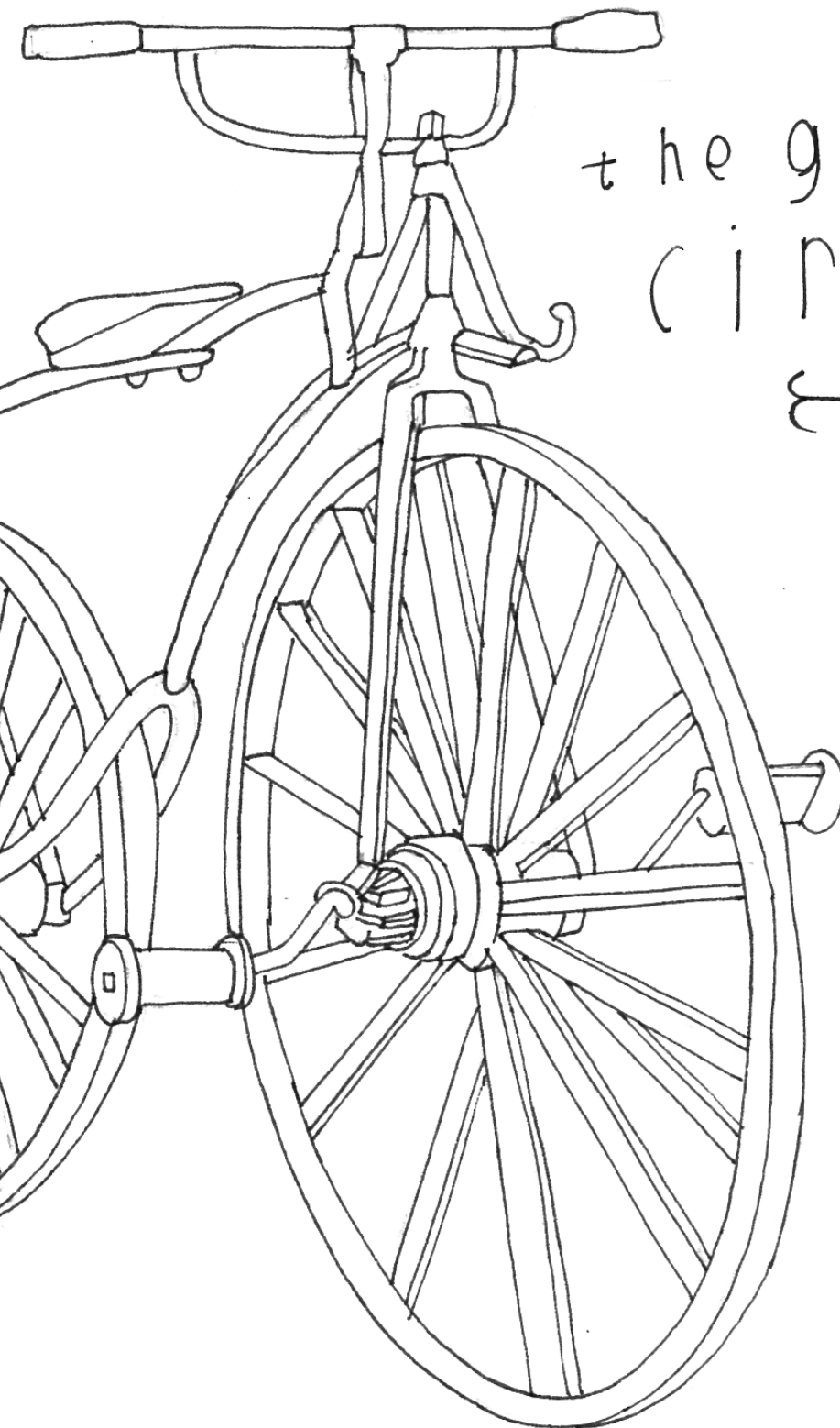


# *The Greenhorn Circular*

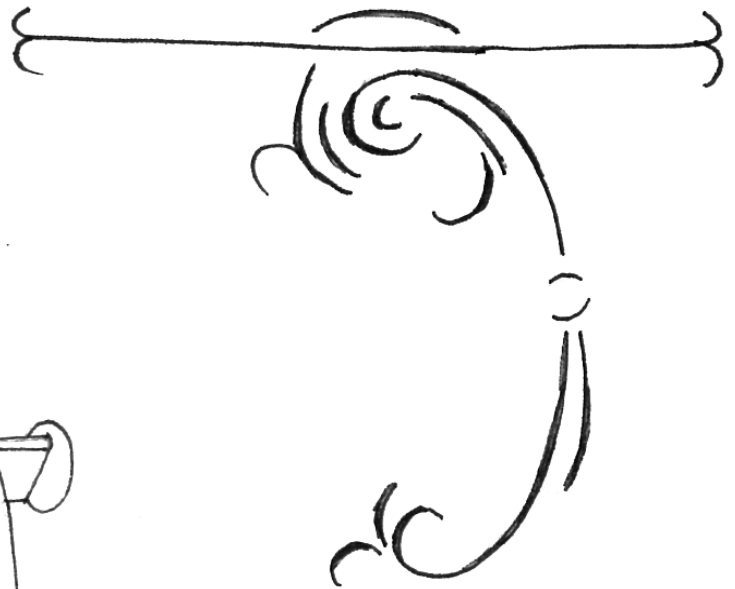
*get out and circulate*

Issue 2  
April 2010

*Bread*  
*Deb Eschmeyer*  
*Rustbelt Revival*  
*Retrofit*  
*Grange Dreams*  
*Young Farmer Radio*  
*Farmer Jane*



the greenhorn  
circular



# Updates

*Severine Von Tschanner Fleming*

## **Greenhorns**

Happy Easter. Happy Vernal Equinox. Happy Spring!

Husky little troopers we've all been this winter neck deep in snow drifts! But now that springtime bounce has come back to the earth, the pep to our step, and those little greenly fellows keep popping up. Good gracious the madness of spring!

## **News**

We had a super lovely Vernal Equinox Hogget Cook Off at Kinderhook Farm with Adam the butcher, Devon the tanner, Chris the spinner, Natsuko the soapmaker. Super duper cookery by La and Fiore, music by Red Rooster and Red Lions and Tao, and such a lot of lovely local young farmers. Thank you to McEnroe farm and Suko for growing pea shoots, and baby greens for our salad! Thank you Derrick and Mead Orchard for the firewood. Thank you Animal Welfare Approved for the support and thank you Lee and Georgia Ranney for hosting us so graciously. Baby lamb and butchery pics up on the blog flickr page.

Now we're preparing for our April west coast events-- in Oregon or Sonoma zona? Please be in touch, there is room to collaborate/table/cross pollinate.

Washington State recently legalized farm apprenticeships.

Since our last update we've been off shooting video with DPs Wilmot Kidd and Jay Dunbar in Alabama, Georgia, Mississippi and in Washington DC where Severine presented at the Drake Forum on Beginning Farmers. You can listen to those proceedings here. So now we're back to fundraising so we can hire an editor and restart editing. Hopeful that at least two of our big grants come in.

nice little profile/article:

[www.grist.org/article/greenhorn-guerilla](http://www.grist.org/article/greenhorn-guerilla)

## **Posters**

The Krankies silkscreeners in Winston Salem N.C. printed out a 2nd edition of Brooke Budner's 'use your tools wisely' and 'spend some time in the kitchen with your friends' posters. And the 'your trusty steed' and 'fruits of your labor' posters will be done in time for our Petaluma mixer- digital offset on the west coast. Make your orders on Etsy.

Our first 2 USDA posters are in and stupendous. They are designed by Jim McMullen <http://www.jamesmcmullan.com/> and Paul Sahre <http://www.paulsahre.com/>. We have one in the works from beehive collective [www.beehivecollective.org/](http://www.beehivecollective.org/). These posters are part of our Beginning Farmer and Rancher Program reaching into k-12 classrooms to recruit the next generation of farmers.

## **Farm Update**

Smithereen farm, as you likely know, had a bit of 'Land drama', from which we've thankfully recovered. This season Severine will be working for Dina Brewster at The Hickories Farm in Ridgefield CT. Tyler will be working for Sean Stanton at North Plain Farm in Great Barrington, MA. All is well and good, we are still all working with young farmers, for young farmers and in the good company of young farmers. Meanwhile, our search for a new headquarter farm continues calmly, optimistically, and very very carefully.

## **Greenhorns Album**

Its called 'greenhorns' by paul curreri. Its our sound track (10 tracks). Paul and I have decided that we can release it before the film. It'll be up on Etsy- we are working on cover art.

## **Spring**

*Spring has arrived. The shepherd says so  
Who grins and bows on the first day  
Of the new clock. The vernal moon is full  
And pale, the sloping pastures green.  
He runs his hand down the sheep's  
Shorn tail, that twitches with primeval  
Reflex. Spring has arrived, he repeats –  
The red-headed pheasant leading through  
The trembling anemone knows, the jonquil  
And the huge marbled skies know.  
They all repeat: Spring has arrived!*

## *NYFC update*

After its founding at the Stone Barns Young Farmer's Conference, I'm pleased to announce that the National young Farmer Coalition is live on the web and an official legal entity! [www.youngfarmers.org](http://www.youngfarmers.org). Our logo (still being tweaked) is by Future Farmer Amy Francheshini, with web design by Greg Osofsky. Thank you both! We've just heard back from the Open Space Institute that we've been accepted for fiscal sponsorship-- so quite soon we'll be after you to become a member! of the coalition, and to start sending in your ideas and suggestions. Our motto: "by young farmers for young farmers"

As a preface to the upcoming events, I thought I'd spend a minute revisiting the question: "Why organize events for young farmers?"

We Greenhorns spend an increasing amount of our time coordinating these collaborative, cooperative events all around the country. Each event is unique, celebrational and educational. While the events are inclusive of 'aspiring farmers, eaters and families' they are deliberately designed to serve young farmers. Its not a conference, not a marketplace. We are not hustling our produce! We are hanging out!

The events provide a venue for networking, socializing, skill-sharing, telling stories, confirming gut feelings, sharing equipment, sharing insight, and building community relationships and team-strength. Country dances, chautauqa, grange hall meetings etc. have faded in this country, and as our rural communities struggle to maintain a social scene it is doubly important that the next generation create, recreate and re-instate these social institutions. We greenhorns, as a small organization powered by a network of volunteers, feel this to be a good format for our advocacy, and a useful service to the community of young farmers. As we work to represent young farmers, communicate about young farmers, connect young farmers, and gather resources for young farmers-- it really helps to spend time listening to the banter, concerns, and gossip of our constituents, particularly as we start focusing our energy around the coming Farm bill. The technology we need to gather that critical insight is not complicated: a few bulletin boards, beer, a bonfire, farm host, a seasonal/technical theme + posse of cohorts. If there are others of you interested in convening these gatherings, supporting these relationships and throwing some parties... please be in touch. We've got event templates aplenty and are looking for partners in other regions.

## *Greenhorns Events*

PDF flyers are up on the blog+ facebook page, spread the word to folks you know in those places!

### *April 14+ 15*

Sisters OR

Small Farmers Journal, Small Farms Conservancy, Friends of Family Farmers, Greenhorns co sponsor: Young Farmer panel, screening, social, nibbles + sparkly beverages.

### *April 25*

Petaluma CA

Baker Creek Seed Bank, Sonoma Historical Society, Greenhorns, Greenstring Farm Band, Greenstring Farm

### *May Day*

Tivoli NY/ Ridgefield CT

Onion Planting and Stone Moving and May pole!

### *May 22*

Charleston, SC/ West Virginia

TBA Young Farmers Mixer

### *June*

Jamaica Plain, MA

Elderflower bike forage

### *August*

Maine

2 day Chautauqua

details TBA

to join planning committee please email [chefflamason@gmail.com](mailto:chefflamason@gmail.com)



# Debra Eschmeyer

## *On Land and Policy*

In December we interviewed Devin Foote, a young farmer from Michigan who is taking action on food and farm policy reform by working alongside Senator Debbie Stabenow. In this issue of the Circular, we continue with another young farmer who wields a shovel in one hand and a briefcase in the other. Debra Eschmeyer is spending this year on Capitol Hill while her family farm in New Knoxville, Ohio is in organic alfalfa and garlic. She works with the National Farm to School Network.

Eschmeyer grew up on a dairy farm and studied International Relations and Marketing in college. At that time she was set on landing a secure job, not securing a job on the land. After graduating, she worked with indigenous communities in Asia where subsistence farming was often the basic mode of life. She was compelled to learn how U.S. policies were impacting these communities, which led her, eventually, on a path back to her roots.

In 2005 Eschmeyer began working with the National Family Farm Coalition while also apprenticing on a farm in Virginia. It was a “healthy balance working on the land and on policy,” she says, while also acknowledging the “burnout” risk that policy work entails. She grew food and got a crash course in food sovereignty at the same time. When the chance came along, she decided to reinvest in the land where she’d grown up.

Today, after three years growing organic fruits and vegetables in the fields where she spent her childhood, Eschmeyer is a “hardcore advocate of Farm to School.” She defines this initiative as not only bringing healthy, local food into schools but also “making the cafeteria into a classroom.” Farm to School is especially critical in underserved urban and rural areas, she says, and ideally it is “a snapshot of what our food system should look like.”

Eschmeyer’s choice to focus her energy in Washington D.C. in this particular year is based on a promising political climate. “We want to take full advantage of this administration...

to push them as much as possible on some real food policy,” she says. High on her list is the reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act, which is happening right now. Senator Leahy (VT) and Representative Holt (NJ) have both announced bills that would provide \$50 million in mandatory funding for a farm to school competitive grant program, which would enable more schools to start their own programs.

Mindful of her dual professional roles, Eschmeyer recognizes that “most farmers are really busy in the work they do, and it’s hard to engage at a policy-work level.” But that isn’t necessary, she adds. “What is necessary is beginning farmers telling policy makers what obstacles they face and where regulation helps or hinders farmers. Becoming active with local, state, and national groups that do the translating between farming roadblocks and regulation is critical. To be effective, we need to organize.”

“Your audience is exactly who we need to engage in that process,” she continues, referring to you, gentle greenhorn reader. So if you are out there planting seeds and making the wheels turn in your community, find out how you can make your voice heard! Join up with your local colleagues in the field, petition your politicians, and let us know what’s happening in your neck of the woods.

*“We have this  
total outgrowth  
of passion!”*





# Young Farmer Radio Rules!

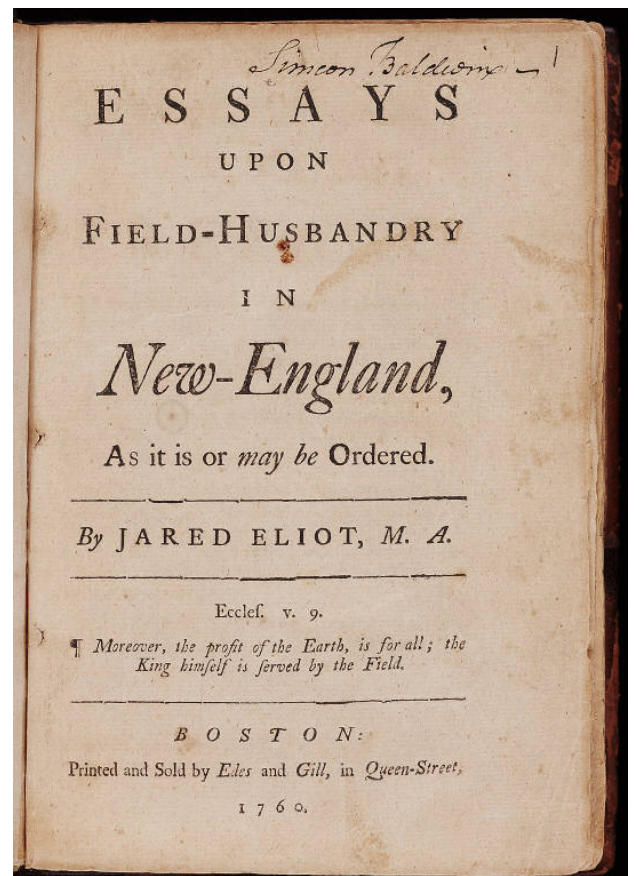
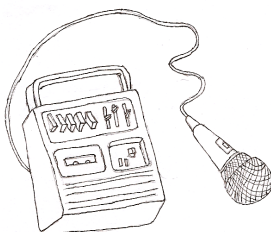
Greenhorns Radio hosted by Severine von Tscharner Fleming on Heritage Radio Network is joined by other broadcasts across the country focusing on America's new generation of farmers. Locavore and radiohead Elspeth Hay hosts the Local Food Report on the Cape Cod NPR station, which is produced by Jay Allison and Viki Merrick of Atlantic Public Media. Downloadable, podcastable, streamable and totally free young farmer hero stories included.

Like this one, about greenhorn Drew Locke of Truro, MA, who is picking up where his grandfather left off. Click on Drew's Picture (See Right) to hear the Interview.

"He's thought about it a lot. He's done a lot of number scratching and note taking and idea bouncing and regulation studying, and he thinks, he's pretty sure, it can be done. His grandfather is a little bit skeptical—Don't put \$4 into a beet you can only sell for \$2, he says—and Drew knows it's good advice. Only with a pasture-based system—one that relies on grass instead of purchased feed—he thinks he can make things work. He won't have to rebuild the huge old barn, either, because he plans to graze the chickens rotationally, moving them around the grass in bottomless cages to a new 12' by 12' plot every day. When slaughter time comes, he can hook into the state's new Mobile Poultry Processing Unit, the MPP pilot program, and save himself \$30,000 on a slaughterhouse. Then on the business side of things, he'll replicate his grandfather's model—tapping into the market through the farm stand and deliveries. When he talks about it, he breaks into a huge, contagious grin. It's pretty great."

To learn and listen more, check out Elspeth's blog: <http://www.diaryofalocavore.com>  
Elspeth Hay: [elspeth.hay@gmail.com](mailto:elspeth.hay@gmail.com)

To Listen:  
[http://streams.wgbh.org/online/play.php?xml=cape2/localfood/localfood\\_010710.xml&template=cape\\_audio](http://streams.wgbh.org/online/play.php?xml=cape2/localfood/localfood_010710.xml&template=cape_audio)



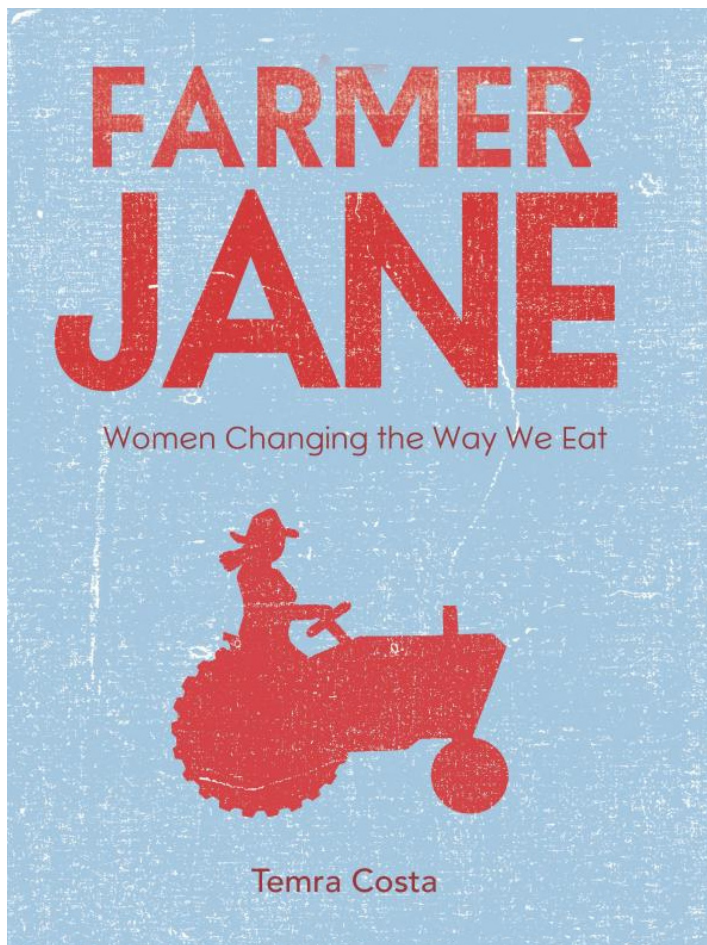
# Farmer Janes are leading food reform

By Temra Costa

author of *Farmer Jane: Women Changing the Way We Eat*.

As the fastest growing demographic to own and operate farms, women also direct and staff 60% of the positions in sustainable agriculture nonprofits. It's true that men are also a part of the sustainable food movement. Absolutely. But this is about more than gender. It's about the return of femininity – the underpinning of all things sustainable – to our food system and to how we think about food and interact with our environment. The feminine in all of us views the world as an entire system. It values relationships and prioritizes future generations' ability to access resources (i.e. food, water, materials). It's due time that we recognize and celebrate the dynamic and inspiring women who increasingly lead and sustain us.

Farmer Jane offers up 30 such stories of women's involvement in the sustainable food and farming movement. Their stories draw roadmaps towards a future that does not compromise our health or nature vis-à-vis farming, feeding, advocating, and educating us all into action. For this issue of the Circular, I have chosen the "Advocate" role as the focus.



## *Jane the Advocate*

"Hot or cold lunch?" asks the lunch lady to each kid as they get to the front of the line. "Hot lunch," is repeated over and over, like a mantra, from children ranging from kindergarten to sixth grade. The choice (obvious when confronted with brown iceberg lettuce and whitish carrot coins staring up from an unloved salad bar), is an exciting selection of fast foods – hamburgers, pizza, breakfast burritos and other processed things – that are easily microwaveable and have been marketed to the children since the time they were propped up in front of a television or computer. Seeing the statistics about obesity and diabetes on the rise seem like a nuclear fallout report of some far away land – but really, the stats are being made everyday and served for school lunch.

School lunch is just one example, perhaps the most poignant one, of the impact of our dysfunctional food system. Fortunately, across the country, women are working to change this through media, advocacy, and policy: the three determining factors of our national agenda for food and farming. Moms, lunch ladies, policy professionals, teachers, visionaries, bloggers, and filmmakers alike are making it happen through education. This is our biggest battle since tobacco and one that the big companies won't back down from easily. Their profit margins depend on it. Yet it's our children's life expectancy, the land, our oceans, and our air that are all depending on us to move away from processed food (corn, soy, wheat, sugars) and move towards whole grains, fruits and vegetables, and less industrial meat (the worst offender of environmental degradation).

Policy largely determines what is planted on America's farms, what crops are promoted through nutrition programs, how much reimbursement a school district gets from the federal government, what kinds of food are allowed to be sold, how we use our natural resources (water, land, energy), what is conserved and protected, and the labeling requirements of new technologies (GMOs). In order to help people wade through the mess of alarming forecasts of food consolidation, women are busy making movies, creating dialog, fostering relationships, and getting the word out. Farmer Jane tells the stories of several such women, including Marion Kalb, who works with a national team to change school lunch, and Deborah Koons Garcia, who seeks to inspire us about the solutions we have at our fingertips, namely in the soil, for addressing our food and environmental challenges.

# The Retrofit Farmer

by Patrick Kiley

## I. Bells

One thing that farming reveals to me is that the world is filled with fantastic illusions and blind spots. It can be either a thrill or a frustration to figure out the wheelworks behind them, and that is up to us.

Moretta, Italy was gray and gloomy for several days straight. The fog was so thick that it began to freeze in mid-air, creating an icy mist that hunched on the rooftops in low clouds. Then, one morning, the sun finally rose into clear blue. Fresh light revealed the snowcapped mountains that ring this fertile plain from the North all the way round to the Southeast. At the center stands Monviso, that jagged peak that Paramount Pictures garlands with movie stars.

I study cheese making in Moretta, at an institute that is housed in a 17th-century church with a monastery attached. We call it the santuario. Its bell tower is the tallest structure for miles around, a venerable standout in this district of flat farmland. It's been there a long time.

On that clear morning I stood in the courtyard during a break in my cheese-making class' microbiology laboratory. The grass was tipped with little helmets of white ice enduring in the shade cast by the school's brick bulk. I pretended to be a sunflower absorbing the welcome radiance that cut through the towering shadows.

I looked up when the bell tolled for noon because it was a surprisingly fast and complex harmony I heard. It turns out that the original brass bells themselves, the ones I had always assumed to be the town's timekeepers, have been replaced with a series of old, Mussolini-era megaphones that peal a recording. I hadn't noticed until today.

And so this brings me back to my first observation, that the world is filled with fantastic illusions. Though I may be wistful for the tolling of medieval bells, the recorded melody was undeniably beautiful and timely. The ancient belfry has been retrofitted with available technology to fulfill the same need that it was originally built for. (Some wonder that the need itself hasn't changed!) The bells themselves, beautiful in their own right, await their restorationist – but I like the makeshift version that serves in the meantime. It's a fine, if not exactly elegant, retrofit.



*A certain awkwardness marks the use of borrowed thoughts; but as soon as we have learned what to do with them they become our own.*

Ralph Waldo Emerson

## II. Stuff

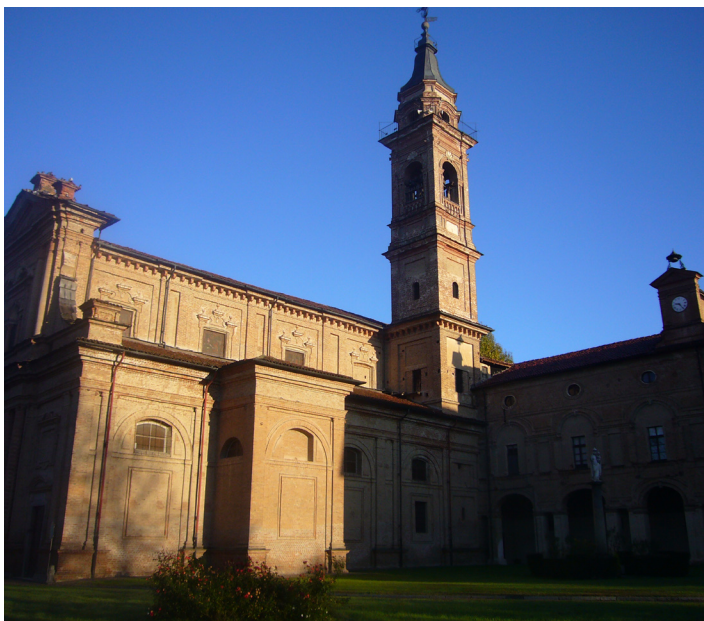
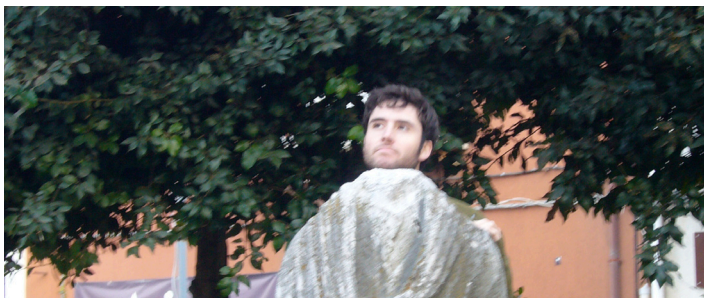
The word 'retrofit' comes up often in farm work, and particularly in the ongoing effort to replenish the roots of American agriculture. What do we want that word to mean? In other words: As a necessary practice, how do we approach retrofitting on our farms and homesteads?

I would situate 'retrofitting' as poised somewhere between primitive tinkering and mathematically accurate modern engineering. A retrofit is a kind of borrowed creation, improvised from local materials, that meets the needs of the maker first and those of the (perhaps distant) market second. It isn't designed to be replicable, but the best ones are replicable nonetheless.

Farmer and writer Wendell Berry suggests that another criterion is that it be poor. "We need to find cheap solutions, solutions within the reach of everybody," he says. "We want a movement that is a movement because it is advanced by all its members in their daily lives."

I think Berry means that the potential for invention is greatest in everyday materials that are close-at-hand. To retrofit, then, means we need to engage local stuff as eagerly as we seize upon the newest imported gadget. Punk musicians did something analogous by stripping rockandroll down to its fibers and twisting it into little firecrackers – and their smoke has drifted down to us. No group is better suited than farmers to make an ethic, lifestyle and livelihood out of DIY. No other profession has so many uses







for the material leftovers of the job (witness dirty straw and old rags becoming a scarecrow).

Last spring I enrolled in boot camp for making poor stuff useful (it wasn't only that). It was a two-week intensive Permaculture design course run in partnership by Appleseed Permaculture and Steve Gabriel of the Finger Lakes Permaculture Institute. The course was offered on a sliding scale and a farmer friend paid for me in exchange for work.

One morning's exercise was to recombine a menagerie of found objects into different kinds of useful tools. Each team was given a goal: make something that collects and stores water, or construct a moveable chicken coop that keeps predators out while still providing access to grazing. My team made this last example from some old grills, a wheelbarrow carcass, and some sparkly plastic sliding, among other scrap. The result looked like a pygmy elephant wrapped in Christmas lights, but it did the job. Everyone agreed that poultry would be proud to call it home.

### III. *Necessarily Unoriginal*

Some people might look at the jury-rigged bell tower in Moretta and say, oh, how unoriginal. I would have to agree. Why not pay a smithy to fix the old bells instead?

Well, maybe a bell expert was unavailable, or too expensive. I find more significance in the way the unoriginal patch up, in all its dumbness, accentuates the basic parameters addressed by the original design. The retrofit serves to remind us that, above all, bell towers need to be loud and tall.

The potential of retrofitting is to reengage old parameters – and define new ones – creatively and onsite. Beauty manifests later through the application of craft.

In his essay “Shakespeare; or, The Poet,” Ralph Waldo Emerson urged those of us who would have “a heart in unison with his time and country,” to strive not to be original at all, but rather “altogether receptive.” This is retrofit rhetoric that applies to plowmen as well as poets. (Shakespeare was a great scavenger).

I believe Emerson's insight about receptivity touches very Americanly on the challenges and promises of retrofitting. At the heart of both his observation and our scrappiness is a retrospective regard for the material worth of our latent history. History – the best of it a brilliant if sometimes rusty relic – has not been lost, but only rendered temporarily dormant. It's sown in all around us. An old steam engine and train platform are going to seed outside my back door. They're just waiting for a retrofit.

Emerson's resourceful Shakespeare “was able to use whatever he found.” He was so indebted to his predecessors, Emerson argues, that “hardly...a single drama of his [was] absolute invention.” “Thus,” Emerson says, “all originality is relative.” I think this means that original things grow out of unoriginality just as sprouts are borne by humus. This is somewhat different than saying that necessity is the mother of invention.

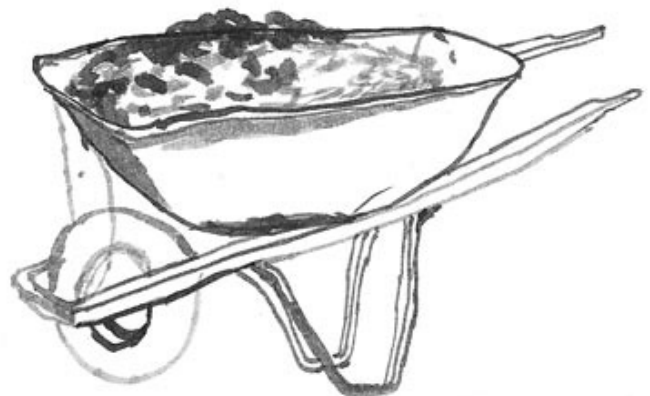
But isn't necessity fuel also? Don't we need good retrofitting as much as we need healthier food systems? Emerson is germane here too. Shakespeare's genius for poetry and drama flowered, he says, because “the people were importunate for dramatic entertainments.” In other words, the Bard's creative power was galvanized by “the spirit of the day” and the need of the hour. (A need, he suggests, to develop a political voice via the allusive carrying capacity of stage and page. What's the political carrying capacity of a cultivated field and warm-blooded stable?)

Today the people are also importunate, and we have a different need that is no less vital. The “proof of its vitality” is the crowd that springs up in response. Us. Look [link to SYCF] how many of us there are, and listen. “It is easy to see that what is best written or done by genius in the world, was no man's work, but came by wide social labor, when a thousand wrought like one, sharing the same impulse.”

The particular history that charged Shakespeare's work was a huge body of stock dramas and street ballads awaiting an imaginative retrofitting. What is ours? A short list of agricultural histories could run on for pages: cheese making, rabbitry, butchery, earthworks, haymaking, barn raising, dairying, gardening, shepherding, forestry...

I am studying cheese making. For three summers previous I have practiced organic vegetable growing. Today I am writing, and tomorrow I will shake up some butter. An old olive jar will work for that.

*+ The Greenhorns want to document and archive retrofit efforts at farms all over America. We want to hear from you. What inventions have you made for yourself? To what degree are they replicable? Do you think they're beautiful? What are your most valuable manual skills? We invite your thoughts, ideas, and scrappy efforts relating to this vital and vitalizing subject.*



# Go (Mid)West Young Farmer!

## Urban Farming for a Rustbelt Revival

by Stefanie Stauffer

Since the EcoFarm Conference where Eliot Coleman said these words, I've been imagining how local solutions in the Rustbelt could be applicable in other regions. I envision a nation in which urban farming initiatives in cities like Detroit, Toledo, Ypsilanti, and Flint serve as models for viable, sustainable agriculture and urban redevelopment. The reasons the Rustbelt should get this attention are multiple, including its fertile Great Lakes Basin soil, agricultural diversity (second only to California in the case of Michigan), innovative developments in season extension technology, and community spirit. Many people in the region show a willingness to use urban space in new ways, like the leaders of Milwaukee's Growing Power and the Detroit Agricultural Network.

Like other towns and cities in Michigan and the Rustbelt, Ypsilanti has been hit hard by unemployment and decreased municipal revenue in recent decades. This was the fallout of defunct automotive plants, the departure of heavy industry, and then the closure of many local businesses at the hands of malls and chain retailers. But Ypsilanti residents today are turning those now familiar crises into an opportunity for positive change. It is true that most of the old factory jobs are gone, but in their place are vibrant local businesses that source Michigan agricultural products. Beezy's Cafe and Corner Brewery are just two of my favorite examples. And then there's Growing Hope, a community organization that strives to improve the economy, community, and environment through urban farming. Finally, Ypsi Transition brings together community members to discuss issues of sustainability and formulate how to incorporate such practices into urban development.

*There are endless solutions  
to 21st century problems,  
we just need the imagination.*

When I entered Michigan at Port Huron in 2008, federal customs agents wondered why I was moving to Ypsilanti when everyone else was leaving the state. To them, Ypsi was just another impoverished Southeast Michigan city with an uncertain future. However, if we view Ypsi through the eyes of its residents, the story changes from one of despair to one of hope. I see Ypsi like these residents, and I am one of many playing a role in developing the local food system here. As staff at Beezy's, I connected cook/owner Bee Mayhew with local growers and producers at Growing Hope and the Downtown Ypsilanti Farmer's Market (DYFM). As a volunteer at Growing Hope, I planted and harvested vegetables and herbs grown at their hoop house and urban micro farm, and sold these products at market. Sometimes I would even sell what was leftover at the DYFM directly to Beezy's, where it would be featured in 'farmer's market' specials the following day.

How does Ypsilanti represent a microcosm of the local food movement that is flowering across the Rustbelt? First of all, it has two vital resources that can sustain the widespread adoption





of urban agriculture: water and access to low-cost, vacant urban land. These resources are integral to viable urban farming efforts and are abundant across the states of the Great Lakes Basin: Michigan, Ohio, Wisconsin, Illinois, Minnesota and upstate New York.

The most important Rustbelt resource, though, is not water or vacant lots – it is the people. I find an extraordinary commitment among citizens here to move their communities forward. Whether it is at events like the Local Food Summit and Homegrown Festival in Ann Arbor, Ypsi PRIDE day, or the Michigan Beer Festival, it is clear that activists, business owners, nonprofit leaders, local officials and other community members share a common pride and a desire to reclaim past prosperity. This is a central ingredient in the Rustbelt urban farming movement and local food production projects.

As a community member living in the Rustbelt, I have experienced the pride and positive energy of the people firsthand. I attend lively Ypsi Urban Farmer Breakfasts to formulate strategies that encourage local food production and sustainable urban planning. I also grow my own food at the Frog Island Community Garden and talk about Ypsi, urban farming, and local food to whoever will listen. Conversation, activism, and action from all levels of the community are creating a critical mass of new growth here. My hope and belief is that the success in Ypsi and other Rustbelt cities can help inform urban farming and sustainable redevelopment projects in other regions.

So why is there such a lack of knowledge about the urban farming and re-localization movements unfolding in the Rustbelt? Even at EcoFarm, the largest gathering of organic farmers in the United States, many people were shocked to hear that the Pacific region did not stand alone at the forefront of such efforts. I commonly fielded questions like: How can you grow food during a Michigan winter? Aren't such post-industrial cities too polluted to farm? How could Michigan and the Rustbelt be integral to the success of the food justice movement? The first two questions have technical answers, but the third has an answer that is somewhat counter-intuitive. While many people view scarcity as causing stagnation, in the case of the Rustbelt, scarcity has been the catalyst for dramatic innovation. Here it seems that strategies to reclaim green spaces and support sustainable local food production actually proliferate in relation to higher levels of unemployment and abandoned land. What the Rustbelt in particular can teach us is that community pride and perseverance are keys to successfully resisting stagnation. Perhaps the word is starting to spread, because this June the US Social Forum will convene activists and farmers from all over the country in Detroit. I encourage you to come meet us here and experience firsthand the vital role that Ypsilanti, Detroit, and other Rustbelt cities play in building a more sustainable food system.





# Bread, Community, and a Bike!

by Lydia Moffet

I walk into the baking room and watch a young woman collapse into a fit of giggles atop a clunky exercise bike. The heavy flywheel continues to spin despite her pause in pedaling. Afternoon sun streams in through a window and catches flour particles in the air, giving her a sparkling halo. A handful of aproned people move around in the bright room while a fire crackles inside the massive brick oven behind them.

“I probably could do this forever... someone stop me!” she cries with debatable sincerity, and takes up the pedals again with a grin. A red lawnmower belt leads from the bicycle’s flywheel to a small grain mill that is spraying flour into a tiny mountain in a bin below. Bridgette, taking her turn at the pedal-powered grain mill, is one of the nine people whom I live and work with at Valley of Stars in Brooksville, Maine.

Timothy Semler and Lake Larsson, Bridgette’s brother and mother, started Tinder Hearth Wood-Fired Bread in 2006 with the help of myself and many friends. The bakery joins a number of other projects harbored by Valley of Stars, including a much-loved weekly open mic, a medicinal herb business, summertime workshops, and a professional band. All these projects intend to plant life-giving gold in the ground by spinning roads of work, song, and food that approach the hunger and grief of our present-day cultural devastation. We see hope and possibility in the humus left behind by past generations.

Tinder Hearth is flourishing as it nears its fourth year. We bake old

world sourdough bread with organic flours grown and processed in Maine and Quebec, and sell from our home bakery, farmers’ markets, local stores, and a variety of “CSB” pick-up locations. We recently organized the business as an LLC so that we can legally transition the ownership to a cooperative model. All nine of us share the baking work and the proceeds support the household and the maintenance of the land.

Our much loved and abused pedal-powered grain mill was born during my time at Hampshire College. I was working on numerous pedal-powered projects at the school’s design center, and I wanted to build something that we could use at the bakery. I found Country Living Mills, a US-based manufacturer that makes a small steel-plate mill. The owner, Jack Jenkins, returned my phone call on a weekend with tales of his own homemade pedal-powered set-ups. Jack has posted general directions for powering the mill with an exercise bicycle on his company’s website.

The mill comes with a crank wheel designed to take a standard V-belt. With a drill and a tap-and-die set I easily bolted a pulley wheel to the flywheel of a sturdy exercise bike from craigslist. The weight of the rider was enough to keep tension on the belt, so I was done with the set up! So simple! The most complicated part was choosing a pulley wheel that was an appropriate size so that the mill would not burn the flour when the biker pedaled at a comfortable cadence, around 85 rpm I figured. The Country Living is small enough so it does not provide much resistance, and it was tempting to crank up the gearing in order to give the biker something to push against. But the mill is designed to operate no faster than 60 rpm, so the bicycle is almost maddeningly easy to pedal and the mill produces flour very slowly.

We used the bicycle to grind all of our spelt and whole wheat during our first year of baking. Neighbors would come over in their spandex for daily exercise (I’m not kidding!) and you could hear the sounds of grinding spelt at all hours to prepare two hundred pounds of flour a week. The mill is truly too small for a commercial bakery, but we are not yet ready to give it up. After a year of abuse the poor exercise bike fell apart at the seams (it’s not designed for that kind of torque!) and took a year of respite in our barn. After a trip to a welder though, the bike is as good as new, and we are using it again, in more moderate amounts, to crack rye for our Vollkornbrot bread and grind some of our wheat. Bread made with the freshly ground whole wheat tastes vastly better, even in comparison to the flour we buy that is as fresh as one can get from commercial mills.

We fantasize about finding an old mill with a bigger milling







surface (they are rare in this country!) and setting it up in a similar manner. We all like the idea of getting more flour for our effort. Regardless of whether we track one down, we are in the beginning stages of working with local farmers to resurrect the grain production system that was abandoned a hundred and fifty years ago in Brooksville. Reviving the art of milling is a key factor in the success of this endeavor, and our little mill is obviously not meant for that task. But we love it, and for now it's helping to serve our community fresh, tasty bread.

More pictures at: [www.facebook.com/tinderhearth](http://www.facebook.com/tinderhearth) Valley of Stars website: [www.tinderhearth.org](http://www.tinderhearth.org) Information about Country Living Mills: [www.countrylivingmills.com](http://www.countrylivingmills.com)

*Lydia Moffet has been a member of the Valley of Stars crew for four years. She grew up in the area, and after years of schooling and traveling she has returned to put her strength into the Valley's projects. She's the resident writer, bookkeeper, bike mechanic, and premier dough shaper.*





# Grange Dreams

by Anne Dailey

Here in Maine you can't miss the Grange Halls. Drive into any town center in this largely rural state, and you're likely to come upon a church, a town hall, a library and a Grange. The stately old buildings bear hand-painted wooden signs - Tranquility Grange #344, Granite Grange #192, Harvest Home Grange #52. Some are boarded up and decrepit, others have been repurposed by community organizations, and a few still serve their original purpose – connecting, supporting and strengthening the local agricultural community.

The National Grange of the Order of the Patrons of Husbandry began in 1867, reaching its heyday in the early 1900s. Though membership has declined and the purpose the organization has shifted and changed, there is much relevancy in the founding ideals of the Grange movement, both for agriculture today, and for our movement of young farmers. The Certificate of Organization for the Maine State Grange includes a lengthy statement of purpose, including such gems as “To buy less and produce more, in order to make our farms self-sustaining,” “to diversity our crops, and crop no more than we can cultivate,” “to emulate each other in labor,” and “to hasten the good time coming.”

Speaking of agriculture and what he saw as its flaws, Grange founder Oliver H. Kelly stated, “I think we can revolutionize all of this.” We Greenhorns seek to do the same. This Spring, photographer Lily Piel and I will set out to document Grange Halls in Maine. We will interview Grangers young and old, visit halls long abandoned and those that remain vibrant and active in their communities, and explore the relevancy of the Grange movement to today's agricultural community. We hope to help tell the story of this remarkable institution that has lasted through so many ups and downs and shifts in agriculture over the 142 years of its existence, and to excite a new generation of farmers in its history and future.

Contact Anne at [anne.dailey@gmail.com](mailto:anne.dailey@gmail.com)  
and visit her website, [www.poundsweet.net](http://www.poundsweet.net)





# Call for Support

The Greenhorns are a volunteer-run, grassroots nonprofit organization based on a farm in New York's Hudson River Valley. The tax-deductible donations we rely on are especially important now in the completion stage of "The Greenhorns" documentary film. Please consider supporting our project with a donation in any amount. Our job as filmmakers is to champion the lives of valorous young agriculturalists, and we are committed to this work. With your support we can best honor their brave work and most effectively entice others into the agricultural sector.

Donate at

<http://www.thegreenhorns.net/donate.html>



**50 DOLLARS** KEEPS US IN PRINTER PAPER FOR A MONTH  
**100 DOLLARS** PAYS FOR US TO PRINT 1000 ROUND STICKERS  
**450 DOLLARS** PAYS FOR A CUSTOM-BUILT BIKE POWERED GOAT SPIT.  
**500 DOLLARS** BUYS US A NICE XEROX MACHINE  
**5000 DOLLARS** PAYS FOR ONE WEEK OF EDITING THE FILM

the donation silo

**DONATE**

Join Our Mailing List

<http://www.thegreenhorns.net/maillinglist.html>