



# The Malabar Farm News

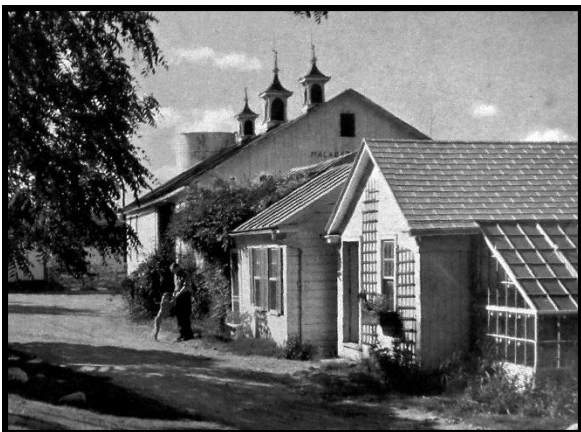
A publication of the  
Malabar Farm Foundation

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February  
2024

## How Your Donations to the Malabar Farm Foundation Are Applied

In addition to the Malabar Farm Foundation's ongoing financial commitment to restore and protect Louis Bromfield's wonderful art and artifact collection (amounting to nearly \$100,000 to date), the Foundation has recently approved over \$30,000 for various needs at Malabar Farm and to support Louis Bromfield's legacy.

Included in this amount is \$6,000 for Lewis Floors of Shelby to replace badly worn linoleum kitchen and pantry flooring in the Big House, and \$9,000 to finish repairing and painting nearly 90 Big House shutters. The Foundation previously approved \$5,000 to begin the shutter project. Troyer Brothers Woodcraft of Orrville is doing the work, which is expected to be completed by the summer. In December, the Foundation approved \$11,000 for repairing and painting the three iconic cupolas atop the main barn adjacent to the Big House.



Louis Bromfield beside Malabar Farm's main barn, 1955

Burkholder Painting & Power Washing of Pandora will do this work and should finish it by late spring. It has been difficult and time-consuming for the Malabar Farm State Park management to find qualified people interested in working on the shutters and barn cupolas, so the Park

and the Foundation are pleased that this important work will be accomplished for the 2024 season.

In October the Foundation approved \$1,200 for Wade Nursery to plant several trees in the pasture near the main barn and the Big House, which will provide livestock with much-needed shade on hot summer days.



As well as providing financial support to Malabar Farm, an important mission of the Foundation is the promotion of Louis Bromfield's legacy. Therefore, the Foundation has approved \$1,200 to support the appearance of a Louis Bromfield interpretive character actor at the 2024 Ashland Chautauqua. Additionally, in cooperation with the Muskingum Watershed Conservancy District, the RichHistory Alliance, and Destination Mansfield, the Malabar Farm Foundation contributed \$2,100 to the Johnny Appleseed Historic Byway's traveling exhibit, which celebrates the 250th birthday of this American folk hero. Johnny Appleseed, who temporarily lived with his sister in Perrysville, often visited the large spring flowing from the grotto at the base of the rocky cliff behind the now-closed Malabar Farm produce stand. This spring, and by extension, Malabar Farm, are on the Johnny Appleseed Historic Byway. You can find more information about the Historic Byway at [www.destinationmansfield.com/johnny-appleseed-historic-byway/](http://www.destinationmansfield.com/johnny-appleseed-historic-byway/) (article cont. page 2)

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Louis Bromfield wrote about Johnny Appleseed in chapter III of *Pleasant Valley*, his first non-fiction book, published in 1945.

My earliest memories of Johnny Appleseed are of listening to my Great-Aunt Mattie talk of him beneath the big catalpa tree on my grandfather's farm. . . . Aunt Mattie said she had known Johnny Appleseed. I do not know if that was true or not. She was born in 1826. . . . The truth is, of course, that Johnny Appleseed has attained that legendary status where facts are no longer important. Long before we returned to Pleasant Valley he had become a kind of frontier saint about whom had collected volumes of folklore and legend.

### Lost and Found:

#### Two Jimmy Reynolds Textile Design Studies Find Their Way Back To Malabar Farm

If you have ever toured the Big House at Malabar Farm State Park, then you know that it is a giant time capsule for the life and times of Louis Bromfield, one of Ohio's most famous writers. On display in the Big House you will see antique furniture and lamps, early appliances, more than a thousand books, and numerous household objects from Stork Club ash trays and ceramic bric-a-brac to fine china and a host of family photographs, all original to Louis Bromfield and his family. The Big House also contains over one hundred pieces of art – oil paintings, watercolors, prints, and sculptures – collected over the years by Louis Bromfield. Included in this art collection are several paintings by artist and author James "Jimmy" Reynolds.

Jimmy Reynolds was a costume and set designer on Broadway, his work there extending from 1919 to 1943. After that he began to travel, write, and paint. He died in Bellagio, Italy in 1957. In addition to several of his paintings on display in the Big House, Reynolds also created the equestrian themed design that adorns the large curtains that hang behind Bromfield's big desk in his study. Reynolds' design, repeated four times on the curtains, includes portraits of four named steeplechase horses.

In preparation for creating his design for the curtains, Reynolds produced separate textile studies of each of the four horses. Louis Bromfield was given (or purchased) at least two of these pieces, which he had framed in the same green that accents much of the Big House. However, at some point in the past both pieces went missing, the circumstances of their removal from the Big House unknown. Recently these two pieces were discovered

hanging on the walls of the Mansfield Memorial Museum in Mansfield, Ohio, how they arrived there being as big a mystery as their disappearance from Malabar Farm.



Through the gracious generosity of the Trustees of the Museum, these two paintings were recently given to the Malabar Farm Foundation with the understanding that they would be returned to Malabar Farm, where they will once again be included in Louis Bromfield's wonderful art collection on display in his Big House.



Louis Bromfield and the Jimmy Reynolds curtains ca. 1945



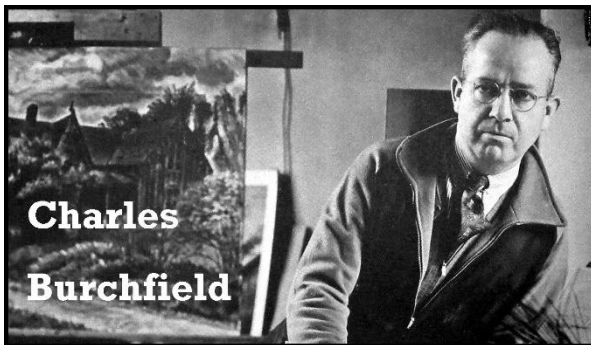
The Curtains in Louis Bromfield's Study today

## Listening to the Past and Seeing the Future: Burchfield and Bromfield, Kindred Ohio Spirits?

by Paul Sukys, Professor Emeritus  
North Central State College

Sometimes a new insight into the life of Louis Bromfield emerges as the result of a focused project planned in detail and carried out over a long period of time. Just as often, an innovative look at Bromfield and his work will become evident after reading just a few chapters of one of his novels. Rarely do such insights arise by chance alone. However, when they do, a celebration of sorts is in order.

Such was the case when, quite by accident, I happened upon a book hidden on the shelves of the gift shop in the Cleveland Museum of Art and discovered the work of an Ohio artist named Charles Burchfield who, as a contemporary of Bromfield, seems to have experienced the same internal conflict between the material and the supernatural worlds, that preoccupied Bromfield for most of his life.



Bromfield, of course, wrote about that conflict in such works as *The Green Bay Tree*, *The Farm*, and *The Rains Came*. In those books, and others like them, we see his attack on the corrupt, materialistic world of the industrialized Midwest. In contrast, in nonfiction agricultural books, such as *Malabar Farm*, *Pleasant Valley*, and *Out of the Earth*, we witness his admiration for the idyllic, spiritual world of the farm and the country.

In contrast, Burchfield depicts that battle in dozens of watercolor paintings that stretch from the beginning of his career in 1912, to its end in 1967. In the 1930s, for example, in a sequence of commissioned works that include paintings of sulfur mines, railroads and coal mines we see his disenchantment with the mechanistic industrial towns of places like Texas, Pennsylvania, and Virginia, while in the 1950s and 60s, in a series of independent works that involve

paintings of forests, fields, and meadows we see his fascination with the mystical beauty of nature.

There are some biographical parallels that illuminate the similarities in the creative energy found in these two twentieth century artistic technicians. Both are Ohioans, born and raised in small towns. Both were partially educated in big cities, Burchfield in Cleveland at the Cleveland Institute (then School) of Art and Bromfield in New York City at Columbia University.

Both lived through some of the most traumatic political and economic events of the last one hundred years including two world wars, the Great Depression, the Korean War, and the Cold War. Both witnessed the encroachment of industry on the countryside and the loss of innocence that comes with political assassinations, technological advancements, rapid urbanization, climate shifts, overpopulation, and declining moral values.

Both admired 19<sup>th</sup> century literature: Bromfield the British Victorians, and Burchfield, the American Transcendentalists. Both had daughters (though Burchfield also had one son). Both learned the value of hard work and the need to help the family at great personal cost, Burchfield after the death of his father and Bromfield after his grandfather was incapacitated. Moreover, at an early age both were at least partially disillusioned by organized religion, but still retained the awe, wonder, and delight experienced by seeing the Divine in nature.

However, what they also shared, and what probably influenced them the most, was that they lived through what may in the future be looked at by historians as the last great moment of American intellectual, philosophical, and artistic history.

This was a unique, brief moment in time that produced a generation of young people who still had faith in the myth of American exceptionalism. This was the era of F. Scott Fitzgerald, Ernest Hemingway, William Faulkner, John Steinbeck, Malcolm Cowley, Sinclair Lewis, E. E. Cummings, Sherwood Anderson, Arthur Miller, and others like them, who still believed in the essence of the American Dream even as they criticized it in their work.

As such, they still had hope and that hope was expressed in their work. That hope, in the case of Burchfield, empowered him to create a galaxy of exquisite, unique visual images, that continue to astonish art critics everywhere, and, in the case of Bromfield, that feeling of hope inspired him to continue a lifelong campaign designed to entertain, enlighten, and educate his many readers. There is, after all, no better legacy.

### Did You Know?

You can help the Malabar Farm Foundation support Malabar Farm through the Kroger Community Rewards Program. Your Kroger Plus Card can be linked to a charity so that each time you shop for groceries or get gas a percentage will be credited to the charity of your choice.

If you do not already have a Kroger Plus Card one can be obtained at the Kroger Customer Service desk. Then, go online at [www.krogercommunityrewards.com](http://www.krogercommunityrewards.com), create an account and link your Kroger Plus Card to the Malabar Farm Foundation from the list of charities.

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#### The Malabar Farm Foundation

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email - [info@malabarfarm.org](mailto:info@malabarfarm.org)

Mail - P.O. Box 551, Lucas, OH 44843



Tax deductible donations to the Malabar Farm Foundation can be made by cash, check, or credit card.

- ☐ **Member** - \$50 / year    ☐ I would like to make an additional donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_
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