



# The Malabar Farm News

A publication of the Malabar Farm Foundation

Winter  
February  
2022

## The Quiet Time

January and February are the quiet months at Malabar Farm State Park, that time between Christmas and the Maple Syrup Festival in March when a silence falls across Malabar's fields, pastures, and woodlands.



The editor of the January 1961 Louis Bromfield Malabar Farm Foundation Newsletter described his winter at Malabar Farm with these words.

As the old year comes to a close, Malabar Farm, nestled in Pleasant Valley, looks like an old-fashioned Christmas card. The landscape is robed in white and in some places the snow has drifted to a depth of two or three feet. The principal field chore on a dairy farm in winter - manure spreading - becomes difficult or impossible, so, between the morning and evening routine of feeding and milking, we find ourselves with some free time.

Springtime offers its rainbow of blossoms and wildflowers, July and August are the "Lazy-Hazy-Crazy Days

of Summer," and Autumn shares its painter's palette of flaming scarlets, glowing oranges, and golden yellows. However, winter should not be neglected as a wonderful opportunity to get out and see what unique experiences the new year at Malabar might have offer. There are three delightful hiking trails that provide just that kind of winter opportunity. Whether blanketed in snow or not, walking the Butternut Trail, the Jungle Brook Trail, and the Doris Duke Woods Trail, each approximately a one mile loop, will take you through some of the best of woodland landscapes that the Park has to offer. For the more adventurous there is also the six mile bridle/hiking trail that circles the Park. Maps of these trails are available online and in the Park's Visitor Center. Call the Park Office at 419-892-2784, or see the Ohio Department of Natural Resources online at [www.odnr.gov](http://www.odnr.gov) for Park office hours and additional information.

## Maple Syrup Time Is Coming

Malabar Farm will celebrate the coming of Spring with its annual Maple Syrup Festival during the first two weeks of March. The Covid pandemic forced a cancellation of this event last year and everyone at Malabar Farm is anxious to resume this tradition that dates back to the 1940s and Louis Bromfield. Louis wrote endearingly of maple syrup time at Malabar Farm in Chapter XV of 1945's *Pleasant Valley*.

All the year round until late in February the sugar camp belongs to the wild things. Then one morning when the snow begins to melt and the earth to heave and the fields and the pastures to stream with water, men come to the place and take it over. Our sugar bush lies all the way along a north slope on the side of the hill where

(cont. pg.2)

the sandstone crops out among the big beeches and oaks and sugar maples. It is the last place on the whole farm to thaw out and so the sap runs late, but is I suspect, all the sweeter for its lateness. There is a kind of excitement which tinges the whole ceremony of sugar making for it is the symbol of the breaking up of winter and the coming of spring...



Louis Bromfield's original Sugar Shack, ca.1945



Ellan Bromfield collecting maple sap, ca.1950



Pioneer demonstration of maple sugaring at Malabar Farm State Park's Maple Syrup Festival

### Miniature 1880's Doll House Donated

The Malabar Farm Foundation recently accepted the donation of a Miniature 1880's Doll House from Sandra Holden Brown. It was Sandra's mother Carolyn June Holden who wanted it to go to good home. Sandra's mother sadly passed away on June 22, 2021. Photos and brief descriptions were provided for each room and its contents. More photos and item descriptions are available online exhibit at [malabarfarm.org](http://malabarfarm.org). The foundation is considering a possible traveling exhibit for the doll house in the future. Here is a brief history about doll houses in America.

Elaborate cabinet-style dollhouses, in which the rooms on one side of a structure are exposed like the shelves and nooks of a cabinet, were popular among wealthy and noble-born Germans of the 17th century. These show pieces were designed less for play with dolls than as curiosities, as they were often filled with real miniature pieces of silver, as well as porcelain dishes from Asia. Tiny chandeliers hung from ceilings, working doors with real hinges connected adjoining rooms, and mirrors hung on their walls. Chairs were upholstered, beds were covered by perfectly scaled bedspreads, and wool rugs were laid out on hardwood floors.

Early American doll houses were largely influenced by their Dutch and German forebears. In fact, by the early 19th century, German companies were exporting a great deal of dollhouse furniture to the United States. As color lithography became common in the Victorian Era, the rooms of dollhouses were often papered with brightly colored wallpaper, while the exteriors sometimes featured patterns resembling bricks. American companies producing dollhouses on a large scale in the first decades of the 20th century include Bliss Manufacturing, Converse Toy and Woodware, and many others.



– Submitted by Louis Andres

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**Listening to the Past and Seeing the Future:**

**Louis Bromfield, Poet of the Great War**

by Paul Sukys,

Professor Emeritus, North Central State College

Most people who are acquainted with Louis Bromfield remember him for one of two things: his work in agriculture and conservation on Malabar Farm or his literary work as a Pulitzer Prize winning novelist. Those with a deeper and more intimate knowledge of his accomplishments might remember him for his political writing in *A New Pattern for a Tired World*, or his Saturday morning radio show on ABC.

Few people, however, would remember him as a poet. There are good reasons for this. He published only a handful of poems in his career, and most of those during his early years as a writer. Moreover, his poetry, while talented and clever, is no match for the poetic giants of his day. After all, when a poet must compete with the likes of T. S. Eliot, Carl Sandburg, and John Crowe Ransom (of Kenyon College fame), there is little room for an occasional, part-time bard like Bromfield.

Still, Bromfield’s poems deserve a second look as representative works of the early twentieth century, but especially as examples of the many poetic works that emerged from within the shadows of the Great War. One poem in particular, “Peace and War,” stands out as representative of his poetic output and as characteristic of the poetry of the war. The poem takes place in pre-war Paris, mere days before hostilities erupt, and consists of three independent but related scenes.

The first scene depicts Paris at work on a normal business day. That scene is interrupted by a second scene which is dominated by a passing military convoy which consists of canons, caissons, soldiers, and officers. The final scene returns the reader to the first scene, industrial Paris, seemingly untouched by the specter of war until Bromfield delivers the last two lines.

In the initial scene Bromfield, acting as narrator, stands on a bridge in Paris looking down on a busy scene of “heavy barges loaded high with coal” while “great factories and engines breathing black and white, darkened the misty air into a denser fog.” In these passages, in atypical fashion, Bromfield pays homage to the industrial might of a city about to go to war, romanticizing the coal barges and factories in a way that would be foreign to him

in later works. Here, however, it seems fitting as a tribute to the workers preparing for an unimaginable and unwanted conflict. The scene, though bustling with the noisy activity of tugs, barges, factories, and engines, seems oddly tranquil in its normalcy.

The second scene focuses on a passing military convoy transporting French troops, ammunitions, weaponry, and supplies to the coming conflict, a conflict which the workers who watch are preparing for, yet who remain detached from the reality of war.

*From out the mist there came a train of guns  
All gray and slender, like young animals—  
Guns drawn by gypsy horses and guided by men  
Men tall, men short, men bearded,  
But all in blue and mingled with the mist*

Here Bromfield’s facility with language serves him well. The convoy does not merely pass by or march on but, instead, materializes almost magically “From out the mist” and as it passes it seems to be populated by mythical animals, gypsy horses, and men in blue uniforms who mingle with and later disappear into the mystical mist.

The final scene leaves the workers standing behind, watching as the convoy, “passes beneath the arch into the gray mist.” After it vanishes into the mist, the convoy leaves no trace of its passing, even of its existence. Or so it would seem, were it not for Bromfield’s last two lines, wherein he tells us that the ghost convoy really has passed by. . .

*And left behind the monotone of toll  
That men call Peace.*

The poem does not give the reader a new message. Instead, it does what most good poetry does. It reminds us of a universal truth, that we all live fragile lives, lives that seem safe and secure, until a passing convoy, reminds us that, just around the corner lays the next, unexpected, unpredicted crisis, whether it be war, economic depression, or a pandemic.

.....  
*With the diminution of faith - whether it be faith in God  
or in one’s self - comes the degeneration of character and  
self-respect.*

– Louis Bromfield

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