

The Malabar Farm News

A Publication of the Malabar Farm Foundation

Fall 2026

Wendell Berry and the Malabar Farm Connection

On August 31, 2026, Wendell Berry, the prominent American novelist, poet, conservationist, and farmer from Kentucky passed away at the age of 92. In 1992, Berry was awarded the Louis Bromfield Society Award for his lifetime of distinguished environmental and agricultural writing. In his speech accepting that award Berry had the following to say about Louis Bromfield.

> "I read Louis Bromfield's *Pleasant Valley* and *The Farm* more than forty years ago, and I am still grateful for the confirmation and the encouragement I received from these books. At the time when farming, as a vocation and an art, was going out of favor, Bromfield genuinely and unabashedly loved it. He was not one of those bad pastoral writers whose love of farming is distant, sentimental, and condescending. Bromfield clearly loved it familiarly and in detail; he loved the work and the people who did it well."

Pleasant Valley was Louis Bromfield's first non-fiction book. Published in 1945, it recounted the establishment of Malabar Farm, and shared some of the history and the folklore of the land that became Malabar Farm. *The Farm*, published in 1933, is an autobiographical novel telling the story of Louis Bromfield's four generation family history in Ohio.

-Ohio Heritage Days 2026- Celebrating the 50th anniversary of Malabar Farm as a State Park

Following Louis Bromfield's death in 1956, friends of his established the Louis Bromfield Malabar Farm Foundation. The Foundation purchased the farm and operated it until 1972, when it was given to the State of Ohio. It 1976 Malabar Farm became Malabar Farm State Park. Malabar Farm has continued as a working farm since its founding by Louis Bromfield in 1939.

The 50th anniversary of Malabar Farm as a State Park was celebrated by thousands of visitors who came to the Farm during Ohio Heritage Days on September 26 and 27. During this year's two day event more than 1,200 people toured author and conservationist Louis Bromfield's Big House, a literal time capsule to his life and times, and more than 300 people attended the Barn Dance held on the evening of the 26th, a tradition started by Bromfield in the 1940s



This year the Malabar Farm Foundation—founded in 1993 to provide support to the Park—was pleased to donate $625 to the Wayne County Chapter of the Horseman's Council, the generous group that provides the popular horse rides for Heritage Days. In the past the Ohio Horseman's Council has covered the cost of liability insurance for the weekend event, but could no longer do so. As this activity is funded only by donations, the Foundation was pleased to step in this year to cover the cost of the insurance to make sure that this much appreciated activity would continue.

Make an Impact for Malabar Farm *Richland Gives* – December 2, 2026

On December 2, our community has an opportunity to come together through the Richland County Foundation's **Richland Gives** event and support the Malabar Foundation. Every contribution—combined with the generosity of neighbors across the region—helps strengthen the Foundation's work and preserve what makes Malabar meaningful for generations to come.

Why Your Support Matters

Your gift helps the Malabar Foundation continue its mission and build momentum for the future. By participating in Richland Gives, you join a community-wide celebration of local organizations and help keep Malabar's legacy visible, valued, and vibrant.

Three Ways to Take Part

- Give on December 2. Choose the Malabar Foundation during the Richland Gives event and make a contribution that is meaningful to you.
- Spread the word. Share the campaign with friends, family, neighbors, and colleagues who care about Malabar and our community.
- Invite others to join you. A personal message can inspire someone else to participate and expand the impact of the day.

Visit **richlandgives.org,** select the Malabar Foundation, and make your gift.
Thank you for believing in Malabar and in the power of local giving. Your support—and your voice—can help make this Richland Gives campaign a success.

Give local. Share proudly. Support Malabar Farm.

New Malabar Farm Mural Honoring Louis Bromfield

If you haven't had the opportunity yet to see the new mural adorning the wall of the Malabar Farm State Park barn at the end of Pleasant Valley Road across from the former Malabar Farm Restaurant you might want to check it out soon.

The mural, bearing a bold portrait of louis Bromfield, was a cooperative effort between the Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) and the Ohio History Connection as part of Ohio's celebration of America's 250th anniversary, and the state's rich cultural and agricultural contributions to the nation.

Renowned muralist Scott Hagan, "The Barn Artist" completed the mural on October 1, 2026.



Photo courtesy of Mark Sommer

In recognizing the significance of the mural Mary Mertz, ODNR's Director, said the following.

> "Louis Bromfield's vision helped shape the way we understand conservation and land stewardship in Ohio. This mural is more than a work of art — it's a tribute to the enduring impact of his ideas and the beauty he saw in working the land. We're proud to celebrate his legacy as part of America's 250th anniversary."

Louis Bromfield appreciated the visual arts in all their forms and his homes in both France and Ohio were filled with art. Today more than a hundred pieces—from original oil paintings and watercolors, to sculptures and prints—adorn the many rooms of Louis Bromfield's Big House at Malabar Farm State Park.



"*A blank canvas and an empty field carry the same promise: growth, transformation, and the birth of something that did not exist before.*"

— Louis Bromfield
Malabar Farm

Listening to the Past and Seeing the Future: The Last Time He Saw Paris

By Paul Sukys, Professor Emeritus
North Central State College

A few months ago, while browsing the stacks in the basement of the Strand Bookstore in New York, I stumbled on a 1955 edition of a book titled *The Twenties: American Writing in the Postwar Decade.* I instantly took the book off the shelf and opened it to the index in search of the name "Bromfield, Louis." For once I was surprised to find the name Louis Bromfield in the index squeezed between *The Bridge*, by Hart Crane, and The Brooklyn Bridge by no one in particular. The name was listed as appearing on page 32.

Now, a single page devoted to Bromfield may not seem like much, but since I have searched endlessly for that name, and come up empty-handed 99% of the time, just seeing Bromfield's name included in an index is a very big deal. Of course, after the initial shock wore off but before I turned to see what was really printed on page 32, I readjusted my thinking, and prepared to find Bromfield's name stuck, as usual, in the middle of a long list of American writers who had been ambulance drivers during the Great War, -- the list usually includes – John Dos Passos, Ernest Hemingway, Julian Green, William Seabrook, E. E. Cummings, Slater Brown, John Howard Lawson, Sidney Howard, Louis Bromfield, Robert Hillyer, and Dashiel Hammet.

This time things were different and instead of a list of American writers who had once been war time ambulance drivers, I discovered an in-depth discussion in which the book's editor, Frederick J. Hoffman, a former professor of English at the University of Wisconsin, tries to explain why, of all the places available in Europe, these American writers, former ambulance drivers all, had chosen to settle in or near Paris.

In this discussion, Hoffman explores a wide variety of explanations from these youngsters, but ultimately focuses on Bromfield's brief but insightful, diagnosis. According to Hoffman, Bromfield believes that, in order to be successful, these young scribes, himself included, had to be liberated from the confines of their hometowns, their families, their friends, and their schools, so they could write about their own experiences with honesty, objectivity, and empathy.

In summarizing these thoughts, Hoffman writes that Bromfield firmly believed that: "It is possible for a writer to see America more clearly from the vantage point of a Paris café, and the experience only makes him more American. The tempo of life slows down for him; he becomes more relaxed, calmer; because he is not constantly reminded that he must get ahead, and he begins to realize that perhaps there are values not measurable in terms of money."

By the same token, Hemingway, the quintessential practical man, had a similar, if less romanticized explanation. Writers came to France, Hemingway remarked, because living in France helped them to write more authentically about home. According to Hemingway: "Away from Paris I could write about Paris as in Paris I could write about Michigan. I did not know it was too early for that because I did not know Paris well enough. But that is how it worked out eventually."

Later in life, Bromfield would adopt a deep, almost mystical explanation for his decision to live in France. In his unpublished memoirs, Bromfield confesses that, from the earliest times that he can remember, he had an inexplicable attraction to France and the French people, an attraction which, he argued, could not be explained by either heredity or experience. This affinity. he believed, came from a transcendent connection to all things French. It is almost as if he had lived in France or been French in some previous lifetime.

This, however, is getting ahead of the story. For now, it is enough to note that, ironically, despite his deep kinship with France, in general, and Paris, in particular, Bromfield never returned after he left to begin a new life on a farm in Ohio. It seems like the time he had already spent in France had been enough for one lifetime and that his almost mystical attachment to that distant land had been easily replaced by the reality of American soil. Or perhaps, all along, that connection to France had been, like so many other things in life, the stuff that dreams are made of.

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"*As the car came down out of the hills and turned off the Pinhook Road, the whole valley, covered in snow, lay spread out before us with the ice-blue creek wandering through it between the high sandstone ridges where the trees, black and bare, rose against the winter sky. And suddenly I knew where I was. I had come home*."

—Louis Bromfield, *Pleasant Valley*

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, create an account and link your Kroger Plus Card to the Malabar Farm Foundation from the list of charities.

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Malabar Farm Foundation
Founded in 1993

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

☐ **Member** - $50 / year
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