

THE PICK-YOUR-OWN FARMS OF LEEDS MANOR ROAD: SOWING
COMMUNITY, HARVESTING MEMORY, AND PRODUCING A WAY OF LIFE IN
THE POST-RURAL ECONOMY

by

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DEDICATION

This is dedicated to my supportive husband, friends, and family that helped me get this thesis completed. And, of course, to the farmers and their families who continue to teach me so much.

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I would like to thank the many friends, relatives, and supporters who have made this happen. Special thanks to the farm families who gave me their time, trust, and stories: Shannon and Matt Davenport, Mimi and Tom Davenport, and their farm workers: Martha, Mark, and the Dude; William Stribling and Alex Jefferies; Bill, Hank, Cheryll, Brian and Henry Green; Paul and Sue Redden; Melanie Fein; and Kathy and Charles Strother.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Pick-Your-Own.....PYO

ABSTRACT

THE PICK-YOUR-OWN FARMS OF LEEDS MANOR ROAD: SOWING COMMUNITY, HARVESTING MEMORY, AND PRODUCING A WAY OF LIFE IN THE POST-RURAL ECONOMY

Kim D. Stryker, B.A.

George Mason University, 2014

Thesis Chair: Dr. Debra Lattanzi Shutika

This thesis explores the ways in which family farmers along Leeds Manor Road in Fauquier County, Virginia are able to shape their identity as farmers through their “pick-your-own” businesses. By continuing the tradition of farming in this post-rural economy, these farm families are preserving a way of life for themselves and their community. Inviting the public to participate in farming by allowing “pick-your-own” has implications for identity that are challenging and also create opportunities for further self-definition and creativity. Analysis of the history of farming in the region highlights that these farm families work both within a tradition and also innovate beyond that tradition. Changing times and increased pressure have created stresses on these farms, but also provided the impetus for this group of farmers to demonstrate creative placemaking and problem solving, while imprinting the land with their own personalities and locally determined sense of place.

CHAPTER ONE: PICK-YOUR-OWN FARMS OF LEEDS MANOR ROAD

Introduction

“It’s people that there’s 4 or 5 generations have been coming here. And they remember my grandfather selling peaches and apples to them and so... that, that’s still a part of it. The other part now is it’s a thing to do for people. It’s a getaway family vacation AND, and it’s a fun thing to do and it’s a good product that people want.”

-Brian Green

As I came down out of the peach orchard at Hollin Farms, Tom Davenport saw me and started hollering my name across the crowd of peach-picking customers. He was excitedly waving at me to come over and grinning like a madman. As I got closer he grabbed a Hispanic teenage boy standing nearby and pulled him towards me saying, “Hey, I want you to tell HER what you just told me!” Tom seemed almost manic in his excitement and I couldn't figure out what was up. The boy looked confused and a little bit scared, eyes darting from me to Tom and over to his parents who stood confused by the entrance gate. “Go ahead!” Tom cajoled him. “Tell her what you just asked me!”

After a long pause, the boy questioningly said, “I asked him, ‘Is this the place with all the free fruit?’” Tom laughed heartily, slapping the boy on the back, and looked

at me with eyes bright. “Can you believe that? ‘Is this the place with all the FREE fruit!?’ It's just what we've been saying!!” I laughed and shook my head, exasperated. Tom and other “pick-your-own” orchardists along Leeds Manor Road in Fauquier County had been complaining about immigrant customers coming and eating too much fruit without paying. This is what brought me an hour from my home to Delaplane, Virginia, many weekends as a researcher to try and answer the question: How had the word spread that “pick-your-own” actually meant “all-you-can-eat”?



Figure 1. Entrance to Hollin Farms, off Leeds Manor Road. (All photos taken by author unless noted).

Tom Davenport received a grant from the Virginia Department of Agriculture and hired me in Spring 2010 as a research assistant to help him discover why they were having so many problems with eating in the orchards and theft from the increasing number of immigrant customers on his family's “pick-your-own” (PYO) farm in

Delaplane, Virginia. My work that year led me to have a deep fascination and respect for Tom's family and for the other PYO family farms in his community tied together by the historic Leeds Manor Road. The more time I spent in the community, listening to people and studying its past, the more I found myself drawn to this very special corner of Fauquier County, known for its history, its scenic beauty and its world famous Virginia apples.

Just an hour from Washington, D.C., this cluster of small family farms attracts visitors with their PYO fruit orchards. Day-trippers leave the metropolis and head out I-66 west from the congestion and noise of the city, to find respite among the scenic byways in the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains. Young parents delight in showing their children where an apple comes from or how peanuts grow amidst a bucolic farm setting. Fauquier County has established itself as a rural retreat, complete with tasting vineyards, quaint "bed and breakfast" inns, winding byways and Black Angus cattle grazing in lush green fields. The county has consciously restricted development and growth through zoning and conservation easements, in order to maintain the rural character of this community.

Along Leeds Manor Road between Markham and Delaplane, a ten-mile stretch, there is a veritable proliferation of PYO farms: four in total and one more in the works. Some of these farms have been rooted in this agricultural corner of the county for generations, while others are relative newcomers. The proximity to a major metropolitan area, the popularity of winetasting trips to vineyards nearby, and the historic reputation of

this land as prime apple-growing country, all contribute to the popularity of this form of agritourism known as “pick-your-own.”



Figure 2. Angus cattle in pasture. Delaplane, Virginia.

Though many residents of Fauquier County prize their agricultural traditions, the farmers themselves have had to be increasingly adaptable in order to financially sustain themselves and their families on the land. PYO orchards are one response of local farmers to the pressures of rising land values, the drop in commodity food prices, and punitive tax laws that make passing on the farm to the next generation difficult, if not impossible. Since the 1980s, there has been a steady decline of small family farms in the U.S.¹ Many small farms have been absorbed into large-scale operations, and small family

¹ “Agriculture in the Classroom.” 2014. Accessed August 30. https://www.agclassroom.org/gan/timeline/farmers_land.htm.

producers with higher per-acre cost overheads have been unable to compete in the commodity food markets. Tax laws affecting inheritance, sometimes referred to in politics as the “Death Tax,” have imposed tax liabilities on land heirs of up to 50% of the real estate value. When cash-poor, land-rich farm families cannot come up with the money to pay the tax bill, they often have to sell off the land.²

Physical location is both a blessing and a curse to these farms in Fauquier County. Located just an hour outside a major city, the area is ripe for developers who would like to build commuter subdivisions.³ After witnessing the massive overdevelopment of neighboring Prince William County and the southeastern part of Fauquier, county officials put zoning restrictions in place to prevent large-scale housing developments on former farmland. Following the bumper-sticker mantra: “Farm Land Lost is Lost Forever,” Fauquier officials sought to maintain the rural appeal of their county with zoning restrictions limiting growth and density, and incentives to put land towards conservatorship.⁴

² “Farmers, Beware: Estate Taxes Could Rise Sharply.” 2013. *USATODAY.COM*. Accessed April 10. <http://www.usatoday.com/money/perfi/taxes/story/2012-07-09/farming-estate-taxes/56118402/1>.

³ “Fauquier County Rural Land Use Plan.” 2014. Accessed October 11. <http://www.fauquiercounty.gov/Government/Departments/CommDev/includes/compplan/ch8.pdf>

⁴ “Department of Agricultural Development.” 2014. Accessed December 2. <http://www.fauquiercounty.gov/government/departments/agdev/index.cfm?action=PDRP> rogram.

Amid all of these larger external forces, there are also controversies at the local level. Disagreements over appropriate land use reveal negotiations of identity and competence: what does it mean to be a *good farmer*, a *real farmer*? In a landscape increasingly dotted with “vanity vineyards” belonging to internet tycoons; tax loophole “hobby farms”; and barnyard-themed agritainments – all within the official realm of the classification “farm use” – these three family farms are defining themselves and their work on their own terms.⁵ As one farmer told me, a “McMansion” with a pair of llamas in the front yard does not a farmer make.⁶

Beneath the surface of the pastoral idyll, there are conflicts, changes, and challenges afoot. Though urban visitors comment that they feel transported back to a simpler time when they visit PYO farms, this peaceful-looking valley is the scene of a struggle: a struggle over self-definition, struggles over appropriate land use, and struggles to sustain a way of life amid tremendous change and social and economic pressures. By looking closer and paying attention to the words and actions of the farmers themselves, this study takes into account these farming families: hard at work innovating new sources of revenue, taking advantage of social media and targeted marketing, bending tradition to create niche value, and all the while still mastering the many skills and ways of knowing traditionally required of people who make their living off the land.

⁵ “Musings on Vanity Wineries.” 2014. *Vinography.Com: A Wine Blog*. Accessed October 11.
http://www.vinography.com/archives/2009/10/thoughts_on_vanity_wineries.html.

⁶ “Fire Department Definitions of Dwellings.” 2014. Accessed October 11.
<http://fcfra.camp9.org/Resources/Documents/FOG/NOVA%20SFD%20Manual.pdf>.

My approach will be to examine how the Leeds Manor PYO farmers negotiate the challenges of maintaining small family farming in a changing community by selective strategies of identity negotiation. These strategies deal with historical legacy, presentation to the public, marketing and display, and conflict resolution. Using examples from my time spent in participant observation on these farms and in casual and recorded conversations, I highlight the differences and similarities between these farmers in how they respond to everyday challenges. The portrait that emerges is one of thoughtful, adaptive individuals, sometimes flawed, sometimes inspired, as they continue within and expand beyond the traditions of agriculture in the Leeds Manor Historic District.

The Leeds Manor Road farms are in the northwestern corner of Fauquier County, at the furthest edge of what local people consider Northern Virginia. This region is a threshold to the Blue Ridge Mountains and the significantly less populated and more rural towns to the west. This area is also known as the Piedmont (which is a French word for “foothills” below a mountain range). The terrain is rolling hills and small granite-laced mountains that locals use as directional guides, but to outside visitors they are just one more aspect of the charming countryside scenery. There are lovely old homes at the end of long drives, fresh spring fed creeks, and railroad crossings. Unlike other parts of Fauquier County that have been majorly developed in the last 15 years, this corner remains relatively undisturbed, with almost no retail stores, or even gas stations and ATMs.

Growing up in a suburb of Washington, D.C. in the 1970s and 1980s, our family would regularly take country drives to get away, eat at country diners, go hiking, and buy

fresh baked pies. Jeffrey Hopkins explores the ways people use the countryside as a weekend escape as “a place to escape one’s own urban world of work, responsibility, and routine” (76). The PYO farms provide families a way can spend time together in a wholesome and inexpensive way while picking fresh fruit. The countryside, juxtaposed with a congested metropolitan area like Washington, D.C., becomes “a place with spiritual resonances, with connotations of romantic simplicity and golden traditionality” (Kneafsey, 763). The “pick-your-own” farmers present a tourist attraction that helps sustain their agricultural tradition, reconnect visitors to the land, and maintain their way of life.

Though it has never been easy to be a farmer, family farms are increasingly threatened these days. Since the 1980’s, the U.S. has witnessed the near eradication of small family farms. U.S. Census data shows that less than 1% of Americans now list “farmer” as their occupation and of that 1%, less than half rely on farm income alone.⁷ Many small farms have been absorbed into large-scale operations, and small family producers with higher per-acre cost overheads (like in Fauquier County) have been unable to compete in the commodity food markets.

Location can be both a blessing and a curse to farmers in Fauquier County. The farmland is good, there are freshwater streams and springs to help with irrigation and watering livestock, and there are many families with generations-worth of knowledge about how to work the land. Being located just an hour outside a major city used to be a boon for farmers who wanted to get their products to a major urban market quickly.

⁷ “Demographics.” 2013. Accessed April 15.
<http://www.epa.gov/agriculture/ag101/demographics.html>.

These days, the area is ripe for real estate developers who would like to build more and more commuter subdivisions or weekend retreats.

Amid all of these larger external forces, there are also controversies on the local level. Recently a woman named Martha Boneta in nearby Paris, Virginia, was fined by county zoning officials for using her farm to sell non-farm produced goods and services.⁸ According to news coverage, local opinion over the issue has been split.⁹ Some Tea Party activists rallied to Boneta's support in a "pitchfork protest" at the Board of Zoning Appeals meeting.¹⁰ Conversely, farmers I spoke to felt that she was bringing unwelcome attention to businesses like theirs, which sometimes made extra money selling hot dogs or bottled water to customers. Again, this situation reveals negotiations of identity: who gets to claim the role of farmer? Who has access to the benefits (financial and social) that the role of farmer comes with? This study seeks to understand how farm identity is locally determined by these particular farmers as they go about their everyday life and work.

⁸ Section 3.2 – 5121, Part B. "Authority to adopt regulations; conformity with federal regulations; hearings; enforcement of article; review of regulations." *Virginia Food Laws: 2011*. Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. <http://www.vdacs.virginia.gov/fdsafety/pdf/foodlaws.pdf> Accessed 4/2/13.

⁹ Dahlberg, Jessica. "Paris Farmer Takes Her Case to State's Halls of Power." *Fauquier Times-Democrat* (online edition). January 8, 2013. http://www.fauquiernow.com/index.php/fauquier_news/article/paris-farmer-takes-her-case-to-the-state-capitol . Accessed 3/23/13.

¹⁰ "Examiner Local Editorial: Fauquier County Steps over the Line | WashingtonExaminer.com." 2013. *Washington Examiner*. Accessed April 17. <http://washingtonexaminer.com/article/2503450>.

Purpose

This thesis is an ethnographic exploration of several PYO farm families as they negotiate their identity in the midst of change and struggle in contemporary Fauquier County, Virginia. To sustain the independent family farm in this era of consolidated agribusiness requires successful farm families to be creative, adaptable to new markets, new opportunities and new technologies. It is not enough to merely do what has always been done in the past. To be a sustainable small family farm in Fauquier County today requires rough hands and a sharp mind. Through in-depth interviewing, this research will give voice to a small group of family farmers so that they can express a pride of place, identification with their land, local history, and their community, and a pragmatic sense of hope for the future of the family farm. Not all of the farmers will define themselves in relation to their work and their community in the same way, however and this too is the point of this study: to present the wide range of farmer identities working within very similar farming models and within just a few miles of each other.

How does the shift from farming for wholesale food production to farming for tourism affect the identities of family farmers? Brandt and Haugen suggest that the transition “to becoming a provider of services raises questions about whether the farm population constructs new occupational roles and new identities.”(35) How do farmers preserve their way of life, despite the external pressures of economics? Is a farm with a corn maze and a moon bounce still a “real” farm?

By collecting oral histories from members of these farm families, I discovered the strategies they employ to present themselves in the role of “farmer” to multiple audiences: customers, state agencies, neighbors, and, most importantly, for themselves.

This research contributes to a better understanding of the many challenges facing contemporary small farmers, not only in the difficult work of farming but also in the way farming shapes their identity.

Definition of Terms

Throughout this thesis I refer to “pick-your-own” farms (sometimes also known as “U-Pick” farms), which for the sake of brevity I will call “PYO” farms. Another term specific to this study is “agritainment” which is a recently employed compound term referring to agriculturally themed entertainments, such as corn mazes, hayrides, PYO farms, and the like.

Methodology

The methodology for this project is case studies based on ethnographic research methods. I conducted a close analysis of three particular “pick-your-own” farms to determine the strategies being employed by those farm families in presenting identity. Additionally, I used participant observation by working on the farms (on a voluntary basis) to better understand the way these farms are situated in a particular place and time. Close analysis of the occupational culture of these farms provides details of ways of making a life that may be applied to farms in other locations or to other occupational culture groups. I supplement participant observation with in-depth, open-ended oral history interviews.

Procedure

I have filed the necessary papers with George Mason University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) and obtained approval the study before proceeding. Permission for

all interviews has been explicitly discussed with all participants and they have been provided with release forms detailing the purposes for which this research will be used. All participants have been given the option of using pseudonyms, and the right to review, edit, and/or strike any recordings, transcripts or final text that they do not wish to be used.

Informants have been located through my connection to Tom Davenport, owner of Hollin Farms in Delaplane, Virginia. He has facilitated the introduction to other neighboring PYO farmers. I personally contacted members of the additional farms to request their assistance, arranged interviews at times convenient to them, and offered to work (unpaid) on their farms as a way to collect ethnographic material.

All interviews were digitally recorded with the participants' full knowledge and consent. The interviews were transcribed, and coded to identify recurring themes. I used field notes from every day spent in the field to record observations, informal conversations, and noteworthy experiences. These notes were also coded to locate patterns, insights, or divergences observed.

Additional data has been collected in the form of customer surveys, again, subject to the farmers' permission. I conducted these surveys in person at the various farm locations. The questions for these surveys have been submitted to the IRB for approval (or exemption) prior to conducting them in the field.

The participants in this research have been: Tom, Mimi, Matt, and Shannon Davenport of Hollin Farms in Delaplane, Virginia; Brian, Georgi, Bill, Hank and Cheryll Green of Hartland Farms in Markham, Virginia; and William Stribling and Alex Jeffries of Stribling Orchard at Mountain View in Markham. For greater context, I have also

conducted interviews with other orchardists along Leeds Manor Road: Melanie Fein of Apple Manor Farm in Delaplane; Charles Strothers of Virginia Perfection Farm in Delaplane; and Paul and Sue Redden who are at the early stages of growing apples for a cidery.

The selection of these farms limits the scope of this study to include only farms along Leeds Manor Road in a small portion of northwestern Fauquier County, Virginia. This area is particularly well suited to observe small scale family orchards because of the relative density of PYO farms; the increasing saturation of small wineries in the area (a similar agritourism model); and the historical association of the area with agricultural production, in particular the growing of tree fruit. The geographical proximity of the farms made it easier to spend more time at each farm, and reduced the variables between the farms' physical, historical, and environmental milieu.

Analysis of the data collected applies established theory on the performance of identity, occupational culture, place, and tourism (included in the theoretical framework and literature review, below) to explore how culture is cultivated on these PYO farms and what these specific case studies can add to the ongoing theoretical discussions. The solutions and challenges offered by the PYO farmers in this study can serve as a guide for family farmers in other locations struggling with similar issues, or for anyone entering into the experience economy.

Why Folklore Studies?

In my approach to this research, I employ the ethnographic method: using participant observation; in-depth interviewing of key informants; and extensive field

notes, all of which I can refer back to find new meanings and connections through coding. The methods are qualitative and non-representative because the focus is on individuals and the ways in which they make meaning from their work. The point is not to aggregate, but to look very closely, very specifically at several individuals in a small community and how they perform in a variety of different situations and to different audiences. But why call this approach folklore? Gillian Bennett (1991, 26) explains our approach as a way of “analyzing the ‘lore’ part of ‘folklore’ as a body of beliefs, activities, ways of making, saying and doing things and interacting with others that are acquired through informal, unofficial channels by the processes of socializing in family-, occupational-, or activity-related groups.” Folklore encompasses a whole range of meaning-making behaviors that people engage in, and therefore, it is the best approach to discovering the subtle negotiations of identity of complex people. My purpose is to foster a deeper understanding of the occupational culture of “pick-your-own” farmers, because I believe, oftentimes, it is through the work that we choose to do that we define ourselves as individuals and who we are in relation to other people.

Folklore Studies has its roots in the traditions, stories, and festivals of agricultural people. Over the years, folklorists have distanced themselves from this focus on rural traditions in order to study urban and suburban cultures. Since 1994, at least, folklorists like Sandy Rikoon, et al. (Hufford, 1994, 188) have bemoaned the lack of cultural work on the subject of contemporary family farms. The time is right for folklorists to return to the farm in order to bring our insights to bear on the latest “back-to-the-land” trend. Recently, the U.S. has seen a renewed interest in food cultivation and production led by

food writers like Michael Pollan and Mark Bittman. In November 2014, Bittman led a sold-out *New York Times* conference called “Food for Tomorrow,” that sought to find solutions to feed the world’s poor and improve eating habits.¹¹ American television sets are filled with cooking shows and celebrity chefs, but fewer people than ever before in our nation’s history live on farms. Food scares, such as the deadly listeria outbreaks among cantaloupe growers in Colorado in 2012, which killed 33 people, and films such as *Food, Inc.* that examine the dark side of food production, have fostered a widespread anxiety about where our food comes from.¹² PYO farms can serve as a way for customers to allay their fears about food production by getting directly involved with the people and the places where (at least some of) their food comes from. At the same time, these PYO farm families are modeling a way of life that customers may not feel is an option to them anymore, where one can raise a family and feed them from the land you own.

Choosing to live a specific way of life *is* a cultural production, though there may not be a tangible object that results and is conventionally recognized as “art.” Ray Cashman (2011) explores how Northern Irish farmers tell stories about themselves and other farmers that illustrate values of competence. These narratives help shape the ethos

¹¹ “The New York Times Food for Tomorrow Conference, Nov. 11-12, 2014 - Food for Tomorrow 2014 - International Herald Tribune Conferences.” 2014. Accessed October 19. <http://www.nytfodfortomorrow.com/>.

¹² “Final Listeria Cantaloupe Death Toll at 33, CDC Says.” 2014. Accessed November 22. http://www.denverpost.com/ci_21418969/final-listeria-cantaloupe-death-toll-at-33-cdc.

Robert Kenner, Elise Pearlstein, Kim Roberts, Eric Schlosser, Michael Pollan, Gary Hirshberg, Joel Salatin, et al. 2009. *Food, Inc.* Los Angeles, CA: Magnolia Home Entertainment.

of their rural community by establishing locally determined rules of conduct and skill. Similarly, the stone carvers studied by Majorie Hunt's (2007) discussed among themselves how they "stole" their skills from their masters, by working within a tradition but also making space within that tradition to develop their individual style. Folklore Studies pays attention to the ways people express themselves culturally through their work, also referred to as Occupational Folklore.

Amongst recent folklore scholarship, I have been greatly influenced by Ray Cashman's work in *Storytelling on the Northern Irish Border* (2011). Like Cashman, I enmeshed myself in the community during my period of fieldwork. Two of the farm families allowed me to volunteer my time at their sales stands so that I could be on site observing day-to-day practices. I also stayed overnight in the area at the Davenports' pre-Civil War cabin and participated in community events such as the Delaplane Strawberry Festival, a church potato planting for the local food bank, and the annual cherry picking cookout at Beulah Baptist Church, in order to learn more about the wider community and document day-to-day work activities, current community issues, and the relationships between neighbors. Especially relevant to my own work is Cashman's attention to the distinction his participants made in their storytelling between the "good" and "bad" farmers. Their conversations about the work done by different farmers negotiate competence in a locally defined way.¹³ Two farmer character types he discusses are the "new farmer-capitalist" and the "old-fashioned hopeless one" (Cashman, 173). These

¹³ See also Glassie's exploration of competence in Glassie, Henry. 1976. *Folk Housing Middle Virginia: Structural Analysis Historic Artifacts*. 1st ed. Univ Tennessee Press.

exaggerated types illustrate the range of appropriate behavior for a farmer, with the “good” farmer falling somewhere in the middle between the two extremes. The stories that farmers tell about themselves, their customers, and each other are my primary source material for understanding how the Leeds Manor farmers place themselves and each other on the scale.



Figure 3. Customers line up at the Hollin Farms sales shed.

Literature Review

Identity as Farmer

Human beings all participate in some form of self-presentation, shaping the way we want others to see us (to some degree) by our clothing, behavior, ways of speaking. PYO farmers are no different from anyone else in that they are at least partly defined by

their occupational role. Sociologist Erving Goffman's *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) highlights the challenges of the presentation of oneself through occupational roles. "Farmer" is a deeply evocative classification that immediately conjures iconic images of a weathered man in a flannel shirt and dungarees, mud clods on work boots, and a battered hat to shield from the sun. Rikoon et al. observe that "The label of 'family farmer' and 'family farm' are emblematic for both insiders and outsiders, serving as powerful ideational constructs around which farmers and the general public may negotiate identity and cultural attributes" (Rikoon et al., in Hufford, 187). In every social identity, there is the identity that one intends to present to society, and the identity that one is assigned in society. Throughout this study, consideration will be given to both sides of the identity of "farmer", how customers of the PYO farms view the farmers and how the farmers view themselves and each other.

Identity in Place

Part of the construction of one's identity comes from the tradition one is rooted in, or chooses to root oneself in. Michael Owen Jones (2000, 116) writes, "Traditions are symbolic constructions of the past in the present for the future." Jones argues that individuals acknowledge tradition as a source for their own self-definition (119). Yet, this does not mean that the individual has to be bound to tradition. Tradition is a resource that can be drawn from as needed, adapted to specific usage, and put aside when new opportunities present themselves which are more advantageous. An example amongst the PYO farms could be something as simple as the juxtaposition of the cable connecting a credit card processing machine running behind a display of antique farm equipment. The

equipment display is evocative of the agricultural past, and the credit card machine allows the farmers to meet the needs of modern consumers.

The concept of place as imbued with the values, history, and culture of the people who live in it (DeCerteau 1984; Glassie 1976) is significant for this discussion of farmer identity because Fauquier County is a place with one of the longest traditions of continuous agricultural in this country, in fact, preceding this country. The past is present for longtime residents of this area and many families can trace their lineage in homesteads there back several generations. Civil War battles were fought on these hillsides, and at least one of my contacts proudly displays Confederate army paraphernalia on his drawing room mantel. The U.S. Department of Interior's National Park Service has recognized the region for its historical significance. The Crooked Run Rural Historic District and John Marshall's Leeds Manor Rural Historic District overlap along Leeds Manor Road, encompassing the farms in this study.¹⁴¹⁵ While this recognition highlights the noteworthy battles, persons, and structures of the past, my focus is on the living culture bearers of the present day.

In the colonial era, farmers in this part of Virginia raised livestock on the grassy foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, grew grain crops and hay, and operated mills on

¹⁴ "Crooked Run Valley Rural HD - 2004 - Final Nomination.pdf." 2014. Accessed September 1. <http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/registers/Counties/Fauquier/030-5369%20-%20Crooked%20Run%20Valley%20Rural%20HD%20-%202004%20-%20Final%20Nomination.pdf>

¹⁵ "JohnMarshallLeedsManorRHD_2007_NRDraft.doc - 030-5428_JohnMarshallRHD_2007_NRfinal.pdf." 2014. Accessed September 7. http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/registers/Counties/Fauquier/030-5428_JohnMarshallRHD_2007_NRfinal.pdf.

the many streams like Goose Creek and Crooked Run. An apple orchard was a standard requirement of lessees who farmed land under the ownership of Lord Fairfax. Farming changed over time, but the large tracts of land in this valley remained largely intact. Today, cattle, hay, and apples are still significant crops though they have been joined by a dozen or more vineyards and wineries. Despite the efforts of Virginia Piedmont winemakers to connect to a Jeffersonian past, wine grapes were never successfully grown in Fauquier until the last thirty years.¹⁶ But through the centuries, the *terroir* of these granite laced hill lands has produced delicious peaches and apples that settlers used for fresh eating and cider. The soil composition and climate provide a particular taste of place to the orchard fruit, and the history and culture of the community give shape to the identities of the farmers who work and live there.

Farm Community Values

One way to define someone is by pointing out who he is not. Cashman and Hunt both reference the way people within an occupational tradition define what is “good work” and what is “bad work.” I am interested in listening to how the farmers speak about their work ethic and that of farmers in their neighboring community. Through conversation, these PYO farmers reveal what they think makes a good farmer and a good neighbor; often these go hand in hand. As Dorfman, et al. (2004, 187) found in their narratives of rural elders, people share stories from their own experience to highlight the “values of self-reliance, hard work, and religion, attachment to place and community, and

¹⁶ “Philip Carter Winery of Virginia.” 2014. Accessed September 20. <http://www.pcwinery.com/>. Note the date of 1762 under the company logo. No wine was being produced in 1762 in Markham.

centrality of family and work.” This discussion is contrasted to the rising population of non-farming, wealthy residents of Fauquier County, who come for an escape from work, as opposed to family farmers who both live and work there. Sutherland presents a useful discussion of the gentrification of farmland in the United Kingdom, which is pricing traditional food-producing farmers out of prime farmland due to increased demand from elite “hobby farmers” (576). This mirrors some of the same effects being seen within Fauquier County, as wealthy urbanites build mini estates on former farmland.

Farm as Stage

The performance of identity needs a stage, and for these PYO farmers that stage is the public/sales area of their farms. The old farmhouses, cemeteries, and rusting farm equipment are markers of a pre-industrial past, of agricultural heritage and tradition, of connection to preceding generations and history (Kneafsey, 2001, 770). But by staging the PYO farm in this way, farmers are participating in the romanticization of their lifestyles. The farm attractions highlight the parts of rural life that the consumers expect and want to see, but do not offer a true account of the hard work and modern innovations of the real farm. According to Dean MacCannell’s *Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings* (1973), a destination like the PYO farm presents to the public a kind of “back” region, a “behind-the-scenes” location that tourists in search of a more “authentic” experience crave. By visiting a PYO farm, people from the city and the suburbs can “play” at being farmers for the day. However, the experience of the day visitor is a polished up, display version of farm life and not the “real” thing. The number of farms in Fauquier County today is at an all-time low, though much of the land is still

rented for grazing cattle of a large beef conglomerate. This is the new post-rural Fauquier County in which much of the farmland is for show: vineyards that only represent a fraction of the grapes used by wineries, a Strawberry Festival that uses berries trucked in from California. It feels like a rural farming community, but very few residents are actually farming for a living. Even at the PYO farms, most of the family members have primary jobs in addition to running the farm, such as government worker, nurse, or insurance sales. By presenting an unrealistic portrayal of farm life, are PYO farm families also perpetuating the assumptions and misunderstandings of the non-farming public, in ways that could significantly impact their way of life? At the same time, it is doubtful that most tourists are aware there is more to a farmer's life than meets the eye during their daytrips, but they are willing to suspend their disbelief for the sake of a fun day out. In this way, both the tourist and the farmer are collaborators in the fiction of the rural idyll – but for different reasons - to be discussed further below. Dean MacCannell's discussion of the "front stage/backstage" dichotomy is useful shorthand for explaining what people show to outsiders and what people show only to insiders. It is interesting through the course of this research to see how the farmers define authenticity for themselves and how the farms' own authenticity is determined by their customers. Both MacCannell and Goffman have written about the creation of a "false back stage" (MacCannell, 1973, 592–593 and Goffman, 1959, 247). This refers to the creation of a tourist setting where the producer wants the consumer to believe they are getting the authentic experience, the "backstage pass" and all the access to insider knowledge that comes with this. However, when tourists come to a pick-your-own farm, an unspoken

agreement seems to be made: that the visitors will get their hands dirty picking their own fruit – and pay for the privilege; and that the farmers will be welcoming and not shatter the illusion with the tough realities of farm life. Part of the attraction of visiting a PYO farm is that the real labor is hidden and that the customers are comforted by the tidy rows and happy cows in fields to believe that this is how all farms really are.

If ‘all the world is a stage’, then the stage dressing is also important in setting the scene of the “real” farm. Barbara Kirshenblatt Gimblett (330) explores in her work “how people save, collect, and arrange their possessions in ways that are profoundly meaningful through the life span.” Kirshenblatt-Gimblett focuses on domestic displays of objects, but I would argue that these family farms use the display of old farm equipment in a similar way. Cashman (242) also discusses the ways in which his group of Irish farmers commemorate their agricultural past through displays of antique farm equipment and the knowledge of how these things were once used. Becoming informal “museum curators” helps the farmer to reconcile the dramatic changes of modernization (Cashman, 245). By positioning an old combine on a hill by the entrance to their parking lot, the PYO farmer is signaling to customers continuity to the past and to the region’s agricultural traditions. “Such objects are a medium of exchange and focus of interaction – a talking point” (Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, 335). Many PYO farmers live adjacent to their businesses, making the opening up of their orchards somewhat like inviting strangers into one’s backyard. What are the costs and benefits for farmers whose daily lives intersect so much with their business life? Focusing on how the PYO farmers choose to market

themselves through branding, signage, advertising and social media helps us understand how they wish to be perceived by others.

Rural as a place of consumption

Some have touted agritourism as the best hope for saving the disappearing family farm (Hopkins, 81). Brandth and Haugen (35) studied the impact of the shift from “the countryside as a place for food production [...] in favour of the countryside as a place of consumption and recreation.” They found that farmers are under increased demands when playing “host” to tourists that cause new stresses (in addition to the everyday stresses of managing a farm) and challenge their social identity. Their research highlights how contemporary farmers are negotiating this shifting identity in a way that is satisfying to their own self-perception and enables them to create new sources of revenue to sustain their farm (Brandth and Haugen, 43).

Sharpley and Vass (2006) explore the effects of farm diversification (specifically agritourism in Europe) on the attitudes of farming families. They found that many farmers preferred to keep their farming separate from the interaction with tourists, thereby maintaining the integrity of their identity as “real” farmers. However, the need for increased staffing to run the tourist attraction did not tend to result in an increase in economic advantage for the landowner, but benefitted the employees and other local businesses that serviced the tourists.¹⁷ Though their primary business today is the pick-

¹⁷ “On Family Farms, ‘Agritourism’; Rural Revenues Rise with Smart Marketing - The Buffalo News.” 2013. *BuffaloNews.com*. Accessed May 6.
<http://www.buffalonews.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20111031/BUSINESS/310319993>.

your-own farm, three of the four PYO farmers I spoke to also maintain herds of up to 200 head of cattle on part of their lands. Why do they choose to maintain cattle when the PYO orchards are so lucrative? Over the years these farmers have had to develop strategies to protect themselves from bad crops, is diversification. Perhaps maintaining the long tradition of Virginia cattlemen is important to the preservation of the farmer's identity as a "real" farmer and provides a source of income outside of the growing season.

Rural counties like Fauquier often renovate old buildings as tourist attractions to promote their destination as a place connected to nostalgia, traditional values, health, nature, or a refuge from modernity – appealing to the romantic notions of a rural place the countryside which appeals to urban elites.¹⁸ An example in this region is Sky Meadows State Park and its historic home. Visitors can pay a small entrance fee and camp or hike through the sprawling grounds or tour the home. Sky Meadows backs up to both the Davenport and the Strother property lines. Kneafsey (2001) points out that while creating profit for some rural residents, this portrayal of rural life also serves to position the farmers as holdovers from the past, and reduces the options for other forms of modern development that would not be "in keeping" with the rural feel of the community. The jobs that are created by tourism of this kind tend to be service-oriented and lacking the autonomy valued by rural residents. Additionally, rural tourism risks attracting interest from the nouveau riche who fall in love with the scenic views and decide to build vacation homes, thereby raising property values.

¹⁸ "ProfitingfromPreservationMosby-Sm.pdf." 2014. Accessed September 7. <http://meganincva.com/pdfs/ProfitingfromPreservationMosby-sm.pdf>.

PYO farms produce crops for consumption but not for the commodity market. They save money on labor costs by allowing customers to come “pick-their-own”, in essence, tricking paying customers into playing the role of pickers, which droves of customers are only too happy to do. But this has the secondary effect of hiding the real labor of farm life. The farm family has to prune and spray the trees at just the right times of year, laying out the orchard for the next twenty to thirty years. They have to fire air cannons all night to keep the deer from devouring the tender bud branches. The farmers build roads to access the orchard, parking lots, sales sheds, and picnic tables. They have to rent portable toilets and make sure they are compliant with zoning codes. If all the fruit ripens and there is no one there to pick it (because of weather or because it’s a weekday) the farmer has to pick it or watch it rot. Though customers are providing only a portion of the labor, I spoke to many who laughed and said, “I have to pay YOU after I did all the work?” In these ways, the real work of running a PYO farm is obscured, with implications for how the farmer is perceived.

Farm Families

Though limited, there have been a few illuminating studies of the stresses farm families face. It is important that this work address not just how farm identity affects the male farmer, but also how it affects the whole farm family unit. How are the relationships between husbands and wives, siblings, and multiple generations challenged and strengthened by the life choice of family farming? Danes and Lee (2004) present findings from an extensive study on the common stresses facing farm families. Particularly, they

indicate that the stresses are felt differently by husbands and wives, who tend to take on gendered roles. This thesis includes the perspectives of the farm wives and mothers from the Leeds Manor PYO farms, and shares what they have to say through interviews. Brandth and Haugen (2007, 379) find “that gendered farm identities change in a way that incorporates old and new roles.”

Using a feminist lens, Jo Little (1987) examines the role of women in rural areas and argues for a valuation of women’s contribution beyond strictly economic measurements to rural life. I apply this feminist lens to the efforts of the farm wives, mothers and daughters in this study, as they seek to create sources of revenue for their families and hospitality for their visitors. Though the primary role of farming belongs to the men in these cases, I show that the women play a significant role in creating a welcoming setting for tourists that meets expectations and ensures return visits.

The values and traditions of a local community are also an influence on how individuals shape their identities (see Cashman; Goffman; Glassie; Hunt). Referring to the maintenance of traditions in folk groups, Michael Owen Jones (2000, 119) discusses “the ways that people rely on one another, with reference to precedent for their wisdom, their expression, their identity.” Many of the farms on Leeds Manor Road have been passed down from generation to generation. Fauquier County officially emphasizes its agricultural traditions, which also affects the mindset of the people who live there.¹⁹ The PYO farms are situated in the rolling hills where foxhunts on horseback still occur, old

¹⁹ “Fauquier County Virginia: Life as it Should Be.” www.fauquiertourism.com. Accessed 4/15/2013.

buildings that are steeped with Civil War history stand sentinel, legendary apple orchards grow, and cattle farmers call to their cows.²⁰

Cashman, Hunt and Glassie all discuss the importance of place in the formation of an individual's identity. Marjorie Hunt explains that the stone carvers she studied honed their craft in the "atmosphere" of their tradition (Hunt, 2011, 54). Henry Glassie, writing about Turkish artisans, observes, "You live in a cultural environment, and the air you breathe circulates through you to emerge in actions that are yours alone but can be called traditional because you created them out of the general experience of life in some place" (Glassie, 1993, 529-530). The PYO farmers who are the focus of this study have identities that are at least partially shaped by the particular corner of the county that they live and work in. Cashman adds that it is especially during times of stress that questions of identity are foregrounded (13). Cashman explains that: "Pressed, people contemplate identity through their bids to envision some community of the social imaginary. The identity people seek, perceive, and often embrace depends on the type of community they appeal to in performance; it could be local, sectarian, regional, ethnic, generational, gendered, and so on. These performances comprise much of what we term folklore" (13). Part of the goal of this study is to identify these pressures and the performances of identity they give rise to among these farm families.

In her work with family farmers in Appalachia, Mary LaLone (2008, 62) focuses on identifying their strategies for success, specifically diversification, reciprocity, and

²⁰ Davenport, Tom. "Calling Cows" *Hollin Farms* (You Tube channel). Uploaded December 22, 2006. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lk2EkaB139E> . Accessed 4/15/2013.

pooling in response to the challenges of economic uncertainty and change. She finds that farmers who employed this collaborative approach were more successful overall (Lalone, 90-91). An in-depth discussion of the survival strategies of family farmers is presented by Lobao and Meyer (2001, 116), who point out that when faced with economic hardship, the choice to leave the farm in search of greater financial security is a survival strategy as well. It is interesting to explore what strategies exist among the PYO farmers: are they cooperative or is there increased competition and tension between them because their businesses are so alike and their farms are so close to each other? The choices these PYO farmers make in response to the challenges of their way of life illustrate the variety of strategic thinking and approaches of these adaptable and creative individuals.

Even within the farm families there can be tensions between siblings or between the older and younger generation of farmers. As parents grow older, siblings have to negotiate who will run which operations of the farm, and how profits from the land will be divided (Taylor and Norris, 2000). Lobao and Meyer (2001, 111) point out that many family farms were lost in the 20th century due to lack of interest in farming from the younger generation, or family feuds over inheritance. Is the PYO model of a small family farm profitable enough to sustain these families and to stay productive for future generations?

Through my interviews and interactions with the families, I present the particular issues faced by the Davenports, the Greens, the Striblings, Strothers, Redden, and Feins. Each family situation presents its own set of problems and its own solutions, based on the cultural values and identity of the individuals in that particular family.

Summary

There is a lot of “buzz” in the media today about local farming.²¹ Michael Pollan and other food writers have made average consumers skeptical of industrially produced foods, GMOs, corn syrup and growth hormones.²² Perhaps it is this suspicion that has fostered the recent explosion in local farmers markets, community-supported agriculture (CSAs), and explains why the word “local” is showing up on every trendy restaurant’s menu.

Yet the widespread stereotype of small family farmers is as holdovers, insensibly rooted to the past and doomed due to external forces beyond their control, which speaks to the need for a deeper exploration of the “farmer” identity in contemporary society (Kneafsey, 2001, 763; Hopkins, 1998, 77; Park and Coppack, 1994, 161-163). The PYO farm families of Leeds Manor Road represent a connection to the past, a challenge to current (more urban) ways of life, and an entrepreneurial drive to keep family farming sustainable into the future.

As family farmers consider shifting towards a more profitable, but more service-oriented farming model, like PYO, agritourism, or to offering agritainments like corn mazes and fun fields, this thesis illuminates some of the shifts in farm identity that this entails. Farming is a way of life that requires farmers to switch between many roles in

²¹ “Virginia Consumers Go Local | Farm Flavor.” 2013. Accessed April 16.
<http://farmflavor.com/us-ag/virginia/virginia-food/virginia-consumers-go-local/>.

²² Pollan, Michael. 2007. *The Omnivore’s Dilemma: A Natural History of Four Meals*.

their work, their families, and their communities. Indeed, a better understanding of the stresses and challenges over identity affecting family farmers that may be of benefit to policy makers, advocates of the local food movement, and consumers as they look for ways to better support and sustain family farmers.

CHAPTER TWO: HISTORY RUNS THROUGH THIS VALLEY

“...Most people don’t invest in orchards. When you invest in an orchard you’re basically saying, ‘I’m going to stay here for the next 25-30 years.’ There’s a real commitment. So many of the people who have bought land in this area aren’t doing this because they don’t expect to be here that long. It’s too much for them.”

-Tom Davenport

One way that the Leeds Manor PYO farmers establish their identity is by linking themselves and their farms to local history. Leeds Manor Road (688) is the link that connects these farms and also serves as the backbone of John Marshall’s Leeds Manor Rural Historic District, recognized by the federal government because of its unique historical, cultural, and agricultural distinctions.²³ The District was home to rebel sympathizers during the Civil War who sheltered and supported the infamous Confederate raider John Mosby and his men.²⁴ The railroad that runs through Delaplane earned a place in military history because it was the first time a train was used to

²³ “JohnMarshallLeedsManorRHD_2007_NRDraft.doc - 030-5428_JohnMarshallRHD_2007_NRfinal.pdf.” 2014. Accessed September 7. http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/registers/Counties/Fauquier/030-5428_JohnMarshallRHD_2007_NRfinal.pdf.

²⁴ “ProfitingfromPreservationMosby-Sm.pdf.” 2014. Accessed September 7. <http://meganincva.com/pdfs/ProfitingfromPreservationMosby-sm.pdf>.

transport troops in a war.²⁵ The Stribling and Strother families served in the war, and also share family ties to John Marshall, Chief Justice in the Supreme Court. History runs through these valleys as sure as Crooked Run and Goose Creek do. The farm families: the Strothers, the Striblings and the Greens all have long ties to the area, dating well before the Civil War. Their family names can be found on many of the weathered headstones in the small local cemeteries throughout the county. Census data going back to 1790, records their family name in official transactions such as the transferring of deeds, the purchase of slaves, and in the records of birth, deaths and marriages.



Figure 4. Roadside historical marker in Delaplane. All photos by author unless indicated.

²⁵ "Crooked Run Valley Rural HD - 2004 - Final Nomination.pdf." 2014. Accessed September 1. <http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/registers/Counties/Fauquier/030-5369%20-%20Crooked%20Run%20Valley%20Rural%20HD%20-%202004%20-%20Final%20Nomination.pdf>.

But it is the history of their homes, their land, and their ancestors, which hold them accountable. The PYO farmers are aware of their connections to each other (three of the four families are distant cousins) and to a legacy of farming that has gone through many changes through the years, but endures. The history of orchards in this area is part of the magnetic pull that attracts customers to drive from 60 miles away to get fruit that is already available at their corner stores, either carrying on their own family tradition, or adopting one as their own. At social gatherings, the locals of this District, many of them related to these farm families, share stories about the past generations, the local characters. In Spring 2014, I attended a fundraising dinner for the annual Delaplane Strawberry Festival. I sat at a table in the old manor house named Carrington, once owned by the Marshall family. Though the current owners were not descendants, they understood that their home belonged to the history of the community, not just to themselves. As people shared stories and dined, I was amazed at how they each seemed to know the family tree of everyone else at the table and how they were all connected. Their stories spoke to a shared community history of, not just the wealthy landowners, but also who their tenants were on the estates and who the laborers were that worked on the farms. Only an hour outside a major metropolitan area, I discovered a “small town” community that I hardly thought existed anymore. Even the relative newcomers complied with the unspoken rule that to live here, you must know our history. The families that run the PYO farms of Leeds Manor are living and working within that tradition.

The Striblings of Mountain View Orchard

The oldest and most well known of the families are the Striblings. Their orchard is beside the old family homestead, Mountain View, on Poverty Hollow Road, just off Leeds Manor Road, in the village of Markham. The drive to the sales shop and public entrance to the orchard winds up past the old house, the leaning log cabin, and tilting with age outbuildings.



Figure 5. The Stribling homestead at Mountain View. Note the satellite dish showing the house is in use.

The setting is evocative of Virginia history; reminiscent of the many historic farms Virginian children visit on their grade school field trips. The family highlights its history through tours, promoted on their website: “We invite preschools, daycares, school age

children, scouts, adult organizations, and corporate team builders to see first hand how apples are grown and learn about farm life.”²⁶

But rather than presenting the anachronism of a “historical working farm,” such as is on display at Sky Meadows’ Bleak House, Stribling Orchard is a very successful and active PYO operation today. The orchard is vast, with rows of trees planted wide enough for cars to drive through and access the upper orchards and scenic views. The “History” page of the Stribling Orchard website tells how in August of 1819, Dr. Robert Stribling purchased Mountain View after establishing his practice in the area seven years earlier. Today, the orchard is owned by a descendant, also named Robert Stribling, but it is his brother-in-law, Alex Jeffries who manages the day-to-day operations. In my conversations with their cousins, the Green family, they suggested that if I was interested in the history of apples in the valley, I should talk to William (Bill) Stribling, who is the family’s unofficial historian.

I interviewed William Stribling in July 2013 at his home, a short distance from Mountain View. He was 86 years old at the time and was enjoying his retirement at home with his wife. William never ran the orchard, but worked there throughout his youth. His hobby is studying the history of the area and of his family tree. As we walked into his home, William showed me a portrait hanging in the entryway, “That’s Chief Justice John Marshall, he’s my third great grandfather.” Now it should be noted that this part of Fauquier County is thick with descendants of John Marshall. When one starts asking people about their family history, everyone seems to have a connection to the Chief

²⁶ Stribling Orchard website: <http://www.striblingorchard.com/Tours.html>

Justice, and the nearby town of Marshall is named after him. But even a casual review of census data shows that the Stribling name has been associated with the Markham area for at least two hundred years. I felt sure I had come to the right place to learn about the region's history. William Stribling helped me understand how the history of apple orchards is integral to the history of the settlement and agriculture of the area, and of Virginia.



Figure 6. William Stribling with a portrait of his father.

William pointed out a framed document hanging in his front hall: “Now this is a ... this is a Fairfax lease.” By which he meant one of the original leases issued by Lord Fairfax, dated November 1787, whose family had rights over the massive holdings in Virginia, from the King of England. I had read about these leases in my research, but hardly expected to see one in person. We both peered closely at the framed parchment, William skimming the old-fashioned script of the document with his fingertip, reading along: “Here it is right here, okay, 160 acres, one dwelling 20 feet by 15 feet wide, [...] SHALL

PLANT AN ORCHARD OF 100 APPLE TREES planted 30 feet apart, trimmed and fenced during this lease. That's where it started from!"

The old Fairfax lease represents an origin story of sorts for apple farmers in this valley. Lord Fairfax was basically an absentee landlord, only coming to Virginia to hunt; and even then preferring to frequent a track on the far side of the Blue Ridge Mountains which he considered more wild. Fairfax wrote the requirement for the apple orchards into the leases because he must have thought they would help tame the hilly wilderness of the Virginia colonies and provide incentive for his leasees to stay on. As Michael Pollan explains in his history of the apple, "The purpose of the rule was to dampen speculation by encouraging homesteaders to put down roots. Since a standard apple tree normally took ten years to fruit, an orchard was a mark of lasting settlement" (Pollan, 2001,16). Even without access to fresh water, a leasee could use the apples to make cider and have a safe drinking supply. In the New World an orchard stood as a symbol for food security and stability in an unsure place and time. For this same reason, Johnny Appleseed continues to be a part of our earliest American folklore, the man who pushed westward and planted apple trees wherever he went. Men like him were the advance team that prepared the way for new settlers to come next, securing their need for a potable drink and alcohol as well.

Like the early American settlers themselves, the apple trees came from European stock but developed their own personality in American soil. The genetic material of European apple trees blended with the native crab apples and 'pippin' varieties planted from seed to create new American varieties "Adapted to the soil and climate and day

length of North America, apples that were as distinct from the old European stock as the Americans themselves” (Pollan, 13). In independent American fashion, many farmer settlers did not want to rely on grafts from European stock to grow their own apples. “[T]he apple couldn’t cross the Atlantic without changing its identity –a fact that encouraged generations of Americans to hear echoes of their own story in the story of this fruit. The apple in America became a parable” (Pollan, 2002, 12). Settlers planted apple seeds to grow cider orchards. Every apple pip can sprout a tree which bears unique fruit (Pollan, 9). Many of the apples produced would be bitter and small, bad for fresh eating but best for making hard cider. Cider gave early homesteaders security and self-reliance by creating a safe drinking beverage and a unit of exchange to use in trade for labors, goods, and services (Watson, 2008, 25). Additionally, cider was easy to make and was not taxed like wine or liquors brought over from the Old World. Over the years, American farmers paid attention to which cider trees bore distinctive fruit and developed their own new varieties of eating apples in the New World, like the Newton Pippin. These new varieties gained popularity in Europe, and especially England, which created a huge demand for Virginian apples abroad. In 1773, there was a devastating loss in English orchards that catapulted the demand for Virginia apples (Watson, 2008, 26). American farmers continued to experiment with new varieties and by 1800, there were 100 named varieties of American apples; by 1850 there were 500; and by 1872 there were 1100 documented varieties (Watson, 27).

Though Virginia apple production was growing during the 18th and 19th centuries, most of the land in the Leeds Manor district was under the control of just a few wealthy

landowners. As the frontier pushed further west, settlers were lured away by promises of free land or land that they could own outright, without having to pay rent to a British landlord or later to an American one. This kept the vast tract of Fairfax's land intact much longer than the rest of his land purview, which was eventually developed into the towns and districts of Virginia. According to William Stribling, Lord Fairfax left his personal property, the Manor of Leeds, to his nephew Denny Martin who struck a deal with Chief Justice Marshall to buy the land. William Stribling explained to me how these events resulted in the slow pace of development in this valley for many years to come. "That really had a complete effect on how this land was developed because with them owning it and dividing it up and passing it down for a couple of generations, it ended up staying big estates. You didn't have any small farmers, you had resident farmers and things that worked on the estates but they didn't own any of the land and that lasted until after the Civil War in the 1880s along in there. The families had no slaves, the families had no way of running those estates and so they began to lose them and began to forfeit because of not being able to pay their debts. Still, the essence of an estate remained." Today's landowners take great pride in "keeping the land in the family" –as I heard it said by every farm family I spoke with at one time or another. Just as Denny Martin struck a deal with John Marshall to keep the estate intact, the farm families today juggle tax exemptions, conservation easements, and other methods to ward off a potential division of the land in the event of a dispute over the estate by heirs.

Hartland Farm and Orchard is an example of how a family cooperates over time to keep their estate intact and their traditions grounded in agriculture. Hartland is owned by

Henry Green, who was 93 years old in 2014. He has six adult children and only two who actively farm the land, along with one grandson. Neighbors wonder how he will be able to pass on the estate equitably and not break it up between his various heirs, when Henry eventually passes on. The success of new agritainments on the farm run by eldest son Hank and his wife Cheryll, in addition to the cattle and orchard operations, may generate enough revenue to keep the farm going for years to come. Hartland benefits greatly from its accessible location, right off the state highway. Access has always played a big role in the apple industry of the Piedmont, increasing the market for a relatively sleepy part of the county.



Figure 7. Markham post office, formerly Alex Green's store.

Trains came out to Markham and Delaplane, which was a great boon to the large landowners who needed to transport their farm products to market. William Stribling

explained how his family would collect the apples at a cold storage building in Markham. The storehouse was built over Goose Creek and the cool spring water provided natural refrigeration for the apples. The apples would then be packed into barrels for transport by train into the cities of Washington and Baltimore and for loading onto ships bound for England. The Civil War disrupted transportation lines and created big setbacks for the farmers of the Leeds Manor district. The citizens of the area famously supported Colonel Mosby and his band of raiders. Union troops raided supplies and crops to feed their troops and sometimes took over homes for officer's quarters or temporary hospitals.²⁷

William Stribling told me how his family had been producing apples commercially for many years from their Mountain View estate, and also buying apples from smaller producers in the area, including their nearby cousins, the Green family at Hartland. Prior to 1938, Virginia apples were big business, especially in this valley. The railroad came right into Markham and the train loaded up barrels of apples to take back to Baltimore to be loaded onto ships and sailed to English markets. William showed me old newspaper clippings he had found about the huge quantities of Virginian apples being shipped abroad to England. "The British like[d] a small, juicy, long-keeping, good-cooking apple and that's what we were shipping over there. What we call the old-fashioned Winesap. The old-fashioned Winesap, the biggest it gets is about an inch and $\frac{3}{4}$. Maybe you'll get a 2-inch Winesap –that was their favorite!"

²⁷ "Crooked Run Valley Rural HD - 2004 - Final Nomination.pdf." 2014. Accessed September 1. <http://www.dhr.virginia.gov/registers/Counties/Fauquier/030-5369%20-%20Crooked%20Run%20Valley%20Rural%20HD%20-%202004%20-%20Final%20Nomination.pdf>.

Despite the intercontinental popularity of Virginia apples, the interruptions in trade from two World Wars and competition from other markets more favorable to growing the sweeter varieties, meant that the golden age of apples in the valleys of Virginia was coming to an end. William's father Bee Stribling saw the writing on the wall and was the first commercial orchard in the region to convert to PYO in the 1950's. Factors that precipitated the change were the loss of cheap labor to work the orchards, the competition for apple sales from Washington state, and the decline in demand abroad. The local African American labor force (most descended from slaves who had labored for the same landowners) had been dwindling as folks left their tenant homes on the big estates in search of better wages in the cities. While some of the labor force stayed, the old tenant labor system that had been in place for generations began to break down, causing the landowners to find new strategies to manage their lands and crops with less labor.

Other farmers in the area were not too keen on the idea of letting outsiders onto their farms. William Stribling told me that the other orchardists in the area told his father, "You're crazy! You're crazy! They gonna break the limbs off and waste a lot of fruit. They gonna tear up the orchard. They gonna steal!" One of those naysayers was neighboring farmer, Henry Green, of Hartland Farm. Henry is the current patriarch of the Green family at 93-years old and still in charge of the property and the cattle operation, wielding the ultimate say about what happens on the farm over his six adult children.

The Green family has roots in the area dating as far back as the Striblings, who are their cousins. The farm, Hartland, has not been an orchard as long. Henry Green's father, A. G. Green, was primarily interested in raising cattle and grains for commodity

markets. During the “golden age” of Virginia apple growing, Hartland had a small orchard that they would harvest apples from and sell to the Stribling’s packing house at Markham for shipment to England. After the collapse of the export market from the disruptions of two world wars, many farms that were not diversified collapsed. Bee Stribling switched over from commercial to PYO in the 1950’s, realizing that the export market was not rebounding and he needed to find new ways to make money off his large orchard. The family had informally allowed friends and neighbors to come pick, but this was the first time anyone had formalized a PYO operation in the area. Henry Green was skeptical. The Green family had a successful farm stand off the main highway, route 55 in the village of Markham, and that kept their farm alive, along with cattle and grain sales. It took 20 more years for Henry Green to decide to open Hartland up to the public with PYO orchards. Bill Green told me it was around 1975, before his father decided to try PYO, after seeing the success and popularity that Stribling Orchard was enjoying. The Greens and the Striblings are actually cousins, and still maintain close ties. Bill Green explained that his “family has been in that area for many generations. The particular farm had become a Green farm back in the year [...] 1900, when a Stribling –it was a Stribling farm before then – an uncle sold it to a nephew, and that’s how it’s gone from a Stribling to a Green.”

The Green Family of Hartland Farm and Orchard

Despite the shared history and blood ties of these two families, they run very different PYO operations, divided by interstate 66. Today the Green family emphasizes that there are multiple generations of family working the farm in its marketing, rather

than focusing on its ties to broader local history. The Green's farm is called Hartland, and is currently divided into several operations run by various family members. As I mentioned, the family patriarch Henry Green, 93, runs the cattle operation. Henry has six children, two of which are directly involved in the farm business. Henry's son Bill, in his fifties, is in charge of the orchards (mainly peach, cherry and apple trees). Henry's older son Hank, and his wife Cheryll run a Fall Fun Field with pumpkin patch, corn maze and hayrides and also a Christmas tree farm that sells wreaths and evergreen roping as well. Finally, there is Brian Green, Hank and Cheryll's 40-year old son who recently leased some land from his grandfather to sell strawberries, blueberries, black raspberries, red raspberries, and blackberries. Brian's license plate on his pickup truck reads: BERRYMAN.



Figure 8. Sign at the exit of Hartland Farm and Orchard.

For the Greens, it is an important part of their identity to present their family as a united front. The sign facing customers as they leave the farm reads: Thank you for your visit and supporting our family's farm. The emphasis at Hartland is on the family united, even if the different members run their farming ventures as distinct operations. It is a point of pride for the family that they have been able to keep the farm going for so many years, and they hope to be able to continue that way into the future. When I was interviewing Henry's nephew Brian about his PYO berries, an older man came up to say hello. He had his daughter and young granddaughter with him and they had driven 70 minutes to pick black raspberries –a hard to find treat these days with a short picking season. The man asked if "Mr. Henry" was still around the farm and Brian affirmed that he was. The man explained that he had been bringing his family to Hartland for many years, since his children were small. Brian explained: "Tom Davenport talks about the Striblings and Greens having what you call 'legacy customers' and we DO. It's people that there's four or five generations have been coming here. And they remember my grandfather selling peaches and apples to them." Legacy customers are families that have been coming to the farm for "pick-your-own" for multiple generations.



Figure 9. Brian Green of Green Truck Farm.

Brian Green explained to me that one of the things that really makes his job special is getting to interact with these customers and hear their stories about how their grandparents brought them to Hartland to pick when they were small and how they remembered Brian's grandfather showing them how to pick a good apple. The fact that all of the PYO farmers have a term for these 'legacy customers' is another indication of the importance of history in the identity of these farmers. They are not only representing themselves when they deal with the public, but also the generations who greeted the public before them. Continuity is part of the ethos of this agricultural community. Not just knowing the past history of the place, but carrying on the family connections, work ethic, community care, and homesteads of previous generations. Continuity is part of the appeal as well to visitors who escape from the inner suburbs where things are constantly changing and people are constantly moving. The Washington metropolitan area is in flux, people move in or out with the changes in politics. The older PYO farms of Leeds

Manor Road offer a refuge from change and rootlessness, amid an idyllic country setting that draws customers in and makes them want to return year after year.

Having been in business as a PYO for the longest time, Stribling Orchards has the best name recognition and the largest amount of legacy customers in the region. Last fall, I stopped in the sales building at Stribling to pick up one of their fresh-from-the-oven apple pies. At the register, I met William Stribling's teenage granddaughter, Stephanie. She told me how special she thought it was that so many generations of her family had worked the orchard, and even though she only rang up purchases at the counter, she liked being able to be a part of this family tradition. There are so many memories tied up with Hartland and Stribling Orchards for both the customers and the farm families.



Figure 10. Exterior of Stribling's Harvest House store.

The preservation of a tradition is at least one part of the farmers' justification for keeping the farm going. As Brian Green says, "My biggest concern is the farm staying available for us, and the family keeping the farm together." No one wants to be the generation that lost the farm due to family squabbling or mismanagement. The farm is bigger than the people in charge of running it today, it holds on to past memories and ones yet to be created.

The Davenports of Hollin Farms

For relative newcomers, like the Davenport family of Hollin Farms, there are no legacy customers. Patriarch Tom is a documentary filmmaker who has drawn heavily on the region's history and culture in his film work, but his PYO operation is less than a generation old and his family must cultivate future legacy customers from the people they draw in through road signs, social media, advertisements, etc. Still local history is evoked at Hollin Farms with its display of antique farm equipment; an old Strother family cemetery greets visitors on the way uphill to the peach orchard; and a restored Civil War cabin nearby demonstrates the respect to the traditional, vernacular home style of this part of the county.

Unlike, the three other farm families that can trace their roots back before the Civil War, Tom's father, Robert Davenport, made the money to buy Hollin Farm by developing a mid-century modern community in Northern Virginia. Still, their contemporary origins do not detract from the traditional Hunt Country scenery that rolls out below you as you pick from their steep upper orchards. Though the Davenports are relative newcomers to the PYO farms of Crooked Run Valley, they have a tradition of

direct-to-consumer sales from selling Angus beef. Robert Davenport was a renowned purebred Angus cattle breeder, who gained recognition for his improvements to Virginia's breeding stocks. "Out here, he just started with Angus cattle and became ... pretty quickly became fairly renowned in the Angus business." Robert's cows were sold to many of the region's other farmers to build up their herds as well. Robert Davenport earned the respect of his community for his hard work, research, and dedication to the breed, and was honored as Virginia Cattleman of the Year in 1991. Though he was a newcomer to the area, he took to the role of "gentleman farmer" and adopted the traditions and calling in the cattle, being a good landlord to his tenants, and dealing fairly with the local hired hands.

When Robert was no longer able to manage the herd of cattle, his son Tom took over, and now it is being managed by Robert's grandson, Matt. The cattle are grass-fed and then sent for finishing before being butchered locally at Gore's Meat Processing in Stephen's City, Virginia. The beef is sold direct-to-consumer in whole, half, and quarter of an animal quantities, and the customer must pick up the meat at the slaughterhouse themselves. This limits the amount of labor that the family has to engage in, beyond caring for the cattle, making sure they don't wander into other people's property, and making enough hay for the winter.

Tom grew up at the farm and played with the children of the landowners nearby.²⁸ He has focused on the traditions of the Piedmont region in his documentary films and short YouTube clips on topics ranging from fox hunting, to calling cows, and has

²⁸ Tom noted in conversation with myself and Charles Strother that they did not play with the tenant children, a class distinction that he regards with curiosity today.

recorded the oral history of Emmanuel church in Delaplane, and a lengthy interview with Alex Green (Henry Green's brother) before his recent passing.²⁹ Though Tom is only the second generation to live along the Leeds Manor corridor, he and his family honor the unspoken rule to know the history of the families and farms in this community. Tom is a Zen Buddhist, which is quite unconventional for this area, but he also attends the Episcopal Church every Sunday with the grandchildren in order to stay connected with the community. The community is actively created through the efforts of people like Tom, who share a commitment to learning the stories of the past, and the old ways of doing and continuing to pass that on to future generations.

In 2012, Tom became embroiled in a local controversy that highlights the differences between area incomers and old timers. A wealthy couple moved to Fauquier and purchased the Legg family property in Paris, Virginia. They built their dream home on the hill overlooking hundreds of acres and left the old farmhouse. Eventually, they decided to demolish the Legg house because they were concerned about safety and trespassers. The new owners applied for a demolition permit from the county and received permission to have the Fauquier Fire Department burn the house for training exercises.

²⁹ *Calling Cows*. 2006.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lk2EkaB139E&feature=youtube_gdata_player. *Alex Green Interview Selects*. 2014.

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XA6KZNIKj00&feature=youtube_gdata_player. "Davenport Films." 2014. Accessed October 19. <http://www.davenportfilms.com/>.



Figure 11. The Legg House, after partial burning. Image from Fauquier.com

Tom was driving down route 17 one day and saw smoke rising from the well known and historic home and rushed to the scene. Knowing that the property owners had agreed to put their land in a conservation easement, Tom was shocked to arrive and find that the fire had been intentionally set by the Fauquier Fire Department. He demanded that they stop immediately. What followed was a prolonged fight in the local media and among neighbors over property rights, conservation easements and what new landowners owe to the community and the past.³⁰ Tom made a short film featuring his longtime friend Dick McCarty telling the story of the Legg House and the role the family and that home played in the community. Strong feelings were voiced on both sides of the issue. Both Tom's

³⁰ "Fauquier Filmmaker Halts Burn of Protected House." 2014. *Fauquier.com*. Accessed November 23.
http://www.fauquier.com/news/article/fauquier_filmmaker_halts_burn_of_protected_house.

wife Mimi and his eldest son Rob wrote impassioned defenses for saving the home.³¹ As Dick McCarty says in the film, it is the deliberate destruction of the home that is so hurtful to the people who had warm memories associated with it: of Mrs. Legg babysitting them as children and of Christmas parties.³² History is personal here. For long time residents of this corner of Fauquier county, history is a part of their identity. The connections between the ‘old timers’ here is tied up in the landscape and the homes. The reason the county offers such tax incentives to hinder development through conservation easements goes back to the idea of continuity. It is important to the members of this community for the familiar landmarks to remain intact to preserve the history, memories, and ghosts of the people that left their mark on this place. The new owners of the Legg House argued that from their perspective, “The farm house is a liability. It’s not a historic house, it’s not a Civil War house or a Revolutionary War farmhouse. It’s just an old house on our property.”³³ This comment demonstrates the lack of connection newcomers sometimes have when they move into this community. To the new owners, the house is

³¹ LETTER to the EDITOR |, Dec 10, and 2012 Comments. 2014.
 “[Http://www.fauquier.com/opinion/letter_entry/vof_needs_to_take_tough_stand.](http://www.fauquier.com/opinion/letter_entry/vof_needs_to_take_tough_stand)”
Fauquier.com. Accessed November 23.
[http://www.fauquier.com/opinion/letter_entry/vof_needs_to_take_tough_stand.](http://www.fauquier.com/opinion/letter_entry/vof_needs_to_take_tough_stand)

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Fauquier.com. Accessed November 23.
[http://www.fauquier.com/opinion/letter_entry/old_and_historically_significant.](http://www.fauquier.com/opinion/letter_entry/old_and_historically_significant)

³² *Delaplane’s Dick McCarty on Burning the Legg House*. 2012.
<http://vimeo.com/54295691>.

³³ Ibid.

just a nuisance, but to the people whose memories are tied up in the landmarks of this place, who see family and friend connections in every old building, tractor and field, the Legg House was so much more. As agritourism (PYO and wineries) brings new people into the Leeds Manor Road region, it creates revenue opportunities for agriculture to continue, but also increases contact with people who don't know or respect the history. The PYO farmers here have to decide how much history they want to try and share with their customers.

The Strothers of Valley View Farm

Tom's neighbor, Charles Strother does not promote his Valley View Farm's history in marketing of his PYO, although he is a descendant of John Marshall on his mother's side and his father was raised in the Manor House that was once the heart of the Manor of Leeds estate. Paul Redden told me that it was Charles Strother's great uncle who sold off the land that became the Manor of Leeds orchard scheme. Once again, these farm family histories are intertwined with the history of apple production in this valley. Charles Strother is well aware that his current PYO operation at Virginia Perfection Orchard on his Valley View farm is a big departure from the farming traditions of his father's generation. He told me, "I cannot IMAGINE my father putting up with people coming on to the farm! It would [be] just so ALIEN to him. It's completely different than he would've wanted. He wanted privacy and farming was just... different. But... its suited me fine, because I enjoy people and having the ministry and working with the youth and everything, I like them coming out here. And enjoying it."

Perhaps in personal conversation Charles might share a tale about his family's history in the area, but he does not trade on that legacy. However, this choice has more to do with Charles' disinterest in marketing his farm generally and avoidance of the Internet than it does with his own interest in history. Inside his home, which the public does not see, Charles has old family photos and Civil War artifacts displayed on the mantel of his living room. Charles is terribly nostalgic for the old days of farming in the region when men worked with horses and took better care of the land. He told me how in the past these farms operated on a "feudal system." "[A]ll the men who worked on this farm, their FAMILIES lived here. So they were furnished with a house, [...] they were furnished with a couple of hogs and the feed for those hogs, and then at hog killing time the farm stopped, whatever else it was doing, and everybody, EVERYBODY did... that was the farm work for the time, to get it all done. And the men all took all the meat. They heated their homes and cooked their food all with wood, and so they all, part of the farm work was to get the wood and get it cut and split and stacked. When my father would go, to Winchester, once a month, he had a list of all the things that he -that everybody- needed. And they would come over and they would get EVERY thing they needed. From sewing needles to who knows what! EVERYTHING THEY NEEDED. Every single thing that they used, they got from the company store, so to speak. And, he bought it all and brought it back, and anything they needed. I remember that."

As Charles talks about the old days in this valley, he is clearly nostalgic for a time when the farm was a community unto itself and did not rely on marketing to outsiders to succeed. Though Charles has regular customers that he enjoys seeing year after year, few

would have the opportunity to get to know him well enough to hear these stories. His farm is listed on a few PYO websites, but for Charles' part, the only promotion he does is the rustic hand-painted signs he stakes out at the entrance, and on route 17 and the inexpensive printed signs (similar to campaign signs) that he adds at the turnoff onto Leeds Manor.



Figure 12. An example of one of Charles Strother's signs along Leeds Manor road.

His adherence to traditional modes of promoting PYO may be the best argument for how Charles is influenced by history in his strategy of presentation to the public.

Although Charles and Tom Davenport grew up together and were playmates, their approach to the marketing of their neighboring PYO orchards could not be more different, and sometimes in conflict. The Davenports embrace social media like Facebook, and emailing their customers using Constant Contact; whereas Charles does

not use the Internet at all. When I asked Charles how his customers find him, he told me from the signs he posts along the main road, route 17. He explained, “See, I don’t do the... the Davenports are BIG into this Internet stuff. And see, I don’t even go on the computers. I don’t like computers. But THEY go on that computer advertising and Internet stuff. And they DO the newspaper, and I don’t. I put the signs out on route 17 that say: PEACHES, and the people that are going from New York to visit their friends and the family in Georgia, and etcetera. They’re going up and down this road. They pull in and THEY are the... THEY have ALWAYS been the primary customers.”



Figure 13. Sign at entrance to Leeds Manor Road off route 17.

Charles’ enjoys his orchard, and the interactions he has with the nice families that stop in to pick, but his decision to get into PYO was actually quite a departure from the farming traditions of his family. At the Manor House where Charles’ father Eddie

Strother grew up, although they were practically neighbors to the orchards of the Striblings and the Greens, the Strothers focused on livestock, hay, and food crops.

Eddie's father gave him the 500 acres for Valley View when he returned from service after World War I. Charles boasts that his father "kept the land very well fertilized and very well limed" and credits this with the reason his peaches are so sweet today.

However, Eddie was not a fan of orchards. When Charles returned home from university, around 1960, and proposed planting a small orchard, Eddie was not pleased. Charles recounted the story to me: "And I remember coming home from college and saying to my father, 'Dad, why don't we have an orchard?'" And he looked down from his... lowered his newspaper and looked at me and he said, "Because. You got to SPRAY the damn things!"—And just the way he said it, I NEVER mentioned it again. But I said to myself [...] When it's MY turn, I'm gonna do an orchard!"

Charles had to wait until his father Eddie left him the farm to run, and considering that he lived until 109 years old, that was quite a while to wait. But amongst the Leeds Manor farm families, the younger generation does not step in until the patriarch has asked them to. This is true for the Greens of Hartland Farm, who still follow the lead of their 94-year old father, Henry. From all accounts, Eddie Strother was a force to be reckoned with, and Charles would not have been wise to defy him. In the meantime, Charles built a successful career selling life insurance, and raised two sons with his wife Cathy. In 1987, he returned to the farm full time and now in charge, he started planting his orchards. Charles told me that he didn't really approach it as a business plan. He had made enough money in his business to keep the farm operational, and he was able to fulfill his lifelong

dream of planting an orchard by starting with just 30 trees. After a few years, he decided he liked taking care of the orchard and he started to plant 100 trees every year to build up the orchard to a size that could support PYO customers. Now the Virginia Perfection Orchard at Valley View Farm is open to the public for peaches, apples and soon for blueberries as well. Though Charles has broken with his own family tradition by going into orcharding, (and when he gets tired of spraying the trees, his father's voice still rings in his ears) Charles continues to care for several herds of cattle to continue his father's beef business and his PYO connects to the wider region's history of orcharding.

There are ghosts of past orchards all around this region. In G.H. Thompson wildlife preserve, the former supervisor told me how hunters back in the hills would find ancient apple trees (some still bearing fruit) deep in the woods, remnants of the old Manor of Leeds orchard. Drive past the turnoff for Markham and head west on 66, the next town will be Linden, Virginia. Linden used to be home to a huge orchard of hundreds of acres called Freezeland. The charming Apple House restaurant is just off the exit to Linden, where you can stop in for home cooking, jars of preserves, or a dozen of their famous apple cider doughnuts. Turn right onto Apple Mountain Road, you will enter a vast community of homes, nicely set apart on big treed lots with the nostalgia for the old orchard written on the street signs: Golden Russet Drive, Jonathan Road, Granny Smith Court, Rome Beauty Drive, Lodi Court and Northern Spy Drive. Linden feels empty, and almost haunted by its orcharding past and the memories that have been displaced by development and time. There is an intangible culture exchange that takes place in an orchard, which makes it particularly painful to see one go away.

Melanie Fein of Apple Manor Farm

Someone who knows that sense of loss when a beloved orchard is replaced by new homes is also a newcomer to Leeds Manor Road, Melanie Fein. As a youth, growing up in Vienna, Virginia, Melanie lived next door to a peach orchard. She has vivid memories of playing amongst the trees and waiting desperately for the summer sun to ripen those juicy, fuzzy peaches. Her family was friendly with the Moutoux family that owned the orchard, and she was saddened when old Mr. Moutoux passed and the family sold the orchard to pay the estate taxes. The orchard was cut down and replaced by McMansions. Melanie was delighted, however, when Mr. Moutoux's grandson decided to continue farming out in Loudoun County, expanding from orchards to organic vegetable gardening and CSAs (Community Supported Agriculture). Although Melanie went on to become a very successful and prominent lawyer with a lovely home in Great Falls and a challenging career, she always missed that orchard she knew growing up. Several years ago, Melanie bought several large parcels of land in a rural development called *Apple Manor* off Leeds Manor Road. She explained that she "had visited England as a young girl and toured some beautiful rural areas of England. This part of Fauquier County reminded me of England. It is a beautiful remote, rural area that I fell in love with." Her land had once been part of the vast apple production in the area, called Manor of Leeds Orchard, adding a historical dimension to her interest in orcharding. The land had been subdivided into smaller country estates with elegant homes and large tracts between each home.

The land was zoned for agricultural use and Melanie set about planning and planting an apple orchard. Melanie envisioned opening a small PYO operation featuring

apples grown using the high-density tall spindle method, with dwarf apple trees supported by trellises. Melanie did extensive research in her spare time, speaking to agricultural extension agents, corresponding with orchard experts at Cornell University, and getting tips from the local farmers, Matt Davenport and Charles Strother. Unlike the Greens and Striblings who have family members to learn from, Melanie had to start from scratch and learn everything on her own. She actually found a great resource on YouTube. “I probably never would have been able to educate myself sufficiently without the Internet, really, to show me how to design an apple orchard and design the apple orchard and trellis system.” Melanie selected this alternative orcharding method because she thought it would be easier to manage as she headed into retirement: shorter trees, orderly rows you can pass through on a tractor for spraying, easier to prune, etc. “Yes, I was greatly concerned about the height of the apple trees. How do you pick the apples when they are 20 feet off of the ground?”

Melanie’s orchard departs from the traditional orcharding found along Leeds Manor Road. In some ways, her choice to implement the high-density, tall spindle method isolates Melanie because other farmers are unfamiliar with how the system works, and hired laborers would require additional supervision and guidance to learn the different pruning techniques. “It’s mainly my husband and I who do the orchard work as much as we can, on the weekends.” While a small operation compared to the other orchards -Melanie has 1000 apple trees on two acres, and 60 head of cattle- on the rest of her 150 acres and she is finding that it takes an awful lot of effort to stay on top of everything.

What Melanie did not count on perhaps, was the difficulty of pulling away from her hectic life in town; the availability of reliable skilled labor in the area; and the resistance she encountered from the other homeowners in her community. Melanie is embroiled in lawsuits with neighbors who don't want their idyllic country setting spoiled by the occasional cow poop on the road or the prospect of agritourists in the area. They want the "farm look" but not the untidy realities of farming. Because of the pending litigation, Melanie has been forced to defer her PYO plans. While she spends time in court, her trees suffer. In 2013, she was so tied up with legal issues –along with new grandchildren- that she did not get to her spraying in time. Her young trees were attacked by a bacteria known as fire blight, which is a threat all orchards face. Fire blight kills the trees if not dealt with by removing the damaged limbs and laboriously cleaning the pruning tools between each cut. Melanie's trees came through fairly well, but an infected orchard could easily be wiped out if not properly addressed.

In anticipation of opening her PYO orchard, Melanie did research into the apple growing history of the region and created a website highlighting the historical antecedents.³⁴ She told me she is working on a book about the history of Fauquier County and just needs to find the time to finish it. I asked Melanie how far back she went in history: the Civil War or colonial times? "Even before then..." she explained to me. "I discuss the origins of the Appalachian Mountains and the Blue Ridge Mountains, where the farm is located. I include excerpts from George Washington's notes and diaries and letters and Thomas Jefferson's works on farming." Beyond the work she has done on her

³⁴ Apple Manor Farm website: <http://www.applemanorfarm.com>

book, the language Melanie uses on her website makes it clear that she is attempting to align her orchard plans into the history of the Leeds Manor orchard area, highlighting its connection to the past and creating a place for her farm in that ongoing story.

Melanie explained how the steep rocky slopes bordering Leeds Manor Road make the use of mechanized farming equipment sometimes treacherous, but result in more flavorful fruit and successful trees. I asked Melanie why this hilly landscape benefits fruit trees: “Because the greatest dangers to fruit and fruit trees is frost in the spring. If you have a slope, [...] the cool air then will float to the bottom and the warm air will rise to the top and [...] the flow of the air prevents the frost from settling on the blossoms and killing the fruit and so that's why this area of Fauquier County is particularly well-suited for fruit production because of the mountains and the slopes.” In addition to the historical relationship between this valley and apple production, there is a *terroir*—a distinctive taste of place— that Melanie is emphasizing in her choice of location. Though she is a newcomer, and her method of growing apples is atypical for the region, through her knowledge of the region’s past, Melanie successfully weaves herself and her farm into the ongoing story of apple production along Leeds Manor. She recognizes that a sense of history is vital to the farming identity in this community, and she embraces it.

Paul Redden, Apple Manor Press and Cider

While Melanie was conducting her research of Lord Fairfax and the historic Manor of Leeds, she came upon a website dedicated to “soft cover reprints of classic genealogy and local history books” run by Paul Redden. Paul, it turned out, is Melanie’s neighbor who lives on his parent’s farm on the other side of Leeds Manor Road from

Apple Manor estates. Paul is fascinated by old books and family history and started this business of reprinting high quality scans of old books and selling them online. Paul also has a historical connection to the region's apple orchards. The land on which his family lives once belonged to his great aunt. She had been working as a clerk in Washington, D.C. in the early 1900's and purchased some shares in the Manor of Leeds orchard scheme. Paul sells a reproduction of a marketing brochure from this time, "The Beautiful Orchards of the Manor of Leeds Virginia" by William C. Amos.

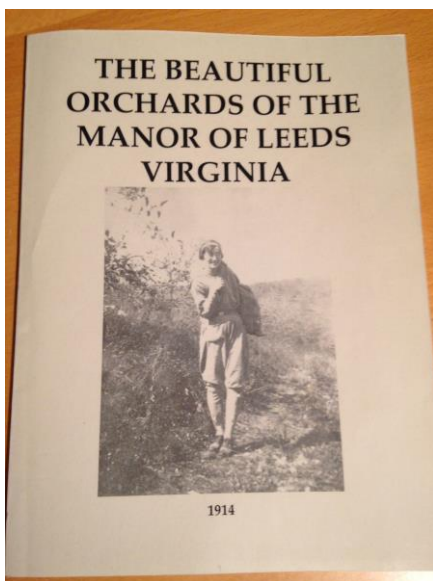


Figure 14. Paul Redden's reprint of the Manor of Leeds brochure, featuring a photo of his great aunt.

In the brochure there is a foldout panoramic photo of the orchards that is truly incredible. It shows hillside after hillside dotted with apples trees neatly planted in rows as far as the eye can see. This historic orchard spanned hundreds, perhaps thousand of acres, producing millions of apples. Though the company eventually folded, Paul's great aunt

hung onto her acreage and built a modest home there. Paul pointed to a spot on the map, “This property right here is THIS five acre lot. My great-great aunt’s cabin is on this five acres.” Subsequent generations added to the original parcel as adjoining lands became available. Paul’s parents eventually took the property over after her passing and now Paul lives there as well. Inspired by his aunt’s love of orchards, Paul has planted his own small collection of trees, but varieties especially good for making into hard cider. Paul has been pressing and bottling his cider for the last few years and having tasted it I can say that it is very good: dry, apple-y but not sweet, naturally effervescent and refreshing. Paul told me he has plans to one day open a cidery on the property with a tasting room and sell his cider to the public. There are already several popular wineries and vineyards in the area: Naked Mountain, Philip Carter (which is owned by Charles Strother’s son), and Delaplane Cellars, so a cidery seems like it would be a good addition to the weekend agricultural excursions offered in this part of the county. I asked Paul why he wanted to start a cidery and he explained, “Well, the land has historically been used for apples; it was part of a large apple orchard when my family first came here. [I] wanted to do something having to do with apples. I wasn’t as interested in the commodity business, or a PYO orchard so much as to have something a little bit more relaxed and value added.”

There are several advantages to growing cider apples over PYO apples or apples for the wholesale market: one, the apples don’t have to look pretty; two, heirloom varieties make tastier cider than conventional apples; three, appearance is less important therefore they require little or no chemical spraying; and four, the customers are confined to a tasting room and a finished product. One drawback to Paul’s cidery idea is that the

county and state have many more restrictions, permits, and guidelines when it comes to alcoholic beverages than they do with fresh farm produce. Recent high profile battles between family vineyards and county regulations have spooked Paul. He told me that, “until they get the farm winery laws ironed out, it’s a little scary to go into debt to do something.” Paul’s family earned their land along Leeds Manor Road over several generations, they do not come from wealth. Their land is not a hobby farm, it is a homestead that gives them the space to practice their way of life as they choose. Paul’s parents raise angora goats for wool and Sue is a weaver in her spare time. His parents are supporters of his efforts and Paul honors his great aunt by featuring a photo of her in the orchard on the labels he made for his not-for-resale cider.

It is clear from Paul’s passion for history and from Sue’s fond memories of her family’s connection to this land that the cider orchard is a way for them to maintain a connection to the past. As I was wrapping up my interview with Paul and his mother Sue, she commented: “Whether what we said was accurate or not... we’re newbie’s, really. We’ve only been here 100 years!” This joking comment points to the awareness of the much longer stake some families have in the orchard history of this valley. The idea of legacy and of shared history keeps surfacing in the way this community of farmers approaches their work and life.

Virginia Apple Country

Today there is interest in epicurean circles in locating heirloom varieties of apples. Old varieties give people the opportunity to taste a piece of history. Ablemarle CiderWorks states, “there is perhaps no fruit as closely associated with the American

landscape as the apple.”³⁵ The apples that were in favor in the early 20th century are quite different from the apples of today. Advancements in transportation, refrigeration, preservatives, and product marketing have made it possible for less hardy but sweeter and prettier apples to gain favor among customers. Also the cooking habits of customers have changed. Today’s consumers are more interested in apples for fresh consumption rather than apples that will need to be cooked into pies, cobblers, side dishes and butters. Therefore, the tarter firmer apples have a shrinking demand. The market demand effects what the farmer chooses to plant. As interest in older varieties waned, farmers let those less popular varieties die out and replaced the old trees with more popular ones. This has resulted in the threat of many varieties “disappearing” and campaigns by Slow Food activists throughout the country to “rescue” the vanishing varieties from obscurity.³⁶

Despite the interest in heirlooms from the likes of Michael Pollan, NPR, and the *New York Times*, the varieties that families come to pick in the Crooked Run Valley of Fauquier County tend towards the familiars: Fuji, Honey Crisp, and Red Delicious.³⁷

³⁵ “Apple Varieties.” 2014. Accessed September 14.
<https://www.albemarleciderworks.com/orchard/apple-varieties>.

³⁶ “Out on a Limb Heritage Apple CSA.” 2014. *Out on a Limb Heritage Apple CSA*. Accessed January 19. <http://outonalimbcsa.wordpress.com/>.
“SFUSA_Noble_Fruits_Brochure.pdf.” 2014. Accessed September 15.
http://www.slowfoodusa.org/files/img/ark_products/SFUSA_Noble_Fruits_Brochure.pdf.

³⁷ Muhlke, Christine. 2009. “Field Report: Family Heirlooms.” *The New York Times*, August 30, sec. Magazine. <http://www.nytimes.com/2009/08/30/magazine/30food-t-000.html>
Ogburn, Stephanie Paige. 2014. “The Comeback Of The Endangered Colorado Orange, An Apple.” *NPR.org*. Accessed September 14.
<http://www.npr.org/blogs/thesalt/2014/09/10/347386837/colorado-orange-helps-seed-states-new-fruit-economy>.

However, at Stribling they do offer the widest variety of apples overall and among their options are some lesser known varieties such as: Smokehouse, Lodi, Tydeman Red, Grimes Golden, Idared, and the lopsided York. At Hollin Farms, they have tried out a few of the older varieties such as Gravenstein, Winesap and Summer Rambo. For these farm families, there is a similar struggle in how much of the past they choose to bring forward in their presentation of themselves balanced with meeting the expectations of their customers. All the PYO farmers of the Leeds Manor district benefit from the history of apple production in the area, and the ownership patterns and lack of development that make these valleys so scenic and appealing for day trippers, and the tradition of country excursions from the congested city. The past is always present in this part of the county but these families each find their own ways to maintain; to break from; or to start new traditions in order to sustain their farms and themselves.



Figure 15. Red Delicious apple bin at Hartland.

CHAPTER THREE: CORN MAZES AND PIG RACES, AGRITAINMENTS AS EXPRESSION OF IDENTITY

“One little boy left saying: “This is the most fun I’ve ever had in my whole life!” And I thought, that’s what makes it worthwhile! And if we stay small forever and can only do one school a day, that’s just fine. To hear something like that.”

-Cheryll Green

Every autumn, some farms within driving distance of Washington, D.C. create what will be referred to here generally as “agritainments.” These are farm-themed fall attractions that lure city and suburban dwellers to the country to escape the stress and worries of modern life by partaking in family-friendly activities with a rural flair. Examples are “pick-your-own” apple orchards, pumpkin patches, and corn mazes. These fun autumnal festivals allow visitors to sit on hay bales, eat candy apples, and “play farmer” for the day.³⁸ The popularity of these attractions has created opportunities and challenges for the Leeds Manor orchards, negotiating how much agritainment in addition to their main attraction: PYO apples and produce. The day-tripper may not be aware of the many labors and decisions that went into the creation of the fall farm. The young

³⁸ In Northern Virginia, the most famous (and crowded) fall attraction is Cox Farms, a family-owned sprawling operation featuring a pumpkin patch, hayrides, animals, games, slides, a farm market, and the Field of Fear on 116 acres in suburban Centreville, Virginia. “About Cox Farms.” 2014. Accessed October 15. <http://www.coxfarms.com/about.aspx>.

couple driving over the bumpy gravel road, getting their shiny black SUV dirty probably has no idea that the construction of that rough road set the farm family back \$60,000 last winter.³⁹ The excited children standing awestruck beside the 6-acre patch of pumpkins can't decide which is the best one, while the farmer looks at the same field and shakes his head at the lower than expected yield. Despite the hand-painted wooden sign that reads: "Please do not pick the ears of corn", children shriek as they pursue each other through the living maze, chucking husked ears of corn. Deer eating plants, bears tearing through the pumpkin patch, stinkbugs marring the flesh of the apples, and bad weather are just a portion of the concerns that these small family farms face. But there are positives to hosting these attractions as well.

Agritainments bring people from town and country together in a festive atmosphere of wholesome family recreation. The fall signals the close of the growing season and a well earned break for farmers, but also the last push of generating income to last them through the long winter ahead. Also, agritainments help connect farmers to an extended community and permit a great level of sociability and creativity. Fall is the only time of year when these PYO farmers take extra time to decorate their properties, placing large potted mums by the entrance sign, and hay bales, decorative gourd displays, and dried corn stalks adorn the sales shed. Perhaps this is all a remnant of harvest traditions of the past, disconnected from the old symbolic meanings and commodified for post-rural consumption. Today, the PYO farmers of Leeds Manor are not providing the only source of food for their local community, through they take great pride in the food they produce,

³⁹ These examples are based on my fieldwork and on information shared by my contacts on the farms via personal communication.

they are providing an experience. This reality presents challenges to the farm producers who are learning to negotiate their new roles as ‘host’ to paying guests, and how to maintain their primary identity of ‘farmer’ in the process.

Farm family producers of agritourisms and the suburban consumers who visit them do have some things in common. They both feel like fall is a time for celebration of family and harvest. They both want to find ways to bring families together to share in wholesome entertainments. They both value rural landscapes and farming traditions. They both associate this season with special foods. It is this intersection between the urban and the rural, between agricultural and consumer culture, that I am interested in exploring. How does agritourism perpetuate stereotypes of rural culture and at the same time, how does it provide access for farmers to creative expression and community connection? Are suburban customers able to experience a real connection to farming, even in a corn maze?

A Fun Farm or a Farm Farm?

Hollin Farms and Hartland Farm & Orchards are on either end of the spectrum for hosting agritourisms in the fall, and illustrate the negotiation most effectively of the four PYO orchards.⁴⁰ Hollin Farms in Delaplane and Hartland Orchards in Markham, both are about an hour by car from the Washington, D.C. suburbs at opposite ends of Leeds Manor Road. Shannon Davenport of Hollin Farms and Cheryl Green of Hartland

⁴⁰ Virginia Perfection Farm run by the Strothers grows apples and pears, but does not have many and does not add any attractions for the season. The Stribling’s orchard at Mountain View sells BBQ and has its regular Harvest House selling jams and baked goods, but they do not add attractions either. They are the largest orchard with 2,500 apple trees and focus on volume sales of fruit.

Orchards, have taken the lead at their respective family farms in organizing the extra fall activities and décor. I interviewed them each at length and followed up with informal discussions and observations in order to discern some of their reasons for offering (or choosing not to) certain fall festival attractions.

Agritainments result in the commodification of the farm as a space of consumption and recreation rather than of food production and personal family space (Brandth and Haugen, Daugstad, Kneafsey). However, commodification does not necessarily diminish the ability of these fall festival events to also be an outlet for creative expression and community engagement for the farmers themselves, as well as being a source of diversified income to help them continue their way of life.



Figure 16. The Bouncing Pillow at Hartland Fall Fun Field.

Hartland's Fall Fun Field

Hartland Orchards is located in Markham, Virginia, a little over an hour west on route 66. You can see the old cider wagon parked on the hill advertising the farm from the highway, capturing the attention of drivers headed out to Skyline Drive and sites west. The Green family has been open to the public for “pick-your-own” fruit since the 1970’s, but the Fall Fun Field agritainments have only been in place for the last three years.

Hartland’s Farm Fall Fun Field is the creation of Cheryll Green and her husband Hank who also run a Christmas tree farm on adjacent land where they offer “cut-your-own” trees, evergreen wreaths and roping in season. Hank and Cheryll are “semi-retired” however Hank still loves to grow things. Hank’s father, Henry Green, the family patriarch in his nineties suggested that someone in the family should do a corn maze and some other fall family attractions. Cheryll fell in love with the idea of a corn maze, so now their late summer and early fall have been filled with activity preparing and hosting day visitors to their agritainment destination. Cheryll related the story of her first encounter with a corn maze, “Here’s how this happened: I saw a corn maze/fun field area and fell in love with it. And I said to Hank, ‘I want a corn maze.’ And Hanks says to himself – being the farmer that HE is- ‘Corn? Corn seed? Corn planter? Tractor? – I LOVE all that! –Yes. Let’s do a corn maze.’ And he didn’t realize that what I was REALLY seeing wasn’t so much the corn as all the fun stuff.” Cheryll reveals in this explanation that the Fun Field serves two main purposes for them: giving Hank the

opportunity to grow different crops for entertainment more than for food, and giving her the opportunity to interact with families in a festive atmosphere.

Cheryll and Hank run their Fall Fun Field near the entrance to the farm in a side field. The PYO apple orchard is down a long drive, past the old homestead, and it is a separate business run by Hank's brother, Bill Green. Customers only pay admission at the Fun Field, but the pumpkin patch and the apple picking are on a "pay-for-what-you-pick" basis. Cheryll usually staffs the welcome area just above the parking lot, while Hank captains the hayrides in a loop from the pumpkin patch way over to the apple orchards and back. She welcomes families and explains how the festival works, and collects the admission fee. This excerpt from her website explains the pricing and activities included: General admission for all ages 36 month and up is \$9.00 payable by cash, check or credit card.

Examples of activities included in admission:

Corn Maze

World's best hayrides

Big pumpkin patches

60 ft. slide

Pony swings

Corn box (similar to sand box but corn kernels)

Duck races

Corn hole games

Pony hop races

Annie and Henry, the goats

Volley Ball

Live Pig Races

Pony rides when available (extra 5.00)

Jumping Pillow

Caramel apples, plain or peanut (4.00)⁴¹

The corn maze appears to be an essential component of a successful fall festival. The Greens travel to a corn maze conference every winter, hosted by an organization called “The Maize.”⁴² Owners of corn mazes belong to this “cornfield maze consulting/design company” in order to share ideas, troubleshoot problems (such as deer eating their mazes, children throwing ears of corn), and templates for maze designs. Last year, to honor Hank’s father, Henry Green, the maze design resulted in a portrait of the patriarch when viewed from above. Henry Green, though in his nineties, continues to be a strong presence, visiting with customers and advising his grown children in their affairs. This amazing creation illustrated the combination of creativity and self-expression and connection to a larger community that farmers are able to experiment and play with when hosting these fall festivals for tourists and a fitting tribute to a man who has fought to keep the family farm going for so many years.

⁴¹ Accessed on 12/1/11 from <http://www.hartlandfarmandorchard.com>

⁴² “The MAiZE.” 2014. Accessed October 15. <http://www.themaize.com/>.



Figure 17. Hartland corn maze featuring Henry Green's portrait.

For Cheryll, the Fall Fun Field fulfills personal expressive goals as well, she explained, “It meets some need of MINE for being outside and having pretty things around, pretty nature around me. And feeling like I’m doing something useful at the same time.” Interestingly, it is Cheryll who has taken the lead on these agritainments, though she still worked as a nurse part-time for the first few years. Her eyes light up when she discusses her future plans for adding new attractions and making the existing site more attractive. But the agritainments she and Hank have created are also a boon to the family as a whole. Cheryll explains: “Another reason to do this, and that is, if it is ultimately successful, it can cause my husband’s family to be able to keep the farm. You know, you just don’t know what’s in the future. And we’re older and we won’t always be doing this, but we will have established a business, if they wanted it, it will be someone’s.”

By creating this agritainment business, Cheryll is able to do something that she enjoys, which is creative and helps families to have an enjoyable day in the country together. At the same time, the Fall Fun Field creates a role for her to play in perpetuating the family farm and providing a potential legacy business for future generations to take over. Bill Green, who runs the orchard business was not interested in running a fall festival himself, but benefits from it as an added attraction to his PYO apple orchards, without having the hassle of having to run it too. In this way, the Fall Fun Field has become integral to the long-term strategy for survival of Hartland through diversification and change with the times. While a bouncy pillow and a “pumpkin chunkin’” cannon seem like silly amusements, they play a serious role in securing the future for this family farm.

Hollin Farms: a Real “Farm” Farm

Hollin Farms run by the Davenport family started with peach trees and has expanded its offerings to include strawberries, raspberries, blackberries, and a wide assortment of “pick-your-own” vegetables during the summer months. I interviewed Shannon Davenport, whose husband Matt does the majority of the farm work, while Shannon worked as a nurse and mother to her three young children. She left her job in 2012 in order to help out more with the concession stand and agritainment activities related to the fall season. Shannon and her husband Matt, in some ways, have more flexibility with what they decide to do with the farm. They are the newest of the PYO farms in the area, so they are not as bound by tradition or by family obligations. Though the farm is technically owned by Matt’s father and his aunt, Matt is primarily responsible

for the day-to-day decision making and planning of the farm. Still, there is the pressure to conform to outside expectations. Shannon explained to me how she refused to sell sodas for the longest time, because as a nurse she had seen too many people adversely affected by calorie packed and artificial beverages. However, in time she succumbed to the demands of her customers and started stocking her drink coolers with canned soda.

Another example of how Shannon must negotiate between the expectations of her customers and staying true to her own ideals and vision for the farm, is the story of a moon bounce that she rented over Columbus Day weekend. The idea was to take advantage of the festive mood customers are in over that long weekend and make a little extra revenue for the farm by charging a dollar for kids to bounce around. Shannon revealed her ambivalent feelings about embarking down the slippery slope of fall festival agritainments: “When I did this experiment this year of getting the moon bounce. I got it for [...] Columbus Day weekend. And Columbus Day weekend in general tends to draw more of that kind of crowd that is like, ‘OK! This is my final weekend. I’m taking my family out and we’re going to a FUN festival of a FUN fair!’ And it’s almost like you can just FEEL that that’s what in the air, people want their fall festival atmosphere. And a moon bounce worked really well on that particular weekend cause it was all those families and their little kids. And that was fine, you know? But like the next two weekends I just didn’t have time to return the thing, so we ended up having to rent it for two additional weekends. And so I was like, Well heck. I’ve got this thing, I might as well just blow it up and let the kids... [bounce] and I’ll try and make the money back. And as I talked to people I got plenty of families who were like, ‘Oh yeah this is great!’

‘We love this place!’ And they are so accustomed to the moon bounce that they don’t even notice it anymore. It didn’t detract from their experience, but then I would talk to other people who were like, ‘Oh wow. You guys have never had this before.’ [sounding disappointed] And I would almost be apologetic like, ‘Yeah... I know.’ I had this internal struggle about whether or not to get the moon bounce. And people would say, ‘Well, you know, I will be honest with you. We come here BECAUSE you guys are the real thing. You are the real farm and it’s all about the farm.’ And I felt like, ‘I KNOW! That’s what I was TRYING To be! I sold out!’”

This dilemma facing the farmers who are producing the agritainments reveals that there are more nuanced negotiations of identity at work than the literature may let on. Studies of rural tourism and agritourism tend to de-emphasize the agency of farmers in the development of farm-based attractions (Castle 1998, Sharpley and Jepson 2011). Clearly, some of these PYO farmers wrestle with the degree to which they want their farms to be seen as amusements.

Being the Rural ‘Other’

The argument can be made that visitors to PYO farms are engaging in a form of culinary tourism. In her discussions of tourism through food, Lucy Long asserts that tourism “involves new experiences for the sake of the experience itself. Through tourism, we satisfy our curiosity about otherness” (Long, 2004, 23). In the case of the Leeds Manor Road PYO farms, the rural location and way of life are what sets the farms apart in terms of ‘otherness’. Long writes that “The contrast between what is accepted as

normal in the new location and what is familiar from past experience can lead to foods not normally perceived as different being held up as subject for “the tourist gaze” (Long 35). Consider that, in the city/suburban areas, the consumer can buy apples and pumpkins easily at any grocers or farmer’s market. With importation from milder climates, one can find shiny apples stacked in the produce section any time of year. Craving pumpkin pie in June? - Canned pumpkin is always on the store shelves today, even in organic varieties. Clearly, consumers drive out to the country for more than just the opportunity to buy produce, they are looking for a new experience. “In countries where the majority of people are urban dwellers, the ‘countryside’ is some other place. A place spatially, temporally and symbolically distanced from the everyday way of life” (Hopkins 65, *see also Sharpley and Jepson 2011*). Setting out west on the long drive, entering the rural setting, viewing the open landscapes and the rustic buildings, the ‘unplugged’ attractions offered, in areas of spotty cell phone reception, the weekend daytrip to go apple picking transforms into an encounter with the ‘Other’.

The Consumer’s Rural Escape

Common in the literature of rural tourism, is the assumption that all tourists are caught up in “the myth of the countryside as ‘pastoral retreat’, a place to escape one’s own urban world of work, responsibility and routine, and adopt a simpler, more natural, ‘rustic’ way of life, if only temporarily” (Hopkins 76). Shannon Davenport also suggested that some of her customers seem to have a rosy view of what life is like for her and her family at Hollin Farms: “You get these 30 something couples from DC with their 2.5 kids and then its like, ‘Oh! You must have the ideal life! It’s so relaxing out here!’

(laughs) The understanding of farming is not there. They are just kind of idealizing the whole lifestyle, like its just some big picnic. I don't know if it is because its part of their recreational experience that they [...] think that. [...] 'Oh this is so peaceful! It's so relaxing! It'd be SO great to live here!' [...] People's perception of work in agriculture is ... The farther removed you are from having the familiarity with agriculture, the less realistic your vision becomes. What it takes to attain that sort of life."



Figure 18. A mother photographing her child in the Hollin Farms pumpkin patch.

For Shannon and the other PYO farmers I worked with, they are all too aware that the urban customers don't really understand what it takes to run a successful farm, but they are too busy running the farms to spend the time educating the public. Their focus is on taking care of their crops, their animals, their staff and their families and gearing up

for the next wave of mini vans and SUVs snaking up the drive. I often overhead customers sighing wistfully about how nice it would be to live “the simple life” like these PYO farmers do. Cheryll laughed, “Yeah, it isn’t simple. It isn’t simple at all. Actually, there’s a lot of planning and a lot of work that goes into everything. [...] We have certain groups who think we are just country bumpkins and somewhat treat us like that.”

Consumer Perception of Agritainments

In order to present a more balanced summary of Fall Festival attendees, I conducted an online survey asking friends and colleagues to respond to questions to understand why people seek out these fall agritainments. 100% of the respondents had visited a corn maze, pumpkin patch, or apple orchard in the fall. The majority of my friends and school associates live in the inner suburban D.C. area, which means that they must have been willing to drive some distance to engage in these events. Most went in search of pumpkin patches (81.8%), with apple picking and hayrides tied for second place (72.7%), and corn mazes, surprisingly, in last place, with only 48.5%. Of the secondary offerings available at these attractions, “baked goods or preserves for sale” was the most common (93.5%). In fact, food items were the top three of the listed “additional activities” (caramel or candy apples, 77.4% and lunch foods/picnic areas, 87.1%) highlighting the interest in consumption. Both Hartland Orchard and Hollin Farms offered hamburgers and hot dogs and bottled drinks for sale. Cheryll Green and her husband Hank also have a concession selling freshly-dipped caramel apples and

Shannon Davenport has a snack stand where she sells ice cream and apple dumplings as well. Neither sells baked goods, however Cheryll indicated her interest in doing so.⁴³

The next most popular offerings, according to the survey, were “petting zoo” (54.8%) and “haunted hayrides/haunted forests” (54.8%). Both farms featured small petting zoos and/or live animals on display. These consisted of some chicken and goats. Hartland also offers pig races, featuring young pigs running around an enclosed mini racetrack to the cheers of onlookers. Both farms also have cattle grazing in the distance, but no animals available to pet or ride, citing liability concerns.



Figure 19. Hank Green loading the hayride at Hartland.

⁴³ In 2014, Cheryll invited two women to sell prepared food at the Fun Field as well, including baked goods.

Haunted hayrides and haunted farm attractions are featured at other locations in the greater Washington area and seem to be very successful enterprises.⁴⁴ However, Cheryll Green and the other PYO farmers along Leeds Manor Road have not gone that route. Cheryll explained, "... apparently one of the ways to make money, if you REALLY want to make money, is to do haunting, and I have no real interest in haunting right now [...]. You have to have a lot of labor, you have to have a lot of equipment." The issues of accessibility and staffing would make an evening attraction like a haunted forest or a nighttime corn maze prohibitive for the Davenports as well. These farms are not located close enough to high densities of potential young adult customers. Additionally, the "haunting" attractions do not convey the same ethos of the farm festivals: the importance of family togetherness, wholesome foods and activities, and a positive, natural vibe in a daytime setting.

Face painting, which is a relatively simple amenity to add, was the next most common (45.2%); followed by moon bounces (or bounce pillows) -also known as "bouncy castles"(35.5%); and hay slides (38.7%). Again, these attractions only require minimal staffing, but they do require an initial outlay of expense and effort (clearing land, purchasing materials, construction labor, etc.). The least common amenities were the "corn box" (12.9%) (similar to a big sand box, but filled with dried corn kernels) and pig races (12.9%), which are only staged a few times a day [See figures 3 – 7].

⁴⁴ Cox Farms in Centreville, Virginia features a Field of Fear starting at dusk and intended for visitors over 12 years of age. "Fields of Fear Home." 2014. Accessed October 15. <http://fieldsoffear.coxfarms.com/default.aspx>.

When asked about what other attractions they may have encountered beyond what was mentioned in the survey, I was surprised to see six respondents mention “live music” because neither Hollin nor Hartland farms offers live music (that I am aware of) nor had I ever experienced live music at a farm before. One specifically mentioned fiddlers, and one Native American dance, which lines up nicely with the conception of the countryside as being fixed in the past, but this entertainment option has not been a large part of the PYO farms events along Leeds Manor Road. Hank Green told me that he was considering hosting singing hayrides, featuring a talented young leading the group in song, but that may be for a future year. In the area, concerns have been raised about the wineries hosting events with amplified music in the evenings that bother the neighbors.⁴⁵ It may be that the farmers are more concerned about staying in their good graces than hosting bands and want to avoid any sources of potential conflict with their community.

The portion of the survey that was most interesting to me, were the questions that dealt with the visitors’ perceptions and motivations. When asked if they knew whether the fall agritainments the respondents visited were family run. Only 60.6% could say, “yes” with confidence, 3% said “no”, and 36.4% responded, “I don’t know.” The ‘additional comments’ section revealed the confusion some visitors felt:

⁴⁵ “Cuccinelli: Fauquier Winery Ordinance Exceeds Authority.” 2014. *Fauquier Now*. Accessed October 15.
http://www.fauquiernow.com/index.php/fauquier_news/article/cuccinelli-fauquier-winery-ordinance-exceeds-authority.

-We were told it was family run (at one) -one I could tell it was family run because the people that worked there lived on the property -others we have visited have not been family run (to my knowledge)

-It said so on the website. There were so many different people working there that it would be way too hard to tell otherwise. Also, there was a house roped off (off limits) close to the area that looked like a family home.

What are the reasons WHY the respondents chose to visit these farm-based attractions? The number one answer, from thirty of the thirty-three people surveyed, was: “Wholesome family fun” [my phrasing]. In descending order, the other reasons given were:

“To relax.”	78.8%
“To get away from the city.”	69.7%
“To get fresh produce.”	66.7%
“To reconnect with nature.”	45.5%
“To learn about farm life.”	24.2%
“To experience ‘the simple life’.”	18.2%

“Write-in” responses were:

-We go to celebrate "fall" season

-It's a good time.

-It's such a sharp contrast to modern life and all our gadgets. It reminds us

how trivial a lot of modern amenities are toward a "good time."

-We have to schedule time to be with the ones we love...

-We go for ALL of the above reasons. I think the average person goes for the checked reasons.

-Yummy apple cider, donuts and pumpkins!

This emphasis on *family* is interesting to take note of in the visitor responses. Both Shannon and Cheryll emphasized to me the importance they placed on making their farm a fun place for families to do things together. The Hartland Farm website features the motto: "Hartland Farm: Where families harvest food, fun, and memories." This is a perfect example of overlap in interests between the producers of the agritainments and its consumers because both groups are interested in building family togetherness. However, the second and third most popular reasons given highlight the differences between the two groups: families from in-town escape to the countryside to relax. Meanwhile, the farm families have to work hard and take on stress and expenses to provide these attractions to the public. Cheryll confessed to me, "I have been a nervous WRECK... for a month and a half. I didn't ever think I would be like this, but I can't sleep very well and I sort of feel like a rubber band stretched a little bit tight? And I think Hank is a little bit the same way. Just being on edge: 'Are the tractors gonna break down? Will anybody fall off the wagon? Will anybody break their neck on the jumping pillow? Will anybody get food poisoning from a hamburger?' (laughing) You know? And so I do everything

that you can do to try and NOT have anything like that happen. And I know that I don't have control over these things and that it's totally senseless to worry, but it's like my head goes spinning. This morning at 4 o'clock -I thought for sure I would sleep late this morning, but sometime before 4, I was awake with my head just spinning with little worries. And so that's something that I have to learn to cope with. Cause that's not very healthy. And I think that ... as time goes by I think I'll adapt (laughs)."

Cheryll's comments illustrate that the producers do not *share* in the fall festivities, one group is in the service of the other. Although Cheryll has professed her love for corn mazes, mums, and pumpkins, she also reveals the anxiety and stress that comes along with the job, not to mention all the physical work and expenditure that goes into setting up an agritainment attraction and making it fun, accessible, and appealing to paying visitors. Being so personally invested in the venture can make negative customer feedback especially disheartening to the farm families. Luckily, Cheryll has the support of her family and her Maize membership who offer helpful tips. Every year that they run the Fall Fun Field, the Green's learn more skills for coping with the role of "experience provider." Cheryll explains, "I've gotten tougher about the people who think that parents shouldn't have to pay. Generally speaking they are sour parents, it appears to me, and they are not fun anyway. And I don't feel bad saying that anymore. I'm sorry." Through the Fall Fun Field, Cheryll has built a network of other agritainment providers who support her and share ideas: "We have a Facebook page where our corn maze people – a group of about 300 farmers – talk to each other about ideas and share ideas, and Patty

Leonard from Cows and Corn responded to this, she says, ‘We’re ALL kids here on the farm!’ and ‘We don’t discriminate because you’re not a child!’ (laughs)”

The agritainments that Cheryll and Shannon produce at their separate PYO farms are fun for the whole family, but there is an additional attraction to tourists: the lure of the rural ideal. Nearly 70% of the respondents were seeking a chance to “get away from the city.” Sharpley and Jepson explain that tourists have been visiting rural areas as an escape from the city for the last two hundred years (2011, 57). The authors say that this shift in how we think about rural places has led to a “collective memory of a nostalgic and idyllic past, a constructed rurality that has [...] to do with the ‘otherness’ of the countryside as a counterpoint to the urban” (2011, 57) The Leeds Manor Road orchards are blessed with beautiful views in all directions. Located in the Piedmont, the foothills of the Blue Ridge Mountains, this area is scenic Virginia at it’s best. As Hank says, “No charge for the view!”

Finally, the survey closed with the following question: “Why do you suppose farm families choose to offer these fall attractions?” and asked them to explain in their own words. The most common responses were rather blunt: “To make money.” Only five of the 33 respondents did not mention “money”, “revenue”, “income”, or “profit.” The five that provided non-income related explanations, responded with the following comments:

-Seasonal activities seen to be popular with many different types of people, including children, parents wanting to entertain their children, and people hoping to reconnect with aspects of childhood etc.

-They're popular, for one. As the seasons change, people get a hankering for leaves and apples and pumpkins, etc. They are marketable and desirable, and they get people off the couch.

-Pride

-It's a way of adapting a rural, production-based lifestyle to an increasingly suburbanized, service-based economy.

-To attract more crowds and encourage people to come out to their farms more often, perhaps at other times of the year (other than the fall). To educate people about farm life as well.

The survey was helpful in countering some of my own personal assumptions about why visitors come to these fall festivals: that most families preferred the circus-like atmosphere of BIG agritainment attractions like Cox Farms over small family farms that are more production-based like Hartland Orchards and Hollin Farms. Many respondents had actually sought these smaller venues out. Secondly, the survey feedback did tend to support the literature on rural tourism, which generally reports an idealization of the countryside (in opposition to the stressful, noisy and polluted city). Shaw and Williams go even further, saying that “the countryside is socially defined as a premier area of leisure and tourism in modern societies; and visiting the countryside is a socially valued end in its own right” (224).

Agritainment as a Strategy

The agritainment site is the meeting place between the farmer/producer's need for economic security, performance of identity, and community connection; AND it is the place where the tourist/consumer can escape for a day into a rural ideal, and explore by participating in the foodways and wholesome fun activities of the 'Other'. How do these farm families share and profit by their cultural 'otherness' while still retaining values important to them, and holding onto their identity as "real" farmers in this post-rural economy (Long, 2004, 37)?

The food crops produced at Hartland Orchard and Hollin Farms are easily recognizable and familiar to most consumers, but in order to attract business, the farms have to offer more. Perhaps this is due in part to some anxiety on the part of the farmers, that to paraphrase, "If they DON'T build it, they WON'T come." However, when I conducted my fieldwork on a beautiful Columbus Day weekend, it seemed that both farms had just about all the customers they could handle. For instance at Hollin Farms, it took three men just to coordinate the limited customer parking. At Hartland, so many people from in-town decided that it was a good day to go apple picking, that there were cars backed up all the way down the drive, resulting in traffic jams and sometimes customer frustrations.

The agritainments provide an added incentive for some customers, and not just the flashy attractions like the bouncy pillow and the corn mazes. There is also the peaceful setting, the fresh air, and the lack of traffic noise. On the farm, visitors are welcomed by artful arrangements of mums, gourds, and corn stalks. Homey handmade signage adds quaint charm, as do the rustic farm buildings, and antique farm equipment.

Additionally, the “pick-your-own” concept itself, places familiar foods in an uncommon context: the consumer gets to play the farmer and hand-select his own fruit from the very trees. Visitors may quite literally, get their hands dirty, to obtain the same produce they find anywhere in town. “Tourists are invited to engage in recreation and consumption of the rural by seeing, tasting, and feeling the landscape” (Daugstad, 2008, 414). What invests the food with meaning is the context in which it is procured. The ordinary becomes extraordinary by means of the setting it is situated in. Descriptions such as “farm fresh”, “homemade”, “local”, and “old-fashioned” help to link the food or foodways to the past and to an ethos of valuing health, home, and traditional family values.



Figure 20. The cider press at Hartland.

These words are applied to the produce, baked goods, apple butter and cider for sale on the farms, and also help to reinforce the regional identity markers of “rural”, “farmer”, and “the country” (Long, 39). The producer can exert some control over how they are perceived by the public by using evocative language, but also through spelling out who they are and what is important to them explicitly through their websites. Both Hollin Farms and Hartland Orchards provide their family/ farm history on their websites.⁴⁶ This gives the visitor the opportunity to learn (if they are so inclined) that they are visiting a family farm with a history on the land and legitimacy as “real farmers.” Shannon explained that at Hollin Farms, they use the website to communicate what the farm is all about, but also convey the message more subtly by simply not charging an admission fee. A fee at the entrance would set up certain expectations from customers that the Davenports have chosen to avoid. Shannon says, “at least 75% of our customers have seen our website before they come. And they know that we are a REAL farm, [...] I don’t think anyone’s presuming that we’ll have a moon bounce or cotton candy or even hamburgers for that matter, I think that we look like a regular farm that grows pumpkins –and has a corn maze. And, the fact that we don’t charge admission is probably another clue for people that, ‘OK this probably isn’t going to be one of those all-the frills kind of places.’”

The website explication also helps to manage the expectations of the consumers, while also reinforcing the producer’s sense of identity. Their websites allow producers to, literally, spell out who they are, for example in an “About Us” section. Based on the

⁴⁶ www.hollinfarms.com and www.hartlandorchard.com

quote above, Shannon and her family are obviously trying to carve out a niche to distinguish themselves from other “mega farm” agritainment venues in the area. By defining what she will and will not offer at the farm, she is negotiating with her own definition of what a farm *should* be. Also, the choice to not charge an admission fee to customers reinforces the dividing line between a farm that is for entertainment and a farm that is for production. Hollin Farms is not without amenities: a concession stand with hot dogs, drinks, ice cream and apple dumplings; a cashier stand that accepts major credit cards; and a bright blue bank of porta-potties, but the Davenports keep the focus on picking produce as much as they can. “Although the simplicity and smallness of rural life is perceived as desirable, we still want the conveniences of technical society” (Park and Coppack, 1994, 164).

Both Cheryll and Shannon are physically on-site during the weekends, greeting customers and answering questions. This gives the producers the opportunity to share their expertise on farming, on the land, and on the regional area. Customers ask the farmers and staff for advice on growing plants at home and tips for how to cook certain foods. “Their farming background gives them legitimacy as experts on the place and the surrounding landscape and nature” (Brandth and Haugen, 2011, 40). As the Green family writes on their website: “We hope that you will enjoy harvesting some of your own food and being on our farm. Feel free to ask questions about how things are grown but be prepared to stay awhile if you get one of us talking about farming...”⁴⁷ The casual,

⁴⁷ “Hartland Farm Where Families Harvest Food, Fun and Memories.” 2013. *Hartland Farm Where Families Harvest Food, Fun and Memories*. Accessed May 6. <http://www.hartlandfarmandorchard.com/>

informal tone used on the website reinforces the invitation to interact with the farmers, and explains that these are farms where the customer will be expected to do the harvesting, but that it also will be a fun experience.

How does the producer decide what will appeal to his/her customers? The farmers decide which varieties of apples and pumpkins to plant: heirlooms or hybrids, for example. At Hollin Farms, Shannon's husband and her father-in-law like to experiment by trying out new crops in small patches and seeing how the customers respond. In 2012, the Davenports planted a field of "dig-your-own peanuts" which was a big success, especially with children who enjoyed digging in the dirt and discovering where peanuts come from.



Figure 21. Matt Davenport instructing customers at Hollin Farms.

The farmers also get to decide what kinds of prepared foods they will offer, for customers to take back home with them. At Hartland, they sell jars of honey from beehives on the farm, jugs of apple cider, and freshly-made caramel apples. Both farms also have grilled hot dogs and hamburgers for sale, as well as sodas, chips, and bottled water for customers who want lunch. The negotiation at work is that the farmers have chosen familiar lunch foods that are simple and quick to prepare. At a festival, “selected dishes thought to be familiar to the crowds but also fitting of a particular public identity [...]” (Long, 43). These basic lunch offerings are in line with the image of the farm as a casual and welcoming space, like a neighbor’s backyard perhaps. In many ways these farmers actually are opening their own backyards to strangers, welcoming them in like old friends, trusting them to respect their land and their hard work, and the homey food is a reminder of that.



Figure 22. Display of apple butters in Stribling's Harvest House store.

“Instead of store-bought, canned, or frozen foods, festivals used homegrown, freshly picked ingredients prepared home-style in a family setting [...]” (Long, 43). This is certainly the case with Hartland and Hollin farms. Because they are first and foremost “pick-your-own” farm, the emphasis is already on foods that are freshly picked, local and seasonal. Additionally, at Hollin Farms they actually offer customers favorite recipes (at the cashier stand and on the website) for vegetables generally perceived by less experienced consumers to be tricky, such as squash and eggplant. This kind of sharing fosters connections between farmers and customers, more commonly associated with close friends or neighbors. Again, the farmer is in the position of expert and his/her knowledge is welcomed as insider information. “This group of farmers blends the survival strategies of the old peasantry with modern demands. As such tourism does not represent a break with farming, but is many ways a continuation of an active farm” (Brandth and Haugen, 43).

As the countryside outside of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan region shifts increasingly away from strictly rural production for production sake and increasingly towards tourism, leisure, and services, we should consider the changes that this will bring to the farm families.⁴⁸ With all the challenges and skillful juggling required to manage a working farm, these families are adding to their list of responsibilities the role of agritainment host. “The transition from running a working farm to becoming a provider of services raises questions about whether the

⁴⁸ Also the many vineyards, distilleries, bed and breakfasts, golf courses and other amenities that keep popping up in Fauquier County, where Hartland Orchards and Hollin Farms are located.

farm population constructs new occupational roles and identities” (Brandth and Haugen, 35). The Greens and the Davenports are active participants in shaping their personal and farm identities through their farms.



Figure 23. Hartland road sign along route 17.

CHAPTER FOUR: STRATEGIES OF CONFLICT RESOLUTION, GLEANING FROM CULTURAL CONFUSION

“Robert Stribling’s [...] famous remark was, ‘I needed a week of therapy after that day in the orchard because it was so impossible to get these people to behave.’

–Tom Davenport

The farmers I worked with in the valleys of Leeds Manor District have the great advantage of being within an hour’s drive of a major metropolitan area. However, in the last few years this proximity has brought with it some challenges as well. For pick-your-own farmers, their place of business is also their home, sometimes their family’s ancestral home. Pick-your-own is unusual as a business model because it entails opening the farmer’s private property to the public. While it can be hard for any small business owner to separate personal feelings from work, the challenges to farmers who operate PYO are even greater because their work is their home, their families are the staff, and because no matter how hard they work, their products are vulnerable to the caprices of nature. Additionally, customers that come to PYO farms today are less connected to farming as Americans have been in the past. I’ve seen children who come out to the farm and are scared of bugs and getting dirty; and ladies who come strawberry picking in platform sandals and a sun dress. Customers from the city and inner suburbs don’t always know what’s expected of them on a farm, or what to expect. Because the

customers view the farm as an attraction initially, they expect to be able to find bathrooms, ATMs, and dining options at the ready. After the first visit, the misconceptions customers have are quickly cleared up and most people have a good time and come back again, dressed for picking, and prepared with cash, water bottles and snacks.



Figure 24. Sign at the entrance gate to Hollin Farms' orchard.

Misunderstandings can sometimes occur when people who are new to the country encounter long established traditions that are foreign to them, and try to make sense of PYO within their own cultural knowledge. During the last 20 years, northern Virginia has become home to a significant population of new immigrants. Washington, D.C. is not only the seat of the U.S. government but also home to embassies, international organizations, non-profits, and government contractors. This has always attracted people

from around the world to work and live in Virginia's suburbs. In addition, the increased demand for labor during the building booms of the late 1990's and early 2000's; the expansion of technology jobs; and the quality of public schools has all collaborated to make Northern Virginia a desirable place for people to emigrate to. In particular, we have seen large populations settle here from Bolivia, Korea, India and Pakistan, and Vietnam.⁴⁹

The PYO farmers of Leeds Manor Road began noticing an increase in immigrant customers about ten years ago. Tom Davenport seems to have been the one that first recognized this population as a new potential market.⁵⁰ The Davenports had a problem because they had invested in growing peaches, fruit that comes into season at the hottest time of the year in Virginia: July and August, when most D.C. area residents want to escape to the beach or spend their days sequestered in air conditioning, not pick peaches in the blazing heat. In the past, local folks would come pick peaches for jams and pies in large quantities, but those traditional customers were not enough to clear the orchards of ripe fruit. Tom Davenport did notice, however, that more and more Bolivian families were coming out to the farm – often multiple carloads – to pick bushels of fresh peaches. The Bolivian customers did not seem to mind the heat and effort involved and were happy to buy plenty of fresh fruit. This solved the Davenports' problem of who would pick peaches in the hottest part of summer, but also resulted in some new problems. A

⁴⁹ Morello, Carol, and Dan Keating. 2011. "Va.'s Numbers of Hispanics and Asians Skyrocket as White Population Dwindles." *The Washington Post*, February 4, sec. Metro. <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/02/03/AR2011020304604.html>.

⁵⁰ As discussed earlier.

pattern emerged of Bolivian groups going up into the orchard, spreading out a blanket, and sitting there eating dozens of peaches without paying for them. This made the farmers furious. But when the farmers confronted the Bolivian customers, the customers would often seem confused. I almost couldn't believe Tom when he explained what was happening. I thought, "How many peaches could they really be eating?" But as I investigated the problem I saw for myself: mounds of peach peelings under the trees; half-eaten peaches rolling down the hill; children with full bellies stumbling out of the orchard faces sticky with juice. Myself, I could probably eat two ripe peaches at a sitting, if I tried, but a Bolivian family of six could easily put away an entire peck bag of peaches in quick measure. That's \$13 out of a farmer's pocket for each group.

At first Tom figured he could confiscate their knives, and that would solve the problem, because the Bolivian customers seemed to prefer to eat the peaches peeled. Tom, Matt, and other staff would patrol the orchards and bust bad customers in the act. He put up signs in English, Spanish, and simple drawings indicating "No Knives in the Orchard." My first day visiting the orchard, Tom showed me an old peanut butter jar filled with confiscated knives. Tom boasted that these were all the knives he had seized. I cringed at the possible confrontations that could occur between an angry farmer demanding someone's knife and a man who spoke little English on unfamiliar turf. But even taking the knives did not stop people from eating in the orchards.



Figure 25. Trash sign in Spanish at Hollin Farms.

Peeling and eating fruit was not the only problem farmers were encountering with these new customers: unruly children running through the orchard, chucking fruit at each other; grown adults climbing trees to get fruit and breaking branches; women stashing extra fruit in baby carriages and purses; aggressive price haggling; and the tossing of fruit with the slightest blemish on the ground. Though many customers did not make trouble, a few bad apples spoiled the bunch, and the farmers were increasingly stressed by these confrontations. As they paid more attention to the growing problems, patterns began to emerge, disconcertingly, along ethnic lines. The challenging behavior was by no means exhibited only by the Bolivian customers: Vietnamese customers like to pick the unripe peaches and eat them crunchy like apples; Korean women preferred white peaches and would only buy the biggest and best looking peaches; Afghan customers were relentless in their haggling, disparaging the fruit to get a better price; Indian customers let their

children run amok through the plants and always arrived with no cash, and used credit cards even for a \$1 bottle of water. As I interviewed the staff and owners of the orchards I kept hearing these stories over and over again. At first, I assumed these were exaggerations, but the more time I spent at the orchards, the more conflict I witnessed.

Obviously not all immigrant customers were problematic, and not all “traditional American” customers were angels, but it shocked me how often these ethnic stereotypes held up. I saw parents sit idly by as their children pulled whole strawberry plants out of the ground; I saw fathers pulling down branches until they snapped to let their families pick more fruit; I rang up customers who paid for a peck bag of peaches and them sheepishly “topped off” the bag with a few extra peaches they had held on the side. The farmers have a saying that Brian Green repeated to me, “The sweeter the fruit, the crazier people get” and it was true. Peaches were bad, but raspberries and sweet cherries were even worse. The temptation of sun-sweetened fruit, fresh from the tree is a powerful temptation.⁵¹ At Hollin Farms all customers had to prepay for a pint before going into the raspberry patch, on the assumption that they would eat at least half as much as they picked. Bill Green got so tired of people climbing in his cherry trees that he bulldozed them over one spring in frustration. Tom Davenport has chased people out of his orchard, banished certain customers for life, and threatened to call the police. At Stribling’s, since customers can drive through the orchards, they have set up a checkpoint where all cars have to open their cars and trunk for inspection by staffers to make sure there are no secret stashes of fruit. One couple I spoke to recount their experience with disgust and

⁵¹ See The Bible, Genesis, The Garden of Eden.

said they would never go back to Stribling Orchard because they felt like they were treated as criminals. I thought to myself, “What is going ON here? How can something so peaceful and wholesome as picking fruit on a country farm become so charged with tension?” My hope was that by investigating the crisis of bad behavior at the PYO farms, I would uncover how the communication of expectations had broken down between farmers and new immigrant customers. Additionally, how these expectations reflect how the farmers saw themselves and their role in the community. But first I needed to understand the assumptions being made by the immigrant customers about PYO based on their cultural context.

Bolivian Customers: Fresh Peach Fanatics

Volunteering as a worker at Hollin Farms during the peach season, I had direct access to the customers.⁵² When they came to the sales shed to purchase their peaches, I would ask people where they were from and what they planned to do with so many peaches. The majority of the customers were of Bolivian descent from Arlington, Alexandria, at least an hour’s drive away. According to the 2010 census, northern Virginia has the largest population of Bolivian immigrants in the country. The majority of the immigrants who have settled in northern Virginia come from the city of Cochabamba where, according to one of my informants, every February they are huge peach festivals with parades; “peach queens” are crowned, there is entertainment, and farmers compete

⁵² I tried to arrange formal interviews with Bolivian customers several times but was unsuccessful in being able to record an interview. Customers were comfortable speaking casually with me, but hesitant to be recorded, perhaps in part due to the insecure immigration status of many Bolivians in the area.

to produce the perfect peach. Research confirms that Cochabamba is well known for the production and consumption of fresh peaches.⁵³ Visit a Bolivian restaurant and they will certainly offer *moco-chinchi* –a sweet iced tea-like drink made from rehydrated dried peaches, spices, water and sugar. Saying Bolivians *like* peaches is an understatement. Peaches are a sweet reminder of home and good times for people far away. I repeatedly asked Bolivian customers what they were going to do with all the bags of peaches they picked, and was always surprised when they just laughed and said, “Eat them!” Anglo American customers come to Hollin Farms during peach season, they usually only picked a one peck bag per family. If they pick more than one bag, it may be because they had a large family or they were planning to make jams or freeze fruit for the winter.



Figure 26. Young girl emerging from the orchard, peach in hand.

⁵³ “YSA2012_Chavez.pdf.” 2014. Accessed September 21. [Http://www.sga-sse.ch/_downloads/YSA2012_Chavez.pdf](http://www.sga-sse.ch/_downloads/YSA2012_Chavez.pdf).

I asked many customers of Bolivian descent if they made jams or special desserts. Try as I might to uncover some secret Bolivian use for peaches, the answer was always the same: they just liked to eat fresh peaches. In Lucy Long's discussions of foodways, she points out that taste and smell are powerful senses for evoking past memories. Additionally, some customers told me they would share them when they got back home with friends and neighbors. Gifts of freshly picked fruit can help foster connection between neighbors and within their community. The Bolivian customers tend to come in large groups: 4 to 5 young adults or a couple of families with young children together. Even when there is conflict over eating in the orchard, the Bolivians tend to be the least confrontational of the immigrant groups, quickly willing to apologize and pay for what they have, smiling broadly. They rarely negotiate over price or quality, and they mostly pay in cash. Of all the immigrants groups that patronize the PYO farms, they don't seem to mind breaking into a sweat or getting a little dirty for the sweet reward of fresh fruit. They are also the largest group of immigrants who come to the PYO farms, and they buy peaches in the largest volume, which makes them very important to the farmers' bottom line. Peaches being fragile and highly perishable fruit, it is important for a PYO farm to be able to bring in volume-purchasing customers to clear the trees during high season or be faced with a lot of wasted fruit and a messy orchard. For this reason, it was essential that the Bolivian customers be retained but also *retrained* to adhere to the rules of the Leeds Manor PYO farms.

Korean Customers: Finding the Perfect Peach

Working on the farms, learned to spot the Korean customers from far away because the women wear giant-brimmed sun hats and white cotton gloves, sometimes with sleeve protectors to protect their skin from the sun and to prevent irritation from the peach fuzz. Unlike the Bolivian customers who are a mixture of young kids and their parents, the Korean groups tend to be older folks or middle-aged women, and they seem to prefer quality to quantity. The Korean customers are the most selective customers as a group. They rarely brought young children to pick, I suspect partly, because they could not be entrusted to pick the best quality fruit. Conflict occurs between Korean customers and the Leeds Manor Road farmers over the quality of the fruit and pricing. In Korea, peaches are highly prized and sold in Seoul markets individually wrapped in special cushioned crates.⁵⁴

Researching peach orchards in Korea, I found that many Korean farmers have limited acreage and will heavily prune their trees to yield fewer peaches that are larger and more perfect in shape and color.⁵⁵ The Korean customers at the farm expressed a preference for the mild white peaches to yellow ones. Some Korean orchards wrap each peach in paper as it grows to keep the skin evenly colored and blemish free. Such a practice would be too costly and time consuming for the labor-strapped PYO farmers. At

⁵⁴ “Success of Korean Peach Promotion 25-28 Aug 2011.” 2014. Accessed March 4. <http://www.mbg.com.my/MBG/news-a-updates/1056-success-of-korean-peach-promotion-25-28-aug-2011.html>.

⁵⁵ Korean peach growing practices discussed <http://southernerabroad.com/tag/art/> Similar practices are employed by peach farmers in China: [http://www.clemson.edu/extension/peach/faq/is it true that in some peach orchards i n china they put paper bags over the young fruit as they are developing and only remove them at harvest.html](http://www.clemson.edu/extension/peach/faq/is_it_true_that_in_some_peach_orchards_in_china_they_put_paper_bags_over_the_young_fruit_as_they_are_developing_and_only_remove_them_at_harvest.html)

Hollin Farms, when Korean customers enter the orchard, the first question is often the same: “Where are the white peaches? We want the sweetest ones you have.” It was uncanny how predictable these questions were, but the Korean customers knew exactly what they wanted. The goal of the Korean picker is to find the most perfect peach. I myself witnessed a Korean picker stretch to grab a peach, carefully examine it, and then toss it on the ground because they found a blemish. This is a problem for the Leeds Manor Road orchardists who have to clean up rotting fruit to keep the orchards pleasant and who cringe to see a perfectly edible peach wasted. Once the fruit is picked, the farmers feel, it should be paid for. If a customer picks a less than perfect piece of fruit, the unspoken rule among the farmers is that the customer should still pay but choose more carefully next time they pick. But Korean customers feel that no self-respecting farmer would expect them to pay for bad looking fruit.



Figure 27. A discarded half eaten peach in the orchard.

These two points of view result in a cross-cultural collision at the orchard. For example, I observed that Korean women were more likely to try and haggle over the price by denigrating the quality of the fruit. This is particularly annoying to the farmers I work with, who take great pride in their fruit. Charles Strother has been so offended that he has taken fruit away from people and asked them to leave. Martha, who runs the sales shed at Hollin Farms, stands firm on the price and uses the excuse that she is not the owner and can't make deals with customers. Bill Green at Hartland Orchards offers his peaches at the cheapest prices as a strategy to avoid haggling and subterfuge. He reasons that if the customers know they are getting a great price, they won't try to get away with more. Stribling Orchards uses a sliding scale to encourage bulk purchases, the more peaches you buy the price goes down. But the bulk pricing doesn't deter eating in the orchards or haggling over quality. Despite the conflicts, eventually, they all pay, some grumbling more than others. Yet the majority of Korean customers are grateful to be able to find a place where they can get their favorite summer fruit fresh and direct from the tree.

To get some perspective on the Korean customer's point of view, I interviewed my friend's mother, Mrs. Yesoon Lee, who is also the chef at her own Korean restaurant downtown. Mrs. Lee told me that in Korea they had PYO farms outside of the cities too. She recalled going for a day trip with friends from college to pick Asian Pears. I asked her what her favorite fruit was, and she responded, "I like white peaches. Because they are more juicy, sweeter." Mrs. Lee told me that Korean people tend to eat mostly fresh fruit and don't do a lot of baking with fruit in pies or jams. This could also explain why Korean customers tend to be more focused on the appearance of the fruit, since each one

is intended to be eaten fresh, rather than many U.S. born customers who come to the farm to pick large quantities to cut up into cooked products. I was surprised to find that many people enjoyed PYO farms in Korea because of nostalgia for an agricultural past, much like in the U.S. “They go to the farm to have fun, experience some of the farm life. It’s not like the old days at all anymore,” Mrs. Lee, explained that Korea went through a big push to modernize in the 1970’s and many young people left their family farms to pursue advanced degrees and careers in the new cities. PYO Farms in Korea seem to function very much like they do in the U.S as a fun outing to the country, an experience to recapture a simpler agricultural past in the present. “The pears and strawberry farms were near the city, Seoul, so people could come out in groups. We didn’t bring home much, more about having fun out there. Main purpose [was] not to bring home much.”

Vietnamese Customers: Like a Crunchy Peach

Though Northern Virginia has had a large Vietnamese population since the 1970’s, which has continued to grow, they are one of the least represented immigrant groups at the PYO orchards.⁵⁶ According to the handful of customers I spoke with, PYO does not exist in Vietnam. A friend who was born in Vietnam asked her father if he could recall anything similar to PYO there, he said he thought no farmer would be dumb enough to let people come on his farm because they would steal everything! While this is an anecdotal story, I think it reveals an interesting difference in the perception of farming.

⁵⁶ “2010 U.S. Census (State Populations)(Vietnamese).” 2014. *Vietnamese Studies Internet Resource Center*. Accessed October 5. <http://www.vietnamesestudies.org/2010-us-census-state-populationsvietnamese.html>.



Figure 28. Asian family picking strawberries at Hollin Farm.

I also chatted with a group of Vietnamese customers that had stopped on their way back from a road trip. I asked them how they thought Vietnamese people would interpret pick-your-own. They told me that they view it as an activity to spend with their children. This group expressed the perception that American farmers are much more wealthy than Vietnamese farmers. One young man in the group did say that he thought his cousin and mother who are not as “Americanized” [his word] would view it as a chance to get inexpensive food while also eating as much as they could while picking. Ironical that here in the U.S. we invented the “all-you-can-eat” buffet. Hearing this interpretation again indicates the cultural confusion that many Vietnamese immigrants seem to have when interpreting the appropriate behavior at PYO farms.



Figure 29. Families picking strawberries and greens at Hollin Farms.

Another potential source of conflict between these customers and the Leeds Manor farmers could be the Vietnamese customers' preference for hard, almost green, peaches. In one encounter, Tom Davenport ran up to a large extended family group of Vietnamese customers who were standing around a peach tree happily crunching on green peaches. Tom scolded them, thinking that they just did not know any better about how to pick ripe fruit. But in later conversations with Vietnamese customers, we discovered that they actually preferred to eat peaches hard, "Like an apple." In Vietnam, there are popular dishes that employ green (unripe) papaya evidenced by the inclusion on many restaurant menus, so perhaps this taste for green peaches is akin to that. However from the Fauquier farmer's perspective, green peaches have the potential to become much larger, heavier (and therefore more profitable) ripe peaches. The same \$12 peck bag can hold 25 unripe peaches or just 12 ripe peaches, so the farmer is justified in his

frustration, because green peaches are less profitable. At the same time, the farmers could also see this as an opportunity to cater to a large new customer base that might be very happy to have access to a fruit (albeit unripe) that is not available even in Asian specialty markets. Visiting the different orchards during my fieldwork, I witnessed these conflict incidents firsthand. Whole families sitting underneath trees and eating dozens of unpurchased peaches, leaving piles of peelings on the ground; I called out boys who picked peaches and hurled them at each other for sport; I asked grown women to climb down out of trees; I found dirty diapers and trash strewn throughout the orchard. Up at the sales shed, I watched people stagger up to the counter with peck bags overfilled with peaches and trying to balance more on top, to squeeze a few extra peaches into a ten-dollar peck bag. When I spoke to the farm workers and the farmers, they confirmed that these problems were common and even typical. I wondered, “Why do people think its OK to act like this?” –and that became the central question of my earlier research project: How can these Virginia farmers better communicate their expectations of the etiquette of “pick-your-own” farms? The other side of the dilemma is, “How are customers communicating the idea between each other that it is OK to steal the fruit before they even come out to the farms?” With these two questions in mind, I set out to see if I could find some answers to benefit both the farmers and the customers, so that everyone could get along.

I spent many weekends at Hollin Farms, both as an employee in a yellow apron and as a customer out to pick fruit. I talked to the farmers, their employees, the customers, and surveyed my own friends to discover how everyone involved perceived

PYO farms. I visited the other PYO orchards along Leeds Manor and found that they were having many of the same problems as the Davenports were: eating in the orchards, stealing fruit, and aggressively bartering. What differed between the farms was how they chose to deal with these conflicts. Tom Davenport actually applied for, and received, a grant from the USDA to study how to best market PYO to ethnic customers. As mentioned in the marketing section, Tom was the first farmer along Leeds Manor to reach out specifically to ethnic populations in the greater D.C. area through advertisements in Korean and Spanish-language newspapers, especially to promote the peach season. His advertisements were definitely successful, as evidenced by the throngs of Korean and Bolivian families that trekked out into the country every weekend in search of sweet fresh-from-the-tree fruit. The amount of customers was a boon to the Davenports, but along with the crowds came some unexpected stresses. PYO farm rules were interpreted differently by some of the immigrant customers than intended by the farmers. While there were the occasional “bad apple” customers, most of them were nice people out for a day of fun in the countryside with family and friends. The message had been communicated within some of the immigrant communities, that PYO translated to a free “all-you-can-eat” buffet.

Alex Jeffries, manager of Stribling Orchard, complained about how some customers behave in the orchard, “Oh, people will sit right down and eat in the orchard. *Under the trees*. One time, I had a family come up with three bags of peach peelings. THREE BAGS! And they wanted to pay for the peelings! But if they filled up three bags with just peelings, then they probably ate twice as many bags worth of peaches!” As he

spoke, I noted the clear frustration in his voice.



Figure 30. A group of pickers in Stribling Orchard.

While its easy for someone familiar with the PYO tradition to assume the worst of people eating in the orchards and otherwise not obeying the rules, I would argue that these customers did not fully understand that what they were doing was wrong, otherwise why would they bring the bags of peeling up to pay for them? Their actions speak more to cultural misunderstanding than to criminal intent. Bill Green explains the draw of a day at the PYO farm, "... it is a MAGNET for first generation Americans and their extended families and for them all to come out and be as a group to pick fruit. A very common scenario is a grandparent or somebody comes from the home country and they all go out to pick peaches, because they have peaches in their home country and that's a –they can spend some time out away from the concrete of the city." However, the resulting loss of profits to the farmer is still

problematic. More than that, PYO farms operate from a baseline of trust: the farmer trusts his customers to respect his farm, his home, and his crop and in exchange he is willing to allow total strangers to come onto his property and pick from his carefully maintained trees and bushes. The violation of trust is perhaps the issue that causes farmers the most consternation. Perhaps by considering the cultural context that these immigrant customers are coming from can shed light on the misconceptions.

Bolivian customers came from a country where land was very valuable and fruit orchards were protected with high fences and guards. They come this big farm in the sprawling Virginia countryside and perhaps assume that the man who owns the farm must be a very wealthy. The interpretation I found most common, especially among our Bolivian customers, was that the farmer must have already picked the best fruit to sell at markets, made his money, and was just allowing regular folks to come in and clean up the “seconds.” This practice of a farmer letting the less fortunate clean out his fields is called gleaning, and it actually has a long history, going back to the Bible.⁵⁷ Because of their assumptions about the intentions of the farmer, the Bolivian customers saw no harm in picnicking under a tree and peeling and eating vast numbers of peaches without paying. After all, weren’t they doing the farmer a favor by clearing out the surplus fruit?

Customers from South Asia (India, Pakistan, Afghanistan) come from cultures where fresh fruit is often bought in outdoor markets and haggling over price and quality

⁵⁷ “When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or pick up the grapes that have fallen. Leave them for the poor and the alien. I am the LORD your God...”
– Leviticus 19:9-10

is common, accepted, and even expected. Alex Jeffries of Stribling Orchard told me that, “Arabs will try to bargain. A friend explained to [me] that that’s how they do it in their country, they bargain for everything. They don’t understand it’s not like that here.” The farmers along Leeds Manor Road however, have already set what they consider to be a very fair price. Most offer discounts for bulk purchases and run special prices when a bumper crop comes in. But they are not used to, or comfortable with, haggling. These cultural misinterpretations have caused a lot of stress and conflict at the Leeds Manor PYO farms. Without knowing the cultural background that led to these misunderstandings, many of the farmers began to resent the new immigrant customers and, by extension, resent Tom Davenport for luring them out there with his ethnic marketing campaigns. I ambitiously took on the task to try and bring peace back to the PYO farms of the Crooked Run valley, between the farmers themselves and between the customers and the farmers.

What Tom Davenport and I realized from my work interviewing and studying the cultural background of the customers, was that we needed to try and teach them how PYO works and what is expected of them. These conflicts with customers were a huge source of stress on the farmers, but at the same time, the farms could not afford to turn customers away. Tom Davenport and I collaborated on ideas to help alleviate the problems. One of my first suggestions to Tom was to consider making signs that represented the rules of PYO visually. My reasoning was that using simple images to convey the rules would be more effective with children, as well as with non-English speakers. At the same time, by not translating the rules into specific languages, no one

group would feel singled out as “troublemakers.” Tom was very excited about this idea and immediately sought out the help of a friend in New York who was a cartoonist. Tom supplied him with the requisite rules and he came up with a cartoon featuring a little blue bird acting out the different good and bad behaviors. He immediately shopped around and got enlargements of the posters made to display at the entrance to the orchard.



Figure 31. Hollin Farms' PYO rules poster.

The reaction to the posters was mostly positive from the customers, but less well received by the other farmers. Displayed in big enlargements at the front entrance to the orchard at Hollin Farms, the colorful cartoon characters caught the attention of children, and of parents who were looking for help to orient their children to the task of picking properly. Even non-immigrant customers with small children appreciated the reinforcement of the rules and the appeal of the cartoon format to catch the kids' attention. However, when I shared the posters with Charles Strother to get his feedback, he complained that the signs were too “Mickey Mouse” and not his style, but his wife

Cathy and adult son Edward both liked them. Bill Green at Hartland was not a fan of the posters at all, he thought they were “condescending” to customers and said that they didn’t have as much of a problem with the issues highlighted in the sign. However, Brian Green thought the posters were great and wanted some translated into Spanish and Farsi, specifically. The warmest reaction outside of Hollin Farms was at Stribling Orchards, where Alex Jeffries had instructed his staff to hand out flier-sized color copies of the posters to each carload of customers that came through the check-in station.



Figure 32. Peck bags printed with rules at Hollin Farm.

Since Tom and I began this project in 2010, the PYO immigrant newcomers seem to have learned the rules. Additionally, I have witnessed the farmers becoming more accepting of and accommodating to their changing customer demographic. More and more of these immigrant families are becoming repeat customers, they tell their friends

about the farm and are more invested in it as a favorite seasonal outing rather than as a source of inexpensive food. The farmers are more engaged with the customers, discussing the differences in farming techniques, swapping recipes, and cultural traditions surrounding certain foods and seasons. As the popularity of PYO increases generally, new groups of immigrants are discovering the Leeds Manor orchards as well, that were not coming before. Bill Green told me, “Right now we’re having a run on Russians! It seems like we’re having a big crowd of people who are from Russia. They recently had a holiday where you picked apples and have them blessed – I understand – and that gives them luck for the upcoming year. And that was an interesting thing I didn’t know anything about!”



Figure 33. Tom Davenport and granddaughter showing hands decorated by Indian customers.

Last September, a large group Indian people of all ages came to the farm to pick

seasonal vegetables and the early apples. They picnicked just off the parking area on the top of a slope that looked down over the farm and the valley. The ladies, old and young, all sat together on one blanket, while the men sat in chairs or stood and talked off by themselves. The ladies were decorating each other's hands with henna in intricate designs. I told Tom and he took his granddaughter Marjorie over to say hello and watch. When I looked up from my busy sales counter next, Tom and Marjorie had joined the ladies on their blanket and were having their hands decorated as well. It was a lovely moment of exchange between cultures and a reminder of the benefits that the farmers can reap from interactions and understanding with new immigrant customers.⁵⁸



Figure 34. Tom Davenport with Indian customers.

⁵⁸ “Scrumpling” is a term used in the U.K. for stealing apples from someone else’s tree. The usage of this folk term seems to imply that stealing a few apples is permissible, and somewhat expected behavior among young people. Further research is needed to explore this idea of socially acceptable theft and the context that makes theft acceptable.

Be a Good Neighbor

Though the problems with new immigrant customers tended to dominate during the period of my research, there were other areas of potential conflict that emerged from time to time. During my interviews I asked all of the farmers whether they had community support for the PYO. While the majority of the PYO customers actually come from outside the immediate community, the farmers are aware that their business model increases traffic on the weekends and are careful to not let their weekend business annoy their neighbors. The majority of the patrons for these PYO farms are from the inner suburbs, and the farmers have mostly set their prices for that income level. However, all of the farmers told me about instances when they have discounted pricing for local folks or people who seemed troubled by the cost. Speaking with Brian Green and his father Hank, Brian explained, “I’ve got people who can’t afford to pick my berries, and when we figure that out, we change things.” Hank nodded in agreement, “Yeah, I give away Christmas trees every once in awhile too.” Cheryll told me about how she let a family of seven go into the Fall Fun Field for free. The Davenports invite area food banks to come out and glean the fields during the week. Charles Strother doesn’t accept credit cards, but if someone shows up without cash he lets them write a personal check, “... or I’ll say, ‘Our name and address is on the bag. I don’t want you leaving here without your peaches. When you get home, you send me the money.’ [...] I have NEVER had anybody NOT do it.”

Being a good neighbor is an important aspect of the identity that these farm

families are creating, and it is interesting to see the different ways this is played out through their actions and behaviors. Neighborliness is an important aspect of the placemaking and identity shaping at work amongst these farm families.



Figure 35. Old sprayer tank used as a road sign at route 55 and Leeds Manor Road.

Of all the farm families studied, the Greens demonstrated through their actions and their words this quality of neighborliness. Their Hartland Farm property stands out from the other PYOs because of its proximity to I-66, a major east-west highway through Northern Virginia. For the most part this is a great advantage to the Green family, because it is easy for customers to find them. The downside of this visibility is that it is easy for non-paying customers to find them as well. As Brian Green told me, “The prices go WAY down after dark,” meaning that the peach trees and berry bushes closest to the service road are easy pickings for late night thieves. Though this theft is frustrating, the Green

family chooses to not surround their property with fencing and to factor the losses into their accounting. Instead, they focus on keeping the grass mowed right up to the street and keeping the farm neat and tidy so that their neighbors will be pleased to drive by. Cheryll Green, Brian's mother, said that they are careful –especially during the busy fall season- to not let the line of cars back up onto the service road and inconvenience locals trying to get to their homes. Cheryll and Hank take traffic concerns into consideration as they plan their agritainment events (such as a pumpkin launching catapult; pig races; or harvest dinners), to make sure they can handle the crowds. In our interview, Brian summed up their philosophy this way: “That’s the strong feeling that we have, with the Greens... It’s very important to stay friends with your neighbors.”



Figure 36. Cherry picking hayride and picnic for the community at Beulah Baptist Church.

A great example of this neighborliness happens each year in May, when Bill

Green hosts the local community at the Beulah Baptist Church, across Leeds Manor Road from the entrance to Hartland. There on the church grounds the whole community is invited to bring a covered dish to share and Bill's family provides hamburgers, hot dogs and sodas. Many of the congregation is African Americans, some who can trace their history back to before the Civil War. The oldest members of the Beulah Baptist community recall working on the orchards for Bill's father Henry, and his grandfather, when they were young children. The history of these folks is intertwined with the history of the Green family, and even though that history includes the dark days of slavery, the community comes together for this event like a family reunion. The conversation is relaxed and easy, as everyone catches up on each other's lives and kin. This past year, Bill counted the number of nametags they used and he estimates a little more than 300 people turned up. "I take hayrides from there to the top of the cherry orchard, the weekend before I open up to the public, for cherry picking." Everyone gets to pick sweet cherries for free and they end the event with a bonfire. Bill has held this event for almost ten years and says that he does it to just build goodwill and community. Bill added, "A lot of folks come to it and I'm tickled to death with it. Very, very proud of it." The cherry hayride picnic is a way for Bill to demonstrate his appreciation for the local community and the idea of being a good neighbor as defined within his family.

The Green family approach to conflict seems to be that a good offense is the best defense: by keeping up a good relationship with neighbors and the larger community, they build up goodwill that will help keep people with bad intentions from their farm. Neighbors look out for the property, for example, helping out when Brian needs people to help cover

his tender strawberry plants on a dark winter night. The Greens also work with their church community to plant and grow potatoes for the county food bank. The Greens donate the land, till the soil, and pick up the seed potatoes; church volunteers come out to do the actual planting and harvesting.



Figure 37. Community members preparing seed potatoes to plant at Hartland.

In addition to being good neighbors, Hank and Cheryll Green's strategy is to avoid growing fruit and avoid the conflict that comes with it. Hank and Cheryll run the Fall Fun Field with agriculture-themed family fun, such as a corn maze, pumpkin patch, bouncing pillow, and hayrides. In the winter they have a cut-your-own Christmas tree farm and sell wreaths and roping. In many ways, their business model is very similar to the PYO orchards: inviting the public to come onto the farm to enjoy fresh air, country

views, and farm grown products. However, the crucial distinction to Hank is that he doesn't sell food, "everything I sell is towards the FUN aspect of it." Hank feel like it makes a big difference in how his customers behave because they are mostly families out for a fun experience and not people who are looking for a bargain, free fruit, or who will criticize the quality of the product.

Bill Green, who runs the main orchard operation at Hartland, has his own strategies for averting conflict that differ from his brother Hank and his nephew Brian. Bill has a well thought out strategy of conflict-aversion in place. For example, when explaining his pricing strategy, Bill told me that he likes to keep his prices low, even lower than the three other farms along Leeds Manor Road. The strategy behind the low prices is that people will not complain as much if they think they are getting a great bargain price. This makes Bill's life easier, because he does not have to negotiate with customers on price, or quality, or how there are too many bugs flying around. People are happy to be getting such a good deal, and they leave it at that. Bill wears a fun tie-dyed tee shirt and dresses all his workers the same. He greets everyone with a big smile and a super cheerful voice. But the stresses of running a PYO get to Bill, just like anyone else. Tom Davenport told me about how one day, Bill Green shocked everyone by bulldozing over some of his oldest cherry trees after a weekend of high conflict with customers. People were climbing the trees, breaking branches, falling, and stealing fruit. Bill was so upset by the customers' unruly behavior that he knocked over the trees rather than deal with the problems they incurred anymore. For Bill's way of thinking, the destruction of the cherry trees was the easiest way to avoid future conflicts.



Figure 38. Sign pointing towards blueberry patch at Hartland.

Other farmers take a more direct approach to enforcing rules and don't shy away from conflict if they feel they are right. Based on my observations between Charles and Kathy Strother and their customers at Valley View, they tend to be hardliners about the rules of their orchard. Charles told me, "Oh the biggest challenge of all is the customers. The customers [who], after you go through ALL the risk, you go through ALL the care, you go through... EVERYTHING, you go through. Those customers who come out and are strictly thinking of themselves, and are willing to steal you BLIND. That's just disgusting." When it comes to resolving conflicts with customers, Charles defers to his wife Kathy to be the enforcer. Kathy does not allow customers to overfill their peck bags or haggle over prices. Charles runs his orchard because he always wanted an orchard and it generates revenue to help the farm sustain itself. But Charles admits that the biggest challenge of running the PYO is the customers. He recounted a story of how Kathy busted a group who had offered to pay for two bags of peaches but had secretly stashed a

load of peaches in their trunk. The Strother's grandson saw them do it and reported back to her and she confronted them, blocking their car in the drive and demanding to see the rest of the peaches. She forced the people to open their trunk and found the stole peaches. Next she insisted that they pay for all of the peaches or she would have Charles call the police. The sneaky customers paid and went on their way. Charles says that for the most part they have wonderful customers that come back year after year, but "the ones that are NOT nice, you usually only have to deal with them once [chuckles]. We say, 'There's three other orchards down there! They would LOVE to see you!'"



Figure 39. Sign by entrance to Charles Strother's Valley View Farm.

"The sweeter the fruit the crazier people get," Matt Davenport told me, so his solution is to charge people in advance before they pick, and then not worry as much if they eat as they go. At least with this method of conflict resolution, Matt continues to earn money

off the more tempting fruits, while allowing for an expected level of customer grazing. Both Matt Davenport and Brian Green charge near retail prices for their PYO berries. They tell me that sometimes customers complain that they could have bought blueberries or raspberries cheaper at their supermarket, but both farmers feel that they have to charge higher prices to accommodate for the cost of fruit eaten in the process of picking. Different orchards employ different strategies to combat dishonest customers. Stribling Orchard avoids tempting their customers with the sweetest fruits by simply not offering cherries or berries. Orchard manager Alex Jeffries echoed Matt Davenport's theory, "Seems like the sweeter the fruit, the more trouble we have." At Stribling's, customers can drive their cars right up into the orchard, but they must also be willing to have their cars opened and inspected at checkout for any smuggled fruit. Charles Strother has only recently added berry bushes and has not opened them up to the public for picking yet, so it remains to be seen how he will handle this source of conflict. He does not allow cars in the orchard and is very clear about pricing and what he considers a full peck bag.⁵⁹

My observation is that the farmers that approach customers in an adversarial fashion seem to get the most conflict and stress in return. But nice guys don't always finish first either. All of the farmers have reported cases of outright theft. The police have been called to deal with belligerent customers; ambulances have been called because people climbed trees recklessly in defiance of the posted rules. But, for the most part,

⁵⁹ Melanie Fein has only grown apples and raised cattle at Apple Manor Farm, and is still negotiating her own conflicts with her neighborhood to even be able to open her PYO to the public. Paul Redden has not opened a cidery as of the date of this publication, so does not deal with the public regularly.

people are nice. “That’s another thing I LIKE about this kind of a business,” Charles Strother explained to me, “You get a lot of people that are [...] nice people. Most of the people are very nice people.”

Looking back at the process three years later, it seems that the signs; the efforts of the farmers themselves; and the in-group communication between customers in the immigrant communities have reduced the amount of conflict at the farms quite a bit. I hope that my efforts to facilitate understanding and communication were a part of that solution. People still snack on fruit, but the transgressions are less egregious. Brian Green and Matt and Shannon Davenport have reported to me that they feel a lot less stress during peach and berry seasons now.

There is a lingering frustration, however, about how customers fail to appreciate the work that farmers put in to a PYO farm. Brian Green explained, “I would say that outsiders don’t understand that it’s... a farm (smiles). And they don’t always understand the amount of work that goes into making this crop, AND that part of what they’re paying for is not produce, but is the experience to be here. And I don’t think they understand the expense of liability insurance and the time it takes to make these crops, safe for them to pick. And to keep the place neat and to make it an agritainment type of venture. If we were just selling produce, the fields wouldn’t look like this. They wouldn’t be mowed like a lawn, they wouldn’t be –everything wouldn’t be neat, and so, that would be my main thing.” This is the paradox of running a PYO operation: the farmer must make the farm attractive, comfortable, and appealing to draw in families as customers,

while hoping that customers will learn about the real skills it takes to run a farm and appreciate the challenges this way of life presents.



Figure 40. Truck repurposed as sign at Hartland.

CHAPTER FIVE: HIDDEN LABORS, RURAL ESCAPES, AND SKEWED EXPECTATIONS

“City folks and city children don’t know what a cow looks like...”

-Sue Redden

PYO farms give people the opportunity to reconnect with agriculture in a safe and enjoyable way. The farms are an inexpensive and wholesome entertainment for families that bring parents and children together in a shared activity. In a time of highly scheduled recreation, the PYO farms offer an unstructured and relaxed setting for family experiences and photo opportunities. Families can see real cows grazing in real meadows. They can learn that cucumbers are covered with little prickles on the vine, and that tomatoes come in all kinds of shapes and colors. They can talk about the hazards of stink bugs with the man who grows the crops. Standing in the field, customers can share favorite preparations of eggplants or squash. The farm is a special place, an ‘away’ that acts as a liminal space permitting encounters with new things and new people and connections across cultures.

Like Tom Sawyer, the farmers have figured out a way to convince customers from in-town to drive 60 miles on their days off from work, and have them pay for the chance to take part in farm labor, and then even make them think it’s entertainment. Really quite a clever trick. Yet, these family farmers aren’t turning to PYO as a way to

trick anyone, for the size of their operations and the high costs of land where they are located, this is the only viable option. Besides, there is so much more work that goes into these farms than just the picking. The PYO farmers are working year round: weeding, applying pesticides and fungicides, pruning, keeping irrigation lines working, repairing equipment; keeping out deer, bear, groundhogs, turkeys; mending fences, overseeing laborers, paying taxes, cutting the hay while the sun shines, getting the hay bales out to the cows in a snowstorm, dragging dead cows out to the woods, taking cows to processing, maintaining the signs, the website, payroll, and taxes. Farmers have to keep up with zoning laws, labor laws, pesticide regulations, and stay informed about the latest threats to their trees and how to control them. Even in winter, when nothing is growing, the cows need to be fed, seeds and plants need to be ordered, and farmers get caught up on everything they didn't have time for before. For example, Melanie Fein explained to me how, "the Extension Service conducts a series of orchard schools for farmers, including one at the Stribling farm every year [...] they are very helpful. Matt [Davenport] goes to that and Bill Green." Even though many of these families have farming in their blood, they commit themselves to staying up to date on the latest techniques, pests, and regulations.

The hidden labors of the PYO farmer are only part of the problem for understanding and connection between customers and farmers. PYO customers have different assumptions that they bring along with them, based on who they are and where they come from. Some comments that I collected working on the farms:

-“Farmers these days all drive Lambourginis!”

-“I figured they had already picked all the best fruit to sell. Why else would they let people come on their land?”

-“They like people and want families to have somewhere nice to come and spend the day.”

The increasing complexity and carnival-like atmosphere of some agritainments around the country, the customer’s preconceptions of what a PYO farm will be like can affect their enjoyment. Recently, a customer posted a negative review on Yelp after visiting Hollin Farms. Aurora A. complained that the farm did not have a retail store with baked goods, hot cider and lunch foods.⁶⁰ What is particularly frustrating to the PYO farmers is that sometimes their efforts are not appreciated by customers who are looking for their experience at all PYO farms to replicate the ones they have been to before. At Hollin Farms, the Davenports feel strongly that what makes their farm unique is the diversity of PYO crop offerings and the simple real farm quality to the experience. They have deliberately chosen to not offer a wide variety of retail items and agritainments, because they want to show people what a real farm is like.

There have been some big changes over time in the types of customers that frequent PYO and what they expect, and the PYO farmers have had to change too. Brian Green told me about how in the early days, Hartland’s customers “were locals. They came all the time. Prices were low. Things were calm. Everything wasn’t done perfectly –it didn’t matter. [...] Now... the customers are from, generally, from Northern Virginia,

⁶⁰ “YELP: Hollin Farms.” 2014. Accessed October 21. <http://www.yelp.com/biz/hollin-farms-delaplane>.

they work in big Northern Virginia jobs... They expect things to look clean and manicured. They're willing to PAY for that. And they have a disposable income for it. And the crowds are a little tougher." These days there are more customers, but they buy smaller quantities than in the past. These days, customers come out for the experience more than for the opportunity to buy bulk fresh fruit at a discount. This means that the PYO farms have to accommodate for more cars with bigger parking lots and spend more money on the upkeep and maintenance of roads, parking areas, and other services as well.



Figure 41. Attractive sales display at Hartland.

The PYO orchards of Leeds Manor Road are special because they are the continuation of a traditional agricultural form that creates the possibility for small family farms to survive amidst multiple external pressures. These are not historical recreations of working farms but they are actually farms that work. The Leeds Manor PYO farms

come from a heritage rooted in the Golden Age of Virginia apples but have diversified and strategically reoriented themselves to be able to keep their land in agriculture into the future. Academics and social commentators can discuss ways to save the family farm, but these farmers have taken matters into their own hands and done the hard work of building a sustainable business model for themselves on their own terms.

The only way to preserve the intangible cultural heritage of this community's farming traditions is by continuing to do the *work* of farming. When Bill Stribling talks about how his father always knew when to rotate the apples in cold storage, just by the way they smelled, I realized that there are some ways of knowing that are already lost. The village of Markham no longer has a cold storage building. There are no barrel makers, because there are no apples being shipped abroad from the depot here anymore. Though the hilly nature of the terrain has not smoothed out over time, the farmers no longer rely on horses to navigate the steep orchard rows. Thanks to hobbyist farmers there is a market for smaller scale farm machinery that these farmers can employ. The Greens, the Strothers, and the Davenports all still have tenants houses on their land, but these people are mostly not farm laborers, just folks who need affordable housing and prefer a rural setting.

In the last 15 years there has been a significant increase in the number of small vineyards and wineries in Virginia. The popularity of wine tasting trips to Fauquier County has brought more tourists to the area that benefits PYO farmers as well, but there is reason to be concerned. Other farming communities have been decimated by the encroaching sprawl of housing developments and shopping malls. The small town of

Healdsburg in Sonoma County, California was once very similar to the Leeds Manor region because they were renowned for the production of the tiny but well-loved Gravenstein apple. But when the California wine industry became a big profit maker, orchards, dairy and horse farms were bought up for wine-growing.



Figure 42. Vines for wine grapes in Delaplane.

Now there are only a handful of orchards still producing this legendary apple. Though Virginia wines have not proved as wildly successful as California vintages, the same fate could befall the Leeds Manor farmers if they find they can make more money with grapevines than with orchards. There are many benefits to supporting diversified agricultural use in Fauquier County beyond the aesthetics of rolling pastures. This northwestern corner of the county has the opportunity to become a real showcase for farm arts. Fauquier County could be like Vermont, with its difficult climate, and short

growing season, where we have seen a boom in recent years of small niche farms producing award winning cheeses, milling their own grains, and maintaining the rural traditions of small communities.⁶¹ The *terroir* of the Piedmont region is exceptional because of its granite laced hillsides and spring-fed creeks. Charles Strother says, “One of the reasons that I have such NICE peaches. Really sweet, wonderful peaches is the soil here is so well... so well taken care of. And it’s the type of soil too.” It is this special soil that makes the land in high demand for viniculture as well. Charles’s son Philip owns a winery down Leeds Manor Road, past the village of Markham, called Philip Carter. Charles explained, “My son wanted to put a winery here and he got the viniculture people to come out and do an assessment, and I showed them ten sites on the farm. And they did this big evaluation on a one to ten scale. NINE of the ten locations I told them, I gave them, he could use, NINE of the ten came out ranked TEN on a scale of one to ten, in terms of suitability for wineries, for vineyards.”

The PYO farmers along Leeds Manor Road consider themselves to be stewards of the land, entrusted to continue in a tradition and to take care of the land for their families and for future generations. Though none of these PYO orchards are fully organic, they practice restraint with chemicals and use natural treatments when possible, because this is where they live and raise their families. As Philip Carter Strother (son of Charles Strother and proprietor of Philip Carter winery) wrote in an article opposing allowing Dominion Power to run a major transmission line through this valley, in which he explained, “Many

⁶¹ Trubek, Amy B. 2009. *The Taste of Place: A Cultural Journey into Terroir*. Edition Unstated. University of California Press.

of the apple and peach orchards of Virginia's northern Piedmont have been in existence for hundreds of years. They are contributing members of the agritourism economy and give the area a unique sense of place, enjoyed by residents and visitors alike."⁶²

Pick-Your-Own is a strategy of survival for small family farms, especially where land and labor are increasingly costly. As farm life becomes more distant for consumers from their own lives, it seems they are willing to pay more for the opportunity to experience it, even just for the day. The Leeds Manor PYO orchards are able to charge nearly retail prices (though some choose not to). If PYO can be profitable and sustainable, this way of life can continue. In addition, there are the secondary benefits of the PYO strategy: creativity and creative expression; interaction and exchange with other cultures; the opportunity to negotiate conflict; working alongside family; honoring history and heritage; giving back to the community; and a passion for growing. One could argue that PYO is a radical defense of agricultural tradition in penurbia because it demands attention from the community.⁶³ The Leeds Manor PYO farms are admired by customers and community members because their businesses evoke nostalgia for the way things once were in this valley and because customers tend to invest emotionally in these farms after visiting with family year after year.

⁶² "Philip Carter Strother OpEd." 2014. Accessed September 1. [http://www.strotherlaw.com/PCS%20Editorial%20-%20Fauquier%20Democrat%20\(12-20-06\).pdf](http://www.strotherlaw.com/PCS%20Editorial%20-%20Fauquier%20Democrat%20(12-20-06).pdf).

⁶³ Goddard, Joseph. 2009. "Landscape and Ambience on the Urban Fringe: From Agricultural to Imagined Countryside." *Environment and History* 15 (4): 413–39.

Though development has been slow to reach this corner of Fauquier County due to conservation easements and large landholdings, there are always people interested in getting away from the chaos of town. Incomers to the Leeds Manor region are attracted to the rural feel and the open space, but they bring with them attitudes from the suburban and urban communities where they came from. Tom Davenport told me how they defined open space in the old days when herds of cattle grazed across unfenced pastures. “They way they used to do it was that if you didn’t want cows on your land it was your responsibility to fence them out,” Tom explained.



Figure 43. Sign leading to Melanie Fein's property.

Melanie Fein was a newcomer to the area, but she came ready to adopt the ethos of the farming community. She bought several lots in a development called Apple Manor

Farm, on some of the old Manor of Leeds Orchard land.⁶⁴ This development has stately homes on large tracts of land, the minimum being 5 acres.⁶⁵ When she purchased her property, the land was zoned for agricultural use, but after she bought some cows from Matt Davenport and planted 1000 apple trees with the intention of starting a PYO orchard, some of her neighbors banded together to change the community ordinance. Melanie has fought back and is hopeful that she will prevail and be able to open her orchard to the public soon. Her conflict with her community highlights the problems facing all farmers in this area as incomers buy homes seeking a rural retreat without the burden of contemporary agriculture, the seasonal traffic for agritainment attractions, noise from a farm or winery wedding, or the smells of livestock wafting in the country air.

There is a rising hegemony of hipster farms today. Bankrolled by Internet millionaires, retired lobbyists, or stockbrokers and run by earnest, good-looking, young people making niche products for urbanites to consume in artisanal farm-to-table restaurants. Where does this leave the 3rd, 4th, even 5th generation farmers who are not

⁶⁴ The Manor of Leeds Orchard was founded by Gilbank Twigg in the late 1890's and was an early attempt at "crowdsourcing". Five acre planted shares were sold to urban dwellers, and the trees were managed by the company. Shareholders could visit their parcels and collect ground apples and get a share of the profits. This was one of the largest continuous orchards in Virginia, spanning 4300 acres, with tidy rows of apple trees covering the hillsides as far as the eye could see. Paul Redden's family still lives on the land that his great aunt purchased around 1914. Melanie Fein's property is just on the opposite side of Leeds Manor Road from the Redden's.

⁶⁵ "Fauquier County Application For Taxation - Applicationforlanduse.pdf." 2014. Accessed October 20.
<http://www.fauquiercounty.gov/forms/departments/commrev/pdf/applicationforlanduse.pdf>.

farming as part of a DIY back-to-the-land trend, but because it is what they know, what they love, and perhaps the only work they could do that would challenge and fulfill them this much. Borrowing from Bedoya and Lipsitz the concept of the ‘white spatial imaginary’ the argument can be made that these farmers are marginalized by their lifestyle choice (certainly not by their race, privilege or class). They have chosen to live a lifestyle that requires so much physical hard work, which must seem non-rational to Beltway insiders who work at a desk all day and then endure cross fit training and hot yoga to stay in shape.

Customers project expectations onto the farmer’s land that challenge the worthiness of what the farmer has created.⁶⁶ How can anyone’s creation measure up to these expectations? Some customers are thrilled to see a moon bounce, some are disappointed, and some expect gourmet lunches, ATMS, and full bathrooms with changing tables. One Yelp reviewer, Aurora A., expressed disappointment when she wrote, “We were greeted by a 10 x 10 A farm shack-like structure, a large area to park, 2 port-a-potties (one tipped over, the other being held up by a tether to a pickup truck), rolling hills filled with pumpkins and other gourds, a scale for weighing and 4 crates of yellow jacket-covered-already-picked apples [...] No cider, no baked goods, no preserves, no apple trees even present, and almost no apples.”⁶⁷ Of course, the farmers

⁶⁶ Tucson, Roberto Bedoya, Arizona, and United States. 2014. “Spatial Justice: Rasquachification, Race and the City.” *Creative Time Reports*. Accessed October 19. <http://creativetimereports.org/2014/09/15/spatial-justice-rasquachification-race-and-the-city/>.

⁶⁷ “YELP: Hollin Farms.” 2014. Accessed October 21. <http://www.yelp.com/biz/hollin-farms-delaplane>.

could explain that they have no control over yellow jackets buzzing around the fruit in the fall, or when certain apple varieties ripen, or how involved it would be for them to offer baked goods, but it comes down to, ‘You can’t please all the people all the time’. With Yelp and other social media sites taking the place in modern times of word-of-mouth and reputation, one bad review can live on in the mind of customers and for the farmers themselves. It is difficult for these PYO farm families to separate out their personal feelings because the line between their business and their homes and families is so thin.

Farming can be an heartbreak all on its own, but especially when dealing directly with the public. After a hard winter, the Davenports lost 75% of their apricot trees when the trunks swelled up and then froze, causing the bark to split and kill the trees, just as they were coming into their prime. Most fruit trees take five years to bear enough to allow opening up to PYO, and then they start to decline in production after twenty years or so. Paul Redden bought and planted dozens of young heirloom varieties for his hard cider, only to have them nibbled down to nubs by hungry deer. Melanie Fein was late in spraying her 1,000 young trees due to her busy law practice and being a new grandmother to twins, and paid the price with a nasty bout of fire blight that required each affected tree to be hand-pruned. Charles Strother planted some peach trees too low on his property and has had problems with frost damage. Brian Green worries over his annual strawberry plants each winter, tucking them in under blankets of black plastic at night. Time is coming for the oldest trees at Stribling to be taken out and the next generation to be sown.

The farmers all know that the choices they make each day will affect the farm for years to come.

Despite all the pressures, challenges, and stresses, the PYO farmers of Leeds Manor Road have persevered because they love this place and the way of life it gives them. They are active producers of the space in which they live, and creators of a space for outsiders from the suburbs to come and reconnect with an obscured and somewhat alien farm culture. Though presented as a form of entertainment, the PYO farms create a possibility of teaching people something very real about farm life and farm families, if they chose to pay close enough attention. And some do. My hope is to help facilitate greater understanding and appreciation of the efforts of these farm families today, and of the long traditions that they are continuing along Leeds Manor Road.

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BIOGRAPHY

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