



# The Malabar Farm News

A publication of the Malabar Farm Foundation

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Winter 2026



## Christmas At The Big House

The scheduled dates for the 2025 Candlelight tours of Louis Bromfield's Big House at Malabar were Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, the first two weekends in December. The first weekend was a grand success, however the second weekend had to be canceled because of the weather. To make up for this unfortunate necessity a special Candlelight Tour date was scheduled for the afternoon of Sunday December 21.

The house was richly decorated by 45 volunteers from Malabar Farm's volunteer group and the Malabar Farm Fiber Arts Guild. These two groups generously donated over 200 hours of their time decorating and de-decorating the Big House. Volunteers contributed another 280 hours serving as Candlelight Tour hosts. Members and associates of the Malabar Farm Foundation also stepped up to help, contributing nearly 70 hours to the cause. Many well deserved thanks also go out to the 36 singers and musicians—25 vocalists from the Fun Center Chordsmen of Mansfield, a 7 member dulcimer group, 2 pianists, a harpist, and a guitarist. See page 2 for more 2025 Christmas photographs.

## Second Annual Night Run At Malabar

In 1896, a young woman named Ceely Rose murdered her mother, father, and brother with arsenic. Tricked into confessing, she was convicted of the crimes—but determined insane, was committed to the Toledo Asylum before being transferred to the Lima State Hospital for the criminally insane where she died in 1934 and was buried on Hospital grounds. The house where Ceely murdered her family is now part of Malabar Farm State Park. Some people claim they have seen Ceely's ghost regularly haunting the old house.



In 2024 Ohio Race Day LLC of Perrysville, Ohio organized the first *Ceely 12 Hour Survival Run*. Proceeds from this first run were graciously donated to the Malabar Farm Foundation for the support of Malabar Farm State Park. The second annual *Ceely 12 Hour Survival Run* was held in 2025, beginning at 7:00pm on October 18, and ending at 7:00am on October 19. A 2.25 mile unlighted circular course was laid out, passing Ceely Rose's house as it traversed the Farm, with runners employing headlights as the night progressed. The winner of the run would be the individual who completed the most laps in 12 hours. Once again proceeds of the run were to be donated to the Malabar Farm Foundation.

The winner of the 2025 *Ceely 12 Hour Survival Run* was Michael Pounds of Mansfield who completed 25 laps during the 12 hours of the event, an average of almost 4.75 miles-per-hour for 12 hours.

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*Survival Run* cont. from Pg. 1

Sponsors for the Run included Big Fish General Store, We Above Me Alex Switzer Memorial Fund of the Richland County Foundation, and Heck & Stiffler Law Offices.

Ohio Race Day LLC's 2025 *Ceely 12 Hour Survival Run* generated \$1,600 in donations for the Malabar Farm Foundation. Thank you to Ohio Race Day, and all the sponsors of the second annual *Ceely 12 Hour Survival Run*. The Malabar Farm Foundation is a volunteer organization, with all income dedicated to the support of Malabar Farm State Park and the literary and agricultural legacy of Louis Bromfield, founder of Malabar Farm in 1939.

### A New "Old" Sound in the Big House



In the northeast corner of the formal living room of Louis Bromfield's Big House at Malabar Farm sits a keyboard instrument that over the years has been referred to incorrectly as either a harpsicord, or a clavichord. No one knows how long it has quietly sat there—broken and unplayable. The instrument, shown in the 1968 photograph above, was built sometime in the mid to late 1800s, and is actually a melodion, an unusual keyboard instrument that is played by operating a foot pedal that pumps air into bellows, facilitating the playing of the various keys.

This was learned when Robert Noble of Noble Piano Services in Mansfield, Ohio, with the assistance of Jessica Overholt, Josh Boles, Eric See, and Debra Shealy at the Richland Academy of Arts, took upon themselves the task of restoring the melodion to full operating condition. The Malabar Farm Foundation was pleased to fund the restoration of this fascinating antique musical instrument.

### Mark Your Calendar for the 2026 Malabar Farm Maple Syrup Festival



The dates for this year's Maple Syrup Festival are the weekends of March 7 and 8, and 14 and 15, with hours from Noon to 4 pm. Tour the Sugar Shack to see maple sap become maple syrup, and watch maple sugar being made the traditional way by native Americans and pioneers. Louis Bromfield's Big House will also be open for free self-guided tours from 1pm to 4pm on all Festival days. This year approximately 500 of Malabar Farm's maple trees are being tapped.

### More of Christmas 2025 At Malabar Farm



**Listening to the Past and Seeing the Future:  
Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Bromfield, and  
*The Torrents of Spring***

By Paul Sukys, Professor Emeritus  
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The 1989 film *Major League* is based on the improbable premise that the owner of a professional baseball team would, in an attempt to move the franchise to another city, assemble a group of players so incredibly bad that they would finish “dead last” in the standings, thus activating a contract clause empowering the management to pack up its bats and leave town.

The existence of such a clause is counterproductive, in fact, the very notion of planned failure defies common sense; and yet, that is exactly what Ernest Hemingway did when he wrote a novel so bad that his publisher voluntarily released the future Nobel Prize winner from his contract.

Of course, the story of Hemingway’s plot to escape his arrangement with Boni and Liveright, the publisher of his second book, *In Our Time*, may have been manufactured by Hemingway’s detractors. Nevertheless, the narrative has lingered to this day, as evidenced by its appearance in *Hemingway: A Life Without Consequences*, by James R. Mellow, a biography which features Louis Bromfield and F. Scott Fitzgerald as Hemingway’s two main, if unintentional, co-conspirators in the plot to punish Hemingway’s publishers who, at least in the writer’s view, had been less than enthusiastic in marketing *In Our Time*.

Still, what bothered Hemingway more than his publishers’ neglect was their intense focus on another author, Sherwood Anderson, who Hemingway saw as a pretentious fake. As a result of this, Hemingway planned to write a satire that ridiculed Anderson and other writers that Hemingway saw as threats to his career plans.

This, however, was only part of his scheme. Hemingway’s book, titled *The Torrents of Spring* would lampoon those writers who had been successful at the expense of more talented writers (like Hemingway, of course) who were being ignored. Moreover, when Boni and Liveright rejected his new novel, Hemingway would be free to negotiate a contract with better paying publishers.

This is when Fitzgerald and Bromfield entered the picture. Hemingway recruited both to read *The Torrents of Spring* and to recommend it to their respective publishers. Both Fitzgerald and Bromfield acquiesced to their roles in the plot; both liked the new novel, and both recommended

it to their publishers, Scribner’s by Fitzgerald, and Harcourt by Bromfield.

What we do not know is whether Bromfield approved or, worse yet, endorsed Hemingway’s scheme. Of course, we cannot know any of this for certain, but we can make an intelligent guess, or two. Given Bromfield’s past behavior, including his relationships with other writers and his opinion of those writers, we do know that he was not likely to engage in the type of literary sabotage that Hemingway was guilty of in *The Torrents of Spring*.

In general, Bromfield simply stayed out of such frays, preferring instead to stick to his own style which meant creating good plots, realistic characters, authentic settings, and believable dialogue and letting other writers go their own way. When he does write about other writers it is to praise them as he did in his pamphlet *The Novels of Robert Nathan*.

We also do not know if Bromfield approved of the trickery that Hemingway used to escape his contract. However, we do know that when Bromfield had a difference of opinion with his own publishers, he was more likely to meet the problem directly as he did when his publisher tried to coerce him into softening his views in 1954’s *A New Pattern for a Tired World*. As a practical and willful man, Bromfield refused to change a word despite pressure from the publisher.

Of course, Bromfield clearly believed he could afford to defy his publisher late in his career, which is when the battle (skirmish, really) over *A New Pattern for a Tired World* took place, while Hemingway was a fledgling writer in no position to engage in a frontal assault over *The Torrents of Spring*. On the other hand, Bromfield may have developed an inflated view of his own influence and might have overplayed his hand had his publisher not surrendered.

Moreover, while it’s hard to believe that Bromfield would have resorted to Hemingway’s tactics, it is not beyond the realm of possibility. Like many aspects of Bromfield’s final years this is one that will remain unresolved unless some future Indiana Jones finds a long-lost letter or telegram hidden somewhere in the secret archives of Malabar Farm.

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*Of shallowness and satisfaction, happiness and a sense  
of accomplishment you get from life in exact degree  
the amount you give to it.*

—Louis Bromfield

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

- Member** - \$50 / year
- Friend** - \$100 / year
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