year, the society and the magazine were broke. The last very slim issue was mailed to a membership that had slipped below 1,500 in summer of 1954 without fanfare or special mention of the organization’s decision to end publication.

It would be easy to say that economics alone explained the end of *The Land*, but the survey of 1952-53 was remarkable in providing clues for changes in philosophical foundations in agriculture and conservation as well. As one countryman pointed out, ecologists were alerting the world to the pervasive global ecological effects of pesticides while *The Land* was still publishing timeworn poetry about “our dear old soil.”<sup>544</sup> While not entirely fair nor true, this comment begs a closer look at what *The Land* dared to publish before its decline and one wonders if, in the context of political and social contexts, invites a closer look at the wider post-war political and environmental context of the voices of *The Land*.

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<sup>543</sup> See Forman’s remarks and statistical break-down of the survey and “reasonably lean” situation in *The Land*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Winter 1953): pg. 359.

<sup>544</sup> “...one countryman,” in: *The Land*, Vol. 11, No. 4 (Winter 1953): pg. 537.

## Chapter Seven

### One World or None

### 1955-1965

#### Introduction

The history of scientific ideas develops and changes within the context of intersections of geopolitical, environmental, and philosophical worlds. A legacy of early 20<sup>th</sup> century holism defined the core commitments of the permanent agriculture movement and was bound to the everyday lives of the men and women who cared about the future of their land. In this final chapter, an environmental biography of the lived and professional experience of Russell Lord the full effect of rapidly changing physical and political worlds bears down upon the ideas of interdependence and ecology, and forces Lord and other leaders of the permanent agriculture movement to re-examine their holistic positions. Within a decade ecological agriculture, built upon the ideas of permanence and interdependence, succumbed to a new brand of ecological reductionism that displaced cooperation and community with competition and individualism.<sup>545</sup>

It was Lord's job to communicate to larger audiences, both friends and foes, how members and contributors (including himself) interpreted and responded to new threats to the environment brought about by Cold War industrial capitalism and anti-communism.<sup>546</sup> This chapter examines how Lord and the movement he helped to craft responded to multiple shifts in political and environmental thinking that signaled large-scale economic trends and environmental consequences for the United States in its newfound status as global superpower following World War II. These were unsettling times unlike any that Lord had experienced, highly political and demoralizing; a challenge to analyze within environmental history. Gaddis warns the historical biographer away from creating a narrative that is cinematic, detached from the inner world of reflection and consciousness and this was a critical piece of advice for me to help create a framework for exploring Lord's personal landscape embedded within a broad field of Cold War history.<sup>547</sup> Lord struggled to find stable ground from which to think and write, but

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<sup>545</sup> Barbour (1995), in: "Ecological Fragmentation in the Fifties," provides the philosophical ground for this chapter, marking tectonic shifts within the new field of ecology during the 1950s, pp. 233-255.

<sup>546</sup> Gaddis (2002), *The Landscape of History: How Historians Map the Past*, helps to frame the individual's contribution to our understanding large-scale historic periods as "sensitive dependence" in the broad scope global and national change, leaving for us a reflective and archival record of their lived experience of movements and historic change, pp. 111-128.

<sup>547</sup> Ibid., pg. 114.

the landscape of his personal and professional life is caught in a revolution of changing ideas. It was anything but permanent or promising.<sup>548</sup>

From the late 1940s through the early 1960s, Russell Lord was forced to examine the original conservation commitments of permanent agriculture against the national political and economic pressure to disregard ideas of interdependence and the common good. The Cold War period tested the resolve of the Friends of the Land who reacted forcibly to threats of obsolescence and un-Americanism. Unfortunately, the organization buckled and the magazine ceased to publish under a combination of economic and ideological pressures. Lord was undeterred. Until his last years continued to safeguard the work of the Friends of the Land. He promoted those writers and activists once familiar to the pages of *The Land*. The test of the Cold War bolstered his own resolve to provide a safe harbor for the story of the movement and its ideas, yet he was no romanticist and did not engage in nostalgia. His final book, *The Care of the Earth* (1962) provides a clear-eyed account of the shifts in his own thinking about agricultural policy and practice, and serves as an important source of reflection.

This was a complicated period of actual, abstract, and imagined outcomes that struck fear in the American public. Some sectors of American political and corporate influence profited from this fear. Other sectors worked to allay public concerns through the gratification of consumerism. Few counter movements attempted to redirect a worried public with the promise of self-sufficiency, detached from commercialism and modernity.<sup>549</sup> A child of the back-to-the-land movement of the early 1900s, Lord developed a mature and reflective stance regarding rural escapism and projects in self-sufficiency that ignored the greater concerns of economic imbalance and land-as-commodity ideals. “Hardly a week goes by but some leader of public opinion discovers the space between the cities as a God-given dump for the unemployed,” he wrote in an editorial during 1933 when working for the USDA and New Deal conservationists.<sup>550</sup> He recognized that returning to a mythological pastoralism or the rugged individualism of the Jeffersonian agrarian was fraught with compromises few modern Americans would be willing to make.

The physical environment in which Russell Lord worked from his home office in Harford County, Maryland, provided perhaps the greatest measure of change against which he would organize his thoughts about permanent agriculture and conservation. As a foundation to this chapter, it is important to be aware of and analyze the dramatic changes that this small tidewater county had undergone, first with the displacement of farmers in 1917 as the site of the large U.S.

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<sup>548</sup> Barbour (1995) uses the concept of revolution to describe the displacement of holistic ideas of early 20<sup>th</sup> century ecology with reductionism and competition, affecting the institutions that supported ecological research to the individual worldviews of the next generation of ecologists in the mid-1950s, pp. 250-251.

<sup>549</sup> Brown (2011) describes Helen and Scott Nearing as experienced back-to-the-landers who had published and found little audience for their books in the early 1950s, though their work would gain international acclaim beginning in the 1970s, pp. 198 – 201.

<sup>550</sup> Brown (2011), pg. 142.

Army chemical and weapons testing ground at Aberdeen was established, and then in the transformation of once-rural communities to suburban enclaves that hugged new interstate highways and commercial centers, both of which worried Lord. Harford County was a microcosm of mid-century transformation that demonstrated a national shift from struggling rural economies to a position of global military-commercial dominance in the span of a single generation. Sensitive to the changes in his own hometown, once a milling and transportation hub for dairy, produce, and grains, Lord predicted the now real possibility that Americans have little concern or understanding for where their food came from and the importance of agriculture in their day-to-day lives.

After the Friends of the Land disbanded, Lord's expansive world of scientific and agricultural journalism, advocacy if not activism, contracted to life at home in Bel Air, Maryland. His memoir work became central to preserving the ideas of the permeant agriculture movement, but more importantly for this research, this reflective period allows us to examine the legacy of scientific and agricultural ideas that his life encompassed. He readily admitted that he was at heart a child of the back-to-the land movement of his father's time, even "indoctrinated" by the country life movement, but that all of this needed critical review, "more than nostalgia, a weighing of relative values."<sup>551</sup> It was time to take stock of those ideas that formed his worldviews, to unpack the role that the cultural baggage of an earlier time had played on his personal and historical place in a legacy of ideas that formed the permanent agriculture movement.<sup>552</sup>

## Red Scare

Communicating ideas of permanent agriculture was Russell Lord's first and foremost job as editor of *The Land*. How concepts of agricultural interdependence were explained to readers depended upon editorial selections of authors and his own lengthy editorials. Paul Sears' work appeared with regularity and it was Sears who explained best for readers that ecological thinking, particularly the concepts of interdependence, balance, and stability were the foundations for permanent agriculture. He was a popular speaker at Friends of the Land events and transcripts of those same speeches frequently appeared as main articles in the pages of the magazine. During the late 1940s, however, years concept became vulnerable to politics. The control of interdependent socio-ecological systems such as those found in national energy production and agricultural production included shifts in conservation approaches to public land ownership and merged management of land and corporation. Ideas of common ground and common good competed with ideas of private ownership and profit. This shift represented far more than the

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<sup>551</sup> Lord (1962) questions whether the working man can have a deep satisfaction of a factory job or assembly line as much as a man who decides to work the earth, pg. 437.

<sup>552</sup> Barbour (1995) explains that ecologists of the 1950s believed that their lives and work progressed along logical lines of "an unbiased course from hypothesis to test," but that (particularly for the ecologists he interviewed for his work) rarely recognize that their lives as scientists have been shaped by cultural, personal, and historical movements.

natural progression of a scientific field; it represented a faceoff between communism and capitalism.<sup>553</sup>

The threat of communism included broadly held beliefs that capitalism and freedom could fall victim to scientific practices that disrespected the rights of the individual to own his own land and, even at the expense of others, to profit from it. New Dealer proponents of the permanent agriculture movement of the 1930s were branded by the late 1940s as collectivists and communists. Rexford Tugwell, a popular early speaker at Friends of the Land gatherings who had espoused the importance of interdependent agro-urban systems made possible through large-scale social and environmental planning programs, was shunned, even shamed, in Washington's political circles.<sup>554</sup>

The ideas of Sears and other *Land* contributors including Leopold, were overrun by new theories in economic ecology that focused on supply and demand, producer and consumer, and energy budgets that operated in far less stable and ever-changeable ecosystems. There was no complete abandonment of aging concepts of interdependence, however, as Beeman and Pritchard (2001) correctly point out, as new, analytical and quantitative ecological sciences were real inheritors of an evolution, if not revolution, in interdependent complex systems studies.<sup>555</sup> Ecological reductionism made possible new advances in agricultural progress and profit. Ecological economics planted the seeds of the Green Revolution with work in genetics, pest management, and soil chemistry.<sup>556</sup>

Guilty by association, proponents of permanent agriculture came under fire. Former Secretary of Agriculture and Vice-President under F.D.R., Henry A. Wallace, now Commerce Secretary, Lord's close friend and former boss, was castigated by President Truman in a fit of anti-communist anger. He was fired from the cabinet in 1946 as Wallace implored the need for diplomatic strategies with Russia that supported the sharing of scientific knowledge for nuclear technologies including the bomb.<sup>557</sup> Wallace stood stanchly with his ideas of interdependence

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<sup>553</sup> Beeman & Pritchard (2001), in: "Ecological Inspiration for Agriculture" describe the shift from philosophies of Sears and Leopold to those of G. Evelyn Hutchinson and Howard Odum during the 1950s. It would not be until the late 1960s and 1970s that the holistic/ interdependent branches and the economic/energy branches of ecology reunited under the environmental movement, pp. 101-110; Josephson, *Lenin's Laureate: Zhores Alferov's Life in Communist Science* (2010), examines the foundations of communism during the Bolshevik Revolution in 1917 and the role of the ecological scientist in Communist Russia. An excellent companion work for contrasting theoretical shifts ecology and other sciences between the U.S. and U.S.S.R.

<sup>554</sup> Lord (1950), pg. 102.

<sup>555</sup> Beeman and Pritchard (2000) mark theoretical shifts from holistic concepts of interdependence of ecological to reductionism in agricultural sciences to expand production and technology, pg. 103.

<sup>556</sup> McNeill and Unger (2010), pg. 6.

<sup>557</sup> Culver and Hyde (2000) in: "The Way to Peace," pp. 419-437.



and the preservation of peace to move both communism and capitalism forward together. Political implications of interdependence, however, rankled the President and his counsel in Washington. Wallace continued to advocate for scientific and agricultural cooperation and, indignant with the treatment he received by his former boss, flew to Europe to offer a series of angry speeches against the militarization of scientific advances and to promote interdependent governance and peace between Russia and the United States. Washington balked and declared Wallace a loose foreign policy cannon, and Truman, enraged, threatened Wallace, his supporters, and sympathizers. Though he quickly became a favorite to lead the new American Progressive party in a bid for the presidency, he and his associates including Lord and the old connections to the permanent agriculture movement came under scrutiny of J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI.<sup>558</sup>

Wallace continued to write and speak for peaceful resolution to a worsening arms race. “The success or failure of our foreign policy will mean the difference between life and death for our children and our grandchildren,” Wallace broadcast from his Washington D.C. apartment. “It will mean life and death of our civilization. It may mean the difference between the existence or the extinction of Man and of the world. It is therefore of supreme importance, and we should every one of us regard it as a holy duty to join the fight for winning the peace. I, for my part, firmly believe there is nothing more important than I can do than work in the cause of peace.”<sup>559</sup> Friends of the Land members and contributors who identified as pacifists or peace activists fell in line behind Wallace. Russell Lord, among them, felt compelled to come to his friend’s aide in what had become the fight of his political and scientific life. Lord spent months interviewing Wallace for *The Wallaces of Iowa* (1949), a biography of three generations of the Wallace family in which Henry A. Wallace is portrayed as the product of his father’s and grandfather’s religious commitment to peace, an agricultural scientist and statesman dedicated to the economic and restorative potential of permanent agriculture. The concept of interdependence plays widely throughout its four-hundred plus pages, framed not as an ideological pipeline to communism as his opponents vehemently argued, but as Wallace’s honestly-earned worldview that peace was the “basic issue” for democracy.<sup>560</sup> The book was lambasted, however, by conservative critics in Congress. The mere mention of his name in Washington, D.C. caused firestorms and controversy.<sup>561</sup>

There is no evidence that Russell Lord was ever under FBI investigation, though his editorials in *The Land*, 1950 – 1953, written with careful restraint, hinted that some of his contributors were risking careers to write approvingly of collaborative scientific and conservation projects between nations agitating politically against each other. Government workers who contributed lengthy reports about the importance of international agricultural aid, hunger programs or the progress of large-scale Russian or Chinese geo-engineering projects were

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<sup>558</sup> Culver and Hyde (2002), pp. 428 – 237. The political implications of association with Wallace put “collectivist” organizations like the Friends of the Land under the watch of J. Edgar Hoover and the FBI.

<sup>559</sup> Ibid., from a home radio broadcast aired Friday, September 20, 1946, pp. 426 - 427.

<sup>561</sup> Culver and Hyde (2002), pg. 442.

especially vulnerable to critics. Lord fired editorial shots at unnamed detractors who continued to brand Wallace and agricultural department writers as internationalists and “one world” communists.<sup>562</sup> “They can’t always fire the man,” wrote Lord in heated commentary, “but they can always abolish or alter the job, and rule him out. It isn’t primarily the frenzied hunt for communists inside and out of the Government, although that, under the goad of McCarthyism, has served to inflame the outcry against an “entrenched” Bureaucracy!”<sup>563</sup>

Paul Sears joined Lord in defense of government writers in soil conservation, international aid, and agriculture whose projects and ideas were suspect. “The most difficult conflict will be that which results not from direct economic interest but from difference in political philosophy. Our world is under the tensions of three vectors. One direction is the pull of communism, the dictator, and for the individual and to safeguard his political and economic rights.” Sears saw through smokescreens of corporate anti-communism and identified the greatest threat to conservation as capitalism itself. “In a society, much given to the gospel of the quick buck, it may take fortitude to espouse the long view. Less pleasant to consider are conflicts of interest in which segments of the public are induced to support projects that exploit natural resources for the sole benefit of the promoters.”<sup>564</sup>

Despite Lord’s and Sears’ defense of USDA and Soil Conservation writers, by 1950 the Department of Agriculture had become a very different agency. The post-war collapse of colonial empires in Africa and Asia brought into sharp focus political destabilization caused by poverty and hunger amidst economic revolt. Policymakers framed international agricultural aid as the U.S. response to “a revulsion against the acceptance of misery and poverty as the normal conditions of life.”<sup>565</sup> Agricultural intervention was considered strategic to advance the aims of an anti-communist offensive, particularly in India. Introducing new seeds and genetics, irrigation engineering, tractors and combines, pest control, and fertilizers along with thousands of USDA advisors to help raise Indian peasant farmers up from the depths of crushing poverty formed the foundations of a new American phase in humanitarian relief better described today as nation-building. Competitive agricultural advances, firmly ensconced as foreign policy, demanded the

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<sup>562</sup> Hamblin (2010) suggests that vocal proponent of the atomic bomb, Harvard President James Conant, a loud and constant critic of Henry A. Wallace, kept up the pressure to keep the Third Party candidate contained in a cloud of controversy, pp. 99 – 100.

<sup>563</sup> Lord (1953), in: “Across the Land,” *The Land*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Spring 1953): pg. 7.

<sup>564</sup> Sears (1953), in: “The Conservation Tangle,” *The Land*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Spring 1953): pp. 101 -102.

<sup>565</sup> Cullather (2013), *The Hungry World: America’s Cold War Battle Against Poverty in Asia*, argues that the Green Revolution was well underway in post-colonial India by 1950, fueled by the scientific and technological advances in agriculture that helped the U.S. thwart communist incursions into destabilized Asian states. Dean Acheson, Secretary of State, believed that an India focused on its food and farming would be preferred to the political alternative that to the communist threat, pg. 4.

USDA hire or contract with thousands of industry scientists, corporate laboratories, and university researchers.

The technical momentum at the USDA worried some Friends of the Land members. There existed an enormous potential for profit and gain among American companies linked to USDA development schemes.<sup>566</sup> Materialism and corporatism ran counter to the values of the good land steward, who, if he was a USDA worker still adhering to the ideas of interdependence and holism, was in danger of being replaced by agricultural technocrats at best or driven from their posts by ideological zealots at worst. “The thing that makes most good men and women now in public service cower, bite their nails, numb their minds and tongues, lose zest and pride in their work and service, and seek freedom out of government if they can, is mainly a distorted and largely unreal picture or image which the word “bureaucrat” has somehow been led to convey to the public mind.”<sup>567</sup> The USDA was no longer a hospitable friend for advancing the aims of the permanent agriculture movement, it had become an adversary.

Pinchot’s efforts to promote conservation as a path to cooperative peace among nations illustrates the ideological bulwarks built against interdependence. During the war, he had worked through the Friends of the Land and channels in the USDA and Department of the Interior to plan for an international conference whereby cooperative conservation serve as a conveyor of world peace. Pinchot made the appeal to his old friend F.D.R. just prior to the delegation at Yalta. F.D.R. thought it was a grand idea and promised to mention it to Churchill and Stalin, but with his death the idea was lost. Pinchot approached President Truman who found the old forester to be an annoyance with talk of resource protection and cooperation. With persistence, however, Pinchot lobbied successfully for the conference under the coordination of the United Nations. The UN Scientific Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Resources convened in 1949 at Lake Success in New York, three years after Pinchot’s death.<sup>568</sup>

In opening statements by the UN, however, leadership declared that the meeting would neither inform nor produce any conservation policy and would not endorse any authority to further conservation goals through regulation or restrictions that would limit exploitation of the world’s natural resources. Pinchot’s widow and pacifist Cornelia, official U.S. delegate to the conference, challenged UN Secretary General Trgve Lie. “To sidestep the human and political implications of conservation, to deal with it exclusively in terms of materials, matter, and technical process is to take a long step backwards from where we stood a generation ago,” she asked. “What upside down Humpty-Dumpty nonsense is this? I should like to ask Mr. Lei when did scientists become so dangerous they are not to be trusted with a little power?”<sup>569</sup> Her challenge was met with silence.

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<sup>566</sup> Bromfield (1953,) in: “Blueprint for Ruin,” *The Land*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Spring 1953): pp. 148 – 149.

<sup>567</sup> Lord (1953), in: “Across The Land,” *The Land*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Spring 1953): pg. 7.

<sup>568</sup> Miller (2001), *Gifford Pinchot and the Making of Modern Environmentalism*, pp. 372-376.

<sup>569</sup> *Ibid.*, pg. 375.

The failure of the international community to consider the possibility that peaceful scientific cooperation might aid in mutual natural resource protection isolated the permanent agriculture movement from broader conversations about development and aid.<sup>570</sup> Domestic and world leaders worried that linkages between conservation and world peace threatened the economic potential of extractive industries and national development, and for some, signaled weakness among adversaries that gave ground to competitive resource exploitation.<sup>571</sup> Outspoken critics of pacifism stated that proponents of permanent agriculture and conservation-as-peace building were nothing more than “balance-of-nature” idealists and mystics.<sup>572</sup> Lord saved a thoughtful editorial reply to charges of mysticism for *The Care of the Earth* published in 1962, well after the McCarthy era and permanent agriculture movement had come to an end. “Call it a religion if you like, a lay religion of many sects, creeds, and codes. If that be a mysticism, it is at least a mysticism expressed in tangible and earthy forms; and ours is no scientific or philosophical replica of the gloomy old-time theologies, wailing of imminent hellfire, foretelling total annihilation, death to stupid and sinful humankind – death without end.”<sup>573</sup> Liberty Hyde Bailey’s “Holy Earth” had served as the lofty philosophical underpinning of the Society, made quite plain in the organization’s manifesto. Lord was correct to defend the movement as one that held at its core both Bailey’s deep spiritual goals for the movement and the pragmatic husbandman’s commitment to protect and guard life as the commitment of anti-war pacifists. Like Bailey, “a man of no orthodox faith but a devout naturalist and farmer,” Lord attempted to defend the pacifist roots of the Society against a scourge of political witch hunting with the simple explanation that a farmer’s love for peace was akin to his devotion to land without the hubris of dogma or creed.<sup>574</sup> It was a difficult defense to maintain, however, as Land contributors became ever more outspoken against America’s political climate and global events.

Louis Bromfield, the Society’s most politically vocal member agitated against the atomic bomb and other weapons of mass destruction. He was increasingly pessimistic and incensed, especially as many of his close friends and colleagues in the Screen Writers Guild had been black-listed by the F.B.I. for their affiliations with actor’s unions and anti-establishment

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<sup>570</sup> Beeman and Pritchard (2001). “Gone was the comprehensive dream of a permanent, planned, ecological agriculture supporting a holistic, healthy, peaceable population,” pg. 81.

<sup>571</sup> Miller (2001) describes the profound disappointment of both Cornelia and Gifford Pinchot at the failure of the UN Scientific Conference on the Conservation and Utilization of Resources. The idea of an international conference was resurrected by the UN in 1972, pg. 375.

<sup>572</sup> Lieberman (2010), *The Strangest Dream: Communism, Anti-Communism, and the Anti-Peace Movement 1945 – 1963*, provides a thorough examination of the American peace movement and its associations with communism and anti-communism.

<sup>573</sup> Lord (1962): in “The Endless Adventure,” pg. 411.

<sup>574</sup> Ibid., rifts and controversies of the late 1940s within literature that simply asked the question: “Can man survive?” pp. 411-412.

views.<sup>575</sup> By the time the Korean War erupted and the peace movement had all but succumbed to red scare tactics, Bromfield intensified his dislike for government and political institutions. Though a few public voices were raised to protest the ever-growing arsenal of atomic and chemical weapons in the U.S. and abroad, Bromfield stood out with consistent protestations against the bomb. Lord published the final chapter of Bromfield's latest book, *A New Pattern for A Tired World* (1954), "Blueprint for Ruin," knowing that there would be no further opportunity for criticism and push-back at least in the pages of the magazine.

"The truth is," Bromfield wrote, "that we have wandered a long way from reason and reality during the past generation. Our destinies have been largely controlled by men with curiously distorted and misshapen personalities from Hitler to Stalin to Communist leaders and traitors everywhere to figures in our own immediate history whose balance and wisdom have been dubious. It is time for the simple people to revolt."<sup>576</sup> The simple people, however, farmers and the unlearned of the Society, whose greatest contributions to the permanent agriculture movement had been their pragmatic, forward-thinking work to heal soil and restore vitality to the American working landscape, were no longer in a position influence the institution of American agriculture. Assistant Secretary of Agriculture Clarence L. McCormick pronounced that the main concern for American agriculture was national security, "a battleground upon which two ideas – democracy and communism – are fighting for survival."<sup>577</sup> The prospects of total war in a world no longer in post-war convalescence, growing ever more militarized, had silenced many voices of the Friends of the Land. The F.B.I. would never stop watching Henry A. Wallace and for all the pacifists and interdependent thinkers in the Society, the anti-Wallace frenzy subdued all but the most outspoken of them. For Bromfield, who continued to protest loudly against atomic weapons, the very survival of life on earth, tore at his ecological sensibilities.<sup>578</sup>

Between a chaotic reorganization of government agricultural and conservation agencies, red fever, and the militarization of science, Bromfield had had enough. He was the last writer among the Society's many contributors to take a stand against an onslaught of militarism and the

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<sup>575</sup> Bromfield was great supporter of the film industry, friends with many actors and screen writers with whom he traveled and who frequented his farm in Ohio for weddings, parties, and meetings. Lauren Bacall and Humphrey Bogart were married at Malabar in 1945.

<sup>576</sup> Bromfield (1954), excerpted from *A New Pattern for a Tired World* in: "Blueprint for Ruin," *The Land*, Vol. 13, No. 2, (1954): pp. 148 – 149.

<sup>577</sup> Cullather (2013), pp. 79-80.

<sup>578</sup> Landes (2003) describes the transition from post-war recovery of Europe during the early 1950s as a rapid surge of economic and technological advance that wielded power and influence. America looked on with concern as world economies "seemed to have learned the secret of eternal growth and prosperity," pg. 498; Culver and Hyde (2000), describe Hoover keeping an active file on Wallace going back to his days as Secretary of Agriculture. The F.B.I. closed the file at Wallace's death in 1964. Anti-Wallace hysteria, spun into a froth by right-leaning journalists, led to several incidents of violence at his speeches, including a throat-slitting in Charleston, S.C. in 1950, pp. 508-516.

prospect of earthly annihilation. "It is the scientist-materialist's, the General's conception of an efficient and sordid world," he declared. "It is also the perfect blueprint for the creation of a world and a life that I would abandon if I had to choose. It is the blueprint for ruin not only for ourselves but for the world...If this I our only choice against destruction by the atomic bomb, I will lie down now and take the bomb. It would be much quicker, pleasanter and easier that I should die still possessed of my self-respect as a civilized man."<sup>579</sup> Bromfield's agitation seemed a far cry, however, from Lord's day-to-day efforts to protect the ideas that for fifteen years had defined the small but influential agricultural movement from oblivion.

The struggle to maintain the philosophical ground of the Society and the challenge to make ends meet must have been exhausting for the Lords. As post-war political tensions rose, they escaped the heat and humidity of Washington and moved back again to the Tidewater country of Harford County, Maryland. After a short three-year stint living in and publishing from a charming yet structurally unsound historic inn located in the center of Bel Air, Maryland, ten miles west of their former farm, Thorn Meadow, the Lords moved again, this time to a small shingled house on Main Street. For a country retreat they purchased twelve acres of abandoned farmland a few miles from town and set about to build a swimming pond. Kate continued with her print illustrations for books and magazines and settled into small town life by offering instruction for a local art group.<sup>580</sup>

Lord published *Forever The Land* in 1950, part memoir, part anthology, in order to preserve for posterity a sampling of the literary work of the Friends of the Land. "Time brings change; but there are as yet no serious signs that Friends of the Land will ever become an organization primarily concerned with conserving itself" he wrote, suggesting that his edited collection of essays and poems belonged to future generations.<sup>581</sup> Carefully selected pieces by Gifford Pinchot, Aldo Leopold, Edwin Hubble, E.B. White, and Liberty Hyde Bailey were placed on equal footing with poems written by Ben Smith, Marion S. Oneal, and Byron Herbert Reece and many country poets of little fame or recognition. "In another ten or twenty years we shall have another generation in power; and signs abound," he said hopefully, "that the young will have learned enough by that time to use the land more wisely, reverently, and productively than their fathers ever dreamed of when they were young."<sup>582</sup>

He continued to review dozens of books annually for the *New York Herald-Tribune Book Review*, *New York Times Book Review*, and *Baltimore Sun* and this freelance work became important for reflecting upon his long career in agricultural journalism and the life of the small

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<sup>579</sup> Bromfield (1954) in: "Blueprint for Ruin," *The Land*, Vol. 13, No. 2, (1954): pg. 149; Beeman and Pritchard (2001) describe a chaotic reorganization of government agriculture and conservation agencies by 1954, "Bennett-era idealists and technicians were leaving the SCS in droves," while the Friends of the Land reflected the decline in the conservation ethos," pp. 81-82.

<sup>580</sup> Chrismer (2007) provides a chronicle of the Lord's home life in Harford County, pp. 44-49.

<sup>581</sup> Lord (1950), pg. 340.

<sup>582</sup> Lord (1950), pg. 1.

movement he helped establish.<sup>583</sup> “There was proof,” he wrote metaphorically in *Forever the Land* (1950), “that soil beaten down all but dead can be brought to life again, and made to yield as well as virgin soil or better.”<sup>584</sup>

### Pressing On the Heart of Conservation

That the momentum of the permanent agriculture movement was lost to the hysteria of the Cold War era, there is no doubt. Among the Friends of the Land founders, Former Secretary of Agriculture and Vice President Henry A. Wallace and other New Deal era leaders, Soil Conservation Service Chief Hugh H. Bennett among them, were political lightning rods for those were determined to erase New Deal policies and legacies. Along with the communist scare and political attacks, there was the booming American economy that ran at cross-currents to the conservation commitments of the Friends of the Land, that ushered in a new kind of war on nature.<sup>585</sup>

War technologies advanced the production and use of insecticides and herbicides and, when modified and marketed for consumer and domestic agricultural use, were becoming common on America’s working landscapes. Thousands of chemical combinations appeared on the American market to promote new weaponry for the home front war on insects. Millions of acres of farmland, wetland, residential area, and forests were treated with vast quantities of chemicals to combat mosquitoes, fire ants, and agricultural pests with the help of surplus military aircraft. Russell and Kate Lord lived forty miles to the west of the Delaware River basin in Southeastern Pennsylvania and Delaware where large factory complexes produced and shipped synthetic chlorinated hydrocarbons (DDT, DDE, dieldrin, aldrin) and chlordane (heptachlor, oxychlordane) agricultural chemicals across the nation. Aberdeen Proving Ground and Edgewood Arsenal, the heart of the U.S. Chemical Corps, was only a few miles south of their Bel Air, Maryland, home. Beyond the testing ground lay the Chesapeake Bay. The Friends of the Land was still unsteady from the storm of political insults and backlash thrown at its high-profile members, when Lord published an article written by a young Edgewood Arsenal researcher, Rod Cochran, who worried about the immediate and legacy effects of broad spectrum insecticides in the environment, especially for the Bay. Localized and heart-felt, Cochran’s piece attempted to refocus the energy of the magazine, if not the Society. His personal experience and advocacy

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<sup>583</sup> Chrismer (2007), pp. 44-49.

<sup>584</sup> Lord (1950), pg. 186.

<sup>585</sup> Beeman and Pritchard (2001) describe withering political attacks by GOP opponents against New Deal-era conservationists, including Friends of the Land members who had served under F.D.R., pp. 81-82; Miller (2001) points to a fear of federal regulation of resource extraction and production limits of agricultural, earth, and forest materials threatened the U.S. postwar economic boom, particularly in housing. Conservation ideas were met with fierce rhetoric in Washington and industry, pg. 367; Russell (2001) lays out the military-turned-consumer use chemical in the Cold War on nature in “Arms Races in the Cold War, 1950 – 1958,” pp. 184 – 203.

articulated the national concern among conservation scientists that nature in our backyards was undergoing profound change.<sup>586</sup>

Cochran, a WWII veteran and outdoorsman, was a chemist at Edgewood Arsenal. He provided Lord with personal accounts of the work he performed that studied the effects of chemical drift and overspray of cattle and goats with DDT. He was careful not to break with classified protocol to release classified data, but as a conservationist, he felt compelled to share his opinions with Lord. “We are truly living in a chemically sprayed world,” he wrote, “We must strive to see that all values are considered by researchers before such powerful poisons are released for wide use.”<sup>587</sup>

For all *The Land’s* many articles critical of the uses and potential abuses of agricultural technology, there had never been a story like this. Insecticides had been hailed as the miracle of modern farming and DDT had ended the threat of malaria in southern states and saved many lives overseas in campaigns against typhus and lice, crowed proponents of new civilian and agricultural uses of the insecticide. Permanent agriculturalists had not expressed quite the same criticism for agro-chemicals as they had for the overuse of synthetic fertilizers, however, and Lord included Cochran’s article to test their concern, based in some part on his own personal experience of just how pervasive the chemical-as-miracle mindset had become in his own county.

After calling a local extension agent for help with a honeysuckle problem at his pond and pine forest property near town, Lord was disappointed that he turned immediately to chemical application as a solution. The agent suggested that Lord contract a local company of Army men, recently “going over into private practice,” to apply a type of herbicide, like that of the defoliants being tested for exposing enemy positions by killing protective plant cover. “This expert said that most such work had been removed from Edgewood to other even more secret stations; but that it was really no secret now that they had chemicals to kill every living blade of growth in field and forest.” Lord was aghast. With a little investigation, he discovered, that it was common practice with county road crews, who as “trainees and graduate apprentices of the Chemical Corps, have obliged the Road Commission by squirting lethal liquids on weeds and other living cover,” throughout the county.<sup>588</sup> Lord’s personal experience confirmed Cochran’s assertion that

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<sup>586</sup> Conkin (2008), agricultural chemicals most widely used in agriculture in “Insecticides and Fungicides,” pp. 112-114; Goel, McConnell, Torrents, et al. (2010), in: “Environmental Factors Affecting Levels of Legacy Pesticides in the Airshed of the Delaware and Chesapeake Bays,” describe the Chesapeake Bay estuary and watershed as one of the largest U.S sites containing legacy synthetic broad-spectrum insecticides with military, commercial production, and civilian use contaminations dating back WWII; Cochran (1953), in: “Insecticides: A Blessing and a Danger,” *The Land*, Vol. 12, No. 2, (Spring 1953): 137-145.

<sup>587</sup> Cochran (1953), pg. 138; See also Lord’s editorial comments on Cochran’s work at Edgewood Arsenal, in: “Views and Visits,” *The Land*, Vol. 12, No. 2 (Spring 1953): pg. 7.

<sup>588</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 255



herbicide and insecticide use was ubiquitous and that the lines between commercial and military use of these chemicals were blurred. “It presses at the heart of conservation.”<sup>589</sup>

Cochran worried that the effects of DDT, benzenehexachlorides, aldrin, and dieldrin upon the marshes and woods at the Edgewood testing ground were having tragic consequences for wildlife. The combined installation at Aberdeen and Edgewood contained one hundred and fourteen square miles of upper Chesapeake Bay shoreline. His test herds of cattle and flocks of sheep and goats were doused weekly with agro-chemicals from the air. Pasture grasses and field forage crops absorbed much of it. Much more ran off after heavy rains and snow melt into the marshes and creeks. Citing ongoing research of USFWS scientists working on the Patuxent Research Refuge along the western shores of the Chesapeake Bay, Cochran stated that biologists were in a race against the chemical industry. “Most of the existing data concerning wildlife and pesticides does not mention the newer poisons. The truth is, their effects are usually not known. Some agencies are trying hard to correct this deficiency but they are hardly keeping pace with the chemists.”<sup>590</sup>

Cochran gave voice to the rising alarm of conservation scientists across the nation, but Patuxent biologists had been especially vocal, including Rachel Carson who had served as a chief editor and writer for the agency in the 1940s. Carson, at the time Cochran’s story was published in 1953, however, had since left government service and was working independently to compile evidentiary research for the book *Silent Spring* (1962). Much of the data she collected was generated by government scientists who had long argued that broad-spectrum insecticides were “a two-edged sword.”<sup>591</sup> Cochran cited the same research to include his own at Edgewood Arsenal and Aberdeen Proving Ground to demonstrate the collateral damage to bird and aquatic life was evident there as well. Given that the scientific and observational evidence was irrefutable regarding the effects upon wildlife and fisheries, he argued, would these same chemicals be as “detrimental to the productiveness of soils?”<sup>592</sup> But the questions and concerns raised by readers came too late for the Friends of the Land. As important as Cochran’s article had been to Lord, the Friends of the Land and the magazine were struggling to survive.

By 1954 Russell and Kate Lord were working long hours to keep the magazine in print. It was a labor of love as compensation at best a token for their efforts. The small but influential permanent agriculture movement was quickly becoming a footnote to a new chapter of American agriculture. “Friends of the Land never got around to world-wide programs, but at least we faced

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<sup>589</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 253.

<sup>590</sup> Cochran (1953), pg. 139.

<sup>591</sup> In the first preliminary study of DDT in 1946, USFWS biologists Cottam and Higgins at Patuxent Wildlife Refuge describe their baseline work in bioaccumulation in terrestrial, avian, and aquatic life. “The experienced control worker realizes that DDT, like every other effective insecticide and rodenticide is really a two-edged sword,” 1. See “DDT: Its Effects on Fish and Wildlife.” US Dept. of Interior, US Fish and Wildlife Service, Circular #11.

<sup>592</sup> Cochran (1953), pg.140.

that way and made a start,” Lord wrote of the last years. “We worked within guarded borders, yet there was a universality about it all.”<sup>593</sup>

Throughout its fifteen-year history, finances had always been a burden for both the magazine and the organization. In an unsuccessful attempt to remain solvent in late 1954, the executive committee of the Friends of the Land separated the publishing division from its membership forcing Lord to reconfigure and redesign the small journal to appear more like its glossy magazine competitors. The remake was expensive and poorly executed, however, and only two thin issues were produced with disappointing sales. The membership organization meanwhile had merged with the National Garden Institute for administrative purposes. It was dissolved a few years later in 1959.<sup>594</sup>

Some of the organization’s earliest founders who worked through the inter-war years to shape New Deal agricultural and conservation policy were in happy retirement by the time the magazine ceased publication, and the elders upon whose ideas the founders built their movement were passing as well. Liberty Hyde Bailey, Lord’s mentor whose ideas served as the philosophical underpinnings of the Friends of the Land, died on Christmas Eve, 1954, at age 96. No other agriculturalist had done more to shape Lord’s worldview of agriculture and environment, but in critical reflection in later years, Lord drew parallels between the fade-out of the permanent agriculture movement and the difficulties Bailey encountered as he struggled to promote his ideas of interdependence. Rendered “old fashioned” and obsolete, Bailey’s ideas of land care and stewardship were met by “an abrupt urbanization of so great an expanse of rural America [that] imposes a baffling complex of new factors, tending to alter the traditional values of country life.”<sup>595</sup> In the post-war years Bailey had stopped writing and was concentrating instead on his interests in horticulture and travel. Bailey’s silence provided Lord with an opportunity to reassess the old ideas. “It shows just what early indoctrination can do.”<sup>596</sup>

In 1954 rural depopulation was still a national concern as it had been during Bailey’s years at Cornell in the early 1900s. When *The Land* ceased publication, 15% of American workers were involved in agricultural production, a marked increase in depopulation from Bailey’s term as Dean of the College of Agriculture, 1903-1913, when 30% of American worked in agriculture. Despite Bailey’s attempts to reform agricultural education and uplift rural communities in an effort “to rescue for America the values of a rural society” through his efforts with Theodore Roosevelt’s Country Life Commission, this work did little to address major economic structural imbalances that plagued rural America’s working farms. “Through the years of conflict and the postwar scramble toward reconstruction, Dr. Bailey maintained an air of aloof

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<sup>593</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 324.

<sup>594</sup> After *The Land* ceased publication, the organization maintained a presence in and provided speakers for meetings of the National Garden Institute, National Nutrition Conference, and the Watershed Council. See general correspondence, pamphlets, and newspaper clippings 1955-1960 in FOL, Collection 364, OHS, boxes 83, 88, 93.

<sup>595</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 346.

<sup>596</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 413.

serenity that nearly all of his colleagues in the word of agriculture found not only unbecoming but irritating.”<sup>597</sup>

While it was true that Bailey broke ranks with the old traditional agrarian order and pushed for farm modernization and scientific advancement, he failed to link his understandings of American rural values with the reality that no reform could contain the rush of technological and economic forces that were altering agricultural societies worldwide. His ideas of interdependence and holy earth indeed seemed quaint and nostalgic at the dawn of the Cold War where ideologies of technological supremacy drove first world economies. Wartime lifting of barriers to trade, the collapse of obsolete political structures across nations and continents, and the power shift of American status as a global actor on the world stage forced rural societies to adapt or perish. Bailey’s ideas of permanence, as hopeful and democratic as Lord once held them to be, ignored the realities that global economic and technological pressures exerted upon American rural communities. “The turnabout is manifest in many ways,” Lord said of his own awakening of self-inflicted disillusionment. His realization that adaptive change, not permanence, was key to good stewardship. “It was then the fear that not enough of our young could be induced to farm, and that in consequence our city people would starve. The fear now is quite as extreme the other way – that even now there are far too many farmers; even these, in dwindling number, produce such superabundance as to flood the market, depress the economy, and pit us in an ill light as merchandizers who do not know how to collect on our overstock of goods or give it away gracefully here or abroad.”<sup>598</sup>

Fewer farmers were producing more food and agricultural products than at any time in American history by the mid-century. Lord had come to terms with the direction in which American agriculture was headed and that it was swiftly away from the romanticized vision of the American farmer defending his land and family from physical and social erosion. Agriculture was now an industrialized process wedded to the scientific and engineering advances of war. “Upward of sixty cents of every tax dollar is earmarked now for cold warfare or the maintenance of a militant defense,” he wrote, noting that the number of government scientists dedicated to “problems of defense by means of massive demolition or retaliation in kind” outnumbered those working in agriculture on “projects that look to peace and permanence of life and civilization in this and other lands.”<sup>599</sup> The farmer, in Lord’s estimation, was becoming an artifact of the past.

Chemical-dependent agriculture required large investments in new machinery, materials, product, and growing methods and was pushing aside, yet again, the small farmer. “I can testify as to a deep and growing bitterness on this score,” Lord wrote, noting the tone and number of letters to the editor in *The Progressive Farmer*. “The forces of displacement which inhere in heavy and costly machinery and equipment, plus forces of displacement as derive from financial

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<sup>597</sup> Lord (1962), pp. 289-291.

<sup>598</sup> Lord (1962), pp. 417 – 418; Landes (2003) examinations post-WWI global shifts in agricultural capital and labor and the functional roles of egalitarian and industrial ideologies, pp. 548-549.

<sup>599</sup> Lord (1962), references a 1958 National Science Foundation report, pg. 434.

and credit mechanisms are severe enough with the government pushing this inhumane manner of “farm relief” then blandly seeking to plaster the wounds and rescue the wounded with a specious and feeble program of rural development.”<sup>600</sup>

Technologies of the Cold War were made frighteningly apparent to the public by 1960. It was now possible to wage war without firing a shot. The military was testing the possibilities of “chain reaction warfare” by weaponizing food systems with the use of introduced pathogens that would kill livestock through ground contamination and feedstock crops. Rumors had circulated that the U.S. had used bacterial warfare in Korea to contaminate water supplies and soil with cholera and plague. The control of nature to facilitate hostile actions against enemies included experimental work in the creation of adverse weather and geotectonic events.<sup>601</sup> “The risk and menace of atomic demolition or a contamination and sterilization of all things have been recently been made manifest. The end of the world may now conceivably be a matter of man’s own making, so far at least as the survival of his kind is concerned.”<sup>602</sup>

Bromfield’s A-bomb tirades seemed no more than outdated rants compared to surreal scenarios of large-scale biowarfare contaminations. But Bromfield was up against his own battle for survival by 1955 when it was discovered he had advanced liver cancer. He died the following year. “I know of no other writer who came to the end of his days with as sure a sense of fulfillment and continuing influence,” Lord wrote in his memoir, *The Care of the Earth*.<sup>603</sup> Bromfield’s celebrity as a conservationist and farmer had overtaken his reputation as novelist by the time of his passing. Though the nation mourned the passing of a novelist, Ohio mourned a conservation hero. Malabar Farm had become a destination for tourists and Ohioan farmers wanting to see the results of two decades of restorative care for soil, forests, and watershed. The family accommodated as many visitors as they could so that mourners could witness for themselves “the glowing green oasis he made of the thousand acres at Malabar,” rescued from the “shoddy and infertile” landscape ruined by decades of natural gas extraction, crisscrossed with pipelines and pocketed with “mucky caverns that had been exhausted of their product.”<sup>604</sup> Bromfield’s gift to Ohio and the nation, was at Malabar living proof that degraded lands could be made fertile and beautiful again. But Bromfield’s methods and demonstrations did little to offer alternatives to the agricultural industries almost complete reliance upon fossil fuels.

The fossil fuel industry had indeed made agriculture the powerhouse of production. Comparing overall yields in 1939, agricultural outputs had increased by 40% in 1955 on half the working land required in 1930, from forty million acres to twenty million. Natural gas drove the

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<sup>600</sup> Lord (1962), reflecting on the mid-1950s decline of small farm owners and independent farmers, pg. 354.

<sup>601</sup> Hamblin (2010), “A Global Contamination Zone” in: *Environmental Histories of the Cold War*, pp. 104-112.

<sup>602</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 409.

<sup>603</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 459.

<sup>604</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 458.

synthetic fertilizer industry. Diesel and gasoline fueled the agricultural machines, built ever more efficiently and powerful, displacing horses and farm labor on all but the smallest farms. Lord worried about the fevered pace of domestic mineral, natural gas, and oil extraction. “Unrestricted extraction of irreplaceable minerals, oil, and gas is bound eventually to exhaust the source, leaving that place sterile, or nearly so. Plain signs of ultimate sterility become all too visible on the landscape of and around mines and oil fields,” he warned. “Often such holdings resemble barrens even as early as the peak of the boom and rush.” The energy age of fossil fuels, he worried, would translate into another era of sacrificed land and impoverished people.<sup>605</sup> “Measures of conservation cannot be confined to the surface of the earth only,” Lord insisted. “When it comes to determining precedence in drawing on ground-line and underground reserves or resources, there are conflicts between immediate convenience and the need for a perpetuation of renewable resources which need constantly to be taken into account.”<sup>606</sup>

The fossil fuel industry drove the American consumer market and made possible affordable and accessible ease of living from family cars to the plastics that sealed T.V. dinners. By 1960 the small county seat town of Bel Air was growing into a busy suburban center that included many car dealerships, chain grocery stores, and entire tract home neighborhoods that sprung up where beef cattle and small farms had once been. Lord maintained a regular routine of walking to and from the downtown corner shop for his morning paper each morning. He watched the town transform before his eyes and he was none too impressed with what he saw.

The creep of suburbia bothered the Lords, especially as it spread in the direction of their home. Small country roads that met at intersections in town were widened to four lanes to accommodate increasing car and truck traffic. The Bel Air Race track, a splendid historic three-quarter mile course with lofty grandstands, closed in 1960. The overgrown disheveled property came under the eye of land speculators who eventually tore the old ruins down to replace it with a shopping mall in 1973. Bel Air had become a bedroom community for commuters to government offices in Washington D.C. and manufacturing in Baltimore. “Along the suburban rim out from Washington and the Federal Department of Agriculture, it is both sad and ridiculous to observe not a few agricultural specialists and economic analysis who poke away at computing machines to demolish old homestead ‘delusions’ all day long striving hard in the bosom of the spilt-level ‘ranch houses’ of evenings and holidays to provide some acceptable substitute to their children for the values they profess to disdain. Across the country as a whole, cooing commercial campaigns for greater ‘togetherness’ with families, of endless advertisement and urbanized magazine articles nowadays, seem a plain indication that something vital is lacking in the New Interurbia. There was never need of such straining to restore family ties on family farms.”<sup>607</sup>

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<sup>605</sup> Lord (1962), compares production and land use statistics, pp. 387-388, and warns of a new era of extractive sacrifice of landscapes and soil, pg. 447.

<sup>606</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 449.

<sup>607</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 438.

American consumerism and the conservation ethic came to an impasse. Samuel J. Ordway, conservationist and president of the Conservation Foundation based at the former Pinchot family home of Grey Towers in Northeastern Pennsylvania, wrote in *Resources and the American Dream* of the dilemma of “the delusion of unlimited material progress,” that “Western civilization is insatiable.” Lord reviewed Ordway’s manuscript and drew his argument against the insatiable drive of consumerism. “We need to be begin to distinguish between wants and needs and bring within more reasonable limits our consumptive demands,” adding that a Cornucopian illusion had infected his own small town with an economic escapism that pretended to ignore the cost of perpetual growth to the countryside and its rural folk.<sup>608</sup> The changes to Lord’s beloved Tidewater landscape, rid of its farmers and caretakers, cleared of its woods and meadows to make room for highways and suburbia, were to Lord unforgivable acts of imposed modernity and in no way represented progress of any sort. These were not the adaptive changes of an ecologically informed society, but changes undertaken by short-sighted proponents of wastefulness and greed. “Whatever befall, there could now be no view more shortsighted and insensitive that that of those American economists and demographers who gaze with rapture at our all but excessive technological feats of producing over abundance.”<sup>609</sup>

Reviewing Ordway’s manuscript was one of his last freelance assignments. In 1960 Kate’s health began to decline and in July she passed away at Harford Memorial Hospital in Havre de Grace, Maryland. The top-of-the-Bay town had been one of the Lord’s favorite local destinations. Its quaint streets lined with Victorian homes and the working shoreline of sail shops, ship yards, and watermen’s docks had always offered them respite from the publishing industry’s tight schedules and workloads. Havre de Grace, too, had changed since they first moved to the county. Expanded heavy highway bridges carried rumbling car and truck traffic across the Susquehanna River, an integral connector the Northeast corridor. Lumbering diesel freight trains shook the town from high-level spans. Nearby, across the arc of the headwaters of the Bay, the U.S. Army at Aberdeen Proving Ground intensified its munitions testing and caused homes to shudder and windows to break as the country prepared to play a larger role in Southeast Asia. Losing Kate, Russell lost interest in trying to make sense of the change, putting aside his reading and reviews to concentrate instead on finishing his final book, *The Care of the Earth*.

Kate Lord had been at her husband’s side for over forty years. She helped him with all aspects of *The Land* and supplied hundreds of illustrations and graphic design pieces for Friends of the Land publications, pamphlets, and advertisements. In the late forties with war work behind her, she joined Russell as co-editor of the magazine. She had been his traveling partner and reader during the long assignments of the New Deal and endured had endured the rough living, dust, dirt, and floods beside him as her husband witnessed and wrote about environmental and economic crisis that had thrown America’s farming culture into despair. All along, Kate created the art of the movement, earthy images in ink, oil, or scratchboard that captured the essence of rural stewardship, the vision of permanent agriculture. Her husband carefully selected intricately

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<sup>608</sup> Lord (1962), reviews manuscripts and conference papers that carried the Malthusian debates into the era of American consumption. Among these was Ordway’s manuscript *Resources and the American Dream* (1955), Osborn’s *Our Plundered Planet* (1948) and *The Limits of Earth* (1953), pp. 415-419.

<sup>609</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 433

rendered, complex images of agro-ecological landscapes for *Care of the Earth*, leaving out the decorative, whimsical pieces of frolicking sheep and grazing cattle once so familiar to readers of *The Land*. He chose pieces that illustrated man's relationship to the land through its complexity. "Events go forward so fast these days," he wrote the year Kate died, "toward the triumph of civilized contrivances or catastrophe – or some point of working balance in between – that a precise gradation to depict ground-line transformation in America would require a stop-watch, splitting the seconds."<sup>610</sup> Nothing could be permanent in such a world.

### **The Impermanent Paradigm**

In the last years of his life, Lord pondered the immense changes he had witnessed since his early training and education at Sparks Agricultural High School in the years just before the First World War. He wondered how and why America's relationship with its soils and working landscapes had taken such a dramatic turn away from ecological sensibilities and long-term thinking that had formed the foundation of the holistic agriculture, how perceptions of the earth and its resources had shifted to capital-intensive functionality, driven rather than enhanced by scientific ambition. His memoir, embedded within *The Care of the Earth*, a big history of agricultural progress over geological and human time, offered his readers as much a reminiscence as chronology, a musing about then and now.

Lord mourned the passing of the age of horses. A life-long equestrian who served in the last American military engagement to utilize cavalry and horse-drawn artillery, Lord appreciated and loved the contributions of horse-powered farming to the history of American agriculture. In 1962 as his final book went to press, the absence of horses on the American working landscape was as much an ecological loss as a cultural one. Had no one considered "the loss to the land of horses on pasture, their strawy stall manure, an admirable mulching material and soil conditioner as well as fertilizer," and a subsequent loss of independence to the American farmer, dependent now on machine, motors, oil, and fuel? War or no war, he acknowledged, the release of millions of acres from equine feed production allowed the conversion of a quarter of America's farmlands to corn and wheat. "The forces of change that have shaped and propelled the continuing transformation of our agriculture and ways of living in this country are manifestly mechanistic and technological, not political in origin."<sup>611</sup>

The disappearance of horses represented the loss of a key component in our relationship to land. Working closely with livestock seemed lost to nostalgia while modern agricultural sciences emphasized advances in mechanization, food safety, and efficiency. Lord looked again to Liberty Hyde Bailey's influence over a generation of agriculturalists to trace how and when ideas of interdependence gave way to competition and complexity. His own youthful experiences provided evidence.

Bailey was one of several plant ecologists who embraced the ideas of interdependence at the turn of the century. As Dean of the College of Agriculture, the idea naturally extended to his

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<sup>610</sup> Lord (1962), in: "Points of Difference" measuring the rate of technological change in 1960 against political and agricultural transformations of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, pp. 327-328; See Appendix I: The Art of Kate Lord, Harford Historical Bulletin, pp. 55-59.

<sup>611</sup> Lord (1962), pp. 333-334.

work in progressive agricultural education. His influence over technical curriculum that combined education in natural history and botany helped form the foundations of holistic understandings among young agriculturalists like Russell Lord. When Lord worked his summers at home as a local milk inspector and milking equipment seller, however, he recalled the challenges to a paradigm were already well underway.

Methods in pasteurization, cooling, and delivery were untethering local dairies from nearby urban markets and making available larger regional and national markets for milk product. By the time of Lord's return to Cornell after the war, milk could be produced anywhere and sold everywhere, regardless of climate and proximity to market. "Milk by the 1930s had become one of the most explosive of liquids" in competitive trade and powerful monopolies. Holistic agriculture would not hold against capitalism and competition, even as the permanent agriculture movement began to organize in the late 1930s. By the 1960s "the transition of dairy farming to its present state and waning respects, both as a part in the national dietary and a factor in the maintenance of soil fertility, offers an instructive example of American social and economic history and the sometimes unpredictable consequences of progress."<sup>612</sup> These consequences of high production surplus and depressed prices continue to plague the industry.

By mid-century the scientific theory of ecological interdependence seemed a relic of a much more visionary time for American agriculture. Even Paul Sears, whose ecological pragmatism greatly influenced how permanent agriculturalists thought about working landscape restoration had shifted his views from plant-based succession models of restoration and biotic functionality to large-scale engineering systems where ecology served to enhance physical scientists' knowledge of biological principles. Lord would have been befuddled by Sears' 1960 participation in Project Plowshare, a U.S. Atomic Energy Commission nuclear detonation/excavation project in Alaska, one of the agency's most ill-conceived and ecologically damaging proposals to date. Sears' felt, however, that nuclear excavation was preferable to nuclear annihilation and trusted that the agency was acting correctly to create a deep-water harbor where none had existed before in the interest of national security. Barry Commoner was also invited to serve as a project advisor and though not an ecologist, stated that once he learned from Sears the concept of fallout patterns in an arctic environment, he quickly abandoned the project and became "an environmental activist!"<sup>613</sup>

How did the shift in ecological theory occur? Lord never spoke nor wrote about Bailey's contemporary, plant ecologist Frederic Edward Clements, but Clements' work greatly influenced a growing spectrum of ecological sciences directly or indirectly associated with agriculture of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, including the young plant taxonomist Paul B. Sears. Clements dedicated the whole of his ecological research to understanding the interdependent patterns of plant communities found on various landscapes around the world. "The concept of holism is nearly as

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<sup>612</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 338.

<sup>613</sup> Cittadino (2015), in: "Paul Sears: Cautious Subversive Ecologist," provides a short biographical sketch of Sears' evolution from succession-based ecologist to systems-based ecological engineer, marking for Sears and many mid-century ecologists the career shift that defined a theoretical platform change in American ecology, pp. 424-425.



possible a replica of nature's observed process," he claimed in 1916, an idea that permeated ecological sciences for the next generation. His understandings influenced the fields of soil conservation, landscape restoration, and watershed research from the 1920s through the 1940s, including the planners and applied ecologists who were working to restore large-scale degraded landscapes of the New Conservation era in Pennsylvania and New York and those who would address environmental crisis of the New Deal years. Clements' theories of vegetative succession, climax, and association-unit theory promoted an understanding of landscapes as "a balance of nature, a steady-state condition maintained so long as every species remains in place. Everything is cooperatively and interdependently linked; if one element is disturbed, the whole will be changed."<sup>614</sup> Patterns and predictability defined Clements' influence in other fields.

What his theories left out, however, was the possibility of unintended consequences, rapid adaptive change, and the idea that intersection of nature and man was far more complex than Clements' ideas of uniformity and stability. A challenge came from plant ecologist Henry Gleason whose ideas took hold at the death of Frederic Edwards Clements in 1945. His few papers and theories of individualism were mostly ignored while Gleason's ideas of predictability and constancy dominated ecological thinking from the 1920s through the end of the Second World War. After Clements' death, however, the apostles of interdependence could no longer guard their conceptual territory and a revolution in ecological thinking was launched. Gleason's concepts of complexity and individualism took hold. This after decades of shunning where Gleason felt as if he were "an ecological outlaw," even driven from the ecological sciences to work on plant taxonomy because "to ecologists I was anathema. Not one believed my ideas; not one would argue the matter."<sup>615</sup>

Gleason argued against Clements stating that plant communities were not interdependent, that an enormous variety of plant species were competing at any given time to take advantage of physical environments that were notable for constant change. The abstract nature of plant zones, communities, associations, Gleason claimed, were simply not real. "If one wishes to recognize associations, perhaps on the basis of the presence of certain dominate species one can do so and even draw lines on maps; but this activity must be recognized as arbitrary, subjective, and a gross simplification of nature."<sup>616</sup> With Clements gone, a new generation of post-war ecologists, many of them veterans entering agricultural sciences, biology, conservation, and genetics, took up Gleason's reasoning. Just twelve years after Clements' passing, the Ecological Society of America named Henry Gleason an "Eminent Ecologist" and researchers were proving right his theories of individualism and competition in field and lab.

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<sup>614</sup> Barbour (1995), in: "Ecological Fragmentation in the Fifties," states "A paradigm shift, or revolution, can often be speeded up by the death or retirement of its founders," pp. 235 -236, and including quote from Clements' 1916 essay, pg. 235, "Plant Succession: An Analysis of the Development of Vegetation," (Washington D.C., Carnegie Institution), pp. 3-6.

<sup>615</sup> Barbour (1995), pp. 248-249, and Gleason's quote from an autobiographical letter, pg. 238.

<sup>616</sup> Barbour (1995), pg. 237.

Lord witnessed the shift during the 1950s as plant genetics and breeding surged forward to lead the next wave of agricultural advancement. Even permanent agriculture leader, long-time hybrid corn breeder Henry A. Wallace was enthralled with the possibilities of genetic manipulation at the individual plant level. Reductionism displaced holism as attention turned to genetic disease resistance, creating seed varieties that guaranteed higher yields, designing vegetables for improved shipping properties, and chemically manipulating longer preservation periods for fruits. Animal scientists worked in the lab to increase milk production, create leaner meats in pork and beef, and perfect genetic transfer techniques for artificial insemination. An upsurge in chemical and fertilizer development, like that of plant and animal sciences, originated in labs under microscopes and molecular test chambers. Gleason's revolution rejected the interdependence of plant and animal communities as being simply human constructs. It was possible he argued, as agricultural science proved from the 1950s through 1970, that an understanding of the great individual complexities of plants offered enormous possibilities for rapid adaptation of living things on a continuum of change and that Clements' ideas of climax and uniformity simply did not exist.<sup>617</sup>

In writing the final chapters for *The Care of the Earth*, Lord accessed the ecological revolution through a continuation of New Malthusian debates that occupied many Friends of the Land members during the early 1950s both in *The Land* and at public speaking events. What had been membership's complicated and varying positions regarding America's international aid stance on addressing post-war hunger and famine became a new scientific debate as an emerging agricultural revolution was at hand in 1960. Human population control as the New Malthusian's would have it, involved "rigid control over aids to conception, artificial insemination, and induced abortion" to control human birth rates "with high precision."<sup>618</sup> Lord abhorred this position which led to a "mild hassle and exchange of published letters with the publishers" for his review of *Challenge of Man's Future*.<sup>619</sup> He parted company with the "brave new world" of population control by embracing the emergent technologies of agricultural science that promised "towering stockpiles" to feed the hungry through efficient production of more nutritious food on less land. Genetic technologies shared and transferred to poorer nations through the work of institutions like the Rockefeller Foundation in Mexico and other underdeveloped nations provided the counter-argument to the New Malthusian claim. But as Lord correctly observed, this also involved a new set of unintended consequences. Increased efficiencies in production, inbred disease resistance, and increased food nutritional values threatened to transform the landscape from communities of small holders to "factories in the fields."<sup>620</sup>

Efficiencies of systems were being studied by a wide range of scientists from biochemists to economists and the idea of factory farms reflected the pinnacle of modern technological

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<sup>617</sup> Conkin (2008), pp. 119 – 122.

<sup>618</sup> Lord (1962), quotes from Harrison S. Brown *Challenge of Man's Future* (1954) that argues the U.S. withholding food aid nations addressed population concerns, pg. 431.

<sup>619</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 432.

<sup>620</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 437.

progress, a view very different from current perspectives on industrial agriculture. While Lord could accept some attributes of systems sciences in agriculture, he couldn't accept all of it. "Defenders of big operations would make it appear that most commercial farms are simply family farms grown larger. And so, some are, but the continuing trend toward factories in the field, vertical integration, and corporate rather than personal management disrupts family life on farms much as do strictly businesses in cities and metropolitan areas."<sup>621</sup>

Lord took issue with government farm relief programs that benefited the largest corporate farms and that waged unfair competition for government program funding for small family-run farms. Exorbitant land prices, generous tax credits going to the largest outfits, and difficulties securing low-cost small farm loans angered his readers. "Unless I misread the thousands of letters that the 1,400,000 farm and small town people send in to my column and other departments of *The Progressive Farmer* month by month, not even farm-relief laws which seem definitely designed of late to relive small operators of their farms are accomplishing that purpose completely, and the yearning of many people of farm background to return to such a life, and try to make part or all of their living by farming, remains deep and strong."<sup>622</sup> There was push-back against large-scale agriculture and Lord attempted to chronicle a small but significant resurgence of back-to-the earth idealism taking root, but his criticism of local land use took precedence.

"Cutting a lawn the size of a rug is hardly the sort of chore to develop in children a sense of responsibility for the better care of ground for the land and the family place," Lord exclaimed. The rim of "rurbanity," was, as Lord viewed it, a "somewhat aborted reassertion of the Jeffersonian dream."<sup>623</sup> Alexander Nunn, columnist for *The Progressive Farmer*, flying over Texas noted "thirty-five to forty thousand acres of new homes" where in 1946 all had been cropland. Lord noted that these were continuous communities "almost unbroken for hundreds of miles long ribboned highways of concrete and asphalt."<sup>624</sup> Southern Harford County had already become a linear suburbia of housing developments, shopping centers, and new highway. Improved Route 40 carried thousands of commuters daily into the industrial heart of Baltimore from the county, while construction was underway in 1957 for the new interstate I-95 that would eventually connect Florida to Maine. Lord looked upon the suburbanization of his home county with disappointment and, broadly, to the changes across Tidewater Maryland with sadness.

"In my youth, when my father would sell a Guernsey calf to Senator Joseph Irwin France of Mt. Aaratt Farm, I used to sail from Baltimore to Port Deposit with that crated calf on the *Emma Giles*, a side-wheeler. The same old steamer was making the run as recently as twenty years ago; not now. The oyster beds of the bay are declining in yield and the quality fast for the same reason: silt."<sup>625</sup> The fast pace of change in the Chesapeake region had been astounding

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<sup>621</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 437.

<sup>622</sup> Ibid., pg. 437.

<sup>623</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 435.

<sup>624</sup> Lord (1962), pp. 438-439.

<sup>625</sup> Lord (1962), pp. 455-456.

and Lord seemed at once perplexed and curious. Soil conservation strategies that applied during agricultural crisis of the Dust Bowl Era did not apply to the building and construction boom of the early 1960s. But the problem was the same: man's relationship to land and his inclination to ruin the soil that sustained him. "Here in the largest sense, is a land-use problem: one that calls for large-scale rational measures of zoning, licensing, and regulation even now," he concluded in *The Care of the Earth*.<sup>626</sup>

### Crisis or Care?

William Vogt, ecologist and bestselling author of *Road to Survival* (1948) provided *The Care of The Earth* with a brief forward statement. Considering the controversy that Neo-Malthusianism had raised in the pages of *The Land*, this was an odd decision on Lord's part noting he had leveled pointed criticism at Vogt and other New Malthusians regarding their suggestions to withhold American food aid to overpopulated developing countries with the notion that catastrophic events, famine, and disease that reduced human population were "blessings in disguise."<sup>627</sup> Vogt reviewed *The Care of the Earth* and politely provided the forward essay and noted that their professional point of departure lay "where the present meets the future."<sup>628</sup>

"Russ and I have spent a good many hours arguing points on the book and there are still areas where we disagree," Vogt explained. He forgave Lord the sense of romance of earlier chapters and pointed out that Lord's strength of argument lay in his contemporary ideas of land conservation and policy. "His is the hopefulness of the husbandman who, almost as an act of faith, looks forward to better crops; the disappearance of species after species of plants and animals, for a variety of reasons, but especially of failure to adapt to changes in the environment, do not apply such an important niche in his thinking as they do in the mind of the biologist. His curve of the future and mine take different ways. He is more likely to be proven right, and I wrong, if the message is heeded."<sup>629</sup> Lord's message was decidedly not eco-catastrophism nor utopian but was shaped instead constructively around concepts of permanent agriculture and principles of conservation that later generations would adopt as sustainable agriculture.

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<sup>626</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 447.

<sup>627</sup> The multi-issue controversy that Lord's negative review of Vogt's book began in *The Land*, Vol. VII, No. 4 in 1948, pp. 430- 432; Desrochers and Hoffbauer, "Post-War Intellectual Roots of the Population Bomb. Fairfield Osborne's *Our Plundered Planet* and William Vogt's *Road to Survival* in Retrospect" (2009), deconstruct Vogt's book *Road to Survival* and the ideas that ignited a Neo-Malthusian revival. Paul Ehrlich, a freshman at Penn State was greatly influenced by Neo-Malthusian thinking and published *The Population Bomb* (1969) the year after Vogt's death in 1968. Population control activists were a major influence in the rise of the environmental movement of the 1960.

<sup>628</sup> Lord (1962), pp. 9-10.

<sup>629</sup> Ibid., pg. 9.

One of the new generation of systems ecologists, Vogt succinctly captured the gist of Lord's semi-autobiographical work as personal and expansive, based upon an individual's relationship to land. He suggested Lord's management of history was grounded partly in affection drawn from the lived experience of rapid agricultural and technological change. Vogt's book *Road to Survival* had triggered the New Malthusian movement and he understood well the power of personal experience to shape worldviews and shift paradigms. His own experiences studying climate, natural resources, and human population in Latin America had inspired the ideas that drove population control controversy. Lord's premise for *The Care of the Earth*, however, was not entirely autobiographic and Vogt, though he may not have agreed in principle, understood that Lord's sweeping agricultural history ultimately framed American farmers and agricultural scientists as uniquely positioned to advance methods and practices that ensured human survival and careful stewardship of resources, if only corporatism, militarism, bureaucracy and "the worship of the Golden Calf" could be reconciled. Lord's premise and values, stated Vogt, "were based on more eternal matters than the gadgetry and conditioning symbolism that shape so much of the behavior of human kind."<sup>630</sup>

Of militarism, Lord predicted hopefully that "we may expect a considerable deactivation of military plants and personnel in the years ahead," suggesting that the economic benefits to farmers and landowners would be impressive.<sup>631</sup> If landowners, including the public, might expect extractive industries like coal, oil, and natural gas to cease robbing resources and the misappropriation of wealth, then "miserably poor agriculture on run-down and degraded soil" could transform through ecological and economic restoration to address many of the catastrophic concerns that pre-occupied the New Malthusians.<sup>632</sup> Lord challenged Vogt with the idea that appropriate free enterprise could be as simple as strengthening the economic position of family farming with fair and affordable access to land and its ownership. "Farmers, in particular, will incline to believe and to work in the faith that the first answer to the world's sore need is in the soil, not in the drugstore."<sup>633</sup>

Lord's choice of Vogt to provide the Forward for *The Care of the Earth* seems more understandable considering the arguments he wished to settle with the New Malthusians. Still, the population control movement held powerful sway over an emerging environmentalism and as

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<sup>630</sup> Ibid., on William Vogt, pp. 9-10.

<sup>631</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 434.

<sup>632</sup> Lord (1962), describes a short-term contractual job he performed in the late 1950s in the Appalachian Mountains of Western Maryland where he was dismayed at the pollution and extraction of wealth and health due to coal fields, shoddily run paper mills, and rural distress. He imagined a sedentary and unhealthy citizenry retrained in agriculture and conservation methods revitalizing the region, pp. 456-457; Derochers and Hoffbaum (2009) examination of New Malthusian concerns that included carrying capacity of land, overpopulation, disease and famine, industrialism, warfare, and profit motive, pp. 44-50.

<sup>633</sup> Lord (1962) refers to "the drugstore" and Vogt's position as Director of the Planned Parenthood Federation of America, 1951 – 1962, pp. 431.

Lord had observed, it generated a backlash of those in disagreement with “doomsayers.”<sup>634</sup> Sustainable agriculturalists who would later inherit the ideals of the permanent agriculture movement found environmentalism’s underpinnings of population catastrophism to be unworkable. Advocates of an alternative agriculture that included organics and biodynamics retained core scientific principles of living soils, biodiversity, and erosion control were indebted to the mid-century research of government scientists. Rising environmentalists, however, cast doubt on the ability of agricultural sciences and policies to provide for a healthy, safe food system without serious environmental costs. Though the physical state of America’s working landscapes had vastly improved, a direct result of New Deal era conservation practices, environmentalists of the early 1960s nonetheless harshly labeled agricultural progress as “technology run amok” adding to a sense of crisis, perceived or actual.<sup>635</sup> This caused an unfortunate and long-lasting rift between farmers who saw themselves as good stewards and those who were relentless in their anti-agriculture claims.

But there were areas of concession between environmentalists and alternative agriculture. A small but determined back-to-the land movement described as “neo-Yankees,” who, as displaced artists, craftspeople, and writers were shunned by or self-removed from society, were demonstrating that small scale organic agriculture was environmentally safe and healthy. Most mid-century back-to-the-landers flocked to New England, Helen and Scott Nearing among them. Escaping technocracy and consumerism, back-to-the-landers created personas of self-reliance and independence.<sup>636</sup> The Nearings made themselves and their rugged lifestyles available to the public through their books *The Maple Sugar Book* (1950) and *Living the Good Life* (1954) which were both popular among counter-culture and disillusioned young people who trekked north in increasing numbers each year to participate in the Nearings experiment.

The Nearings celebrated their self-sufficiency living off the land and eschewed wage-earning dependency while simultaneously learning from and keeping distance from the local farmers. Native Vermont farmers “bore little resemblance to those Yankee icons of hard work

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<sup>634</sup> McCann (2009), in: “Malthusian Men and Demographic Transitions,” argues that Cold War demographers employed statistical and gendered scare tactics, justified by Malthus’ methods of quantifying population boom and bust predictions that framed population dynamics in the U.S. as of the greatest concern to dominant power structures in science and policy, pg. 142; Odum (2007) *Environment, Power, and Society for the Twenty-First Century: The Hierarchy of Energy*, notes that social demographers of the 1950s served as the initial “voices of concern” who ushered in a generation of “doomsayers” with population explosion warnings that “have come so and often and for so long” as to be the boy who cried wolf, pg. 382.

<sup>635</sup> Lord (1962) credits the extension of New Deal policies and agricultural advancements in soil health and erosion control through the 1950s, “with a soil base [in 1960] already in some part restored and on places plainly on the up toward greater fertility, with more land than we really know what to do with,” pg. 386; Conkin (2008) in: “Alternatives,” pp. 183-185; Brown (2011) notes that farmers of the 1950s and 1960s were the beneficiaries of New Deal agricultural and social programs, pg. 205.

<sup>636</sup> Brown (2011), pg. 201

and frugality admired by regionalist writers of the 1930s,” but the new re-invented image of the Yankee husbandman nevertheless captured the hearts and minds of readers.<sup>637</sup> Lord observed the new movement with interest. “No one of country rearing can be wholly unsympathetic regarding this back-to-the-earth stampede of transients and new residents in rural parts,” he noted. But he criticized the movement as not having honored a sense of place and commitment to the existing rural community to instead “live out in the country and are not at home there.”<sup>638</sup> His doubts about a modern movement were surely influenced by personal experience with the earlier back-to-the-land movement of the 1910s. He noted with some amusement that even familiar back-to-the-land books of his youth, *Three Acres and Liberty* (1907) for instance, that had inspired his father to move the family to a run-down farm far from the commotion and comforts of Baltimore, had been reissued and adopted as favorite texts among the neo-Yankee farmers.<sup>639</sup>

The rise of a new back-to-the-land movement was not, however, a simple remake of an earlier time and whether Lord observed this is unknown, for he makes no further mention of it in his books or articles at the time. I suggest that it is important to understand how the two back-to-the-land movements differed, for it gives historians an interesting interpretation of the permanent agriculture movement that occupied the chronological space between them. Brown (2011) argues that like many social movements of the early 1960s the back-to-the-land phenomenon was indeed influenced by a growing environmental awareness but layered deeply too with waves of social discontent seated in modern American life. The latter movement, Brown suggests, was marking the end of an era and the start of a new one.<sup>640</sup>

Less apparent in the mid-century return to the land were the single-family homesteads of grit and determination as personified and celebrated as the Nearings while increasingly common were the establishment of communes and loosely assembled off-the-grid communities appearing throughout New England and later, in the American West. While the mid-century back-to-the-land movement is still woefully understudied, it signaled an important transition of predominately young white Americans fleeing to the land not to find more security and material abundance in self-reliance, but to escape a culture that was perceived by them to be too rich and materialistic. As Helen and Scott Nearing noted, the crowds of visitors to their farms in Vermont (and later in Maine) were not escaping poverty or economic uncertainty, but had come from families of privilege and security.<sup>641</sup>

Between 1907 when Russell Lord and his family resettled in the country to build a secure life farming and 1962 when in old age Lord observed a new exodus back to the land, agriculture

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<sup>637</sup> Brown (2011), pp. 200-201.

<sup>638</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 344.

<sup>639</sup> Ibid., pg. 344; See also Brown (2011) pg. 206.

<sup>640</sup> Brown (2011), pg. 205.

<sup>641</sup> Brown (2011), pp. 205-207; Nearing (1979), *Continuing the Good Life: Half a Century of Homesteading*, pg. 360.

had undergone tremendous change. No change would be more profound than the American relationship to land, a dynamic shift from farming as exploitation to that of stewardship. Permanent agriculture, defined by span of Lord's life, bridged the pragmatic and philosophical space between social and scientific concepts of land health and human well-being by connecting the agricultural reforms of the Country Life era with an emerging environmentalism that voiced growing concerns for nature, land, and human welfare.

Had adherents of permanent agriculture assumed one must own and work land to change one's relationship to it? Lord clarified this position as a criticism of the movement he helped promote. "We found, as perhaps we should have known long years before, that you do not have to own even as much as a single acre of land, or even own or rent a front-foot of it; you do not yourself have to be a farmer, great or small; you do not even have to be a gardener in order to be a part and take a part in fundamental conservation and better care of the earth." Anyone can take a stand for the earth, no matter background, economic situation, ethnicity, city dweller, or suburbanite. He was passing the torch, testifying to the next generation of conservationists and stewards that "we must never let up in our efforts at recruiting" for the cause of the land.<sup>642</sup>

Lord's final book, *The Care of the Earth*, was published the same month as Rachel Carson's last work in 1962. *Silent Spring*, hailed as the book that launched the modern American environmental movement, overshadowed Lord's memoir and history of movement that prepared the ground for a new generation of land advocates. While Carson maintained an exhausting two years in public hearings and making appearances to appreciative (and sometimes critical) audiences, Lord was enjoying the gentle pace of town life in his retirement from agricultural journalism and editorial duties. Both Lord and Carson passed away, he from coronary illness and she from cancer, in 1964. The torch was passed.

### Lord's Epilogue

There is no finish to this story and Lord proclaimed as much, that a convergence of social, agricultural, and environmental movements would provide for an "endless adventure" in an ongoing search for ways to live sustainably on the land. The work of soil conservationists, ecologists, and economic reformers of the interwar and post-war years inspired a suite of agricultural innovations and ways of thinking about the health of the land for the long term that led into new fields of sustainable agriculture, permaculture, and agroecology. But Lord worried, too, that this good work would be overwhelmed by continued economic and environmental crisis. He was not wrong and it seemed to some sustainable agriculture advocates during the return of debilitating droughts of the 70s and economic crisis of the 80s that farmers and the USDA had forgotten or ignored the lessons of his time.

If historians frame the permanent agriculture movement as agricultural reform, then the movement clearly failed. It did not resolve the problems of rural depopulation nor address the inequities of class and race that continue to plague farming. Although permanent agriculturalists tried to acknowledge the usefulness of science and technology in long term conservation practices of soil and landscape, they were insufficiently prepared to approach the forces of capitalism and industrialism that reshaped attitudes among the rural business class. It seemed at

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<sup>642</sup> Lord (1962), pg. 324.



times, as is evident in the articles and stories of *The Land*, that Lord struggled to strike a balance between the technical and economic side of the movement and those who emphasized that rural social and cultural factors were more important. The movement seemed split as to which priorities to emphasize and worked at cross-purposes.

If we frame permanent agriculture as a branch of agricultural science, however, then a different picture presents itself. One of the main commitments of the Friends of the Land, modeled on the Progressive Era priorities of Liberty Hyde Bailey, was the dissemination of agricultural sciences to farmers that aimed to foster experimentation and innovation. Lord and the Friends of the Land organization promoted and encouraged scientific engagement with the popular seminar and tour series. Farmers were encouraged to partner with university researchers or form cooperatives that stressed scientific experimentation and demonstration. Faulkner's *Plowmans Folly* (1945) remains a masterpiece of soil conservation and applied technology. It was in the pages of *The Land* that agricultural scientists debated his novel and controversial practices that urged farmers to eliminate the moldboard plow, plant cover crops to hold and enrich soil instead, and rototill instead of turn soil. Agroecology, the science of sustainable farming, was born within the purview of permanent agriculture.

The core of permanent agriculture was a pragmatic scientific approach to ideas of interconnectedness and ecological habit of mind. Far from denying science and technology a place in the long view of agriculture, the concept of permanence invited science to help strike balance between holistic and mechanistic relationships with land through the appropriate use of technology.

Lord's observations during World War One of French peasants working fertile fields seven hundred years under one family's care aligned his view of agricultural science to F.H. King's *Farmers of Forty Centuries* (1907), cementing in his mind the need for long-term permanent solutions to critical agricultural problems like erosion, soil exhaustion, irrigation, and adaption to changing environments. From his early years as an Ohio extension educator to the pinnacle of his career as an editor, his promotion and advocacy of permanence served as a scientific challenge to American agriculture. Sustainable agriculture scientists continue to answer his challenge with a range of research and application.

The Land Institute, based in the eastern prairies of Kansas, is working to perennialize wheat. The Leopold Center of Iowa offers lucrative grants to farmers to encourage innovation in agroecological methods that conserve aquifers and enhance soil health without fertilizers and chemicals. Nearly every state maintains a sustainable agriculture organization, agency, or program to promote scientific problem-solving among farmers. It is possible at most land grant universities to major or minor in agroecology or sustainable agriculture and extension services throughout the states provide education and conferences.

Russell Lord challenge was also a product of his time and environment and, lucky for us, he wrote from the position of a keen observer of and participant in a century of almost continual change. War, economic collapse, environmental crisis, and an explosion of technological advances were all chronicled and given meaning within the context of agricultural history. Lord faced the philosophical dilemma of his upbringing as a young agrarian under the wing of Bailey's reformed agricultural schools and under the influence of his father, a back-to-the-land gentleman farmer. The horrible reality of industrialized warfare during World War I offered an

opportunity to juxtapose two contradictory views land use; as sustenance or sacrifice. His transformational moment, observing peasant farmers manuring their fields just a few miles behind the brutality of the front lines, later led to a critical shift in his thinking about endurance and longevity. This was so pivotal an experience, like that of young forester Aldo Leopold, who witnessed and later wrote about his killing of a wolf, that it made meaning of a lifetime of advocacy for his cause in permanent agriculture.

Within the framework of environmental biography, Lord offers agricultural and environmental historians a rare experiential perspective that embodies six decades of an outdoor and reflective life to make meaning at the crossroads of broad environmental impacts and the modern technological world. I wonder how different this experience may have been had Lord spent his writing career under the glare of office lights in some editorial office of a major magazine or newspaper. Instead, he wrote literally from the field, watching landscapes from coast-to-coast trains, camping with his wife on months-long expeditions to national forests, and most importantly, from his writing library at Thorn Meadow Farm. His readers were introduced to and made members of working landscapes that, whether rural, urban, or later, suburban, were composed of the human construct and influenced by human activity. He helped shape how we valued or de-valued land and urged us, whether farmers or gardeners, to take responsibility for our actions. He made land care and stewardship a moral issue as much a conservation imperative.

Though only a part his career writing about agriculture, his editorship of *The Land* was his greatest contribution the American conservation movement. His was the first literary journal to secure an open space for multi-disciplinary conversations on key conservation issues made accessible to a general readership. As a literary journal, his intent was to provide a platform for a larger critique of the progress that could threaten or advance ideas of stewardship. It is my hope that the few remaining collections of *The Land* journal are preserved for the benefit of future agricultural and conservation history. It is a body of work that we should examine more closely as a collection of the core ideas and authors of the modern environmental and sustainable agriculture movements.

Lord managed most of the Friends of the Land tours and speaking events that allowed scientists to be seen and heard, appearing before enthusiastic and mixed audiences of farmers and consumers, urban and rural citizenry, a wide cross-section of the American public. Through *The Land* and the public activities of the Friends of the Land ecological sciences earned celebrity and a passionate public following. Here the Society fulfilled its core mission to make conservation education accessible to all and despite the financial struggle to keep both the organization and journal afloat, the ideas each promoted provided ample inspiration to further the conservation message beyond their time.<sup>643</sup>

Ten years after Lord's death, the outdated concept of agricultural permanence had been replaced by the term *sustainability* as agricultural scientist Lester Brown declared anew that "our economic system depends on the earth's biological systems. Anything that threatens the vitality

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<sup>643</sup> Beeman and Pritchard (2001) chart the inspiration for a new environmental ethic that followed the permanent agricultural movement, pp. 101-130.

of these biological systems represents a deterioration of the human prospect.”<sup>644</sup> By the 1980s and the height of the farm crisis, sustainable agriculture was firmly established as an heir to the ideas of permanent agriculture, a pragmatic application of the environmental ethic of farming. Lord would have been pleased to know of this development believing that the agricultural problems of the near future would be historically contingent upon the legacy of his time.

Lord warned that overabundance, glut, and gigantic surpluses - hallmarks of modern industrial agriculture - have and will continue to result in “success that [defeat] this purpose because material surplus induces a multiplication of human numbers out of all proportion to available or prospective provisions and supplies.”<sup>645</sup> The questionable morality of a competitive society that boasts of its enormous surplus while large regions of the world are in conflict and go hungry might spur some deeper consideration, “when amid all the name-calling and bomb-rattling, quieter voices of reason seem to give promise that more peaceful and rational interchanges may prevail.”<sup>646</sup>

Where to go from here on this endless adventure?

Looking at inheritors of the core aims of the permanent agriculture movement, social movement researchers and agricultural historians can do no better than to look at The Practical Farmers of Iowa, a large progressive and pragmatic group of farmers and conservationists, formed during the Farm Crisis of the 1980s. The group has long adopted Bailey’s nature-as-model framework to support ecologically responsible farming as a core tenet of its mission, and much like the Friends of the Land tours, the group manages an extensive on-the-road workshop and speaking tour roster each year to promote adaptive ecological management and conservation in agriculture. The Land Institute, mentioned earlier, was named specifically for the Society of Friends of the Land by founder Wes Jackson who, as a young agronomist, had collected a few issues of *The Land* and was astounded by what he read in them. In a scientific movement all its own, the Institute works to advance agricultural research in perennial grains and oilseeds to address problems associated with soil health and wind erosion of soils of prairie ecosystems. It too maintains a vibrant public education program and models its annual Prairie Festival on the Friends of the Land national speaker tours. The Rodale Institute of Kutztown, Pennsylvania, was established in the 1950s and continues to challenge industrial agriculture with ongoing research in organics and appropriate technologies in farming methods. It maintains a popular publishing house and is locally active in public and farmer’s education programs.<sup>647</sup>

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<sup>644</sup> Beeman and Pritchard (2001), pg. 113.

<sup>645</sup> Beeman and Pritchard (2001), pg. 11.

<sup>646</sup> Lord (1962), “With the world growing physically smaller in terms of proximity and travel time; and with ultimate resource, the resourcefulness of man, enlarging, the madness may subside,” pg. 269.

<sup>647</sup> Personal conversations with Teresa Opheim, Executive Director, Practical Farmers of Iowa and Connie F. Mutel, University of Iowa, October – November 2010; conversation with Wes Jackson at the Prairie Festival, October 2010; Personal conversation and email, Maria Pop, Education Director, Rodale Institute, March 2012. Each of these interviews included mention of

Long after the lifespan of these legacy organizations have run their course, the land will remain. For the field research that this work required, I visited many of the landscapes that Lord wrote about during the 1930s and 40s. I stood on the rim of Providence Canyon and was aghast at the magnitude of it. I hiked the Hocking Hills and Malabar Farm in Ohio and was taken aback with how mature forest cover blankets the worst of the gullies which are still evident if one carefully follows Lord's descriptions as a guide. I birdwatched in the historical district of Honey Hollow where P. Alston Waring gathered his farming neighbors to start the nation's first farmer's land cooperative. It is rich with healthy forest, clean streams, lush hay fields, and working farms. I helped locate and mark rare plant communities on the serpentine barrens where Lord's first farmer interview took place. It's now a state park full of curious naturalists who hike along trails made long ago by grazing cattle.

I'm hopeful that these places will continue to heal from the damage inflicted on them during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The signs of past abuse are still there if you know how and where to look. I fear, however, that we will lose the stories of these places and that would be a great disservice to the men and women who fought to save them. The paradox of conservation is masking with nature the stories in the land that we so badly need to relearn as we move into uncharted territories of large-scale environmental change lying just ahead of us.

I drive past Thorn Meadow every day on my way to and from work and figure it hasn't changed much though the fields are less thorny and beautifully manicured. It's now an equine estate with handsome stables and grazing horses. His study and library is still there, the addition to the old farmhouse made in the late 1930s where neighbor kids listened to the clacking of the typewriter at the study's window. His home in Bel Air, however, is gone. Strip malls and densely build housing developments are continuous from his Main Street address to the interchange with I-95 some ten miles south. It is the kind of land use that he predicted. Some today say it has become a scourge on the rural character of Harford County. But the county has much to be proud of, especially its role in soil conservation and an ever-growing number of protected agricultural acres enrolled in various conservation programs and farm easements. The ideas of permanent agriculture were adopted early and eagerly here and the county should celebrate this for it holds a notable place in the history of the movement.

In sum, I hope that readers and historians continue to explore how environmental biography can be used to understand man's relationship to land. The social and conservation movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century offer us very fertile ground for discovering so many more voices, little known or old friends. Russell Lord gives us the go-ahead to keep exploring.

It was entirely by chance, as I have told you, that I was led into a concern for the land, with all its ramifications through the study of agriculture. That somewhat restricted routes of study then laid down for students of vocational agriculture left any lacks and deficiencies in basic knowledge and training, which had to be, or will be made up later, if at all. I have never regretted my choice, such as it was, however; for it set me upon a journey of discovery to which there seems no ending. We have come quite a long way

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Friends of the Land and the work of soil conservation writers and researchers who inspired early adopters of biodynamic and sustainable agriculture in the 1950s and 1960s.

together, those you who have followed or stayed with me all the way to the closing  
page.<sup>648</sup>

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<sup>648</sup> Lord (1962), pp. 459-460.

## Conclusion

I have presented an environmental biography of Russell Lord through the lens of conservation history so that his work, a vision of long-term working lands stewardship might be seen differently, if not anew, in the context of 20<sup>th</sup> century agricultural history. The small but influential agro-conservation movement, embodied as the Society for the Friends of the Land, has been obscured by time and a lack of critical attention. I hope this biography of both the man and the movement he co-founded encourages others to re-examine the ideas and influences of his time to help us understand the literal and philosophical landscapes from which environmentalism and sustainable agriculture emerged. His ideas of stewardship and time, inspired by a transformational experience with peasant farmers behind the lines in France during World War I, forged a life-long commitment to communicating the ideas of sustainability long before the term could be defined by modern practice.

As this research evolved, I had to re-examine my ideas about why the permanent agriculture movement and Russell Lord himself seemed absent from scholarship in agricultural history. I reframed the way I approached my search for materials, it was perhaps not surprising that conservation history provided the most access to the ideas and work of permanent agriculturalists. This is an important venue for agricultural historians to consider as it broadens the context through which ideas about soil conservation, technology, and rural issues emerge. This richer contextual approach allows for more opportunity for interdisciplinary collaborations. This was certainly true for understanding the complex economic, environmental, and technological factors that helped form my perspectives of sacrificial landscapes and the conservation paradox that resulted from their retirements and restorations.

Long-term thinking, ideas of interdependence, deep ecology, and holism inspired later movements in environmentalism and ecological farming. The scientific and philosophical legacies of Liberty Hyde Bailey, F. H. King, Gifford Pinchot, and Frederic Clements inspired a generation of young conservationists, agriculturalists, and writers to think differently about how environmental and economic crisis could be addressed. The value Lord's direct experience of and reflections upon war, economic collapse, poverty, and progress cannot be understated. His writings always contained enough of the autobiographical voice that we can observe how his thinking changed over time and that his personal study of the agricultural history of man and in the environment over time charged his literary and philosophical mind. He connected ideas, authors, and controversies within the pages of *The Land* and invited readers to explore the possibilities along with him. This work forms the center of permanent agricultural thought and action. It was pragmatic as well as far-seeing.

Russell Lord's passing in 1964 was not an end to the ideas of permanent agriculture though a dearth of contemporary scholarship on the movement may make it seem so. With a little sleuthing, the legacy of *The Land* and the Friends of the Land can be observed in many facets of environmentalism and agriculture today. The evidence of this legacy is in the work of ecologically-minded farmers and ranchers, young and veteran farmers, as well on the land itself. It extends now, finally, to farmers of color, to issues of land access and ownership, and to the South, where even the most ambitious federal agricultural programs stumbled and failed. Sustainable agriculture programs can be found in nearly every land grant university in every state

including historically black colleges and universities (HBCUs). The ideas of permanent agriculture can now be considered a foundation for a new environmentalism that includes the work of farmers and land stewards who understand, as Lord and the Friends of the Land did, that man is an integral component to the force and function of nature for better or worse.

Today there are agricultural conservation organizations that contain in their mission familiar echoes of the concepts of permanence (perennial and organic) and interdependence (complex socio-ecological communities). These include the Land Institute, Aldo Leopold Foundation, Leopold Center for Sustainable Agriculture, Rodale Institute, and American Prairie Reserve. Almost evangelical are the educational and economic opportunities for new and beginning farmers, especially in the work of the Pennsylvania Association of Sustainable Agriculture, Practical Farmers of Iowa, Northeast Organic Farming Association, and Oregon Tilth. Federal agencies and national non-profit organizations that hold as core tenets the appropriate use of technologies and regional ag-innovation hubs include the Natural Resource Conservation Service (NRCS), Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education (SARE), National Center for Appropriate Technology (NCAT), and the work of individual farmers within thousands of regional cooperative soil and watershed conservation districts. The common operational thread among these organizations include permanent agriculture's core commitments to restoring and conserving working soils and watersheds that result in vibrant rural economies. Though the Friends of the Land failed to sustain its public message beyond the mid-1950s, ideas of permanence and interdependence were transformed and carried forward.

There is an enduring tradition of post-mid-century farmer-philosophers who matured as thinkers and writers during the formative years of America's modern environmental movement. These are now the elder voices of sustainable agriculture's ecological conscience. Russell Lord, were he around today, may have felt personally akin to farmer-theologian Fred Kirshenmann, poet Wendell Berry, and prairie agronomist Wes Jackson. In *Cultivating an Ecological Conscience* (2010), Kirshenmann draws directly from the ideas of Liberty Hyde Bailey to argue for a new ecological agrarianism of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. While attending the 2010 Prairie Festival at the Land Institute in Kansas, I had the opportunity to speak informally with Wes Jackson, who expressed excitement that I had chosen Russell Lord as the subject for my dissertation research. He was thrilled to know that a rare and complete collection of *The Land* was housed at the Historical Society of Harford County and that it was only a short drive from my home in southern Pennsylvania.

This work leaves undone, however, many venues for future investigation. It was difficult at times to restrain my research to biography without falling down any number of scholarly rabbit holes that would have taken me beyond the scope of this work, but I have set aside several questions for future study. Considering the name of the organization and the influence of Quaker co-founders and members, how did core insights of Quakers regarding war and peace, land and stewardship, and ideas of community influence scientific and economic perceptions of permanence? The Friends of the Land, aside from its nod to Quakerism in its organizational name, worked fervently to create community, relationship, and conversation in both printed materials and public events. Giving testimony was an important part of the Friends of the Land gatherings and tours. Though Lord declared no formal connection to Quakerism or any other religious group, his work and words were decidedly influenced by the Friends philosophy. Who

else, I wondered, may have been similarly influenced and by whom? How deep does Quaker environmentalism run in 20<sup>th</sup> century agricultural reform?

The socio-ecological philosophical underpinnings of interdependence and holism were no match for American political repressions of the Cold War. This research demonstrates how such repression, under the guise of protecting society against the threats of Communism, impacted the voices of the permanent agricultural movement. How did McCarthyism affect the work and ideas of progressives in agriculture and did the effects alter or delay a course in the emergence of sustainability sciences? Permanent agriculturalists were not counter culture revolutionaries and they were committed deeply to the ideals of democracy. They were declared guilty-by-association to the New Deal, of thinking too far left in matters of international collaboration especially with Russia and China. Further research is needed into why certain conservation and early environmental groups may have been targeted and how they were punished for perceived un-American activities and thinking. It is important to understand how and why that even today environmentalism and sustainable agriculture is regarded by some agricultural institutions as subversive and on the fringe of accepted agricultural establishment. It is important, too, to understand that even after the anti-communism crusade ended in the mid-1950s, why and how political ideology continued to marginalize those who sought alternatives to agricultural practices considered harmful to the environment, rural communities, and farm workers.

Finally, we need to give attention to the ecological and social narratives of the stories of domestic wartime working landscapes, land that suffered severe degradation because of immediate and ongoing demands for food, fiber, fuel, and fats. Lord experienced complex processes of land degradation first-hand. His accounts of frenzied efforts to take from the land the maximum yield in minimum time for maximum profit resulted in sometimes difficult examinations of ideas about progress, industrialism, militarism, and consumerism. Working lands, like people, contains evidence both biological and physical that describes over time like memories of its past uses and ecologies. Many of the questions I had as I read Lord's accounts about the degradation of lands in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Oregon, California, Georgia, Florida, and France concerned how land under pressure reached and crossed the threshold of biological dysfunction even as farmers and other users continued to work soils and what remained of natural resources even harder. How was it possible that working lands could be worked to death? More importantly, what combination of social and governmental solutions may have prevented further demise?

Land retirement and agency acquisitions contributed to biological rescues that over time masked serious degradations with natural settings, abundant wildlife, recovered forests and plains. Large-scale watershed reconstructions involved the cooperation of rural communities, ranchers, and farmers offered a chance that lands could be farmed again. These are lands sacrificed for the war effort, profits, or technologies that we further sacrificed to conservation and engineering. There is yet no seven-hundred-year continuous history of farmers on the land in America as Lord witnessed in France during World War I, but what can we learn from our own attempts to restore working lands that may offer insight into future conservation policy and practice?

I think that the use of environmental biography used as a tool to examine broader, interdisciplinary histories of 20<sup>th</sup> century social movements and transitional periods is a valuable prospect for those interested in the history of science and ideas. From the standpoint of



environmental ethics, Lord and the permanent agriculture movement together promoted a sense of morality with regards to land as community. It was not, as some critics claim, a movement based upon utopian ideals, but of pragmatic considerations for leading an industry and rural people out from under the weight of environmental crisis. Lord's views of science and technology informed his personal and public philosophies which he richly shared in his writing and editorial selections of poetry and essays for *The Land*. His perspectives were examined by readers and surely influenced their own or drew criticism. Environmental biography allows historians to dive deep into the processes of how ideas are shared, adopted, or abandoned and this biography framed certainly bore that out.

The field of environmental history is rapidly expanding. It is unhindered by traditional disciplinary boundaries and therefore is open to diverse methodologies and scholarly investigations that describe man's relationship to land and natural resources yet it retains strategic positioning within the broad field of historical study. Given the complexities and detail of the study of one man's place in time and space, it may seem almost inconsequential to answering larger questions of agriculture and conservation, but if this biography stands to serve its purpose in the context of 20<sup>th</sup> century environmental history, it is revealing if not revelatory to consider the impact and influence that an individual might have in shaping the evolution of relationship of a society to the working lands that sustain it.

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## Appendix -Permissions

To: Maryanna Skowronski, Director, Historical Society of Harford County, Maryland

From: Peggy Eppig

Date: August 3, 2017

Dear Ms. Skowronski,

I am a doctoral student at Antioch University New England completing my dissertation on Russell Lord. Could you please confirm permissions for the use of collection and papers for Russell Lord, Editor, *The Land*, and co-founder of the Society of Friends of the Land. This work will appear in Proquest Dissertations and Theses Database, a Print on Demand Publisher <http://www.proquest.com/products-services/pqdt.html> It will also be accessible through Ohiolink Electronic Theses and Dissertations Center and that Ohiolink ETD Center, an open access archive, <https://etd.ohiolink.edu/> Through my university, this dissertation will be available through AURA: Antioch University Repository and Archive, an open access archive. <http://aura.antioch.edu/>

August 4, 2017

From Historical Society of Harford County, Maryland -

I am writing to assure you that excerpted materials from The Land series of publications which Peggy Eppig has cited in her dissertation may be used with our permission.

The Land has been out of print for over sixty years and the set she utilized in her research is the property of the Historical Society of Harford County.

Russell Lord, the publisher and editor was a Harford County resident and the journal was published here in Harford County in the Town of Bel Air. The Society has over the years worked in close contact with Mr. Lord's remaining immediate family who are his niece and two nephews (he had no children) who have given their blessings to any intellectual works that utilize their uncle's publications. His niece in particular is aware of Ms. Eppig's work.

If you need any further information, please feel free to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Maryanna Skowronski

Director

The Historical Society of Harford County, Inc.

143 N. Main Street

Bel Air, MD 21014

Phone: 410-838-7691

FAX: 410-838-5257