

MALABAR FARM NEWS

The Malabar Farm Foundation

Winter 2020

Edition 14, Volume 4

In The Spotlight

Malabar Farm Foundation's 25 Years of Accomplishments & Support

Compiled by Foundation Vice-President, Bob Berry

As the year 2019 came to a close, the Malabar Farm Foundation celebrated 25 years in existence as a nonprofit organization to provide resources in support of Malabar Farm State Park programming that preserves, educates, and promotes the agriculture, conservation and literary legacy of Louis Bromfield.

The Foundation is proud of the many accomplishments over the years and following is a list of some significant ones:

- Provided \$400,000 for the design & construction of the Louis Bromfield Education Center
- Granted nearly \$50,000 to design & produce educational exhibits for the Louis Bromfield Education Center
- Funded dozens of internships for college students to work at Malabar Farm State Park
- Underwrote educational programs and materials reaching more than 11,000 students annually including the School Days program as well as an Educational Guide for teachers & students
- Co-sponsored two award winning documentaries: "The Man Who Had Everything" and "The View From Malabar". Both were shown nationally on Public Television
- Financed the Louis Bromfield Bicentennial Historical Marker
- Created and now fund the website www.malabarfarm.org
- Purchased a new Tour Wagon that is completely accessible to visitors with disabilities
- Restored Louis Bromfield's 1946 Willys Jeep to its original condition
- Restoration of the greenhouse across from the Big House
- Ownership of the copyrights to all of the works of Louis Bromfield

Financially supported many capital improvements at Malabar Farm including:

- The purchase and installation of a sandstone sidewalk reaching the front door of the Big House
- Sandstone benches in front of the Big House
- Installation of a drainage system in the front, rear, and garage side of the Big House
- New shutters on the Big House
- Construction and signage for the Wetlands Observatory Area
- Construction and operation of a songbird aviary
- Re-construction of the bird aviary into a covered picnic shelter
- Livestock watering system in pastures and irrigation system for produce and flower gardens
- Fencing to prevent soil erosion and protected pastureland
- Construction of manure composting pad
- Installation of climate control system in the archival area
- Construction of a stage in the Main barn with upgraded electrical service to support plays
- Interpretive signage around the park (Cont. page 2)

Looking Back

By Tom Bachelder, Board Member

This installation of "Looking Back," rather than sharing information from the original 1959 – 1972 Louis Bromfield Malabar Farm Foundation Newsletters, will relate a fascinating but little known story from the life of Louis Bromfield, a story that reveals something of his character and generosity.

In 1933 Louis Bromfield published *The Farm*, an autobiographical novel. One of the multitude of characters inhabiting the novel is Aunty Walker. Aunty Walker was the pseudonym that Bromfield used for a real and well known Mansfield native named Aunty Bradford. In *The Farm* Bromfield writes that,

"Aunty Walker was rich and had a house with a big garden outside the Negro quarter on Elm Street. She had money made out of a catering business which had engaged her energies for forty years until she retired, at last, a capitalist, to live upon her income. She had great intelligence and during a lifetime of hard work had educated herself by reading in her spare time... she had a reverence amounting to awe for books."

The real Aunty Bradford was one of only a few black members of the Congregational church in Mansfield. Upon her death in 1885 she bequeathed \$2000 (\$53,000 in 2019 dollars) to the church to establish a free children's library, the first public library in Mansfield. Unfortunately, in February 1942 the church burned down and the library was lost.

In that same year Rowena Jelliffe, founder of Karamu House, an inter-racial settlement house in Cleveland, Ohio, approached Louis Bromfield, asking if he might be able to provide some help for a struggling black writer named Chester Himes. Himes was an ex-convict trying to set his life straight through writing.

(Cont. page 2)

Join ~ Donate ~ Volunteer!

The Louis Bromfield Society is the membership program established to raise funds in support of Malabar Farm State Park's mission.

Your membership dues help the Malabar Farm Foundation, an independent, nonprofit, 501(c)(3) organization, continue to make education, development, and preservation projects possible at Malabar Farm State Park. All contributions are tax deductible, as provided by law. **Member \$50.00 / Friend \$100.00**

The Malabar Farm Foundation

Contact us @ 419-892-2784 (Park Office)

Website: www.malabarfarm.org

Follow us on Facebook: Malabar Farm State Park

[www.fb.com/malabarfarm](https://www.facebook.com/malabarfarm)

E-mail: mffspeialevents@yahoo.com

Address: 4050 Bromfield Rd., Lucas, Oh 44843

In The Spotlight (from page 1)**The Malabar Farm Foundation has given Farm Support and In-Kind Donations to Malabar Farm State Park:**

From 2007 – 2019 (to date) the Foundation spent total dollars of \$433,806 in support, \$84,671 in art & fabric, & \$4000 in cash cards to the farm. The annual average is \$33,370. Total In-Kind donations are \$54,550. The total annual average farm support (2007 – Current) is \$37,566/yr.

Looking Back. . . (from page 1)

At that time Himes was writing a prison novel titled *Black Sheep* and supporting himself and wife Jean with menial jobs when he could find them. Louis offered both Himes and Kean jobs working in the Big House at Malabar Farm, suggesting that Himes could finish his book there.

At first Himes was thrilled with the opportunity to work for a world famous author, perhaps expecting more from Bromfield than he was willing and able to give. However, the reality of the situation quickly set in. From 7 a.m. to 8 p.m. Chester worked as a butler in the Big House and Jean helped in the kitchen. With the house filled with a number of guests, as well as several family members, this left little time and energy for Himes to write. Collecting their combined \$120 pay at the end of the first month's employment, and with an additional bonus of \$100 from Louis, the couple left for Hollywood where Bromfield had assured Chester that he could find work as a screenwriter. Unfortunately, because of his color that work never materialized, and Himes once again had to find work where he could.

Fortunately, Himes continued to write and ultimately did succeed as a novelist. Among his popular books are *A Rage in Harlem* and *Cotton Comes to Harlem*. In time he would also see four of his books turned into Hollywood films.

About now you are probably asking yourself, "What beyond the color of their skin, do Mansfield's Aunty Bradford of 1885, and Cleveland's Chester Himes of 1942 have in common?" The answer indirect though it may be is Karamu House in Cleveland.

Because of Rowena Jellife's 1942 intercession with Louis Bromfield on behalf of Chester Himes, occurring as it did the same year that the Congregational Church in Mansfield burned down, and with it Aunty Bradford's library. Louis was inspired to donate \$6000 (\$94,750 in 2019 dollars!) to the Karamu House to establish a memorial library in memory of Mansfield's Aunty Bradford.

I recently contacted the Karamu House (karamuhouse.org) and was told that they have "several" libraries," but as of this newsletter's deadline they have not conformed if they are aware of the Bradford /Bromfield connection. When more information comes my way I will update this story in a future newsletter.

Sources:

-Bromfield, Louis, *The Farm*, Wooster Book Company, 1999 edition, p. 174

-Jackson, Lawrence P., *Chester B. Himes: a Biography*, W.W. Norton & Co. Inc., 2017

-*The Mansfield News Journal*, February 17, 1942. "'Aunty' Bradford Stays to End."

-*The Mansfield News Journal*, April 8, 1942, "Bradford Gift to Perpetuate Memory of 'Aunty' Bradford."

Listening to the Past and Seeing the Future : Expatriates – Vintage 1927 or 2020?

By Paul Sukys, Professor Emeritus, North Central State College

Hidden away as the thirteenth entry in a 1927 book named *Mirrors of the Year-A National Review of the Outstanding Figures, Trends and Events of 1926-27* is an essay by Louis Bromfield titled "Expatriate – Vintage 1927." At the core of this essay is a portrait of American character as it existed at the end of the first quarter of the 20th century. Moreover, the portrait anticipates the unfolding of what some experts eventually called the American century.

At the opening of the essay, Bromfield lays claim to being an authority on American character based on two essential facts. First, he is not only an American, but also one who spent the first two decades of his life in "the sacred Middle west" a part of the country that was "chosen by God." This fact, he argues, has made him a homegrown expert who has seen "the spectacle from the inside," and who, therefore, understands what makes the American character tick. Second, Bromfield has also seen the United States from a European perspective which he asserts, has enabled him to be more objective and unbiased as he examines the faults and the assets of his fellow countrymen.

As an initial step in his study of American character, Bromfield dismisses the mistaken image of the vulgar American painted by Mark Twain in the 19th century. While Twain's vulgar American may have been an accurate portrait in the 19th century, Bromfield argues that it has long since been replaced by the image of America as the New Rome and Americans as New Roman citizens.

In Twain's day, Bromfield says, Americans felt obliged to impress Europeans by smothering them in charm. On paper that strategy seemed like a good idea. In practice, it merely led Europeans to see their American cousins as loud, noisy, and rude. Today, that is, in 1927, Americans need no longer perform like entertainers. Instead, Bromfield declares they need simply "to exist." By this bold statement Bromfield means to say that American wealth, political power, cultural influence, and charitable generosity have reshaped Europe and have transformed the average American abroad from a country bumpkin into a Roman citizen. (Cont. page 3)

Listening to the Past (from page 2)

This is not Bromfield's main point, however. Instead, his main point is that the American expatriate is very nearly extinct, at least in Europe. To be a true expatriate, an American must experience a cultural meltdown during which his or her cultural identity is absorbed into the culture of their new national home. Authentic expatriates speak the language of the natives. They know the customs of their new home. They eat the food with relish, drink its wine with great pleasure, read its newspapers for the latest political contests, and dance its national dance with a frenzy that rivals the enthusiasm of any native.

Americans, Bromfield observes, no longer do any of these things, not because they do not want to, but because they no longer can. To make this observation credible, Bromfield again compares modern America to ancient Rome, and 20th century Americans to first century Romans. Americans are like Romans because they live in a Europe that is dominated by their home culture. During the highpoint of the Roman Empire, Roman citizens lived in a Europe controlled by all aspects of Roman policy. In 1927, Europe was controlled by American money, American advertisements, American products, American movies, American novels, American companies, and American ideals.

In making these observations, Bromfield has again anticipated a cultural transformation long before it actually occurs. He has, in effect, anticipated the American Century without calling it as such. The American Century is that period of time in the 20th Century when the planet Earth was dominated by American politics, culture, economics, and art so completely that, in the words of Michael Mandelbaum in his book, *The Case for Goliath*, the United States became a *de facto* world government.

It may be a blessing that Bromfield passed away when he did because he was spared seeing the decline of American influence. Let's end this column with a provocative question. What would Bromfield think of America today? Would he still be confident in the power of America's ability to control culture, economics, and politics on a global level? Or would he surrender to a pessimism that heralds the rebirth of the new American expatriate? Think about it.

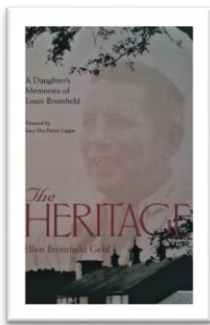
In Memory of Ellen Bromfield Geld (1932 – 2019)

Ellen, the youngest of three daughters of Louis & Mary Bromfield passed away in Brazil on October 24, 2019 at the age of 87. Ellen was born in Paris, France. At the time of her birth her parents had been living in the medieval town of Senlis, France since 1925. In October of 1938, Louis Bromfield sent his family back to the USA. Shortly after returning Bromfield purchased three farms in southern Richland County, Ohio near Mansfield where he was born and created his dream "Malabar Farm."

Ellen grew up at Malabar Farm, taking up interest in the daily operations of the farm. She went to local schools and graduated from Mansfield Senior High School in 1949. She then attended Cornell University studying Agriculture. On January 6, 1951 she married Carson Geld, a senior at Cornell majoring in Agriculture. They went on to have 5 children. In early 1953 along with their first son Stephen, they traveled to Brazil where Carson became the manager of Malabar do-Brazil, a farm in Brazil modeled after the agricultural conservation practices of Malabar Farm in Ohio. Louis Bromfield was a partner and consultant for both operations. After her father's death in 1956, Carson and Ellen purchased their own cattle farm in Brazil. The farm remains in the family today.

Like her father, Ellen was a writer, farmer, and conservationist. In 1962 Ellen wrote "The Heritage: A Daughter's Memories of Louis Bromfield." In 2003 she published "View From the Fazenda," the story of her early life in Brazil. Both of these books are available in the Visitors Center Gift Shop at Malabar Farm. She also wrote the novels of "The Garlic Tree" and "A Timeless Place," as well as several nonfiction books about Brazil.

In 2014 while visiting Malabar Farm from Brazil, Ellen said growing up on the farm and doing chores are some of her fondest memories. A Memoriam of Ellen Bromfield Geld was held for family and friends at Fazenda Pau D'Alho in Brazil on December 20, 2019.



Ellen in 1940 at Malabar – and her last visit in 2016



BIG HOUSE VALENTINE'S BASH: February 14, 15, and 16 **Love is in the Air at Malabar Farm**

Experience artistic stylings in the tradition of the Great American Songbook while enjoying a 5-course meal in the historic Big House!

Available Seatings:

Friday, Feb. 14 (Valentine's Day) at 6:00 pm

Saturday, Feb. 15 at 4:00 pm & 7:00 pm

Sunday, Feb. 16 at 2:00 pm (New this year!)

Event price: \$50/person Ticket includes a guided house tour one hour before your seating

Pre-registration is required by calling Victoria Cochran at 419-892-2929

This event is sponsored by the Malabar Farm Foundation

The Sunday seating is co-sponsored by the Mansfield Art Center

CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2020: February – April

February – Winter Hike for Health, February 8 @ 9am – 12pm (Free)

Big House Valentine's Bash, Feb. 14, 15, 16 (See above for times & registration)

March - Annual Maple Syrup Festival, March 7,8,14 & 15, 12pm – 4pm (Free)

Nature Doodling, March 28, 10am – 12pm (Free) (New in 2020) *

Come & create designs using line doodles inspired by nature's wondrous array of patterns.

April – Mohican Wildlife Weekend, April 24 – 26

"Survivor Mohican" focuses on outdoor survival skills and nature activities. Check www.mohicanwildlifeweekend.com for all participating locations & activities.

Malabar Farm activities (Free) - call the Park office for activities with pre-registration.*

All Malabar Farm activities begin at the Visitors Center.

Visit www.parks.ohiodnr.gov/malabarfarm for Malabar Farm's events

*Pre-registration is required by calling the Park office @ 419-892-2784