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ABSTRACT

The Louis Bromfield Sustainable Agriculture Library is located in Lucas, Ohio, at Malabar Farm State Park. Established in 1992, the library is jointly maintained by the Ohio State University Sustainable Agriculture Program and the Ohio Department of Agriculture. The library's namesake, Louis Bromfield, was a Pulitzer Prize-winning author and noted conservationist and farmer. This research paper traces the development of the collection from its origins as a part of Bromfield's personal working library to its place in what at one time was to be the premier ecological information center in the world, and ultimately, to its current status as a closed-reference library for farmers, students, and other individuals interested in sustainable agriculture. Bromfield practiced what today is considered sustainable agriculture. Sustainable agriculture combines traditional conservation-minded farming techniques with modern technologies and includes such practices as rotating and diversifying crops, building up the soil, and when possible, controlling pests naturally. Economic, social, and environmental concerns have increased the need and demand for alternative methods of agriculture and consequently, the demand for information and education about the topic has increased. The Louis Bromfield Sustainable Agriculture now serves to meet this growing demand. (Contains 140 endnotes.) (Author)

SEEDS OF KNOWLEDGE: THE EVOLUTION OF THE LOUIS BROMFIELD SUSTAINABLE AGRICULTURE LIBRARY

A Master's Research Paper submitted to the
Kent State University School of Library and Information Science
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree Master of Library Science

by

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Seeds of Knowledge: The Evolution of the Louis Bromfield Sustainable Agriculture Library

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Although the Louis Bromfield Sustainable Agriculture Library was not established until 1992, its development offers an interesting and notable history. Having its origins from a portion of the personal library of Pulitzer Prize-winning author and conservationist Louis Bromfield, this collection is now jointly maintained by the Ohio State University Sustainable Agriculture Program and the Ohio Department of Natural Resources. Bromfield was a proponent of what is presently referred to as "sustainable agriculture". A sustainable agriculture is one which is "profitable, conservative of natural resources, socially acceptable and leads to vibrant communities."[1] Today, due to the continuing struggle of farmers to financially survive, the public's dissatisfaction with current agricultural practices, and the ecological necessity for change, the awareness and acceptance of sustainable agriculture is increasing. The importance of this Library is twofold. Not only is the Library an information center for sustainable agriculture, but it is also a "snapshot" of environmental history. To understand the significance of this Library, it is important to understand who Louis Bromfield was and why he was who he was. The success of this Library exemplifies the importance and possibility for the transformation of other private working collections into public libraries.

The Life of Bromfield

Louis Bromfield was born in 1896 in Mansfield, Ohio. Although Bromfield was not raised on a farm, he spent half of his

childhood on his grandfather's farm and enjoyed many hours with his part-time politician father campaigning through the rolling country surrounding Mansfield.[2] To the young Bromfield, the surrounding countryside presented a stark contrast to the small industrial city of Mansfield. Bromfield was quick to gain a distaste for industrialism and the urban way of life. It was not until the age of eighteen, however, that Bromfield was actually able to reside year-round on the family farm.

In 1914, the Bromfield family returned to the farm of Robert Coulter, Bromfield's maternal grandfather. The Bromfields hoped that this return to the farm would not only take them away from the increasing decadence of the city, but also would allow them to work the land back to its most productive state. At about the same time, it was decided that Bromfield would attend Cornell Agricultural College to study scientific agriculture.[3] While at Cornell, Bromfield encountered the great Liberty Hyde Bailey. Dean Bailey was a writer, a Dean of Agriculture at Cornell, and the chairman of President Theodore Roosevelt's Country Life Commission. He became Bromfield's agricultural mentor. Like Bromfield, Dean Bailey considered the earth "holy".[4] After only one quarter at Cornell, however, Bromfield's grandfather died and he was forced to return home to run the farm. After working the farm for a year, Bromfield did not return to Cornell. Citing his "potent urge to become a writer" and his mother's determination that he should not, "waste [his] life on a farm", Bromfield never returned to formally study

agriculture again.[5] It was the dream of Bromfield's mother that her son Louis would be a writer first, and then, if the circumstances were right, a gentleman farmer.[6]

In following both his mother's intentions and his desire, Bromfield attended the Columbia School of Journalism during the years 1916 and 1917. But once again, his academic education was cut short when he enlisted in the Army. It was during his service with the French Army from 1917 through 1919, that Bromfield got his first taste of French country life--a lifestyle he was not soon to forget.[7]

After returning to the United States in 1919, Bromfield promptly found his way in the publishing world. From 1920 through 1924, Bromfield held numerous editorial, advertising and critical positions with the likes of Associated Press, Time magazine, and G.P. Putnam's Sons.[8] In 1926, he was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for his novel Early Autumn. It was one year prior to winning the Pulitzer, that Bromfield and his family (which at that time included his wife and two children) left to vacation in France and did not return until fourteen years later.[9]

For Bromfield, France represented what he thought the United States lacked--permanence and continuity.[10] The Bromfields took out a fifty-year lease on an old Presbytere in the ancient village of Senlis, just north of Paris. Here, Bromfield had several acres of land, including an ancient cemetery which had been transformed into a vegetable garden by previous occupants.[11] Bromfield admired the local peasants and farmers for their

agricultural practices, and they showed equal admiration for him. Of all of the awards bestowed upon him, he was most honored for having received a diploma from the Workingmen-Gardeners' Association of France and a medal from the Ministry of Agriculture for the introduction of American vegetables into popular cultivation in the market garden area surrounding Paris.[12] Later when he was forced to leave France, what he was to miss most was not the intellectual life, his friends or the good food, but rather, "the old house and the few acres of land...earth in which I had worked for fifteen years, planting and cultivating until the tiny landscape itself had changed."[13] Thus, when he returned to his homeland, it was this permanence and continuity which Bromfield was seeking.

In 1938, with the ensuing war in Europe, Bromfield was compelled to leave his beloved France. Apparently, he had always thought he would return to Richland County, Ohio. When his wife asked "Where shall we go?", he replied, "To Ohio. That is where we were going anyway sometime."[14] Bromfield explained:

> What I wanted was a piece of land which I could love passionately, which I could spend the rest of my life in cultivating, cherishing and improving, which I might leave together, perhaps, with my feeling for it, to my children who might in time leave it to their children, a piece of land upon which I might leave the mark of my character, my ingenuity, my intelligence, my sense of beauty--perhaps the only real immortality man can have.[15]

And so, Bromfield found Malabar Farm.

The property which was to become Malabar Farm was located in Lucas, Ohio in the rolling hills of Richland County. Bromfield named the property "Malabar" after the southwest coast of India

where he and his family had lived for several months and which he remembered fondly as one of the most beautiful areas on earth. By using the name "Malabar", he also was paying homage to the books he had written about India, which had made the farm financially possible.[16] In establishing Malabar Farm, Bromfield purchased three neglected and worn out farms. The 640 acres he initially purchased represented the prevalent condition of much of the land in the United States. This land had once been rich, fertile land, but after generations of taking and no giving, the land was able only to yield gullies, and not the abundance of food of its distant past. This was the challenge that Bromfield had so desired. He was to nurture the land back to its original productivity. Bromfield firmly believed that "poor soil made poor people" and he wanted to make sure that the rest of the world realized this.[17] Consequently, Malabar Farm became his soapbox for voicing his views on all that was wrong with this country and in the world. Sunday after Sunday, hundreds of farmers, gardeners and other interested folk flocked to Malabar Farm to hear Bromfield tell of "good farming." And thus, Malabar Farm became known as the "most famous farm in America".[18]

Through his work at Malabar Farm, Bromfield became recognized for more than his prolific novel writing, his screenplays and his Hollywood friends. During his residence at Malabar, Bromfield authored four books on farming. His first book in this series, Pleasant Valley, was published in 1945 and he followed this with Malabar Farm in 1948, Out of the Earth in

1950, and finally From My Experience in 1955. Of course, the fame he had attained from his contacts with Hollywood certainly did not hinder his cause. As it happened, after his huge success in the twenties, Bromfield's popularity among the reading masses had begun to wane. Critics were not as favorable to Bromfield's work as they previously had been. He was no longer the golden boy who in 1928 was described by Vanity Fair as "the most prominent of our younger novelists."[19] The return of Bromfield to his native land and his involvement with the Farm provided Bromfield with a new focus and new fodder for his writings. Although he continued to write "sleek, Hollywood-slanted stories" throughout most of his years at Malabar Farm, his focus gradually turned more toward agricultural and economics writings.[20] And as Bromfield would have desired, it is for his agricultural writings and Malabar Farm that he undoubtedly will best be remembered and revered. Louis Bromfield died on March 18, 1956.

The Influences of Bromfield

It is important to understand the reasons for Bromfield's deep interests in the land and nature and why he was willing to make his concerns public. Bromfield was a Jeffersonian. He considered Thomas Jefferson to be "the greatest of farmers and Americans".[21] Like Jefferson, Bromfield regarded farming as a virtuous way of life and viewed the city as a necessary evil.[22] Upon review, it is remarkable to note the similarities between the lives of the two men. Both men spent several years in France

and both made a lifelong commitment to agriculture. Jefferson, too, worked to return neglected land to its former fertility and desired to achieve self-sufficiency on his land. Furthermore, both men exhibited an interest in the improvement of farm machinery.[23] Ralph Cobey, a close friend of Bromfield's and owner of a farm implement manufacturing company tells of Bromfield explaining his dreams to him about innovative farm machinery. In the same conversation, Cobey referred to Bromfield as a modern day Thomas Jefferson, recalling Bromfield's knack for smoking his own hams and fishing his own ponds.[24] It, therefore, should not be too surprising to know that Bromfield owned a copy of Betts' Thomas Jefferson's Farm Book.

Bromfield had always fondly remembered his days on his grandfather's farm and from his Grandfather Coulter he drew his love for the land. Bromfield's father was also highly influential in forming Bromfield's interests. His father liked his horses as he liked his land. As Bromfield remembers his father:

> He had a passion for land and for horses and oddly enough, neither for the best land nor the best horses. He preferred the horses which had hard mouths or were considered unmanageable and could, he believed, be reformed and the farms which no one wanted any longer but could, he knew, be restored to life and fertility.[25]

And in sharing these experiences with his father, Bromfield developed a passion for reclaiming forgotten and misused land and restoring it to its highest level of productivity.

Bromfield's writings and speeches on agriculture and soil conservation are legion. The influences of his father and Thomas

Jefferson formed the foundation for Bromfield's passion and dedication to farming, but what drove him to take his concerns about the land public was what he was seeing and hearing around him. Consequently, one must understand what was happening in the United States during the latter half of Bromfield's life.

The Times of Bromfield

Most contend that the frontier closed--that the last virgin land in the United States was claimed--by the end of the nineteenth century. To populate the empty continent, the United States relied upon the Homestead Act of 1862.[26] Under the Homestead Act, most American citizens were qualified to file for 160 acres of federal land. After residing on that land for five years, the original filer was then able to secure a fee simple title to the land.[27] By the turn of the century, as the distribution of marginal lands increased, homesteading became a "doubtful policy".[28] Nevertheless, it was not until 1934 that the remaining lands of the public domain were withdrawn from availability.[29] Americans were faced with the fact that there was no longer any free land left on this vast continent. For so many years, land in this country had seemed to be endless, but suddenly it seemed to have run out. Russell Lord, one of America's premier writers on agriculture and land observed in 1938, "No one who talks or corresponds with a considerable number of Americans nowadays can fail to detect a widespread restlessness under physical restrictions relatively new in our

history, a cramped feeling, a sense of being denied earth-room and an equal chance."[30]

In addition to the closing of the frontier, much of the land that was being cultivated was not good, productive land. In 1929, it was estimated that over 17,500,000 acres of land formerly cultivated in the United States had been "permanently destroyed or so damaged that farmers, working alone, are unable to restore them to agricultural use."[31] Bromfield had warned of the "bad farmer" who was not "drawn to his station by a passion for the earth" but who had instead been merely "been born to it and had not the energy to escape when it became impossible any longer for a man to receive an honorable reward for his labors as a farmer."[32] And it was these farmers who abandoned the lands which they had raped and simply moved on to more fertile land to do the same. Adding to the problem of unproductive land and the increase in "bad farmers" was the back-to-the-farm movement during the Great Depression. City residents had become disillusioned during this period and determined that a move back to the farm "offers a living of sorts, always. The city sometimes offers breadlines."[33] From April 1929 through March 1930, 303,339 more people moved to rural areas in the United States than moved to urban areas.[34] Although many of these migrants may have been brought up on farms, many still lacked the necessary experience to farm, and in turn this added to the misuse of the land. In the end, this lack of experience and a general disregard for the land, resulted in devastating soil

erosion throughout much of the United States, and coupled with a severe drought in the Great Plains, resulted in the Dust Bowl.[35]

The Dust Bowl brought the country's land problem to the forefront, and more than any other singular event, it "brought the science of ecology out of obscurity and into the public eye."[36] During this time, it would have been nearly impossible for any person to have gone unaware of the urgency and cause of this calamity. In a nationwide address over the National Broadcasting Company network in 1939, H.H. Bennett, the Chief of the Soil Conservation Service of the United States Department of Agriculture declared:

> The United States is a declining Nation--in the sense that our most basic asset, our most indispensable national resource--the land--is being impoverished by erosion faster than we have been able to establish defense measures.[37]

Bennett also warned that the current crop surpluses had given the nation a false sense of security as to the permanence of the country's agriculture. In this address, he asserted that not only had all virgin lands been claimed, but also that the amount of good land had decreased, and therefore, the most urgent single problem of this country was land restoration. Finally, Bennett called for a revival of our country's love of land and asked the people "to build a new and deeper appreciation of its value."[38] Gradually, people were becoming aware of the growing problem of taking from the soil without giving anything back in return.

By the end of the depression, the country was having some success in mitigating the problems of soil erosion through the enactment of the Soil Conservation Service Act in 1935.[39] The

beginning of World War II, however, brought new problems and concerns. Food shortages became a real concern not only for Europe, but also for the United States. In 1943, Bromfield believed that the lack of skilled labor, the lack of machinery, and the lack of fertilizer were preventing the farmer from achieving maximum production. Bromfield maintained that these impediments resulted from the Federal government's poor planning.[40] Later in 1943 at the Annual Conference on Conservation, Nutrition and Human Health, Bromfield warned that food shortages in the United States might become common if bad farming practices such as single crop planting continued and complained about the country's failure to replace the depleting forests.[41]

In 1950, despite the current trend of thought that the battle for soil conservation had been won as a result of education and economics, the nation was still concerned with the future of the land.[42] Cited as one of the "five great problems of the new half-century" was "the effective and beneficent management of our physical environment." This concern was based upon the noticeably shrinking forests, eroding soil, polluted waters, decreasing animal and plant life, and the diminishing supply of natural resources.[43] At this time, while most perceived that the earth's environmental problems could be solved only through the management and control of the environment, others like Bromfield, such as Fairfield Osborn and William Vogt,

believed that the problems would be solved only through cooperation with Nature.[44]

At the time of Bromfield's death in 1956, industrial agriculture was growing more prevalent. While industrial agriculture provided farmers with greater yields, it also presented farmers with new economic and ecological problems. Rachel Carson's Silent Spring, published in 1964, publicized the current ecological problems. Bromfield was gone now. Fortunately, others would carry on.

"What is to become of Malabar?"

Bromfield left the majority of his estate to his three daughters. His wife Mary had died four years earlier. Specifically, the daughters were to equally share his personal effects, including the livestock and farm machinery. Two trustees were also named by Bromfield to govern his estate. In his will, Bromfield stated that he hoped the trustees would maintain Malabar as a home "for my children and their families or some of them for as long as they are able to use and enjoy it."[45] This clause in his will should have come as no surprise to those who knew Bromfield. He had frequently written of the permanence and continuity of the family farm. The trustees, however, had the right to make other use or disposition of the farm property.[46]

At this point, the future of Malabar Farm was uncertain. Not only was the land at stake, but also the "Big House". The

"Big House" was Bromfield's rambling 31-room home. Within the "Big House", Bromfield had acquired a personal library of approximately 6,000 volumes. His daughters were entitled to their father's personal belongings, and whatever they did not desire would follow the same fate as the rest of the property. His daughters retrieved those objects most dear to them and later consented to the sale of the property.[47] Consequently, Bromfield's library became entangled in the tumultuous succession of events involving the Farm subsequent to Bromfield's death.

After Bromfield died in 1956, all those who had been close to Bromfield or who had a special place in their hearts for Malabar Farm were asking, "What is to become of Malabar?". Real estate developers had their eyes on the property for creating a "Malabar Estates" and turning it into a country club. But others were set on maintaining Malabar Farm as Bromfield would have wanted.

In 1953, Bromfield had established the Mary A. Bromfield Foundation leaving an idea as to what he thought Malabar Farm could be in the future. This Foundation was to be "established upon a Trust Foundation basis, self-supporting in perpetuity, to continue long after the disappearance from the earth of the present owner."[48] Bromfield recognized that his farm over the years, in having received thousands of visitors, had become an informal center of agricultural, horticultural and ecological information for the entire world. It was the hope of Bromfield that Malabar Farm would become a "permanent center for

agricultural and horticultural research and for the dissemination of knowledge concerning agricultural economics and the relationship between soil and health."[49] The Foundation was to provide agricultural education for international students and agricultural scholarships for those most qualified.[50] The Friends of the Land hoped to see these dreams of Bromfield become reality, since he was not able to see his plan come to complete fruition.

Friends of the Land was organized in March 1940 at Washington, D.C. "to integrate into an overall picture, each and every phase of Conservation, and to create a public consciousness of the basic relation of soil and water to our everyday lives."[51] More specifically, the Friends of the Land encouraged the establishment of privately-operated demonstration farms.

The membership of this non-profit, non-partisan organization was made up of a diverse group of citizens which numbered more than 5,000 active members in 1943.[52] Members included zoologist and writer, Aldo Leopold, Chief of the Soil Conservation Service, Hugh H. Bennett, and documentary filmmaker, Robert Flaherty.[53] The first national meeting was held in Columbus, Ohio because of its "public-spirited citizens [who] were concerned enough about the problem to give money, time and energy; and because Ohio was unique in its almost perfect balance between agriculture and industry."[54] Columbus also became the location of the organization's national headquarters. Initially, Bromfield was not a member of Friends of the Land. Bromfield had

heard about the founding of the organization, but because of his busy planting schedule and his strong dislike of the Washington atmosphere, he did not become a member until 1941.[55] At the time of his death, Bromfield was the Chairman of the Board of Directors. Aside from his farm and writing, Bromfield gave more of his time and effort to the organization than any of his other interests.[56]

Friends of the Land also published The Land. This quarterly agricultural journal was edited by Russell Lord. The Land was different from other agricultural journals because it fostered literary merit and openly discussed land policies and adjustments of human populations.[57] Published from 1941 through 1954, "The Land was informed throughout by a Jeffersonian agrarian ideal. In fiction, nonfiction, poetry, philosophy, The Land evoked a vision of small farms, peopled by independent-minded, self-reliant men and women who understood their responsibility to the land."[58] Bromfield was a frequent contributor to the journal.

Soon after the death of Bromfield, it became widely known that the Friends of the Land were sincerely interested in carrying on the legacy of their "most famous member" by preserving Malabar Farm.[59] In keeping with the Bromfield dream, the Friends of the Land hoped that the Farm could be "acquired and operated as a private enterprise by a competent group of scientists on a paying basis so that it could be shown to the farmers of America that the successful experiments paid off."[60]

Initially, Friends of the Land had proposed working with Battelle Memorial Institute in establishing the Malabar Farm Research and Educational Institute or the Louis Bromfield Memorial.[61] The proposed Institute was not only to have maintained the experimental farm, but also would have created a conservation education center/center for ecology. To the Friends of the Land, association with Battelle would have meant gaining instant access to an organization with proven experience and expertise in experimental endeavors.

The proposed association between Friends of the Land and Battelle Memorial Institute would have included the establishment of a library at Malabar Farm. It was the hope of the Friends of the Land that "a team of men be assigned there with a branch agricultural library patterned after the main library at the Columbus Headquarters."[62] As a part of the proposed Center of Ecology, Dr. Paul Sears, head of Yale University's Conservation Department and a Director of Friends of the Land, stressed that as a result of the newly evolving science of "ecology" there was yet a place for an ecologist to study which provided a complete working library. At this proposed library, the ecologist would have immediately available to him, all the necessary facts "so that his time will not be wasted in rummaging through periodicals in all these various fields of science."[63] Additionally, this library was to have served the agricultural investigator.[64]

By January of 1957, Malabar Farm was on the auction block. Bromfield's daughters had consented to the sale of the farm.

Since Bromfield's death, the executor of the estate had held the property hoping friends of Bromfield would form a foundation and purchase the property, but nothing had materialized.[65] Everything on the property, with the exception of the Big House furnishings, was to be sold. The asking price was a surprisingly low $150,000. Again, it was the hope of all Malabar Farm lovers and Bromfield admirers that "Malabar gets into the hands of some dedicated group that will continue there the work Louie began."[66] And thus many hoped for the success of the Friends of the Land in the acquisition of the property.

On January 11, 1957, the Friends of the Land announced a campaign to raise the $150,000 necessary for the purchase of Malabar.[67] By January 23, 1957, the directors of the Friends of the Land had offered $145,000 for the purchase of Malabar Farm and an additional $25,000 for the purchase of the farm machinery, furniture and livestock. If the offer were accepted by the New York brokerage firm, the money to purchase the farm would be pledged by several directors of the Friends of the Land until a fundraising campaign was initiated. At this time, the Friends of the Land were still planning on cooperating with Battelle Memorial Institute on the project.[68]

In their solicitation of funds to complete their option to purchase Malabar, the Friends of the Land proposed the establishment of the Louis Bromfield Institute. Like their initial concept involving Battelle, the Friends wished to establish "a living memorial to [Bromfield's] personal handiwork

and pioneering efforts in restoring [Malabar Farm] from waste land to rich and fertile acres to the end that a permanent and sound agriculture may be established throughout the world."[69] The Friends of the Land again envisioned the Ecological Institute, a center not unlike that which Bromfield had spoken of:

> Any citizen from Sunday driver to scientist can find in this area remarkable patterns of development and degeneration side by side, as well as what is probably the most advanced ecologic pattern in existence anywhere...I see the immense possibilities of a demonstration center to tie all that can be learned together--a Center accumulating and co-ordinating all information in the field of Man's relation to his environment, whether it be nutrition, flood control, what you will.[70]

In following with Bromfield's vision, one of the objectives of the Institute was "to collect, correlate, interpret and disseminate reliable information on the relationships between man and his environment to farmers and agriculture leaders."[71] As a part of this ecology center, a Library of Ecology would be developed. This library, to be built along the lines of Battelle's research library, would not only be a depository of books and journals, but would be staffed by individuals capable of "assembling quickly all the information which the investigator needs for the exploration of his problems."[72]

Friends of the Land Inherit the Earth

Fortunately, when Malabar did change hands, it fell into the right hands. On May 10, 1957, the Friends of the Land acquired Malabar Farm for $140,000. Only three days before, the future of

Malabar appeared to indicate the development of the property as a golf course and/or dude ranch. But believers in Bromfield had come through at the last moment. A group of Mansfield businessmen raised $55,000 to loan to the Friends of the Land, while the Samuel Roberts Noble Foundation, an Oklahoma organization dedicated to agricultural research, agreed to lend $85,000.[73] With these pledges, Friends of the Land was now able to able to set its dreams (and presumedly Louis Bromfield's) in motion. The new financial obligations of the Friends of the Land now necessitated the initiation of a campaign for financial support in earnest.

In their nationwide fundraising campaign, the Friends of the Land hoped to raise $1,000,000 to pay off the mortgage, to operate the farm, and to develop the much talked about ecological center. Suggested press releases on the Friends of the Land's purchase, envisioned a conservation library which would be "one of the best in the nation." In attaining this goal, contributions from the collection of Soil Conservation Service Chief Hugh Bennett and the Friends of the Land Library were made to supplement the "fine library of Louis Bromfield."[74]

As a result of his interests, Bromfield had amassed a considerable collection of monographs and journals on agriculture, conservation and the life sciences. To understand the depth of his collection, one must realize the roots of Bromfield's passion for nature and farming and generally for

knowledge. As may be expected, Bromfield was an avid reader. His wife said of him,

> He absorbs every book of interest to him that he can lay his hands upon, enjoying particularly memoirs, biography, and novels, which if good or great, give him the thrill and excitement of any great work of art. He reads books on farming, medicine, eating, and politics as well, and never forgets anything." [75]

Furthermore, in his semi-autobiographical novel The Farm, Bromfield described one of the main characters as if he were describing himself:

> He created his own curriculum, studying books and papers and articles dealing with biology and chemistry and botany which all had to do with the earth he loved. In the few hours a day he had left from the stiff job of running a big farm and bringing up a large family, he read anything and everything. It would have been impossible for him to have gone uneducated, because he could not help himself. His passion for knowledge was like a disease. In his own field--the world of agriculture and horticulture and beekeeping and stock-breeding--he possesses a knowledge and experience which was intensely practical and unsurpassed by any man in the whole County."[76]

This writing clearly describes Bromfield and provides an idea of what subjects his personal library offered. It was the selection of titles by the Friends of the Land from this diverse collection which served as the foundation of the Ecology Library.

In addition to the books and journals of Bromfield, the Friends of the Land relied upon their own library in establishing the Ecology Library. The numerous bookplates and dedications in the books indicate that many of the books (approximately 1,000), once belonged to Dr. Jonathan Forman, a close friend of Bromfield's.[77] Dr. Forman was a physician with a keen interest in nutrition and a President of Friends of the Land. Dr. Forman

had previously donated many of his books to the Friends of the Land Library.

In an effort to carry out the Friends of the Land's plans to develop the ecology center, Dr. Floyd Chapman was appointed Acting Director of the Ecological Center in February 1958. Dr. Chapman, with a doctorate in wildlife management, would be responsible for establishing the information center and library.[78] It was at this time, however, that Dr. Jonathan Forman, the President of Friends of the Land, did not see a need to hire a professional librarian, thinking it "is not very impressive and may appear to some of our critics as getting the cart before the horse."[79] But despite the reluctance to hire a librarian, the Friends of the Land's goal of establishing a premier resource center for conservation and ecology seemed to be taking shape.

In a solicitation letter to potential members, Dr. Forman boasted of the library which contained 118 journal, 1,000 catalogued books and 1,000 more books in the process of being catalogued.[80] A later inventory of periodicals, dated March 4, 1958, listed approximately 250 titles. For many of the titles listed, however, the library held only single issues of the periodical. Periodicals with considerable runs included Ohio Conservation Bulletin, Audubon Magazine, Scientific Monthly, Soil Conservation, and Better Crops with Plant Food. The library offered an eclectic selection of periodicals, ranging from Ice Cream Review to Florida Wildlife to Dental Digest.[81] Cataloging

of the books and periodicals was done in 1958 and 1959, using the Library of Congress Classification System. 3,500 bookplates with images of the infamous boxer dog (Bromfield was known for his boxers) and the rolling hills of Pleasant Valley were ordered for the Louis Bromfield Institute Ecologic Center Library.[82] Friends of the Land members were entitled to use of this library.[83] It was quite evident that those involved in the project were making a sincere effort to see that the Ecological Center became "the finest ecological information center in the world."[84]

Malabar Farm Foundation Carries on the Legacy

By late in 1958, the Friends of the Land had relinquished title to Malabar Farm to a newly formed, non-profit corporation. The new corporation, the Louis Bromfield Malabar Farm Foundation, was created with the hope that funds could be more successfully solicited for the Malabar Farm project. Dr. Forman, Chairman of the Board for the Friends of the Land, admitted that the Friends of the Land were having trouble raising the necessary funds to pay off its debts. Believing that the Friends of the Land was "too cumbersome a organization to operate the farm", the new foundation would be a smaller group made up of members selected from the Friends of the Land. It was hoped that the change would allow the organization to retire the debt "in a couple of weeks."[85] But as might be expected, this was not to be the case.

The Foundation had succeeded in establishing the Ecological Center. The Library was located in the basement of the Big

House. Now, in what used to serve as the canning kitchen, there were shelves of books about agriculture, ecology, and nutrition. Reading tables and chairs were also provided.[86] This Ecological Library was open to members of the Foundation. Members were permitted to borrow the books at no charge.[87] But it was questionable as to whether or not the Library was receiving the full attention and use it deserved. In 1959, the Friends of the Land dissolved and was later absorbed by the Izaak Walton League.[88] Perhaps this signified the end of an another era at Malabar Farm.

Nevertheless, during the early sixties, the center grew in both size and renown. As word travelled about the library, increasing numbers of inquiries and donations were made. Donations from individuals and organizations from across the United States varied from literature on Santa Gertrudis cattle to 15-20 books on thoroughbred horses. The Library received approximately fifty gifts during 1961.[89] In January 1961, the Executive Director of the Red Clay Valley Association in Delaware requested a list of the books in the children's conservation section of the Library. This association was planning to supply library books on conservation to sixteen schools in the Red Clay Watershed and had read about the Library's expansion of its children's collection.[90] At the same time, the Library was not only acquiring books through donation, but also was acquiring them, when necessary, through the purchase of the same.[91]

In 1961, another of Bromfield's idea was instituted. Over the years, Bromfield had hosted international students interested in agriculture at Malabar. This had been one of the reasons for establishing the Mary A. Bromfield Foundation back in 1953. During the Summer of 1961, the Louis Bromfield International School of Practical Agriculture held its first academic session. The Trustees of the Louis Bromfield Malabar Foundation believed that the training students from Asia, Africa and South America were receiving from American universities could be augmented with advanced agricultural methods specifically suited to their geographical area. During the first session, students from Iran, Mexico and Israel lived at Malabar Farm while they learned about diverse aspects of farming. While attending the school, the students were free to use the Ecology Library's catalogued books, periodicals and pamphlets.[92]

By 1965, Malabar Farm had become more of a tourist destination than a center for ecological studies.[93] Due to financial constraints, the Louis Bromfield International School of Practical Agriculture had been forced to close not long after its inaugural year.[94] The Malabar Farm Foundation was now offering tours of the Big House and wagon tours of the property. Members of the Foundation were still entitled to take advantage of the ecological lending library.[95] Although always financially unstable, the Foundation was somehow able to perpetuate the agricultural practices of Bromfield.

In 1972, it seemed that the dream might soon come to an end. For sixteen years, under one name or another, but always with the same loyal supporters, Malabar Farm had struggled to maintain, what most perceived to be, the Bromfield ethic. Grandiose plans for saving Malabar Farm from financial hardship were continuously being conceived, but none resulted in any permanent, practical solutions to the problem. During the previous year, the future had looked exceedingly bright for the Farm when the Governor's Environmental Task Force decided to jump on the ecology bandwagon. This task force, headed by former astronaut John Glenn, had proposed developing a major center for the study of ecology and the environment at Malabar. The task force felt that with the renewed and growing interest of the public in the environment, the center could expect one million visitors each year at Malabar. Financing for the center was uncertain, but the task force hoped that the State would work with private foundations to financially back the project.[96]

Malabar Farm's longtime devotees must have viewed the task force's proposal with skepticism since they had seen similar ideas never materialize. By 1972, the original ten-year $140,000 mortgage had turned into a $250,000 debt. The Malabar Farm Foundation had never been able to make a single payment toward reducing the debt. The Noble Foundation, the mortgagor, never had pushed for payment by the mortgagee, but as a result of tax law changes in 1969, the Noble Foundation felt compelled to collect the debt. Both the Noble Foundation and the Malabar Farm

Foundation were hoping that the State of Ohio would take control. The State needed only to pay off the $250,000 mortgage to take ownership of Malabar Farm. The State, however, was in no financial position to make the acquisition. It was the hope of the State that foreclosure on the property would prompt the Noble Foundation to donate it to them.[97] Once again the wolves were at the doors of Malabar Farm.

The Reign of the State

Eventually, the Noble Foundation relented. In August of 1972, Governor Gilligan accepted the deed to Malabar Farm from the Malabar Farm Foundation whose mortgage on the property had been extinguished by the Noble Foundation. As so many had hoped for, the Noble Foundation had donated the Farm to the State of Ohio.[98] Even Bromfield himself had written, "Perhaps one day [the Big House] will belong to the state together with the hills, valleys and woods of Malabar Farm."[99] The State's proposed plan called for the Ohio Department of Agriculture to manage the farm and for the Ohio Department of Natural Resources to manage the remaining property, including the Big House.[100] While attending the transfer of title ceremony, Ellen Bromfield Geld, Bromfield's daughter, expressed her desire to see the property become a school. Also at the ceremony, it was announced that the Library would be made available to scholars.[101] At last, after so many years of financial woes, it appeared that Malabar Farm would receive the attention and respect it deserved.

Within a year of the State taking over the property, the barn received a fresh coat of paint, the dairy herd was expanded, and a new silo was under construction.[102] The Ecology Library remained in the basement, however, receiving little use or attention. Of course, the priority of the State in the early years of its reign was not the books which had been in the Ecology Library. Initially, the State needed to attend to the more cosmetic aspects of the Farm. Later in the mid 1980's, the Ecology Library was moved from this original location to another room in the basement.[103] Though a move of only a few yards, this move proved to be more costly than one might have imagined. While these books and journals were in this room, the area flooded twice. Consequently, some of the volumes were water damaged. The collection now sat in the damp basement largely forgotten.

What is this thing called "Sustainable Agriculture"?

The Sustainable Agriculture Program at Ohio State University was started in 1986 "to promote a more-energy-conserving, environmentally-sound and economically-viable agriculture through research, education, and extension." Later in 1990, a formal interdisciplinary program was established.[104]

What Bromfield had called "new agriculture" might today be called sustainable agriculture. Bromfield's new agriculture was "based upon the principle of working <u>with</u> nature and following her methods."[105] More and more people are now advocating the

practices and preachings of Bromfield and his contemporaries. As noted writer Wes Jackson explains:

> It is becoming apparent that our problem with the earth is the result of our "subdue-and-ignore" assumptions, assumptions not just about agriculture but about everything else. We have assumed control of nature without adequately understanding nature's arrangements.[106]

A renewed interest in our limited natural resources, concern for the safety of our food and the severe economic difficulties farmers have had to endure over the last decade have forced much of the agricultural community and the general public to re-evaluate the methods of conventional farming.[107]

Increasingly, the practice of sustainable agriculture is gaining notice, if not respect. In 1990, the Sustainable Agriculture Research and Education Program was initiated by the federal government. The purpose of this program was

> to encourage research designed to increase our knowledge concerning agricultural production systems that: 1) maintain and enhance the quality and productivity of the soil; 2) conserve soil, water, energy, natural resources, and fish and wildlife habitat; 3) maintain and enhance the quality of surface and ground water; 4) protect the health and safety of persons involved in the food and farm system; 5) promote the well being of animals; and 6) increase employment opportunities in agriculture.[108]

Additionally, the State of Ohio currently has a bill pending in the General Assembly which calls for the implementation of a state program of sustainable agriculture research and education.[109]

Sustainable agriculture is "still a radical, having not flowered on the American landscape."[110] Farmers are beginning to adopt sustainable agriculture practices, but many have yet to

overcome the lingering sociological barriers (the lack of sophistication and modernity oftentimes associated with the practice).[111] Sustainable agriculture does not require a return to the farming methods practiced before the Industrial Revolution and despite some who may think its methods simple, it is a highly complex system of farming. Sustainable agriculture "combines traditional conservation-minded farming techniques with modern technologies."[112] As Bromfield had advocated and practiced, it calls for rotating crops, building up the soil, diversifying crops and livestock and controlling pests generally by natural means.[113] Sustainable agriculture also "emphasizes place-specific agriculture and an ethic of land stewardship that requires an intimate understanding of the particular piece of land being farmed."[114] Similar to Bromfield's concept of the "good" and "bad" farmer, writer Wendell Berry explains:

> Learning to farm is learning to farm a farm.[115] If the land is to be used well, the people who use it must know it well, must be highly motivated to use it well, must know how to use it well, must have time to use it well, and must be able to afford to use it well.[116]

The complexity of sustainable farming, therefore demands an educated farmer.

In 1990, Dr. Clive Edwards, Director of Ohio State University's Sustainable Agriculture Program, was asked by the Director of the Ohio Department of Agriculture to visit Malabar Farm and to offer his advice on how the farm could best practice the benign style of agriculture that Bromfield had advocated.

During this visit, Edwards reviewed the Ecology Library collection.[117] Most notably, he found that the 1,200 volume collection included a limited edition, fourteen-volume set of Charles Darwin writings dated 1872 and a twenty-volume set of The Writings of John Burroughs from the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. Also included was a rare, complete series of the Friends of the Land's journal The Land. Edwards recognized that this valuable collection was going unused and unattended.[118] After his visit, Edwards presented a library renovation proposal to the Ohio Department of Natural Resources, hoping that the ODNR would be in a position to financially support the cataloging, preservation and development of the former ecology collection. But as much as the ODNR was enthusiastic about the proposal and supported the relocation of the collection to a safer location at Malabar Farm State Park, the department was unable to provide the necessary funds for the proposed project.[119]

During the following year, representatives of the Gund Foundation approached Edwards offering their assistance to the Ohio State University Sustainable Agriculture Program.[120] The George Gund Foundation provides financial support to various projects involving the arts, community development and environmental policy. As to environmental policy, the foundation is most interested in funding public education projects relating to the Great Lakes ecosystem.[121] By January 1992, the Sustainable Agriculture Program had submitted a proposal to the

Gund Foundation asking for financial assistance in preserving and restoring Bromfield's conservation and sustainable agriculture library. The collection, still the property of the State, would be managed by the Sustainable Agriculture Program. The Sustainable Agriculture Program perceived the proposed library to be a golden opportunity to make available to a growing number of farmers and researchers interested in alternative farming practices information which was not easily accessible to them.[122]

In response to the proposed project, numerous institutions and organizations, including Ohio State University's Agricultural Technical Institute, the Ohio Ecological Food and Farm Association and the magazine Ohio Farmer offered their support. The need for this library at Malabar Farm was justified by the fact that while interest in sustainable agriculture had grown at an increasing rate over the years, generally speaking, Ohio farmers' accessibility to information on sustainable agriculture had not grown.[123] In the end, George Gund Foundation Grant 92-100 provided $36,700 for the project. At the same time, the Fanwood Foundation, a foundation established by the family of Hope Bromfield Stevens' husband, also announced that it would make a yearly grant of $2,000 towards the Library.[124]

The Sustainable Agriculture Library as Reality

Over the summer of 1992, the books and some of the pamphlets which had been a part of the Ecology Library were moved across the valley to a seven-room farmhouse on Malabar Farm State Park

property. The house was provided by the Ohio Department of Natural Resources and was to be used not only as the sustainable agriculture library, but also as an education center/museum. Andrew Ware, the original Ohio State University graduate research associate appointed to the project, and Scott Fletcher, who was a Park Naturalist at the time, were responsible for moving the collection from the Big House basement to the new location. Dr. Harry Campbell, Chief of Collection Maintenance at Ohio State University, provided his advice and assistance on the proper care and shelving of the collection for preservation purposes.[125] On September 27, 1992, the Louis Bromfield Sustainable Agriculture Library officially opened.

In January 1993, the Library was opened to the public on the weekends and by appointment at other times as a closed-reference library. A library advisory committee was formed in early 1993 to provide professional guidance on the development and maintenance of the Library. The seven member committee was mostly made up of librarians from local libraries, including Ohio State University and Kent State University. In August 1993, the journals which had remained in the Big House were moved to the Library.[126] Now only those books which had suffered severe water damage had not been relocated.

By September 1993, the entire collection had been catalogued on a computer.[127] This catalog included those books in the original card catalog created by the Friends of the Land and also contained catalog information on those books received

subsequent to the original cataloguing. It is the hope of those involved with the Library, that the Library's collection will eventually become a part of the OhioLINK central catalog.[128] OhioLINK is the statewide library and information network which links the major university and research libraries in Ohio. Participation in OhioLINK would most probably result in more exposure for the collection.

Because of the costs involved, the Library has never had a telephone, or, as necessarily follows, a modem. Obviously, the lack of a telephone greatly limits the services that can be rendered and prevents the Library from participating in OhioLINK and other online catalogs such as OCLC. The addition of a telephone could bring in new patrons from this rural community who may not otherwise be able to drive to the Library. Additionally, with a phone and a modem, the Library would be able to connect, through Internet, with SAN, the Sustainable Agriculture Network. SAN, a cooperative effort between land grant universities, private nonprofit groups, agribusinesses and extensions, was established in 1990 to "promote effective, decentralized communication about sustainable agriculture."[129]

An original goal of the Sustainable Agriculture Program in its proposal to the Gund Foundation was the establishment of an internship for students interested in library science.[130] Since its opening in 1992, however, the Library has been served by a Graduate Research Associate in the Sustainable Agriculture Program at Ohio State University. Without any formal training in

library science, Andrew Ware and Meredith Wessells, the two Graduate Research Associates thus far, have acted as the "librarians" for the collection. With the assistance of the Library Advisory Committee, both Graduate Research Associates have successfully transformed this underused collection into an significant library. Those who have been involved in this project believe that if this library is to survive and grow, then the employment of a professional staff librarian would be desirable, if not necessary.[131] Due to the limited funding for this project, however, the hiring of a professional librarian at this time is not possible. If the popularity and demand for the Library does in fact increase, then librarians working on a volunteer basis may offer a temporary solution to the resultant understaffing problem until full financial support can be guaranteed.

Today, the mission of the Louis Bromfield Sustainable Agriculture Library is "to provide farmers, students and anyone interested in profitable, resource-conserving, socially acceptable farming methods with educational books, journals, magazines and videos for self-education."[132] The books and journals have once again been placed in their original Library of Congress classification order and comprise three rooms of the house. Since the Library opened, it has had over 1,500 visitors. Within its first year, the Library had received over five hundred donated books and brochures on varied subjects. In April 1994, approximately five hundred books and journals were donated by the

widow of a Professor Emeritus of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology at Ohio State University. This donation will be housed at the Library as a special collection. The journals currently subscribed to include Stockman/Grass Farmer and New Farm.[133] The Library now has more than 2,000 volumes and fourteen videotapes.

As hoped, word is getting around about the services that the Library offers. Meredith Wessells, the current coordinator of the Library, has promoted the Library at sustainable agriculture farmers' meetings and at a North Central Region Sustainable Agriculture Conference. Wessells is also planning to present information about the Library at the next meeting of the Innovative Farmers of Ohio.[134]

Those individuals involved in the development of the Louis Bromfield Sustainable Library have recognized that education and information are the essential elements in the acceptance and practice of sustainable agriculture. Re-education must also occur. Agricultural colleges, extension agents and farmers are generally familiar with conventional farming practices. For sustainable agriculture to be developed effectively, the researcher, the extension agent and the farmer "must be viewed as team members who will learn from each other." In this regard, "educating the educators" is critical.[135]

Certainly, the realization of the importance of information and education in agriculture and conservation is nothing new. In 1949 when farmers could not put down their copies of Malabar

Farm, farmers were insisting upon "books that will show me how to do things better around the farm" and "better local library service."[136] As Bromfield himself said, "perhaps the greatest and most serious task we have before us is the education of people everywhere to the realization and understanding of the principles of human ecology."[137] It should come as no surprise that soon after the Dust Bowl, conservationists realized that the best way to sensitize the public to the problems of the country was through education. In 1940, the Secretary of Agriculture for the United States Master Conservation Plan called for a continuing process of education. He wanted everyone, country and city folk alike, to understand the needs of the land.[138] And just as libraries, during the aftermath of the Dust Bowl, acted as "agencies for public enlightenment" about soil conservation, the Louis Bromfield Sustainable Agriculture Library does the same for sustainable agriculture.[139]

Despite the fact that Bromfield has been gone for nearly forty years, the Library allows his ideas and knowledge to endure. As Bromfield's daughter Ellen Bromfield Geld expressed in 1962:

> It is the hope of the Louis Bromfield Ecological Center that those who so desire will come and walk over the land as they did in the past, and if they feel so inclined, read in the library the things Louis Bromfield would have said to them had he been there to greet them on the lawn.[140]

This is the essence of this Library. Bromfield, a great advocate of self-education, would be proud of his namesake Library. As the past has indicated, the viability of the Library will be

directly dependent upon the viability of Malabar Farm as a center for agricultural education and information. Today, the Louis Bromfield Sustainable Agriculture Library provides a unique experience for the patron. The collection is not only useful for its information on the growing practice of sustainable agriculture, but also offers uncommon insight into the life and times of Bromfield and his contemporaries.

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