

RETHINKING LANDSCAPE INTERPRETATION: FORM, FUNCTION, AND MEANING  
OF THE GARFIELD FARM, 1876-1905

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Submitted to the faculty of the University Graduate School  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree  
of Master of Arts  
in the Department of History,  
Indiana University

July 2014

Accepted by the Graduate Faculty, Indiana University, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts.

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## **Acknowledgments**

I am indebted to many people who provided support throughout the process of researching and writing this thesis. I would like to thank my advisor, Dr. Elizabeth Brand Monroe, whose genuine interest in the Garfield site brought her all the way to Mentor, Ohio, last July. Her tireless attention to many drafts of each chapter and her willingness to challenge me every step of the way has made me a better writer and historian. I thank committee member Dr. Nancy Robertson, who provided guidance in my first semester of graduate school and never failed to offer advice as I entered the bewildering world of choosing and researching a thesis topic. I am also indebted to committee member Dr. David Bodenhamer, whose spatial humanities research and concise presentation on the potentials of deep mapping in my digital history class inspired me to ask new questions and push the boundaries of my historical investigation of a vanished landscape.

I have sincere gratitude for Lynn Vandevort, of the Lake County Historical Society, as well as the staff of the Western Reserve Historical Society and the Library of Congress Manuscript Division. Everywhere I traveled, the presence of individuals willing to assist me made my research experience both pleasant and efficient. I offer my most profound thanks to the staff and volunteers at James A. Garfield National Historic Site, who helped me realize my passion for public history. Their continued support of my research and professional development has been immeasurable. I also extend appreciation to Dr. Cathy Stanton. Her research on farming at Martin Van Buren National Historic Site and her willingness to discuss my own research

kept me inspired and reassured that I am on my way to becoming part of a very close-knit professional and scholarly community.

I thank Callie McCune, Ellen Holodnak, Brendan Curtin, and Tom Curtin, who read drafts of this thesis and provided valuable suggestions and insight in the document's many stages.

I would not have made it through this process without the love and support of family and friends. My parents have been constant in their faith in my abilities, and I am forever grateful for their unyielding support in all aspects of my life. My fellow public history graduate students provided a support system and a home-away-from-home during my two years in Indianapolis. Last but far from least, I thank Ethan Teare. You have heard far more about James A. Garfield and his croplands and cows than anyone else has had to bear. Your love and support means the world to me, and I am blessed to have you by my side.

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## **Introduction**

For years, scholars have studied landscapes as artifacts of everyday life and as repositories of cultural values and beliefs. The landscape of President James A. Garfield's Mentor, Ohio farm (today preserved as James A. Garfield National Historic Site) is one such artifact. It provides a lens through which to teach the public about changes in American agriculture, the apparent cultural conflict between tradition and progress in which the late nineteenth-century American farmer became embroiled, and the eventual transformation of Mentor, Ohio from a rural village into an affluent suburb. The larger questions driving this research consider how the theoretical field of cultural landscape studies is applicable to historic site interpretation and how public historians interpret historic landscapes that have been irreversibly changed over the course of time.

### **Cultural Landscape Studies**

Multiple channels of literature inform the methods and arguments of this thesis. The scholarship discussed here has contributed to the development of my own methodological approach. It also inspires my argument that cultural landscape theory has a practical use and can play a vital role in the public interpretation of historic places.

Since the seminal work of W.G. Hoskins, *The Making of the English Landscape* (1955), introduced the value of landscapes as rich historical records, landscape studies have proliferated and evolved. Hoskins studied the physical features of landscapes and recognized them as products of human interaction. His perspective

formed the basis for later studies. By the last decades of the twentieth century, historians and scholars from several disciplines were giving increasing attention to more varied approaches to landscape study.

In 1984, the Landscape Research Group, an international scholarly collective representing multiple disciplines, consulting firms, and heritage organizations, put together a symposium to assess the future of landscape studies. Out of this symposium came *Landscape Meanings and Values*, edited by David Lowenthal and Edmund Penning-Rosenthal (1986). It includes essays by symposium participants (from the United States and the United Kingdom), which examine landscape from perspectives including psychology, art, and ecology. The essays address issues such as how scholars from various disciplines think about landscapes, what symbolic meanings landscapes can embody, and how people experience landscapes. Published in the early stages of the shift toward “new cultural geography,” *Landscape Meanings and Values* presents the complexity of landscapes. The conversation among the interdisciplinary scholars provides a glimpse of the early emergence of understanding landscapes as multi-layered subjects in which cultural and personal meanings and values are embedded.

John Wylie summarizes the new cultural geography in *Landscape* (2007). He argues that it encompasses the idea that landscapes have historically been shaped by people of diverse cultural backgrounds. He also sees the settlement patterns, behaviors, and cultures of most communities as shaped by the landscapes that they inhabit. As part of the new cultural geography, landscapes have also come to be

understood as cultural and personal constructions, reflected in art, individuals' accounts, and other media.<sup>1</sup>

The academic theory behind landscape studies has evolved greatly since the 1980s and in light of the emergence of the new cultural geography; however, practical applications of cultural landscape theory have been slow to appear.<sup>2</sup> Although the emphasis on cultural components of landscape has remained largely abstract, several essays show the promise that landscape scholarship holds for the field of applied or public history.

Archaeologists, primarily concerned with unearthing the tangible characteristics of historic places and landscapes, have shown interest in the theory and methods of new cultural geography. In "The Historic Environment, Historic Landscapes, and Space-Time-Action Models in Landscape Archaeology" (1999), British archaeologist Timothy Darvill argues that for too long his fellow practitioners have focused on the physical dimensions of landscapes, rather than their social dimensions.<sup>3</sup> Landscapes, he says, should be understood as subjects, rather than objects analyzed from a positivist perspective.<sup>4</sup> By applying a subjective approach to landscape archaeology and paying particular attention to the cultural

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<sup>1</sup> John Wylie, *Landscape* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 13.

<sup>2</sup> Here I use the term "cultural landscape" theory, identifying it with the new cultural geography movement. I will give preference to "cultural landscape" over "cultural geography" in this thesis because the area that I am researching is not spread over a wide geographic area, and because the National Park Service uses the former phrase.

<sup>3</sup> Timothy Darvill, "The Historic Environment, Historic Landscapes, and Space-Time-Action Models in Landscape Archaeology," in Peter Ucko and Robert Layton, eds., *The Archaeology and Anthropology of Landscape: Shaping Your Landscape* (New York: Routledge, 1999), 104.

<sup>4</sup> Positivist perspective, meaning a perspective that sees the nature of historic landscapes as absolutely verifiable, or in this case, interpreted in a single, absolute way. *Ibid.*, 107.

and social contexts that shape landscapes, archaeologists can uncover new stories about the places whose history they seek to discover and interpret.

Similarly, historic preservationists, particularly those in the National Park Service (NPS), have embraced the idea that intangible cultural dimensions of historic landscapes ought to be preserved alongside their tangible features. Nora Mitchell and Robert Melnick's "Shifting Paradigms: New Directions in Cultural Landscape Conservation for a Twenty-First Century America" (2012) highlights the NPS's recognition, beginning in the 1970s, of the importance of evaluating historic landscapes in terms of their cultural value.<sup>5</sup> Attention to cultural components of places is primarily evidenced by the production of cultural landscape reports for properties under NPS management. These reports are based on the premise that understanding the cultural contexts of historic landscapes should guide how the Park Service manages historic resources.

The 1994 cultural landscape report (CLR) for James A. Garfield National Historic Site analyzes the cultural contexts in which the landscape of the site existed and evolved between 1876 and the early 1900s and dictates management options for the landscape. The report takes into consideration both the landscape's historic designed and vernacular features. Public interpretation of the landscape is not a primary focus of the report. Instead, the CLR represents the NPS's standards and methods of researching historic landscapes and demonstrates how the NPS uses this research to inform management and preservation strategies.

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<sup>5</sup> Nora Mitchell and Robert Z. Melnick, "Shifting Paradigms: New Directions in Cultural Landscape Conservation for a Twenty-First Century America," in Ken Taylor and Jane L. Lennon, eds., *Managing Cultural Landscapes* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 233.

Landscape scholars and professional interpreters at historic sites have explored how cultural landscape theory and methods might impact the ways in which historic landscapes are presented to the public. Essays such as Catherine Howett's "Grounds for Interpretation: The Landscape Context of Historic House Museums" (2002) and Elizabeth Goetsch's "An Integrant Part: Using Cultural Landscapes in Interpretation of Difficult History" (2011), suggest that cultural landscape methodology has the potential to enhance interpretation at historic sites. However, both scholars find that such methodology is currently underutilized. While Howett argues that historic landscapes are important to interpret, she also acknowledges that changes to a landscape over time compromise an interpreter's ability to show public audiences how it actually looked, or how people experienced it in the past. As a result, landscape stories are often left untold.<sup>6</sup>

In her essay, Goetsch argues for an interpretive approach that establishes and maintains landscapes as characters in interpretation at historic sites. By adopting this approach, she writes, interpreters have an "opportunity to engage visitors with the 'layers' of history."<sup>7</sup> She uses the example of Stones River National Battlefield to illustrate how increased attention to landscapes can facilitate the interpretation of controversial or difficult histories, as well as provide a common link between the multiple stories or themes that sites interpret.<sup>8</sup> Most notably,

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<sup>6</sup> Catherine Howett, "Grounds for Interpretation: The Landscape Context of Historic House Museums," in Jessica Foy Doyle, ed., *Interpreting Historic House Museums* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002), 120.

<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth Goetsch, "An Integrant Part: Using Cultural Landscapes in Interpretation of Difficult History," in Samantha Weber, ed., *Rethinking Protected Areas in a Changing World: Proceedings of the 2011 George Wright Society Biennial Conference on Parks, Protected Areas, and Cultural Sites* (Hancock, MI: The George Wright Society, 2011), 407.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, 410.

Goetsch writes, “Visitors will make a better connection to the place and to the story when interpreters use the landscape as a character in the story. . . . Visitors have a more informed encounter when interpretive materials and programs integrate stories of history with the significance of place.”<sup>9</sup> Howett’s and Goetsch’s essays support the argument that increased interpretation of landscapes can enhance visitors’ experiences at historic sites.

Despite support for increasing cultural landscape interpretation at historic sites, the question of how to effectively incorporate landscape remains. Possible answers to this question lie in the field of spatial humanities. In *The Spatial Humanities: GIS and the Future of Humanities Scholarship* (2010), produced under the leadership of the Polis Center at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, several scholars explore possible ways to illuminate the social and cultural identities of landscapes that have been lost or irreversibly changed over the course of history. They advocate the use of digital technology and a method called “deep mapping” to recreate such landscapes.<sup>10</sup>

## **Summary of Research**

The body of literature described above shapes the questions that I ask throughout this thesis, including “What cultural values did Garfield and the landscape of his farm embody during his 1880 presidential campaign?” “What were

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<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 411.

<sup>10</sup> David J. Bodenhamer describes deep maps as “genuinely multimedia and multilayered,” containing all information available on a place, including oral testimonies, biography, memoir, images, and natural history. Deep mapping can help recover sense of place and imaginative qualities of “lost spaces,” such as historic landscapes. David J. Bodenhamer, “The Potential of Spatial Humanities,” in David J. Bodenhamer, John Corrigan, and Trevor M. Harris, eds., *The Spatial Humanities: GIS and the Future of Humanities Scholarship* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 24, 27.

the main functions of the landscape of the farm between 1876 and 1905?” and “What personal meanings and values were embedded in the landscape of the Garfield farm between 1876 and 1905?”

Brief biographical comments on the Garfield family will put my research into context.<sup>11</sup> James A. Garfield was born in Orange Township, Ohio on November 19, 1831. He was raised in Northeast Ohio, and the region would forever be his home despite his eventual success as a politician and large spans of time spent residing in the nation’s capital. Garfield attended the Western Reserve Eclectic Institute in Hiram, Ohio, today called Hiram College, as well as Williams College in Williamstown, Massachusetts. He married Lucretia Rudolph, the daughter of a trustee of the Eclectic Institute, in April 1858. The Garfields made their home in Hiram and lived there through Garfield’s service during the Civil War and his later election to the U.S. House of Representatives.<sup>12</sup> Although Garfield had many occupations throughout his life, including lawyer, preacher, college president, and soldier, he spent the most years in politics. Between 1863 and 1880, he served as a congressman, making an annual salary of approximately \$5,000.<sup>13</sup> The Garfields

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<sup>11</sup> The biographical information in this paragraph comes from Allan Peskin, *Garfield* (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1978), 8, 33, and 55. Peskin’s work is the most comprehensive biography on Garfield, covering the president’s life from cradle to grave. The historian covers Garfield’s childhood, education, multiple careers, political views and emphasizes his rise from modest childhood to successful adulthood.

<sup>12</sup> Garfield began his service in the Civil War as a lieutenant colonel, leading the 42<sup>nd</sup> regiment of Ohio volunteers. The 42<sup>nd</sup> was involved in the Battle of Middle Creek, and shortly after, Garfield received charge of the 20<sup>th</sup> Brigade of the Army of Ohio. As commander of these troops, Garfield fought in the Battle of Shiloh. In 1862, Garfield was elected to represent Ohio’s 19<sup>th</sup> district in Congress. After the Battle of Chickamauga, Garfield was named Major General, and he left the Army to take his seat in Congress. Peskin, 92, 117, 133, 135, 219.

<sup>13</sup> In 1865, congressional salary was raised from \$3,000 to \$5,000. In 1871, it increased to \$7,500, before being lowered to \$5,000 in 1874, where it remained until 1907. Ida A. Brudnick, *Salaries of Members of Congress: Recent Actions and Historical Tables* (Congressional Research Service, 2014), 11. Any profit from Garfield’s farm would have supplemented his congressional income.

sold their Hiram home in 1872 and resided primarily in Washington D.C. for several years.<sup>14</sup> In 1876, the Garfields purchased a farm north of Hiram in Mentor, Ohio, a town within Garfield's congressional district.<sup>15</sup> By this time, the family was composed of James, Lucretia, and five children, Harry, James, Mollie, Irvin, and Abram, who ranged in age from four to thirteen.

In 1880, Garfield conducted his presidential campaign from his home and was subsequently elected the nation's twentieth president. However, he was assassinated only six months into his first term in office. After President Garfield's death, Lucretia and the children returned to the Mentor farm. Lucretia eventually built a home in Pasadena, California, but still spent summers in Mentor.<sup>16</sup> She died in 1918. The Garfields' Mentor home remained in the family until 1937, when the Garfield children donated it to a local historical society.<sup>17</sup> It became a National Historic Site in 1980, and the National Park Service took over complete management and operation of the site in 2008.<sup>18</sup>

My research spans roughly thirty years and focuses specifically on two time periods, 1876-1880 and 1885-1905. These dates represent two major periods of change to the landscape, as well as the two periods that are currently interpreted for public audiences at James A. Garfield National Historic Site. I have further limited

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<sup>14</sup> Peskin, 349.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., 431.

<sup>16</sup> There is no comprehensive scholarly biography of Lucretia Garfield. For biographical information see Finding Aid to the Lucretia Rudolph Garfield Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C., 2009, 3-4.

<sup>17</sup> Deed of transfer of Garfield property to Western Reserve Historical Society, March 23, 1937, Lake County Deed Records, Volume 160, page 385.

<sup>18</sup> Scott Kirkwood, "An Early Exit," *National Parks Magazine* (Spring 2010), <http://www.npca.org/news/magazine/all-issues/2010/spring/an-early-exit.html> (accessed March 25, 2014).



the scope of my research to the physical and phenomenological forms of the landscape of the Garfield farm.<sup>19</sup> I will only mention general changes to the built environment that affected the landscape as a whole.

This thesis rests on a broad base of primary sources which reveal both the evolution of the physical appearance of the Garfields' Mentor home and the meanings and values attached to the landscape in three cultural and temporal contexts. Consultation of the 1880 United States Census, Productions of Agriculture schedule helped me better understand the evolution and function of the landscape of the Garfield farm. The census allowed me to compare the function and crop yields of Garfield's farm with those of other Mentor farms, and to therefore place the farm into the context of the rural community in which it was located. A variety of other materials found at Western Reserve Historical Society (hereafter WRHS) and Lake County Historical Society (hereafter LCHS) including property surveys, village maps, financial account books, and receipts, provide more detailed information regarding the appearance and function of the farm between 1876 and 1905.

Garfield's prolific diary entries have been preserved in four edited volumes, and they prove a valuable source for analyzing the physical as well as phenomenological forms of the landscape. The diaries offer descriptions of activities taking place on the farm and unequaled insight into the meanings and values that Garfield attached to his home between 1876 and 1880. Likewise, letters between

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<sup>19</sup> Phenomenology is a philosophical concept, and when applied to my study on landscape, it refers to the symbolic associations and personal significances or experiences of a place. A phenomenological approach often requires insight into the thoughts of historical actors. In this case, Garfield's diaries reveal his thoughts and feelings about his Mentor farm. For an in-depth explanation of phenomenology in landscape studies, see Wylie, 139-186.

Garfield's wife Lucretia and numerous family members found in the Lucretia R. Garfield Papers at the Library of Congress (LOC) and the Garfield Family Papers at WRHS reveal Lucretia's motivations for making changes to the landscape after her husband's assassination. Illustrations and descriptions of the farm recorded in campaign biographies and other political ephemera reveal the political and cultural meanings embedded in the landscape of the Garfield farm during the presidential campaign of 1880.

Each chapter of this thesis reveals one layer of a multi-layered historical landscape with the goal of deepening understanding of the place that has become James A. Garfield National Historic Site. The nature of my research is twofold. First, this thesis represents a very specific spatial narrative, and a single interpretation—my interpretation—of the landscape of the Garfield home. Second, although what I present here is my own understanding of the historical landscape, I hope that my methodology and acknowledgement of multiple experiences and understandings of my subject demonstrates that a deep map of the landscape can prove valuable in its interpretation.

In Chapter One I analyze the politicization of Garfield's farm and his identity as a farmer through the lens of campaign biographies, illustrations, and political cartoons produced during Garfield's 1880 presidential campaign. Representations of Garfield and the landscape are a window to the shifting cultural values that surrounded rural life in the late nineteenth century. In Chapter Two I look at Garfield's agricultural practices and changes in the landscape between 1876 and 1880 (the years following Garfield's purchase of the farm and leading up to his

election as President of the United States). I reconstruct Garfield's identity as a farmer and explore how his mediation between the seemingly opposing values of traditional agrarianism and progress became manifest in the landscape. In Chapter Three, I look at the evolution of landscape of the Garfield farm between 1885 and 1905, as it transitioned from family farm to country estate and memorial landscape under the supervision of Lucretia Garfield and her children.

In the Applications section, I discuss public interpretation of this multi-layered history within the context of landscape interpretation challenges and recent interpretive planning at James A. Garfield National Historic Site. This section explores the potential of deep mapping as a tool for the public interpretation of historic landscapes.

I have embedded relevant primary source materials such as illustrations, letters, and maps in Chapters One through Three. These documents, though not comprehensive, represent materials that should be present in a deep map of the Garfield site. I argue that the application of deep mapping in landscape interpretation at James A. Garfield National Historic Site has the potential to bring currently untold stories and powerful visual evidence into the visitor experience of the landscape.

## Chapter One: The Garfield Farm in the Presidential Campaign of 1880

On a summer evening in early June 1880, the village of Mentor, Ohio witnessed a grand celebration. On June 8<sup>th</sup> in Chicago, James A. Garfield, U.S. Congressman and Mentor resident, had received the Republican Party's nomination for President of the United States.<sup>1</sup> When Garfield returned to Mentor after the national convention, crowds of people—neighbors, friends, village music ensembles, and fellow politicians—greeted him. According to the *Painesville Telegraph*,

Mentor Avenue was thronged with carriages . . . . The whole length of the Avenue . . . was gay with the proudly waving stars and stripes streaming from the windows. Almost every family had some joyful expressive recognition of the great event displayed from their dwellings or grounds."<sup>2</sup>

On that June evening declarations of patriotism and political support for Garfield adorned porches and pasture fences along the avenue. E.T.C. Aldrich, one neighbor of the Garfield family, nailed a Garfield bunting "over his hospitable front door."<sup>3</sup> In this fashion, Mentor's citizens used their landscape to express political support for the Republican candidate.

James A. Garfield had purchased his Mentor, Ohio farm in 1876, four years before he was elected President of the United States. He was a politician—by 1880, he had served in Congress for seventeen years—and he took up farming as a hobby. Garfield's home became the stage for his presidential campaign in 1880.

In this chapter, I will analyze representations of Garfield and the landscape of his farm within the political and cultural contexts of the late nineteenth century.

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<sup>1</sup> Herbert J. Clancy, *The Presidential Election of 1880* (Chicago: Loyola University Press, 1958), 82.

<sup>2</sup> *The Painesville Telegraph*, June 10, 1880.

<sup>3</sup> *The Willoughby Independent*, July 9, 1880.

Textual and visual descriptions of the Garfield farm from campaign biographies emphasized that the farm was located in a small rural village, albeit only twenty-three miles from Northeast Ohio's largest city. The biographies asserted that the farm and its rural environs were well removed from city life, while still being within easy reach of the comforts and conveniences of Cleveland. Biographers also painted the landscape of the farm as being both agriculturally productive and a place of relaxation for the Garfield family. They portrayed it as utilitarian, but also as an escape from the wearying pace of life in Washington, D.C.

I will also look at how political cartoonists and poets scrutinized Garfield's identity as a farmer. They portrayed Garfield as a progressive agriculturalist, an ennobled yeoman farmer, and an outmoded country geezer. Representations of Garfield and his farm produced during his presidential campaign offer a window on the convergence of agrarianism and progress, two cultural value systems that reverberated throughout rural life in late nineteenth-century America.<sup>4</sup> This interpretation of Garfield's landscape and Garfield himself significantly broadens understanding of the political and cultural significance of Garfield's Mentor farm within the context of societal change.

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<sup>4</sup> I characterize progress as either accepting middle-class values (explanation in footnote 32), or embracing modern agricultural technology. I characterize traditional as associated with the cultural belief system of agrarianism. Traditional, or agrarian farming is associated with depending on non-mechanized agricultural tools and identifying with the idea of rural life as apart or distinct from developing urban areas. The dual values of traditional agrarianism and modern progress have existed in contrast many times throughout our nation's history. I will focus on the nature of this system of dual values in the last three decades of the nineteenth century and first decade of the twentieth century.

## Agrarianism and Progress

In *Pastoral Inventions: Rural Life in Nineteenth-Century American Art and Culture* (1989), Sarah Burns explains that in the nineteenth-century United States farm life possessed a sense of “otherness.”<sup>5</sup> This distinction of rural life was part of the inherited cultural belief system of agrarianism, which Burns defines as “a compound of general ideas associating agriculture with good life and good government.”<sup>6</sup> By the late nineteenth century, agrarianism had been deeply engrained in American culture.<sup>7</sup> Depictions of idyllic rural landscapes, Burns further asserts, played an integral part in the perpetuation of the agrarian myth.

Burns explores the social and political contexts in which the iconography of agrarianism developed, noting especially the anxieties that accompanied urbanization and the enduring value that Americans bestowed upon the Jeffersonian ideals of hard work, autonomy, and private land-ownership. The

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<sup>5</sup> Sarah Burns, *Pastoral Inventions: Rural Life in Nineteenth-Century American Art and Culture* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), 3.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 8.

<sup>7</sup> A few historians debate whether the agrarian myth was truly engrained in nineteenth-century American culture. Richard H. Abbott presents one of the most cited objections to the ubiquity of the agrarian myth in “The Agricultural Press Views the Yeoman: 1819-1859,” *Agricultural History* 42, no. 1 (Jan. 1968): 35-48. He argues that the farm press perpetuated the agrarian myth, which held up the yeoman farmer as the pinnacle of hard work and honesty. Publishers glorified the yeoman in response to growing anti-farm sentiment. Abbott argues that though historians have used agricultural periodicals in the past to support the widespread consciousness of the agrarian myth, these publications only reaffirmed the myth in “proportion to the degree to which it was rejected by those for whom it was intended.” The nineteenth-century American farmer, Abbott says, was not conscious of and did not recognize the agrarian myth as a legitimate cultural belief system. Abbott wrote his article in partial response to Richard Hofstadter’s discussion of the agrarian myth in *The Age of Reform from Bryan to F.D.R.* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955). Susan Session Rugh, in *Our Common Country: Family Farming, Culture, and Community in the Nineteenth-Century Midwest* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2001), and Jackson Lears, in *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern America, 1877-1920* (New York: Harper Perennial, 2010), argue in contrast, that the myth was widely accepted in the late nineteenth century and that its influence grew as economic and social change accelerated.

iconography of rural life existed to reinforce these prescribed values that many saw as endangered in the midst of economic, political, and social change.

In “The Myth of the Happy Yeoman” (1956), Richard Hofstadter asserts that America’s political values and ideas have throughout history been shaped by “country life.”<sup>8</sup> He goes on to argue that in the context of the late nineteenth century, the “myth” of the yeoman farmer was just that—a myth—an anachronistic expression of what rural life ought to be.<sup>9</sup> While the works of Burns and Hofstadter both confirm the existence of nostalgia for the agrarian good life in nineteenth-century America, “The Myth of the Happy Yeoman” presents a useful contrast to *Pastoral Inventions*.

Hofstadter’s work represents mid-twentieth-century interpretations of nineteenth-century farmers and how they dealt with increasing commercialism and changing social and cultural values. It supports the idea that farmers’ responses to changing practices and beliefs were black and white – they either embraced change or spurned it in favor of maintaining traditional practices and values. *Pastoral Inventions* presents a more complex interpretation of the agrarian myth. Burns notes that many farmers maintained some traditional practices and values while adopting some modern ones to suit their needs. This interpretation represents a significant shift in historical understanding of changes in rural life and culture in the nineteenth century.

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<sup>8</sup> Richard Hofstadter, “The Myth of the Happy Yeoman,” *American Heritage* 7, no. 3 (April 1956), <http://www.americanheritage.com/content/myth-happy-yeoman> (accessed August 2013), 1.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

Despite the ubiquity of agrarianism, opinions about rural life became increasingly complex around the turn of the twentieth century. In the late 1800s, depictions of agrarian settings celebrated the pastoral ideal, but at times also criticized rural life by representing it as anachronistic in the context of progress.<sup>10</sup> As the stage for his presidential campaign, Garfield's farm became politicized in the context of this growing complexity. Conflicting images of the candidate and his home demonstrated a cultural tension that existed in late nineteenth-century America. Campaign biographers played up the values that Garfield and his farmscape embodied; however, political enemies and satirists used Garfield's farmer persona against him. In addition, rather than portraying the values of tradition and progress as contesting, campaign biographies suggested their mutual existence, and further, their exemplification, within and around the landscape of the Garfield farm.

### **Representations of the Landscape of the Garfield Farm**

Garfield's presidential campaign put Mentor, Ohio, a rural village with a population of less than 2,000, at the center of national politics.<sup>11</sup> According to reporters and political biographers, the village embodied the best of rural American life. They called it "one of the most beautiful towns for situation, as well as for soil and products" in Lake County, Ohio.<sup>12</sup> Biographer James Brisbin recalled "There

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<sup>10</sup> Burns, 6. Burns discusses several rural personas that artists used to criticize rural life, including the bumpkin, hick, peasant, and geezer.

<sup>11</sup> Janice Anthony Habinski and Ronald L. Prosek, *Mentor, A Retrospective* (Mentor, OH: Old Mentor Foundation, 1988), 25; According to the U.S. Federal Census for 1880, the population of Mentor, Ohio was 1,883.

<sup>12</sup> *Painesville Telegraph*, July 22, 1880.



were houses every hundred rods or so, and little farms, orchards, and gardens around them.”<sup>13</sup> It was a bucolic locale for the home of a presidential candidate.

As political headquarters were moving to cities, Garfield’s presidential campaign brought politics back to rural America.<sup>14</sup> The exuberant festivities in Mentor when Garfield returned from Chicago evoked the spirit of the political campaigns of the early decades of the nineteenth century. In the last decades of the century, political parties based their headquarters in urban areas and business practices increasingly shaped campaigns. Parties educated voters on the candidate’s platform, and the candidate avoided discussion of the issues. During the 1880 campaign, most official business and strategizing took place at the Republican National Committee headquarters in New York City.<sup>15</sup> Uniquely, political friends and advisors deemed it appropriate for Garfield to speak to voters from his Mentor farm for most of the summer.<sup>16</sup> Today, scholars recognize Garfield’s campaign as the first “front porch” campaign in American history.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> James S. Brisbin, *The Early Life and Public Career of James A. Garfield* (Philadelphia: Hubbard Bros., 1880), 314-315.

<sup>14</sup> For more on the changing nature of political parties and campaigns in the late nineteenth century, see Gil Troy, *See How They Ran: The Changing Role of the Presidential Candidate* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 82- 107; also see Glenn C. Altschuler and Stuart M. Blumin, *Rude Republic: Americans and their Politics in the Nineteenth Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000) and Michael McGerr, *The Decline of Popular Politics: The American North, 1865-1928* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 5. In their chapter, “Leviathon: Parties and Political Life in Post-Civil War America,” Altschuler and Blumin argue that there was no such thing as “popular politics” (defined by McGerr as “the visible endorsement of the people,” manifest in large voter turnout, political parades, and rallies) in the decades after the Civil War. The “urbanization of political consciousness” shifted politics away from the “average man” and toward elite citizens. This process, he argues, isolated many Americans from the democratic process.

<sup>15</sup> For a detailed account of the campaign of 1880, see Clancy, 167-205.

<sup>16</sup> Allan Peskin, *Garfield* (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 1978), 501. According to Clancy, The Republican National Committee, under the leadership of Marshall Jewell and Stephen Dorsey, planned and strategized Garfield’s campaign.

<sup>17</sup>Troy, 90, notes that the term “front porch” campaign was not used until 1896, in the campaign of William McKinley. Presidential candidates Benjamin Harrison (1888), William McKinley (1896), and Warren G. Harding (1920) all adopted the “front porch campaign” label. Troy notes that this style of

Because of the farm's significance during the campaign, contemporary writers featured it prominently in biographies about Garfield. As a popular part of late nineteenth-century American life, biography entered middle-class homes with the purpose of influencing readers' lives.<sup>18</sup> This genre, also considered a branch of history writing, served to imprint the values of patriotism and morality upon its readers.<sup>19</sup> First published in 1824, campaign biographies appeared prior to every presidential election. At least five Garfield biographies—possibly as many as a dozen—emerged during the 1880 presidential campaign.<sup>20</sup> The five biographies that I studied provide rich textual and visual depictions of the home, barnyards, and croplands of the candidate.<sup>21</sup> The biographies reveal that the agricultural landscape of Garfield's farm became culturally and politically significant during the 1880 campaign.

Biographers described the farm as an escape from city life, but simultaneously affirmed its connections to the region's largest city. Collectively, the

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campaigning "originated in 1880 and 1888, [was] perfected and properly named in 1896, [but] by 1904 . . . was suspect." 117.

<sup>18</sup> Scott E. Casper, *Constructing American Lives: Biography and Culture in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1999), 1-3.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, 10.

<sup>20</sup>The five biographies are: James S. Brisbin, *The Early Life and Public Career of James A. Garfield* (Philadelphia: Hubbard Bros., 1880); J.M. Bundy, *The Life of Gen. James A. Garfield* (New York: A.S. Barnes & Co., 1880); Charles Carleton Coffin, *The Life of James A. Garfield* (Boston: James H. Earle, Publisher, 1880); James McCabe, *From the Farm to the Presidential Chair, Being an Accurate and Comprehensive Account of the Life and Public Services of Gen. James A. Garfield* (Philadelphia: The National Publishing Co., 1880); and E.V. Smalley, *The Republican Manual: History, Principles, Early Leaders, Achievements of the Republican Party with Biographical Sketches of James A. Garfield and Chester A. Arthur* (New York: American Book Exchange, 1880). They are available on Archive.org. The NPS asserts that there may have been as many as twelve biographies, but their titles are unknown. Ronald W. Johnson, *Historic Resource Study James A. Garfield National Historic Site* (Denver, CO: Denver Service Center, Branch of Cultural Resources, Northeast Team, National Park Service, United States Department of the Interior, 1984), 88.

<sup>21</sup> I selected five biographies available on Archive.org. These five contained the most detailed descriptions of Garfield's Mentor farm, and were therefore best suited for my exploration of political representations of the landscape.

campaign biographies described a landscape that was a farm, yet at the same time the “country home” of a middle-class family.<sup>22</sup> The biographies contained descriptions of the Garfield farm as a place of relaxation, where the candidate escaped from the city to “commune with nature.”<sup>23</sup> However, they also noted that the farm was “situated on the great thoroughfare,” and “conveniently near Cleveland.”<sup>24</sup> This main thoroughfare, Mentor Avenue, traveled west to Cleveland where it turned into Euclid Avenue, which another biographer described as “the most beautiful of Cleveland’s streets.”<sup>25</sup> In *The Early Life and Public Career of James A. Garfield* (1880), James Brisbin described the landscape of the farm as suburban, situated on the Lake Shore Railway, whose “long and thundering trains, bearing the mighty traffic of twenty States, suggest the heavy pulsations of a nation’s vigorous life.”<sup>26</sup> He wrote that the houses on Mentor Avenue evoked a sense of the suburbs of New York, rather than a small rural village.<sup>27</sup> Conversely, in *From the Towpath to the White House* (1880), another biographer emphasized the rural locale, calling the farm “but a speck in the landscape of a country that was quite attractive and enabled me to realize why the general wished to reside away from the city’s bustling walls . . . . [Garfield] needs rest and leisure to prepare himself for the winter sessions of Congress . . . .”<sup>28</sup> These biographical passages illustrate the convergence of the dual

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<sup>22</sup> Biographers James Brisbin, J.M. Bundy, and James McCabe referred to the farm as a “country home,” or “country place.” Brisbin, 316; J.M. Bundy, 221; McCabe, 518.

<sup>23</sup> Coffin, 335.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, 334-335.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, 332.

<sup>26</sup> Bundy, 223.

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 221.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 351.

values of rural life as separate from urban life and rural areas as increasingly connected to cities.

Writers further used evocative language to highlight the purpose of the farm. It was a simple farmstead, an oasis of relaxation from the harsh realities of political life. It was a place, one biographer remarked, where Garfield could, with “his hands upon the plow, the summer sun bronzing his face, the healthful breezes of Lake Erie fanning his cheeks . . . revive his acquaintance with Nature.”<sup>29</sup> He noted that Garfield purchased the Mentor farm because the “well-ordered community” in which it was located would be a “pure influence” on his children.<sup>30</sup> According to these biographers, the Mentor home was meant to be a landscape of quiet restfulness, where the politician could recuperate from long, wearying periods in the nation’s capital.<sup>31</sup>

Throughout their works, biographers also subtly defined the existence of landscapes of domesticity, as well as utility, that existed on the Garfield farm.<sup>32</sup> They argued that the Republican candidate was a productive farmer, but that he and his family also participated in activities that were part of nineteenth-century middle-class culture.<sup>33</sup> In *The Life of Gen. James A. Garfield* (1880), J.M. Bundy wrote that the

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<sup>29</sup> Coffin, 335.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, 334.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 335.

<sup>32</sup> I differentiate between utilitarian and leisure or domestic spheres and recognize the croplands, barnyards, and orchards as utilitarian spaces, and the house. This differentiation only refers to utilitarian and leisure spheres as they applied to Garfield and his family. These spaces would have had different meanings to the farm laborers who worked in and around them.

<sup>33</sup> For discussions of middle-class values in the nineteenth-century Midwest, see Andrew R.L. Cayton and Peter S. Onuf, *The Midwest and the Nation: Rethinking the History of an American Region* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990), 50-59 and Susan Session Rugh, 155-56. Based on these two works, I define middle-class (at times alternatively referred to as “bourgeois”) culture as oriented toward non-local markets, participating in consumer culture, and moving beyond patriarchal family structure toward more genteel concepts of gender spheres (males in the public

whole landscape possessed an air of duality. He explained that the space felt like “the country place of a family who wants plenty of room, in-doors and under piazzas.”<sup>34</sup> At the same time, barns and other outbuildings populated the landscape beyond the house, “suggesting . . . actual farming and also perfect arrangement.”<sup>35</sup> Bundy described the enclosed meadows, interrupted only by the croquet lawn at the edge of the road.<sup>36</sup> Near this recreational space, according to biographer E.V. Smalley, also lay the “good orchard,” the “little vineyard,” and the “large vegetable garden which comes up unabashed beside the croquet lawn and crowds its cabbage-heads and pea-vines against the roadside fence.”<sup>37</sup> Another biographer referred to the Garfields’ “kitchen garden, with its beets, turnips, and cabbages,” as well as their cherry trees, peach trees, and currant bushes.<sup>38</sup>

The dual purposes perceived in the landscape of the farm may have influenced the name newspaper reporters and biographers gave to the farm in the summer of 1880. The name “Lawnfield” evoked a sense that the Garfields used their landscape for both recreation and agricultural practices.<sup>39</sup> The “lawn” referred to the landscape adjacent to the house, which Garfield had sodded in the springs of 1879 and 1880. This pristine area, used primarily for croquet and entertaining the thousands of visitors who came to the farm during the campaign, existed separately

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sphere and women in the private sphere). According to Rugh, middle-class values were part of an “ideological shift that made farming as a way of life appear anachronistic, even outmoded” (156). Middle-class, as discussed in this thesis, refers not so much to the Garfield family’s economic status as it does to the values that biographers perceived the family embracing.

<sup>34</sup> Bundy, 221

<sup>35</sup> Ibid.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Smalley, 249.

<sup>38</sup> Coffin, 334.

<sup>39</sup> On August 22, Garfield wrote in his diary, “It has been a delight[ful] day at Lawnfield—as the papers insist on calling our place.” *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume IV*, 445 (August 22, 1880).

from the working farm's fields and other croplands. By deeming the farm "Lawnfield," reporters, like biographers, highlighted two distinct parts of the landscape and the purposes they served.

When biographers described the landscape in terms of its utilitarian function as a farm, they noted the many improvements that Garfield had already made and which he continued to make to the property. According to writers, the house and property that Garfield purchased in 1876 had been in a sad state of disrepair. Garfield wasted no time in replacing "decaying and unsightly zigzag rails" with neat fences and improving the drainage in soggy fields.<sup>40</sup>

Biographers also took advantage of the correlation between Garfield's campaign and the harvest season. Biographer E.V. Smalley emphasized the size of the farm's crop yield and wrote that the "big barns hardly [held] the products of the harvest."<sup>41</sup> Focusing on the harvest of the season rather than on the markets to which the crops were taken, Burns subsequently explained, "accorded perfectly with agrarian ideals of the farmer's proud self-sufficiency, which separated him from the materialistic world of commerce."<sup>42</sup> Smalley's and Burns' descriptions reinforced the idealization of the farm as productive and reflective of the agrarian ideal of being independent from outside markets.

Although they made Garfield appear to be an active farmer, biographers also noted that the candidate's longest visits home occurred during congressional vacations, which began in late summer. During these breaks, he returned to Mentor

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<sup>40</sup> Coffin, 334.

<sup>41</sup> Smalley, 249.

<sup>42</sup> Burns, 37.

and “often [found] great pleasure in looking after affairs on the farm . . . occasionally spending a portion of a forenoon holding a plow or performing some part in the harvest-field.”<sup>43</sup> In fact, during his campaign, Garfield spent more time on his farm than he did in a typical summer. He had a farm manager and a number of workers who assisted in planting and harvesting, both while he was home and while he was away.<sup>44</sup>

In July, as delegations of voters began to arrive at the Mentor farm to hear Garfield’s speeches, workers harvested corn and beets and threshed wheat, barley, and rye. At the end of the month, Garfield reported in his diary that the grain harvest appeared to be “best yield yet reported in this vicinity.”<sup>45</sup> As the campaign waned in late September and October, the men harvested potatoes and clover and searched the orchard for the final ripe apples of the season.<sup>46</sup> Garfield’s campaign of 1880 was infused with the spirit of the coming and going of harvest season.

Despite the farm’s politicization as a landscape existing on the increasingly narrowing border between city and country, and as a place embedded with both agrarian and middle-class values, biographers described it as a place apart from conflict and imbued with morality. In a bold description of the farm, Charles Coffin wrote, “No profane word, no unseemly jest, no ribaldry, is ever heard at Lawnfield . . . . The moral atmosphere is as sweet, pure and healthgiving to heart and soul, as the

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<sup>43</sup> Coffin, 334.

<sup>44</sup> Garfield’s friend, fellow farmer, and businessman, John P. Robison, served as a manager of Garfield’s farm between 1876 and 1880. Robison helped Garfield decide which farm to purchase, and managed the farm’s finances while Garfield was away in Washington, D.C.

<sup>45</sup> *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume IV*, 428 (July 26, 1880) and 431-432 (July 30, 1880).

<sup>46</sup> *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume IV*, 460 (September 25, 1880), 465 (October 7, 1880), and 468 (October 14, 1880).

breezes from Lake Erie to the body. It is a Christian family, -- a Christian home.”<sup>47</sup> On the Garfield farm, according to this biographer, the time-honored values of family and religion stood firm.

Coffin’s description of the moral qualities of the Garfield farm begs the question of the larger significance of a presidential campaign waged from the home in the context of America’s Gilded Age.<sup>48</sup> Historian Gil Troy argues that Garfield’s choice to remain at home and welcome visitors—some 17,000 who came in a sort of political pilgrimage throughout the summer—allowed the candidate to interact with voters in a democratized space.<sup>49</sup> Garfield’s farm, therefore, also bestowed a moral or virtuous quality upon the presidential campaign in the midst of the shift of political parties to corrupt urban centers.<sup>50</sup>

The virtuous qualities of the Garfield farm that biographers perceived were in part the result of Mrs. Garfield’s attention to domestic matters. One article in the *Painesville Telegraph* read that Mrs. Garfield was like a “delightfully cool summer

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<sup>47</sup> Coffin, 340.

<sup>48</sup> Most historians agree that the Gilded Age is bookended by the end of Reconstruction and the beginning of the Progressive Era, chronologically defined between 1877 and the early to mid 1890’s. There is little consensus regarding the nature of American political culture during the Gilded Age, and this has been the case for over a hundred years. In the first four decades of the twentieth century, progressive historians generally interpreted Gilded Age politics through the lens of the expanding economy and the growth of capitalist wealth. They argued that America’s emerging tycoons and burgeoning big businesses degraded politics by coercing and manipulating politicians. For recent interpretations of Gilded Age politics, see Mark Wahlgren Summers, *Party Games: Getting, Keeping, and Using Power in Gilded Ages Politics* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2004), Charles W. Calhoun, “The Political Culture” Public Life and the Conduct of Politics,” in *The Gilded Age: Perspectives on the Origins of Modern America* (Wilmington: Scholarly Resources, Inc., 1996), and Worth Robert Miller. “The Lost World of Gilded Age Politics.” *Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era* 1, no. 1 (January 2002): 49-67.

<sup>49</sup> Troy, 90. Troy explains that during his campaign, Garfield “played the good democrat, addressing the people as equals in his own home. . . .” It is not clear whether Garfield’s front porch campaign was part of a calculated political strategy. It likely emerged organically as people read newspaper and biographical descriptions of the candidate and his home and felt compelled to see them both in person. Whether calculated or accidental, Garfield’s campaign method set a precedent for presidential candidates making themselves accessible to the American public.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.



morning . . . woodland flowers, and everything that is modest and lovely.”<sup>51</sup>

According to two campaign biographers, Lucretia oversaw the enlargement of the farmhouse, which took place in the late spring of 1880. She had influence over architectural plans and interior designs.<sup>52</sup> Several biographers also referred to Lucretia doing work around the home. McCabe wrote that she was a “perfect lady,” but also “not afraid to work,” and Smalley wrote, “Mrs. Garfield superintends all the duties of the household and helps in its active labors during a portion of each day.”<sup>53</sup> The biographers portrayed Lucretia performing tasks and spending much of her time in the domestic, rather than utilitarian sphere of the farm.<sup>54</sup>

Biographers’ treatments of Lucretia reflect the shift in domestic culture that accompanied agricultural advancement in the nineteenth century. Biographers intimated that Lucretia embodied middle-class values. They suggested that she had an appreciation for aesthetics, and that she embraced consumer culture, incorporating it into the making of a comfortable and tasteful home. Historian Sally McMurry writes that in the nineteenth century,

“Domesticity,” which entailed devotion to bringing up children and thrifty housekeeping, took the place of the women’s direct economic contribution to the family livelihood. According to the ‘cult of domesticity,’ the wife and mother was entrusted with the responsibility of sanctifying and ennobling the home; under her

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<sup>51</sup> *Painesville Telegraph*, June 10, 1880.

<sup>52</sup> Bundy, 233 and Smalley, 248.

<sup>53</sup> McCabe, 519 and Smalley, 250.

<sup>54</sup> The farmhouse represented utilitarian, rather than domestic space for many farm wives; however, according to the campaign biographers, Lucretia’s role was limited to domestic issues such as home décor and raising children. I therefore use the words “utilitarian” and “domestic” with their interpretation in mind. For more on women’s roles and the farmstead as a workspace in the nineteenth century, see Sally McMurry, *Families and Farmhouses in Nineteenth-Century America: Vernacular Design and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 56-134.

guidance, the home sanctuary served as a counterbalance to the socially destructive effects of capitalism.<sup>55</sup>

McMurry's interpretation became increasingly true in the late nineteenth century as the nature of women's work changed with the emergence of mechanized farm practices and the acceptance of middle-class values outside of urban areas.<sup>56</sup>

McMurry explains, "After about 1855, the ideal of the 'profitable farm wife' gave way to another image – that of a worker whose primary tasks more often consisted of services to the family."<sup>57</sup> While the biographers presented Lucretia as clearly rooted in the domestic sphere, and in tune with the most fashionable trends in home design, they also noted that she was highly educated, her husband's "equal," and that the home life that she created was "simple and quiet."<sup>58</sup>

Campaign biographies positioned the Garfield farm on the boundary between country and city and asserted that the landscape served the dual purposes of utility and leisure. Biographers created the sense that the farm was imbued with morality, thereby sending the message that Garfield and his campaign were the antithesis of the corruption of urban Gilded Age politics.<sup>59</sup> The Garfield campaign biographies serve as descriptive vignettes about the landscape of the Garfield farm, as well as about the candidate, his wife, and their five children.<sup>60</sup> However, close reading suggests contradictory values. Should the reader take away the message that

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<sup>55</sup> McMurry, *Families and Farmhouses*, 56.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Smalley, 251 and Coffin, 337.

<sup>59</sup> Political corruption existed in the late nineteenth century, although the media also sensationalized it. The rise of big business led to the emergence of political machines and bribery. At the same time, third parties, such as the Populists, represented special interests.

<sup>60</sup> Descriptions of the children are brief in most biographies. Authors generally noted that Harry, James, Mollie, Irvin, and Abram were active, intelligent children, and that the family spent a great deal of time together.

Garfield and his family members were hard-toiling farmers, working the land to reap a bountiful crop for their own sustenance? Or should they understand the family as well-to-do landowners, primarily concerned with comfortable living and pursuits of middle-class leisure? I argue that the biographers wanted readers to accept both images.

However, Garfield and his landscape did not epitomize *both* traditional agrarian values and more progressive, or middle-class values. By portraying the farm and the candidate as the ultimate embodiment of both, biographers appealed to the experiences and emotions of American voters. Whether a reader was from the country or city, was a farmer or not, he would find some quality of the Garfield farmscape and its inhabitants admirable and appealing.

As political tools, campaign biographies were not meant to be completely realistic. Instead, they were meant to create an idealized landscape and candidate that Americans of varied class and locale could relate to or admire. In *From the Towpath to the White House* (1880), biographer James Brisbin used first person descriptions of his visit to the Garfield farm to appeal to readers.<sup>61</sup> The personal nature of his account of the farm transported readers from their own homes to the home of the candidate. By using this technique, Brisbin and other biographers showed readers that Garfield's home and farm were like any other found in an American community.

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<sup>61</sup> Brisbin, 310-321.

## Representations of landscape in illustrations

Visual representations of the Garfield farm published in campaign biographies and other media reinforced the aesthetics of the ideal agrarian landscape, as well as the farm's accessibility during the campaign summer. Although Lawnfield was a working farm, no animals or crops appear in the illustrated pastures or barnyards. Barns and other outbuildings can be seen, but are often in the background. The house and frontage are the focal point. None of the five illustrations I have included in the following pages portray any sign of the productive agricultural activities that took place on the farm during the campaign summer. (See Figures A through E).

According to Burns, illustrations of rural landscapes dating to the nineteenth century reflect the existence of a "widespread consensus on the [appearance of the] perfect farmscape."<sup>62</sup> Some of the most overlooked sources of these illustrations are county histories and atlases. By the late nineteenth century, county atlases illustrated geographic features, but also highlighted cultural information about prominent residents. Views of rural life, such as those found in the county atlases, created a recognizable standard of farming as fashionable and desirable.<sup>63</sup> There are no images of the Garfield farm in surviving county atlases or county histories. Therefore, I will compare images of the farm found in biographies to the illustrations of other farms in the Lake County atlas and county history.

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<sup>62</sup> Burns, 11.

<sup>63</sup> I do not know that Americans looked at these atlases for pleasure; however, I do conclude that they are evidence of a desired or prescribed aesthetic of rural life. See LouAnn Wurst, "Fixing Farms: Pondering Farm Scenes from the Vanity Press," *Historical Archaeology* 41, no. 1 (2007), 69-80.

The landscapes portrayed in Garfield campaign biographies and other political ephemera are immaculate. Figure E shows trees planted in tidy rows and the yard neatly fenced. These images not only communicated perceptions of the landscape of the Garfield farm; they also sent a message about the candidate who lived there. Surely, only a prosperous, sensible man living a well-ordered life could inhabit such a tidy landscape. The images also convey a sense of accessibility about the farm. Illustrators portrayed an open front gate, as though inviting those pictured walking or riding up and down Mentor Avenue to come inside. Figures B, D, and E show a buggy, carriage, and buggy, respectively, which effectively reaffirm Mentor Avenue's prominence in the region and the connection of the village and the farm to places such as Cleveland.<sup>64</sup> These vehicles further illustrate the prosperity of the community, as they do not appear to be capable of hauling produce. Buggies and carriages would have been for leisure use, rather than utilitarian use.

Many illustrations of other Lake County farms found in the *History of Geauga and Lake Counties, Ohio* (1878) depict livestock. However, other signs of agricultural production are also absent from these portrayals, except when the subject of the illustration is a feed mill, nursery, or other agricultural business. Like the illustrations of the Garfield farm, many of the *History's* illustrations highlight the farms' proximity to local and regional centers of business and commerce, as well as the prosperity of the local communities.<sup>65</sup> Representations of Lake County farms in

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<sup>64</sup> Wurst, 77.

<sup>65</sup> Twenty-one out of forty-five of the illustrations of farms and residences in the *History of Geauga and Lake Counties, Ohio with Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Pioneers and Most Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: Williams Brothers, 1878) portray carriages or buggies traveling the roads on which the homes are situated.

the 1878 county history (such as the example in Figure F), as well as the 1874 county atlas (see Figure G), portray an air of tidiness and order, as well as precise division of spaces using fences.

As demonstrated by the comparisons with depictions of farms in the county history and atlas, renderings of the Garfield farmscape from the summer of 1880 fit into a larger tradition of landscape illustration. In *Currier and Ives: America Imagined* (2001), Bryan LeBeau argues that illustrations in the style of the popular print-makers Currier and Ives were symbolic representations of people, places, and events. The main purpose of such illustrations was to convey information in a visual medium and to be a “forum for discussion of national issues, a window on times past and times to come, a mirror of current anxieties and aspirations.”<sup>66</sup>

The illustrations of agricultural landscapes found in county atlases and histories and the depictions of the Garfield farmscape represented places to which city dwellers might have wished they could escape. They may have also evoked feelings of nostalgia for a simpler agrarian life, unmarred by the forces of progress. The carriage or buggy motif, which appears throughout illustrations of the Garfield farm and other local farms subtly hints at the connection of this landscape to the urban landscape twenty-three miles to the west.

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<sup>66</sup> Karal Ann Marling, *Wall to Wall America: A Cultural History of Post Office Murals in the Great Depression* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1982), 14, as quoted in Bryan LeBeau, *Currier and Ives: America Imagined* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001), 2.

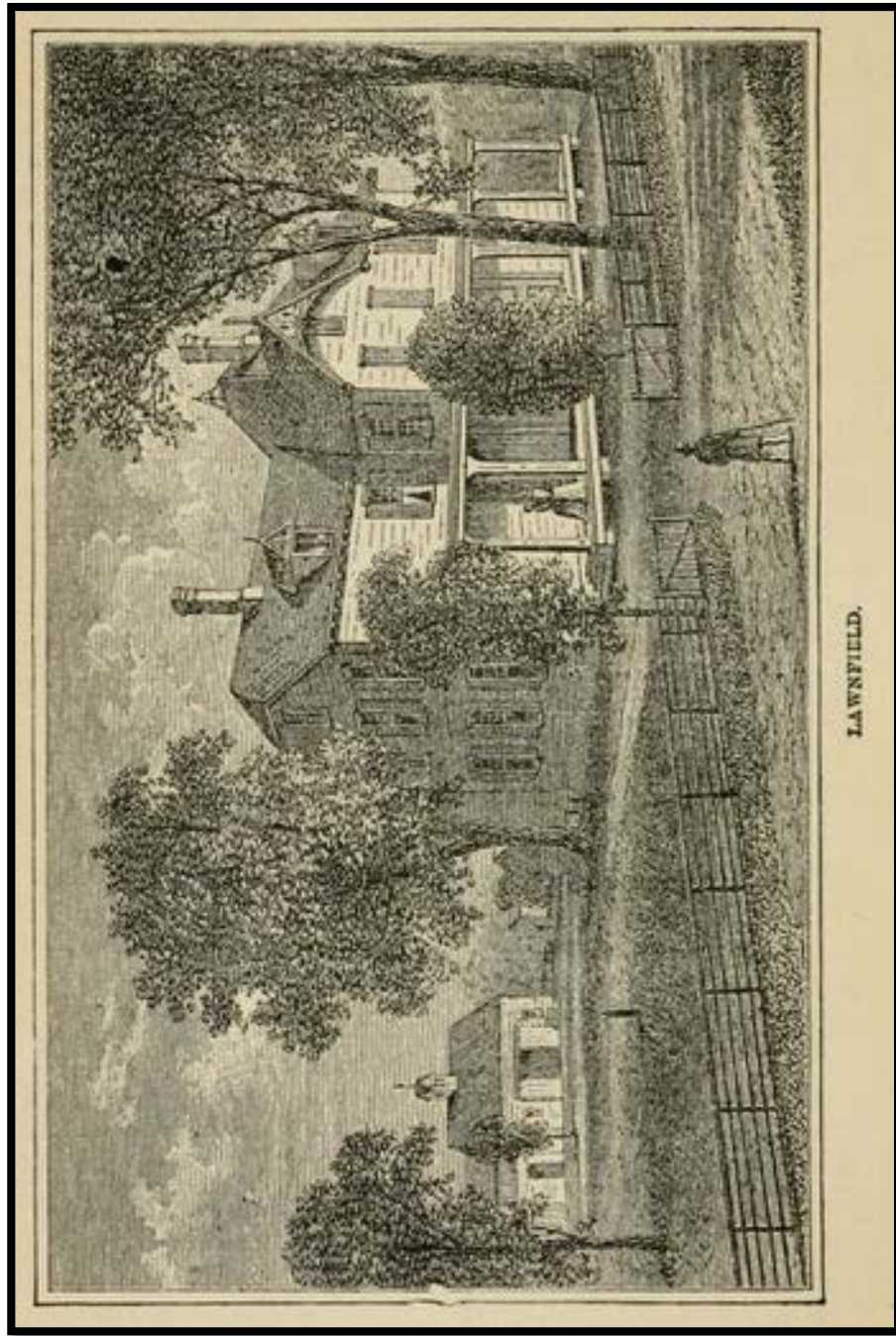


Figure A: "Lawnfield," from J.M. Bundy, *The Life of James A. Garfield* (New York: Barnes & Co., 1880), 220.



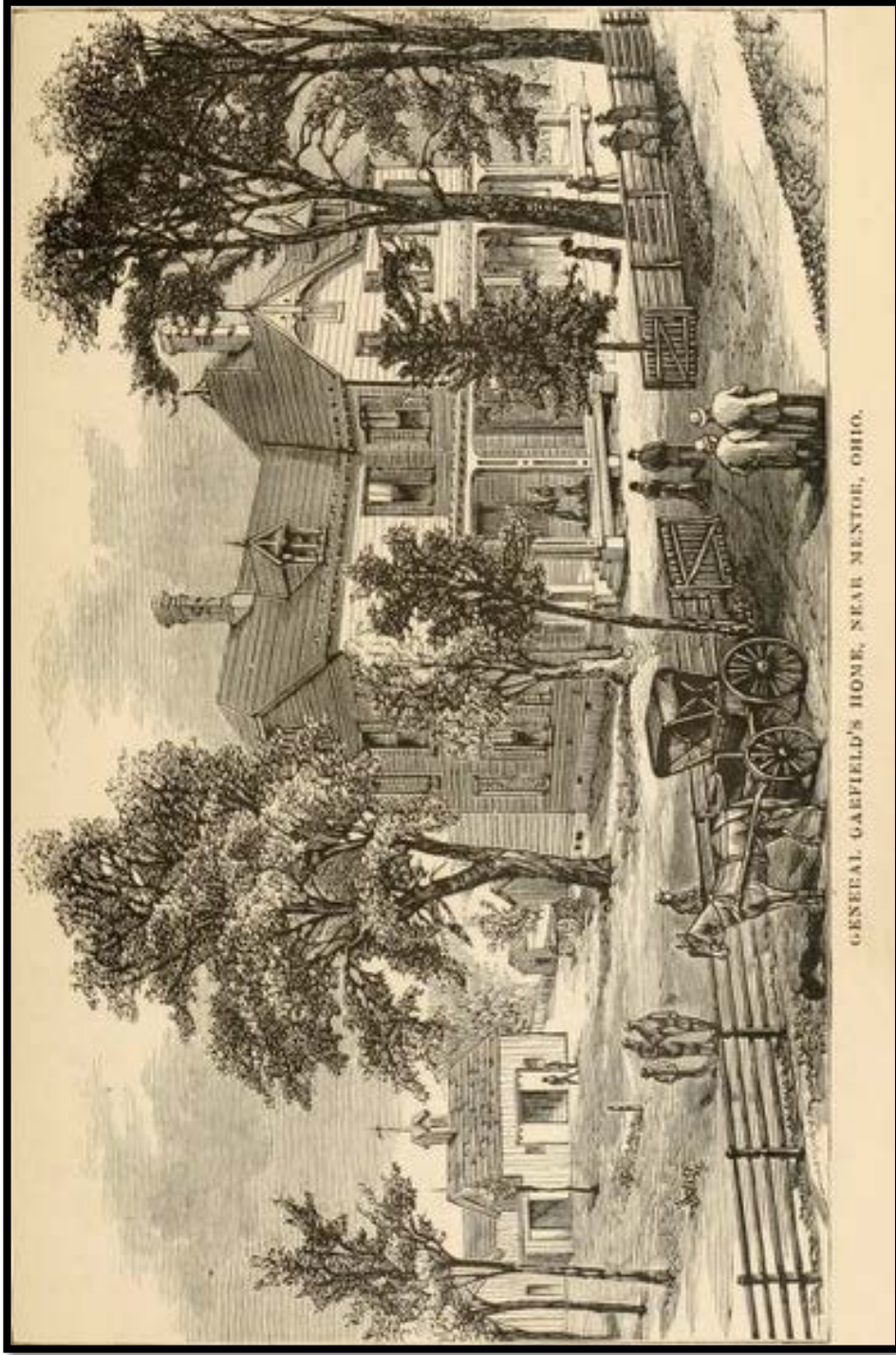


Figure B: "General Garfield's Home, Near Mentor, Ohio," in James McCabe, *From the Farm to the Presidential Chair* (Philadelphia: The National Publishing Co., 1880), 4.



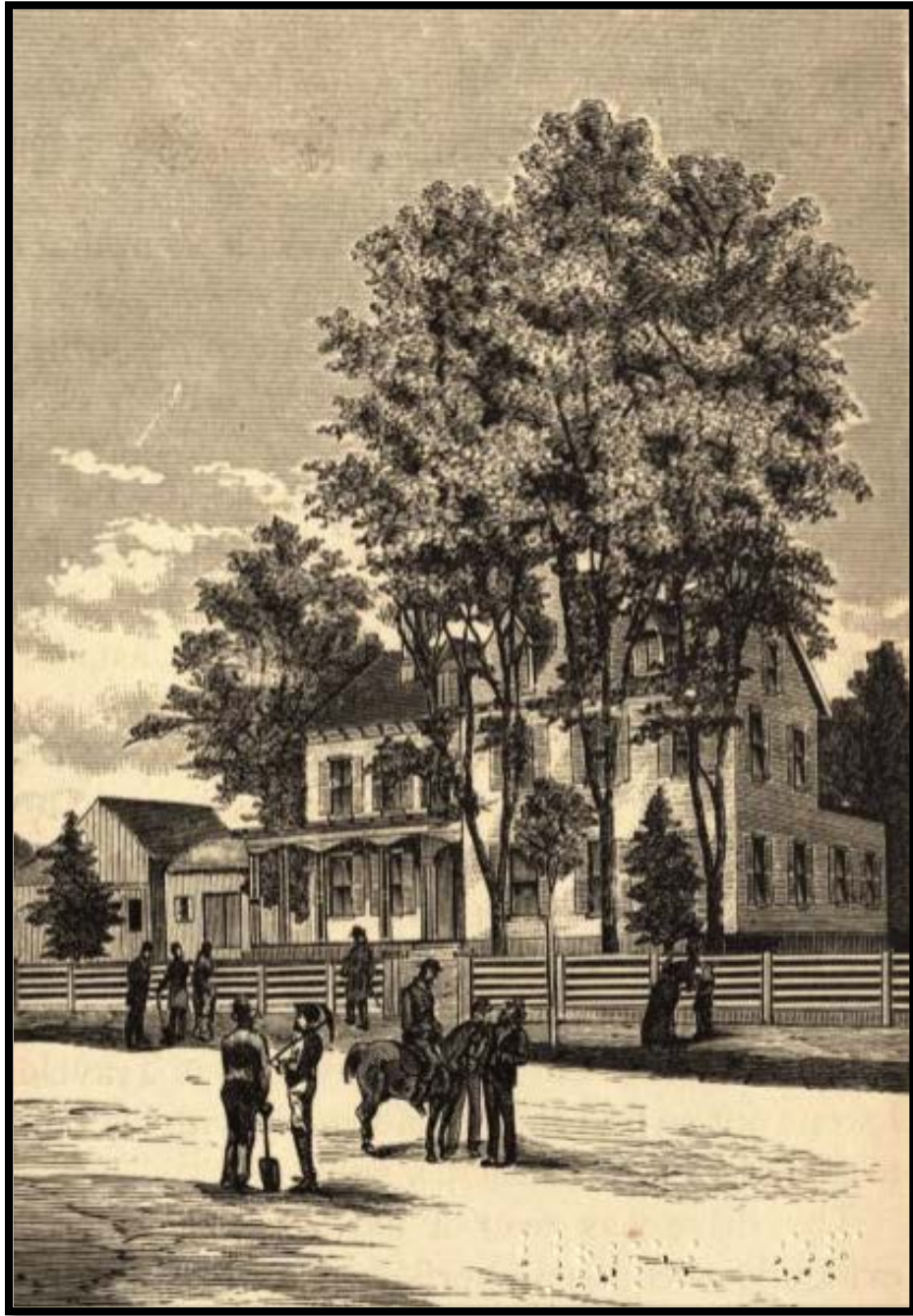


Figure C: From James S. Brisbin, *The Early Life and Public Career of James A. Garfield* (Philadelphia: Hubbard Bros., 1880), 31.



Figure D: J.H. Bufford's Sons, "Lawnfield Mentor Ohio. The Home of Garfield,"  
Library of Congress digital collections.

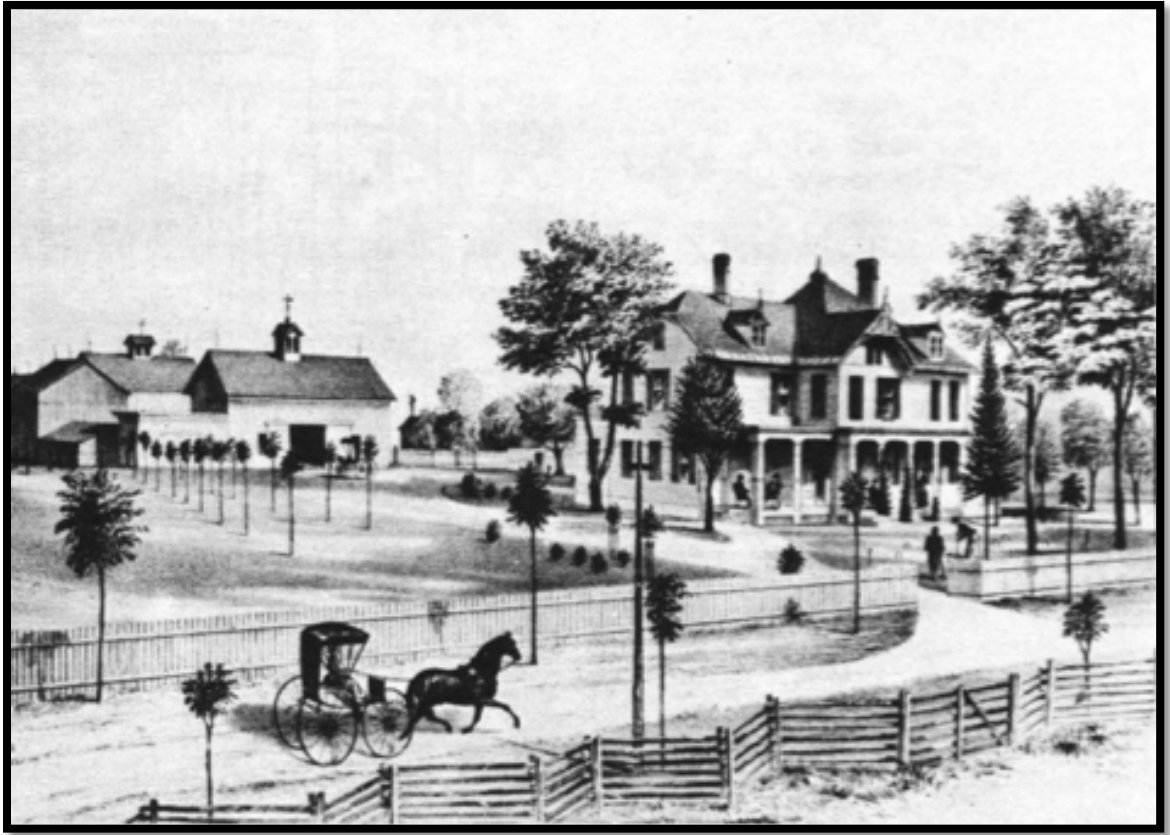


Figure E: L.C. Corwine's "Residence of the house of James A. Garfield, Mentor, Ohio" (1880), in Cultural Landscape Report, James A Garfield National Historic Site (Denver: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1994), 74.



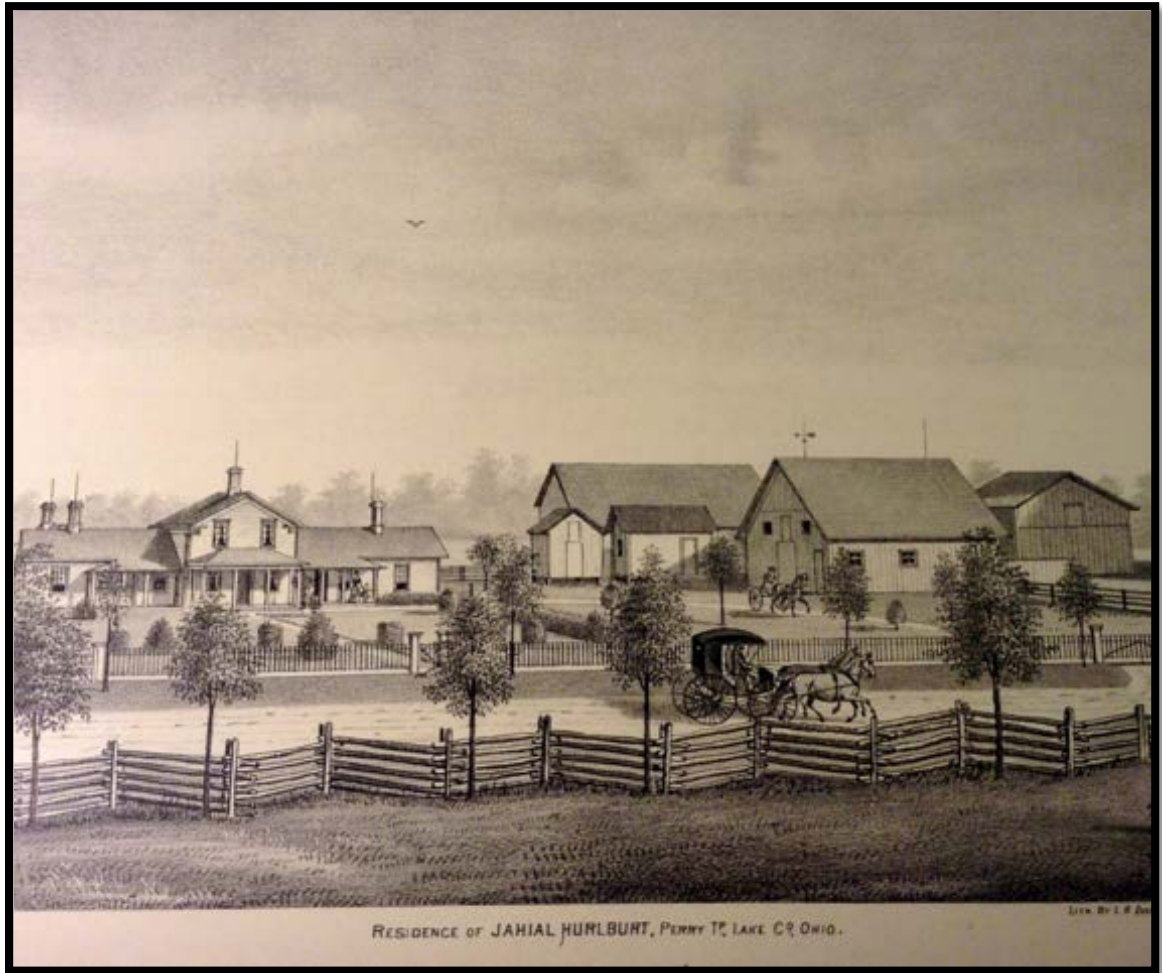


Figure F: One example of an illustration from the *History of Geauga and Lake Counties, Ohio* (Philadelphia: Williams Brothers, 1878).

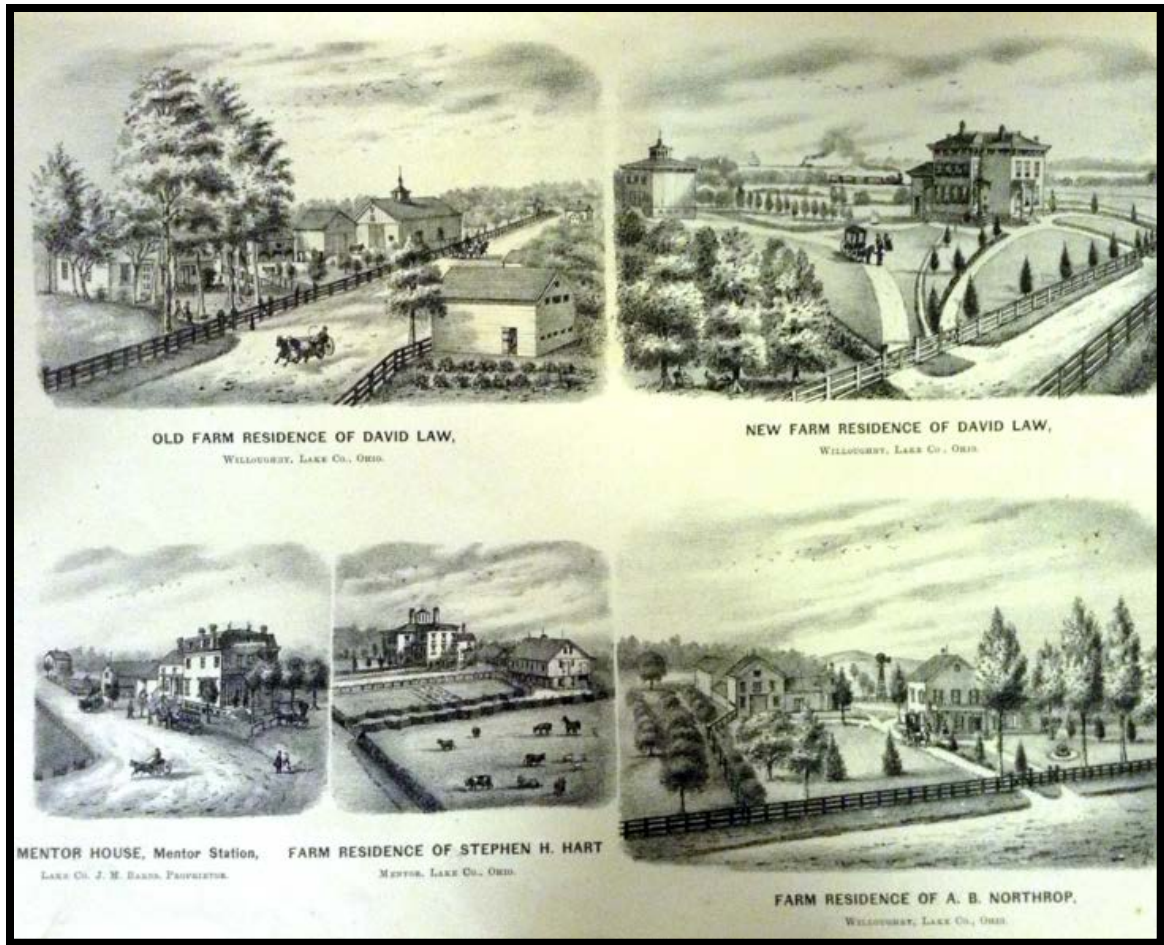


Figure G: Examples of illustrations from the *Atlas of Lake and Geauga Counties, Ohio* (Philadelphia: Titus, Simmons, and Titus, 1874), 33.

### Representations of Garfield's Identity as a Farmer

Political cartoons, as well as campaign songs and poetry, addressed the identity of the farmer, the presidential candidate who occupied the idyllic landscape portrayed in campaign biographies. Just as biographers and illustrators highlighted dual values in and around the landscape, cartoonists and writers portrayed Garfield as several different types of farmer. He was painted as a progressive agriculturalist, an ennobled yeoman farmer, and an outmoded country geezer.

In the poem "Gen. Hancock, the Farmer – His Dilemma," Horrace Harris applied the dual values of the late nineteenth century and pitted progressive farmer Garfield against Winfield Scott Hancock, the Democratic candidate for president.<sup>67</sup>

In the poem, Harris likened the United States to a farm and made an analogy between the political expertise and agricultural experiences of the two candidates:

He [Hancock] never had farmer's vocation, / And scarcely knows  
barley from beans, / And scarcely a plow from a harrow / . . . / But he  
wants to be President plowman, / Though plowing with bull and a  
mule / And both very hungry and lanky, / And not very tractive to  
rule.<sup>68</sup>

Harris then introduced Garfield, the experienced and technologically advanced farmer:

But he [Hancock] cannot be President plowman, / For Garfield is hard  
on the track; / And perfectly skilled in such labor / And of the best  
tools has no lack. / His plow, with the latest improvements, / Is drawn  
by a grand Union Team.<sup>69</sup>

Underlying Harris' descriptions of the two candidates is the assertion that the Republican Party's legacy of maintaining the Union through the Civil War and Reconstruction would continue if Garfield was elected. Harris wrote that Garfield's

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<sup>67</sup> Garfield's Democratic opponent was Winfield Scott Hancock. Hancock was born and raised in eastern Pennsylvania, and became most well known for his military career and service in the Civil War, notably at the Battle of Gettysburg. Clancy has called Hancock's 1880 political platform "cautious and noncommittal." During the campaign of 1880, the Democrats waited for the Republicans to make mistakes, which they could "seize upon to use as political explosives," thus, Hancock's campaign has been called one of "watchful waiting." Campaign biographies on Hancock seem to have primarily focused on his military career before and during the Civil War. See Rev. D.X. Junkin, D.D. and Frank H. Norton, *The Life of Winfield Scott Hancock: Personal, Military, and Political* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1880), Alvan S. Southworth, *Life of Gen. Winfield S. Hancock, (With Portrait)* (New York: the American News Company, 1880), and A.T. Freed, *Hancock. The Life and Public Service of Winfield Scott Hancock* (Chicago: Henry A. Sumner and Company, Publishers, 1880).

<sup>68</sup> Horace Harris, "Gen. Hancock, the Farmer – His Dilemma," James A. Garfield Papers, Reel 166, Campaign Poetry, WRHS, Cleveland, OH. Also see "Plow Boy," in *Garfield and Arthur Campaign Songbook* (Washington, D.C.: Republican National Committee, 1880), James A. Garfield Papers, Reel 166, Campaign Poetry, WRHS.

<sup>69</sup> Harris, "Gen. Hancock the Farmer – His Dilemma."

plow was “drawn by the grand Union Team,” while Hancock’s plow was led in tandem by a bull (representing Southern Democrats) and a mule (representing Northern Democrats). The bull and the mule symbolize party division or lack of cohesion. Harris also suggested that unlike Hancock, who had never been a farmer, Garfield used only the best technology to cultivate his land. One message sent by this poem asserted that only the candidate who embraced technology and relied on agricultural skill could successfully “sow” and “cultivate” a strong nation.<sup>70</sup> Here, Garfield embodies the opposite of the traditional farmer of the agrarian myth. He is the new, modern farmer, and, by extension, an apt politician.

In 1880, Currier and Ives produced a cartoon titled “Farmer Garfield Cutting a Swath to the Whitehouse,” (see Figure H) which portrayed Garfield as a traditional farmer within the framework of the agrarian myth. It shows Garfield, healthy and strong, using a scythe bearing the words “honesty, ability and patriotism,” to cut weeds and kill snakes with names such as “fraud,” “falsehood,” and “malice” that threaten the nation’s capital. The sleeves of Garfield’s plain cotton shirt are rolled up, revealing muscular arms, toned from long hours of farm labor. In this image, Garfield embodies the characteristics of the more traditional American farmer in the

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<sup>70</sup> Harris, “Gen. Hancock, the Farmer – His Dilemma.”

Jeffersonian ideal.<sup>71</sup> Garfield's was typical of yeoman garb represented in nineteenth-century art and literature, and his exposed arms reveal the strength that signals the yeoman's trademark autonomy.<sup>72</sup> His use of a scythe, an outdated tool, symbolizes strength and old-fashioned values in the face of the perceived corruption that accompanied social and economic change.<sup>73</sup> Again, Garfield's identity as a farmer was used as an argument for his political acumen.

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<sup>71</sup> The yeoman farmer was the hero of the agrarian myth in nineteenth-century America. This myth grew from Thomas Jefferson's vision for the nation, which historian Peter S. Onuf describes as "prophetic to subsequent generations as they pursued their own happiness and fulfilled the nation's destiny." Peter S. Onuf, *Jefferson's Empire: The Language of American Nationhood* (Charlottesville, VA: University Press of Virginia, 2000), 1-2. The yeoman farmer demonstrated patriotism through his independence, hard work, and direct relationship with the land he cultivated. Onuf, 15, 161. Jefferson most highly valued the "unmediated relation between a people and its country." Onuf, 161. His writings on agrarian virtue, most notably in *Notes on the State of Virginia*, conveyed this value, which became the "foundation of American national identity" in the early nineteenth century. Onuf, 161. In *The Machine in the Garden*, Leo Marx argues that "Nowhere in our literature is there a more appealing, vivid, or thorough statement of the case for the pastoral ideal than in *Notes on the State of Virginia*," printed in 1785 (118).

<sup>72</sup> Burns, 100.

<sup>73</sup> *Ibid.*, 89.



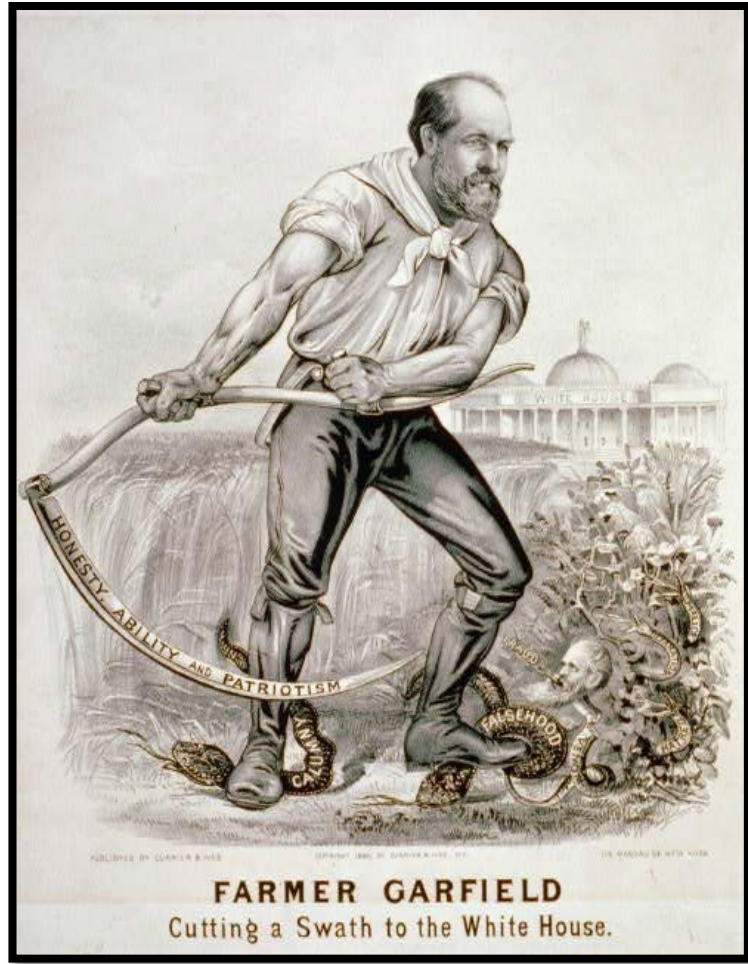


Figure H: “Farmer Garfield Cutting a Swath to the White House,” *Currier and Ives* (1880)

Illustrations of the farm and of Garfield, as cultural constructions, were highly political. In the case of the Currier and Ives cartoon, the ideal of the yeoman, “naturally lent itself to symbolic and didactic representations of leaders and would be leaders in the nineteenth century.”<sup>74</sup> Political cartoonists “used the yeoman’s guise to symbolize . . . fitness for office . . .”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*, 107.

<sup>75</sup> See Burns’ discussion of yeoman imagery in political cartoons, 107-109.

The Republican Party had emerged in part out of the collapse of the Whig Party in the 1850s, and it defined itself by celebrating free labor and middle-class domestic pursuits.<sup>76</sup> Through the Civil War and into the late nineteenth century, the party maintained support for economic development and internal improvements; however, it lacked consensus.<sup>77</sup> In their study on the history of the Midwest, Andrew Cayton and Peter Onuf provide insight on the type of person who supported the Republican Party when they write, “While a great many different kinds of people could accept [the] precepts [of the party] in theory, putting them into practice in a national industrial order divided factory owners and laborers, railroadmen and farmers.”<sup>78</sup> The tenets that the party supported included free labor, mobility, materialism, and the self-made man. These principles, being broad, appealed to a large number of Americans, and although the party maintained control in the Midwestern states in the 1870s and 1880s, it became extremely factionalized.<sup>79</sup>

Portrayals of Garfield as the yeoman of the pastoral ideal did not align with the political interests of some Republicans of the time. However, the Republican Party existed in flux during the last decades of the nineteenth century, and the ideologies of the party factions are beyond the scope of this thesis. Cayton and Onuf argue that most farmers in the late nineteenth century, whether Democrat or Republican, feared that industrial interests would destroy their livelihoods.<sup>80</sup> The biographers, journalists, and artists who created the idealized representations of the

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<sup>76</sup> Cayton and Onuf, 85.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*, 93.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 94.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, 94-95.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, 96-98.

landscape of the Garfield farm and the farmer who worked the land knew that *both* traditional values such as independence and autonomy, as well as middle-class values, such as participation in non-local markets, would appeal to the members of the Republican Party. By incorporating both value systems into their depictions, the writers might gather a broad base of support for the Republican candidate. Thus, likenesses of Garfield and his Mentor farm from the campaign summer shed light on the cultural complexities of late nineteenth-century America, as well as the vague tenets of a political party that, though powerful, lacked consensus.

As urban populations grew and agricultural production became “outstripped” and dependent on non-local markets, perceptions of rural life began to change.<sup>81</sup> Political enemies and satirists took advantage of this reconfiguration of rural life and portrayed farmer Garfield in a negative light. A second image of Garfield, and the antithesis of the Currier and Ives representation of the candidate, appeared on the cover of political satire magazine, *Puck*, in August 1880 (see Figure I).<sup>82</sup> It showed farmer Garfield leaning on a fence looking ill. A pipe that Garfield had evidently been smoking sits on the ground nearby. According to the cartoon, the “nomination tobacco,” which Garfield was smoking, had made him quite ill. Garfield also wears ragged overalls and appears frail and gray. The pipe on the ground reads “Credit Mobilier,” referring to the allegation that Garfield was involved in the 1872 scandal that had been engineered to collect large profits from the Union Pacific Railroad.

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<sup>81</sup> Burns, 190.

<sup>82</sup> *Puck* first appeared as a German-language publication in 1876 and the first English edition was published in 1877.

In addition to political undertones relating to scandal, this cartoon contains symbolism of the decay of rural life in the late nineteenth century. Burns notes that caricatures of farmers standing hunched and appearing tired or ruffled were hallmarks of representations of agriculture as lacking vitality or sustainability.<sup>83</sup> This cartoon is an illustration of Garfield's agricultural persona and is evidence that late nineteenth-century American culture did not always glorify the American farmer. In *Puck*, Garfield is the farmer and former canal boy (represented by the boat in the background of the cartoon), who has been left behind in the midst of social and economic change. He represents an outdated way of life, which some Americans saw as fundamentally incompatible with the growth of cities and the new social and economic order.

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<sup>83</sup> Burns, 190-202.

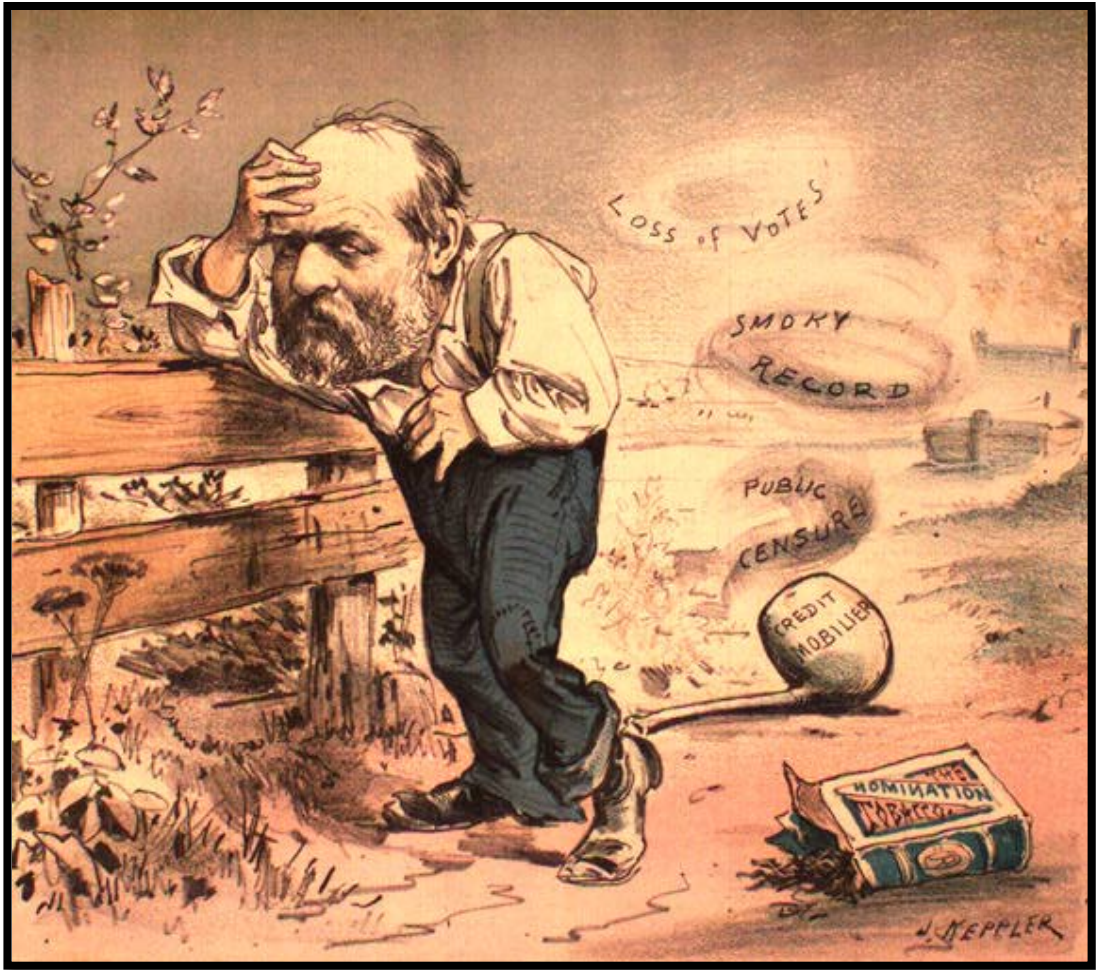


Figure I: "It Makes Him Sick," *Puck*, June 28, 1880

### **Significance of textual and visual representations of Garfield and his farm**

Garfield's front porch campaign of 1880 and the depictions of the candidate and his Mentor farm came at a time when many Americans perceived a loss of morality and integrity in politics. A presidential campaign waged from a candidate's home in a bucolic locale presented the perfect opportunity to perpetuate the agrarian myth in response to growing discontent with national politics. This cultural narrative reaffirmed the importance of local community and the cultivation of the

nation's lands by self-reliant family farmers. Descriptions and visual representations of the candidate and his farm also affirmed middle-class values and the positive aspects of the nation's expanding commercial networks.

Although the biographies and their accompanying illustrations illuminate contesting values of tradition and progress, some scholars criticize the characterization of agricultural change in terms of these standards. For instance, in *Rebirth of a Nation: The Making of Modern American, 1877-1920* (2009), Jackson Lears argues that the perceived geographical and cultural antitheses of city and country and tradition and progress were pure figment. They, in fact, "concealed the complexity of [the city's and the country's] interdependence."<sup>84</sup>

Despite such arguments, the idealized landscape of the Garfield farm and representations of the candidate are cultural artifacts of the transformation of rural life in the late nineteenth century. They contain echoes of agrarianism, and they affirm the infusion of middle-class values in rural communities located in proximity to growing cities. Writers and illustrators portrayed Garfield as a farmer with what Hofstadter called "dual character."<sup>85</sup> Garfield was the folkloric hero in the spirit of the yeoman farmer as well as the innovative progressive, intent upon continuously improving his landscape and embracing middle-class values. *Puck* satirized him as a corrupt politician, and the antithesis of the noble farmer.

The idealized landscape of the Garfield farm is evidence of the dual value systems, or at the very least the perception of these dual values, in the late nineteenth century. It is also a reminder that farming is not a static practice. It has

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<sup>84</sup> Lears, 135.

<sup>85</sup> Richard Hofstadter, *Age of Reform from Bryan to F.D.R.* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1955), 47.

evolved many times with economic and social change. Although campaign biographies, illustrations, and cartoons asserted that the landscape of Garfield's farm, as well as Garfield himself, epitomized *both* tradition and progress, this was not the case. Like many farmers of his time, Garfield had to rationalize traditional farming practices and modern agricultural advancements. Between his purchase of the farm in 1876 and his election as President of the United States in 1880, Garfield created his own blended farming practice, in which the values of progress were especially apparent. However, the values that Garfield and his family associated with the landscape of their Mentor farm remained firmly rooted in agrarian tradition.

## Chapter Two: Tradition and Progress on the Garfield Farm, 1876-1880

In May 1880, the *Painesville Telegraph* printed a letter that John M. Bailey, of Billerica, Massachusetts wrote to the editor of the paper.<sup>1</sup> Bailey advocated the use of silage to feed stock, and wrote, “You and the readers of the *Telegraph*, progressive farmers and dairymen who are interested in the preservation of green . . . crops for winter . . . are cordially invited to visit ‘Winning Farm’ and witness the results of the first thorough trial of this system in America.”<sup>2</sup> The content of his letter is telling. Bailey’s use of the term “progressive farmer” alludes to the existence of a widespread consciousness of the progressive farmer persona that emerged in the late nineteenth century.

In *Our Common Country: Family Farming, Culture, and Community in the Nineteenth-Century Midwest* (2001), Susan Sessions Rugh argues that Midwestern farmers acted as mediators between traditional agrarian values and progressive values in the late nineteenth century.<sup>3</sup> The farmers she writes about participated in

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<sup>1</sup> John M. Bailey was the author of *The Book of Ensilage* (1880). It is not clear why Bailey sent this letter to the editor of the Painesville, Ohio newspaper when he himself was from Massachusetts; perhaps he sent it to many papers, directing editors to personalize and publish it.

<sup>2</sup> *Painesville Telegraph*, May 6, 1880. In the 1870s and 1880s, farmers in Ohio began experimenting with making silage, feed for dairy cows. It was composed of grasses and/or cereal oats, which were stored together in airtight containers, such as silos.

<sup>3</sup> Susan Sessions Rugh, *Our Common Country: Family Farming, Culture, and Community in the Nineteenth-Century Midwest* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2001) xviii. Rugh’s work is an example of scholarship in the “new rural history.” By the mid 1980s, the “new rural history,” a “cousin” of the new social history, was garnering the attention of historians of nineteenth-century agrarian life. As Hal Barron summarized in his 1986 overview of the emerging field of literature, the “new rural history” shifted focus away from farm production and technology and towards the social and cultural dimensions of changing rural life. See Hal S. Barron, “Rediscovering the Majority: The New Rural History of the Nineteenth-Century North,” *Historical Methods* 19, no. 4 (Fall 1986): 141. Rugh traces the development of family farm culture in Fountain Green, Illinois between 1830 and 1880, and argues that families responded to the forces of progress and changing values in various ways. As the children of the mid nineteenth-century Fountain Green farmers left the country to forge new lives in cities, they took with them the values that they had grown up with. These values lived on in the form of the agrarian myth, a cultural belief system that, even to this day, honors rural life as noble and idyllic.



the growing market economy and accepted middle-class values, but also maintained a belief in the importance and significance of independent family farm operations.

Letters and advice printed regularly in the *Painesville Telegraph's* "Field and Garden" column suggest that the spirit of improvement and agricultural progress, or at least the prescription of agricultural progress, was present in the villages of Lake County, Ohio in the late nineteenth century. The newspaper communicated these values, and manuscript and census records reveal that the Garfields, as well as some of their fellow Mentor farmers, incorporated the newest agricultural experiments and advancements into their own routines.<sup>4</sup>

In Chapter One I argued that presidential campaign ephemera used depictions of the landscape and of Garfield to hyperbolize and affirm the dual values of agrarian tradition and agricultural progress. I now argue that, in reality, both of these values were manifest on Garfield's farm. However, rather than epitomizing both values, Garfield and his agricultural landscape represented the complexity of the transition from "rural past" to "modern world."<sup>5</sup> Although Garfield and his

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<sup>4</sup> In *The Farm Press, Reform, and Rural Change, 1895-1920* (New York: Routledge, 2005), xvii, John Fry acknowledges the great changes that took place on Midwestern farms as cities grew and "manufacturing surpassed agriculture as the principal source of wealth in America" in the last decades of the nineteenth century. He argues that farm newspapers and columns reprinted in local papers reveal how prescribed farm values changed over time and how farmers responded to these changes.

<sup>5</sup> Martin Bruegel, *Farm, Shop, Landing: The Rise of a Market Society in the Hudson Valley, 1780-1860* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), 4. Hal Barron argues that between 1870 and 1930, northern American farmers experienced the "second great transformation" in agriculture and rural life. Barron notes that the "second great transformation was characterized by the centralization of the economy, the expansion of state power and professional expertise, and the rise of an urban consumer culture." He vaguely defines the "first great transformation" as the result of the rise of a market economy, presumably in the early nineteenth century. See Hal Barron, *Mixed Harvest: The Second Great Transformation in the Rural North, 1870-1930* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 7-16.

family embraced progressive values in their agricultural practices, their perceptions of the Mentor farm were undoubtedly influenced by the agrarian myth.

Using census records, diary entries, personal financial records, and letters, I have reconstructed a general sense of Garfield's identity as a farmer and the consequent form, function, and meaning of the farm's landscape between 1876 and 1880. Sources document Garfield's improvements to the farm, the workings of his dairy operation, and allow me to compare the value of Garfield's farm and crop yields to those of other Mentor farmers. Garfield's diary gives insight into his motivations for purchasing the farm and taking on the work that the croplands and livestock required. My research reveals a farmscape shaped by Garfield's implementation of progressive agricultural practices, as well as his desire to create an agrarian retreat for his family.

### **Mentor, Ohio Context**

The village of Mentor is part of the Western Reserve region of Ohio. These frontier lands were originally owned by the State of Connecticut and were later purchased by the Connecticut Land Company. The company sold tracts of this land to settlers moving west from New England states in the early years of the nineteenth century.<sup>6</sup> Still known today as the Western Reserve region, it is bordered by Lake

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<sup>6</sup> For more information on the establishment of the Connecticut Western Reserve in Ohio, see Harry Forrest Lupold, "The Western Reserve as a Section in American History," *The Great Lakes Review*, 7 no. 1 (Winter 1981), 27 and Bari Oyler Stith in cooperation with the Lake County Historical Society, *Lake County Ohio: 150 Years of Tradition* (Northridge, CA: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1988), 17-18. In 1792, Connecticut compensated its citizens' losses in the Revolutionary War by awarding them lands from its holdings in what are now the western-most counties of the Western Reserve region of Ohio. In 1795, Connecticut offered the rest of the Reserve lands for sale, and the Connecticut Land Company purchased three million acres. The company's investors sold lands to settlers.

Erie on the north, Pennsylvania on the east, the forty-first degree latitude on the south, and Sandusky and Seneca Counties on the west. The region spans 120 miles from east to west and 50 miles from north to south.<sup>7</sup> (See the area circled in Figure A).



Figure A: Map of Ohio drawn by John Melish, c. 1813 illustrating land office districts, including the Connecticut Western Reserve. From the David Rumsey Map Collection.

Garfield purchased his Mentor farm on October 31, 1876, initially obtaining 119 acres from the widow Harriet Dickey. Shortly thereafter, he purchased an additional forty acres of land “along the railroad tracks” from George Dickey (The Garfield farm is circled in red on the map in Figure B).<sup>8</sup> The farm sat within Lake

<sup>7</sup> Harry F. Lupold and Gladys Haddad, eds., *Ohio's Western Reserve: A Regional Reader* (Kent, Ohio: The Kent State University Press, 1988), 6.

<sup>8</sup> Harry James Brown and Frederick D. Williams, eds., *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume III* (East Lansing, MI: Michigan State University, 1967), 373 (October 13, 1876); 473 (April 16, 1877).

County and Ohio's nineteenth congressional district, which Garfield had represented since 1863.<sup>9</sup> The Dickey properties, located within the village limits of Mentor, included land on the north and south sides of Mentor Avenue. This main east-west highway connected Mentor and its neighboring towns of Painesville and Willoughby with the city of Cleveland. The avenue was one of more than twelve roads formally laid out during Mentor's early years of settlement, and it traveled along one of the sandy ridges that remained when lake waters receded at the end of the last ice age. Native Americans had traversed the ridge, creating a well-worn road that later became Mentor Avenue.<sup>10</sup> By 1874, the village of Mentor was comprised of a livery stable, a general store, a retailer of agricultural implements, and included fifty or more private homes.<sup>11</sup>

Mentor Avenue, as well as the Lake Shore and Southern Michigan Railroad, were principal features on an 1874 map of Mentor. Both of these transportation routes paralleled the Lake Erie shoreline, and the railroad, a later arrival on the landscape, bisected the privately owned farms located along its route.<sup>12</sup> By the last decades of the nineteenth century, passengers and goods could make their way to Cleveland from a train depot in Mentor or Painesville, its neighboring town to the east. With easy access to tools, farm supplies, and major transportation networks, Garfield's farm was the very picture of convenience.

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<sup>9</sup> Allan Peskin, *Garfield* (Kent, OH: The Kent State University Press), 219.

<sup>10</sup> Stith, 22; Joan Kapsch, Sue Muehlhauser, and Kathie Pohl, *Mentor: The First 200 Years* (Mentor, OH: Mentor Bicentennial Committee/Old Mentor Foundation, 1997), 2.

<sup>11</sup> *Atlas of Lake and Geauga Counties* (Philadelphia: Titus, Simmons and Titus, 1874), 30.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

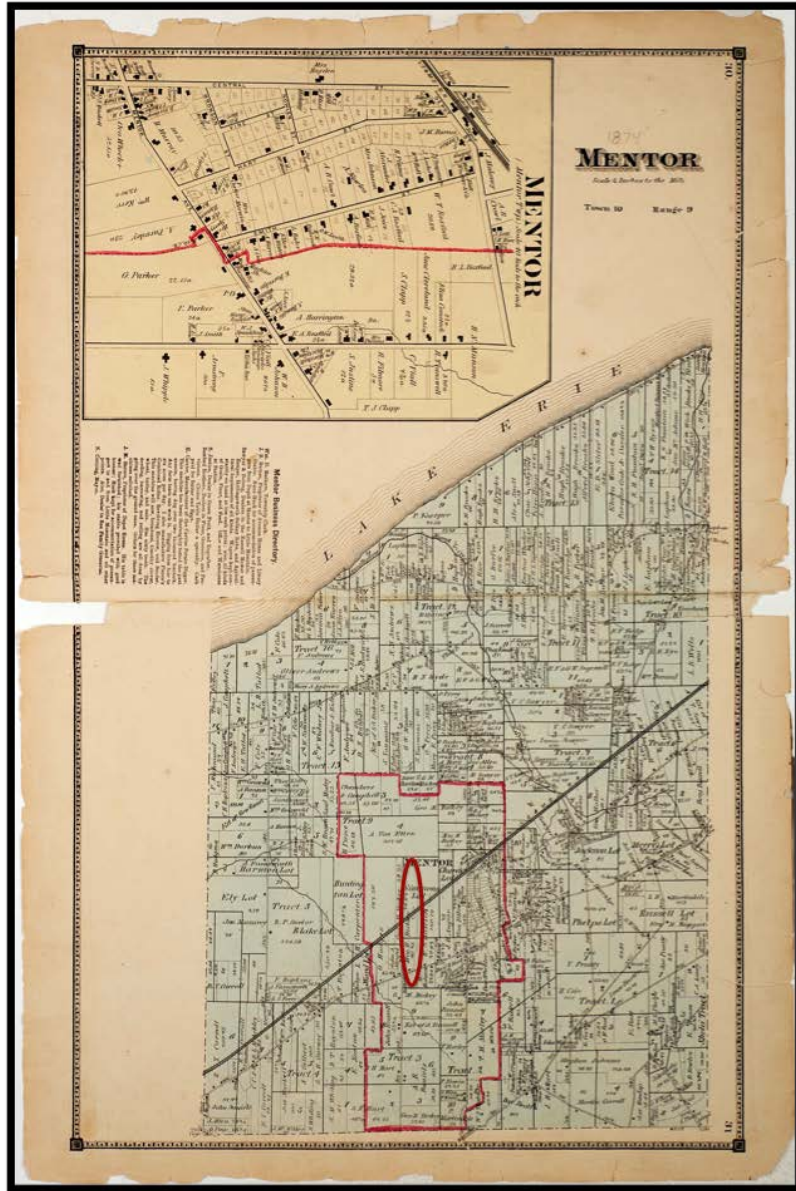


Figure B: Map of Mentor from *Atlas of Lake and Geauga Counties* (Philadelphia: Titus, Simmons and Titus, 1874), 30-31.

Since the early nineteenth century, Mentor's economy had depended on agriculture. Markets expanded quickly after the Erie Canal was completed in 1825.<sup>13</sup> The farmers of Mentor produced field crops including barley, corn, oats, wheat, and potatoes. The Northeast Ohio climate was particularly well suited for fruit

<sup>13</sup> Kapsch, Muehlhauser, and Pohl, 19.

cultivation because Lake Erie warmed slowly in the spring and chilled late in the fall. The moderated temperatures resulted in a longer frost-free growing season than other locations could provide.<sup>14</sup> According to the 1880 census of agriculture, nearly all Mentor farms had apple orchards; only 16 percent had no fruit orchards.<sup>15</sup> Many farmers also grew peaches, though this fruit was slightly less prevalent.

The farmers of Mentor shifted toward specialty agriculture as the popularity of dairying grew in the late nineteenth century.<sup>16</sup> By 1880, eighty-nine percent of Mentor farmers owned dairy (milch) cows or produced milk for the purpose of making butter or cheese.<sup>17</sup> Dairying appealed to many farmers seeking a stable income during the years of economic depression in the 1870s. Unlike crops, which could be blighted due to weather or disease, cows, for the most part, reliably produced milk for most of the year. With proper planning and equipment, dairy cattle could give substantial yields of milk during the winter months.<sup>18</sup> Butter and cheese production in the area accelerated and increasingly took place outside of the home after Augustus Bull and A.J. Tuthill purchased the Mentor Cheese Factory in

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<sup>14</sup> Jones, Robert Leslie. *History of Agriculture in Ohio to 1880*, (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 1983), 2.

<sup>15</sup> *U.S. Federal Census, Productions of Agriculture, 1880*, Mentor, Lake County, Ohio.

<sup>16</sup> It is possible that this shift toward dairying corresponded to a shift away from subsistence agriculture, though it is difficult to tell how much of their crop yields Mentor farmers were selling at market. For a more thorough discussion of the shift from subsistence to market agriculture in the context of dairying, see Sally McMurry, *Transforming Rural Life: Dairying Families and Agricultural Change, 1820-1885* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 124-125. McMurry uses the experiences and practices of Upstate-New York dairy farmers as a lens to study the changes taking place. While her study focuses on Oneida County, New York, she notes that one can generalize to a certain extent from one “dairy belt” community to another, meaning that dairying in and around Mentor, Ohio was likely very similar to that which occurred in Oneida County.

<sup>17</sup> *U.S. Federal Census, Productions of Agriculture, 1880*, Mentor, Lake County, Ohio.

<sup>18</sup> Jones, 203.

1875.<sup>19</sup> By 1878, the business's main function was butter making, (an average of 175 pounds per day) and the shipping of milk and cream (an average of 250 gallons of milk and 50 gallons of cream per day) to Cleveland for sale.<sup>20</sup>

### **Progressive agriculture**

Sally McMurry, a scholar of the new rural history, defines progressive farmers as those who “aimed to reform American agriculture and rural life through the introduction of capitalist methods, technological innovation, scientific experimentation, and the reorganization of social and family life.”<sup>21</sup> In the late nineteenth century, progressive farmers wrote books and articles promoting the newest methods and technologies created to improve the efficiency and sustainability of farms. The progressives served as cultural mediators between past traditions and modern advancements.<sup>22</sup> While some farmers embraced modern agricultural views and techniques more than others, McMurry, like Susan Sessions Rugh, asserts that the methods and beliefs of the progressive farmer and the

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<sup>19</sup> Shortly after purchasing the factory, Tuthill took over as the sole proprietor and changed the name to Tuthill Creamery. In 1869, Mentor farmers produced an average of 196 pounds of butter per household. In 1879, Mentor farmers made an average of 250 pounds of butter on their farms. This does not include the butter made in factory. In 1869, Mentor farmers sold 28,735 gallons of milk. By 1879, this number had risen to 166,871 gallons of milk being sold or sent to factory. These statistics illustrate the growth of the factory dairy industry in Mentor between 1869 and 1879. *U.S. Federal Census, Productions of Agriculture, 1870 and 1880*, Mentor, Lake County, Ohio.

<sup>20</sup> *History of Geauga and Lake Counties, Ohio. With Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of its Pioneers and Most Prominent Men* (Philadelphia: Williams Brothers, 1878), 251.

<sup>21</sup> Sally McMurry, *Families and Farmhouses in Nineteenth-Century America: Vernacular Design and Social Change* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 3. McMurry tracks changes in the vernacular architecture and organization of landscapes on Northern farmsteads. She does so as a means to examine the changes that increasing market activity, technological innovations, and pressure to adopt middle-class values wrought upon family farms of the northern United States.

<sup>22</sup> McMurry, *Families and Farmhouses*, 26.

traditional farmer were not completely incompatible.<sup>23</sup> Most farmers combined traditional and progressive practices and values on their farms.<sup>24</sup>

Agricultural identities during Garfield's time were complex. Some farmers—though by this time few—retained old standards, such as independence from non-local markets.<sup>25</sup> Others imitated the methods of more advanced farmers in order to keep up with agricultural change. Historian Clarence Danhof divides progressive farmers into two categories, “innovators” and “imitators.” In *Change in Agriculture: The Northern United States, 1820-1870* (1969), Danhof defines “innovators” as farmers who “originated significant changes that became integral parts of the routine of farm operations.”<sup>26</sup> These men developed new breeds of livestock and crop species, and they constantly sought to improve the efficiency of their farms. Agricultural “imitators” “readily accepted changes that came to their attention and incorporated them into their routines.”<sup>27</sup> These men did not engineer or create significant advancements through experimentation like the innovators; rather, the imitators borrowed solutions and techniques from them.

Most farmers of the nineteenth century represented unique combinations of traditionalist and progressive identities. Garfield was no exception. He undertook impressive and nearly constant improvement of his farmland, structures, and

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 25.

<sup>24</sup> Susan Sessions Rugh also argues this by stating that the farmers of Fountain Green, Illinois, “held a range of attitudes toward the land and employed a variety of strategies to carry out their goals.” *Our Common Country*, 58.

<sup>25</sup> Clarence Danhof, *Changes in Agriculture: The Northern United States, 1820-1870* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), 281.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 283-284. Although Danhof's research focuses on the time period that might now be considered the “first great transformation” in rural life, the categories he defines remain applicable to farmers experiencing similar changes in agricultural practices and beliefs during what Hal Barron calls the “second great transformation” in rural life (1870-1930).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 285.



livestock from the time he purchased the Dickey property in 1876 until he moved to the White House in the early spring of 1880.<sup>28</sup> He experimented with fertilizers and purchased modern tools and implements, but he was not an innovator. Instead, Garfield embraced progressive agricultural methods in the style of Danhof's "imitators." Garfield educated himself by reading books, and possibly local agricultural newspapers and periodicals written by innovating progressives.<sup>29</sup> He visited with other Mentor farmers and may have adopted farming techniques from them.

Garfield also oversaw the workings of his farm with substantial input from his farm manager – friend, fellow farmer, and businessman, John P. Robison.<sup>30</sup> Robison assisted Garfield in the selection and purchase of the farm in 1876, and served as the farm's primary manager through 1880. It is hard to say which decisions about how to organize and operate the farm between 1876 and 1880 were made by Garfield and which were made by his advisor. Letters from Robison to Garfield suggest that Robison may have had a say in which men were hired to work on the farm, and that he also established the precedent for using fertilizers on the

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<sup>28</sup> For extensive evidence of the constant improvement of the farm, see *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volumes III and IV* (April, 1877-1880).

<sup>29</sup> Garfield owned a variety of books on scientific farming and new innovations in agriculture, including John Bailey's *The Book of Ensilage* (1880). I have not found any evidence suggesting that Garfield subscribed to farm journals or periodicals. However, it is likely that he read at least one of the local newspapers, most of which had agricultural columns.

<sup>30</sup> John P. Robison, a close friend and agricultural mentor of Garfield and a manager of his farm, owned a property in Mentor valued at more than twice that of Garfield's. According to the 1880 Census, Productions of Agriculture, Robison had more livestock on his farm, including a herd of 29 dairy cows, which was nearly twice the size of Garfield's own herd. When it came to crop yield, Robison and Garfield produced roughly the same number of bushels of oats and wheat in 1879.<sup>30</sup> Robison helped Garfield select which farm to purchase. Robison also made a portion of his living in the meat packing industry. In 1874, he built the National Packing House in Cleveland. See *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume III*, 126, f.n. 219.

fields.<sup>31</sup> Evidence does not allow me to draw any definite conclusions regarding the dominance of Robison's influence; however, it does necessitate a cautious interpretation of Garfield's own progressivism as illustrated by his agricultural practices.<sup>32</sup>

In the spring and summer of 1877, Garfield visited and received visits from several local farmers. Primary sources reveal only minimal information about these meetings at which Garfield may have collected agricultural advice. In late April, he hosted a visit from Mr. Allen, the brother of a close friend, experimenter in horticulture, and the owner of 120 acres of "choice land."<sup>33</sup> Allen joined Garfield at Storrs and Harrison's Nursery in the neighboring town of Painesville to select fruit-trees and evergreens for planting at Garfield's farm.<sup>34</sup> At the end of the summer Garfield visited with Mr. Morley, "a wealthy and influential farmer."<sup>35</sup> Garfield also

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<sup>31</sup> Several letters from Robison to Garfield have survived and reveal Robison's involvement as Garfield's farm manager. See J.P. Robison to James A. Garfield, March 15, 1878; March 18, 1878; April 12, 1878; April 18, 1878; May 2, 1878; May 7, 1878; May 10, 1878 and J.P. Robison to Lucretia Garfield, March 27, 1878. Robison gives advice and suggestions regarding the farm, discusses taking corn to the neighboring town of Kirtland to sell to the mill, gives updates on the weather, and information on hiring men to do work. James A. Garfield Papers, reel 41, WRHS.

<sup>32</sup> Throughout this chapter's discussions of methods and practices on the Garfield farm, I give agency to James A. Garfield. However, I recognize the influence that Robison and others might have had over his decisions.

<sup>33</sup> *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume III*, 477 (April 30, 1877).

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, Storrs and Harrison's Nursery was located in Painesville, one town east of Mentor in Lake County. Jesse Storrs and J.J. Harrison are recognized as "pioneers" in Lake County horticulture. Both men wanted to open a nursery, but they were not confident that Lake County could support two nurseries. Storrs and Harrison's was established in 1858. By 1907, there were 29 nurseries in Lake County, making it the "nation's largest nursery center." See "Storrs, Harrison Planted Seed for Nursery Capital," and "County's Nursery Zooms in 100-Year Span," *Painesville Telegraph* April 30, 1958.

<sup>35</sup> Mr. Morley was presumably Thomas Morley, a Mentor farmer whose 270-acre farm was valued at \$15,000, and who owned 22 dairy cows, and sold or sent milk to factory to be made into butter or cheese. Mr. Morley also invested in fertilizers. His property was located southeast of Garfield's, also within the Mentor village limits. In 1885, the *Painesville Telegraph* recognized Morley as "one of, if not the best, butter makers in Ohio," and extolled his use of progressive techniques to produce large

traveled with Robison to the farm of Mr. Hopkins in the neighboring village of Willoughby. There, he observed Hopkins' fields of Clawson white wheat, which Garfield later sowed on his own farm.<sup>36</sup> This wheat, one columnist in the *Painesville Telegraph* noted, was "likely to be more generally sown than any other variety" in parts of Ohio.<sup>37</sup>

This pattern of visiting with well-to-do farmers reveals the possibility that Garfield carried ideas relating to agriculture back to his own farm. It suggests that other farmers who may have been more actively involved in progressive farming influenced Garfield's agricultural practices. One of Garfield's neighbors, E.T.C. Aldrich, was also an exemplum of progressive agriculture practice. He was a charter member of the Mentor Grange, Patrons of Husbandry, a local chapter of the national Grange movement.<sup>38</sup> Aldrich owned the farm directly east of Garfield's, with 250 acres of improved land.<sup>39</sup> The value of his farm matched that of Garfield's, and the two men were good friends.<sup>40</sup>

According to McMurry's definition, progressive farmers also participated in capitalist networks beyond their own farms. This practice included the incorporation of wage labor into everyday farm operations. As early as April 1876,

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crop yields on his first rate land. *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume III*, 527 f.n. 196; *Painesville Telegraph*, January 23, 1885.

<sup>36</sup> *The Diary of James A. Garfield*, 511-513 (September 30, 1877 and October 8, 1877).

<sup>37</sup> *Painesville Telegraph*, September 13, 1877.

<sup>38</sup> The Grange, Patrons of Husbandry emerged across the country after the Civil War. Grange activity intensified after the financial crisis of 1873, and member farmers sought to assert the interests of individuals and local communities in the face of social change and economic centralization. See Barron, 81-83 and Rugh, 138-143. The Mentor Grange was organized on January 29, 1875. *History of Geauga and Lake Counties, Ohio*, 251.

<sup>39</sup> *U.S. Federal Census, Productions of Agriculture, 1880*, Mentor, Lake County, Ohio, page 1.

<sup>40</sup> In addition to farming, Aldrich also sold fire insurance, was an active member of the Grange, a town councilman, president of the board of education, and was the mayor of Mentor from 1870-1872. *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume IV*, 144, f.n. 286.

Garfield hired laborers to make improvements to his property.<sup>41</sup> For the next four years, Garfield maintained a substantial staff of workers.<sup>42</sup> These men planted and harvested crops and built barns, fences, and irrigation systems.<sup>43</sup> Garfield paid his laborers wages and may have offered them board, particularly when planting and harvesting would have been in full swing.<sup>44</sup>

It was common among Mentor farmers to hire outside laborers to help with planting, harvesting, and general improvements. In 1879, fifty-five percent of Mentor farmers hired extra help.<sup>45</sup> Contributors to the local “Farm and Garden” newspaper column urged farmers to hire laborers so that farmers could devote their own time to educational pursuits and scientific experimentation. Education was at the core of progressive agricultural ideology. “Agriculture and the world demand more facts, more knowledge, more science,” one contributor proclaimed.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume III*, 473-477.

<sup>42</sup> In April 1877, Garfield hired men Butler and Bancroft. *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume III*, 474 (April 17, 1877). Later that spring, Garfield mentions workers Moses, Devereaux, and Barnes. *Diary, Volume III*, 481 (May 11, 1877). In addition to his regular force of hands, Garfield hired carpenters to work on improvements to the barns and fences. *Diary, Volume III*, 481 (May 12, 1877). In June 1877, he hired A.P. Rutland to sow turnips and Smith and Couchman to sow corn. *Diary, Volume III*, 495 (June 11, 1877). There are various references to Thomas Northcott working on the Garfield farm. Northcott was Robison’s farm hand. *Diary, Volume III*, 480, f.n. 122. In 1880, Garfield mentions workers Smith, McAbe, Coats, and Curtis. See receipts for labor payments in the James A. Garfield Papers, reel 140, WRHS.

<sup>43</sup> Garfield’s workers used some of the latest agricultural implements, including the Peerless mower and reaper (deemed the very best of mowers and reapers by the 1875 edition of the *American Farmer* IV, no. 1, [January 1875], 244), a fanning mill (which mechanically separated grain from the plant), and a Mishawaka Combined Feed Mill (which, according to an 1878 advertisement in the *American Agriculturalist*, XXXVII, no. 1 [January 1878], could “shell and grind six to fifteen bushels of corn per hour”). These implements sped up the harvesting processes, and enabled the farmer to cultivate his fields to their fullest potential.

<sup>44</sup> While none of the workers appear to have lived permanently with the Garfield family based on population census records, a diary entry indicates that in 1878 Garfield enlarged a harness room in the horse barn to make room for his hands to sleep. *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume IV*, 85 (June 25, 1878).

<sup>45</sup> *U.S. Federal Census, Productions of Agriculture, 1880*, Mentor, Lake County, Ohio.

<sup>46</sup> *Painesville Telegraph*, May 10, 1877.

As a farmer who modeled his own methods off of progressive and scientific agriculturalists, Garfield recognized the value of preserving the ecological balance of soil on his farm. Many progressive writers advocated the importance of farming with an eye toward the future, and warned of the danger of not doing so. In July 1877, *The Painesville Telegraph* printed an article on “the value of farm lands,” which read, “The farmer who neglects to cultivate his farm to the best advantage is aiding to depress the value of lands.”<sup>47</sup> The columnist argued that Ohio farming was at that time in the midst of a “crisis,” brought on by the carelessness of farmers who had “farmed only for the present, thoughtless of the future fertility of [the] lands.”<sup>48</sup> Garfield recognized the value of using both manure and fertilizers on his soil, and he understood the merits of letting the soil rest after several seasons of cultivation. As he and his workers commenced harvesting wheat on the south side of Mentor Avenue in July 1878, Garfield found that the crop in the east half of the field was “good and heavy for it was summer fallowed.”<sup>49</sup> The west half, which had been planted with wheat for three successive seasons, did not yield as hearty a crop.<sup>50</sup>

Garfield’s dairy practice exemplifies his implementation of progressive agricultural methods. United States Census of Agriculture records show the amount of milk from Mentor farms sold or sent to factories, as well as the amount from which families produced butter in their own homes. Dairy was the only farm product for which census enumerators recorded in-house versus factory

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid., July 1, 1877.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., July 1, 1877.

<sup>49</sup> This meant that the field had been left unsown to allow the soil to recover. *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume IV*, 90 (July 5, 1878).

<sup>50</sup> Ibid.

production.<sup>51</sup> It thus offers a direct window on market involvement of Mentor farmers in the late nineteenth century. Only ten percent of Mentor dairy farmers, including Garfield, sold or sent their milk to factories in 1879. These farmers sold their milk to local creameries, where it was made into cream or butter for purchase by consumers in Lake County and cities and towns nearby.<sup>52</sup>

A herd of well-bred cows typically promised the production of generous amounts of high-quality milk. It also demonstrated the prosperity of a farming operation. The farmer who could afford milch cows of the finest breeds set himself apart from others.<sup>53</sup> The first summer on the farm, the Garfields bought a common milk cow and several Durhams.<sup>54</sup> By May 1879, they owned fifteen milk cows and had invested in Jerseys, which were known for producing large quantities of milk with high butterfat.<sup>55</sup> Many nineteenth-century dairy farmers shared a desire to build dairy herds composed of high-blooded stock.

The Garfields practiced both market-oriented and semi-subsistence-oriented dairying. In 1879, they sold or sent a large portion of their milk to Tuthill Creamery.<sup>56</sup> Census data and records of the Garfields' account with Tuthill illustrate the family's participation in the local market economy.<sup>57</sup> At the same time, Garfield

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<sup>51</sup> *U.S. Federal Census, Productions of Agriculture, 1880*, Mentor, Lake County Ohio.

<sup>52</sup> For more information on dairying in Ohio, see Jones, *History of Agriculture in Ohio to 1880*, 181-205.

<sup>53</sup> McMurry, *Transforming Rural Life*, 177.

<sup>54</sup> *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume III*, 479 (May 5, 1877).

<sup>55</sup> *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume IV*, 261 (July 6, 1879).

<sup>56</sup> *U.S. Federal Census, Productions of Agriculture 1880*, Mentor, Lake County, Ohio, page 8.

<sup>57</sup> Other evidence of the family's mixture of subsistence and market farming can be found in the Garfield diaries. In 1878, Garfield sold wheat to Kirtland Flouring Mills at 96 cents per bushel. Several days later, he sold 400 bushels of wheat, reserving 70 bushels for seed and "family use." *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume IV*, 104-105 (August 12 and 16, 1878). In 1880, he noted that he sent 200 bushels of wheat to Cleveland at 90 cents per bushel. *Diary, Volume IV*, 441 (July 13, 1880).

noted in his diary that he intended to build a dairy herd that would provide enough milk and butter for his family.<sup>58</sup>

Garfield's use of the newest technology and innovative techniques facilitated year-round dairying on the farm. The practice of winter dairying required capital and ingenuity because the farmer had to buy or create a storage facility for winter feed. In late fall 1878 Garfield rented a steam engine to grind corn and fodder throughout the winter.<sup>59</sup> This process was a substitute for keeping silage.<sup>60</sup> The following March, Garfield reported, "The machine for cutting, grinding, and steaming cattle feed is working well."<sup>61</sup> He noted that the machine increased the amount of product he could extract from cornstalks to turn into feed for his cows.<sup>62</sup> Garfield's practice of steaming maximized the amount of feed he could produce from his crops, which in turn fed his milch cows throughout the winter. Dairy production on the Garfield farm reached its height in May 1880, when the family sold 7,462 pounds of milk to the local creamery and received a sixty-seven dollar credit on their account, which they used to purchase butter.<sup>63</sup>

From Garfield's perspective, there was always more work to be done, and there were endless improvements that he could make to the farm. In keeping with the characteristics of progressive farmers, Garfield saw improvement as a continuous process. On one July day in 1879 he went out to inspect his fields and

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<sup>58</sup> *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume III*, 497 (May 5, 1877).

<sup>59</sup> *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume IV*, 146-147 (November 14 and November 18, 1878).

<sup>60</sup> Cultural Landscape Report, Lawnfield, James A. Garfield National Historic Site (Denver: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1994), 18. See also Jones, 203.

<sup>61</sup> *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume IV*, 196 (March 10, 1879).

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> James A. Garfield, in account with Tuthill Creamery, receipts 1877-1880. James A. Garfield Papers, reels 139-140, WRHS. Account records show that the Garfields' cows produced milk throughout the winter, though the yields fell during the months of November, December, and January.

buildings, and later wrote, "It [the farm] is gradually coming towards my notions of what it ought to be, but each step discloses new wants, and increases my interest in it."<sup>64</sup> In November Garfield wrote, "I am not satisfied with the condition of the farm. Though it has improved in some respects, I have not been able to give it the time I desired and must leave many things for the future."<sup>65</sup>

Garfield relied almost entirely on his workers for the actual cultivation and harvest of crops on his farm. This is not to say that Garfield was unengaged or disinvested in his farm endeavors. He routinely walked his property and oversaw the work of his hired hands. However, the extent of Garfield's involvement in affairs on the farm was dictated by his work schedule as a politician as well as his financial ability to invest in hired workers. Garfield's professional identity as a Congressman and his long absences from his farm make him unique in comparison to other Mentor farmers of the late nineteenth century.

Even as modern technologies and progressive methods made it possible to maintain some agricultural activities year round, "seasonality continued to be a major force in rural people's lives."<sup>66</sup> Garfield, however, experienced the rhythms of rural life differently from other Mentor farmers. Political seasons shaped Garfield's agricultural routine. Occupied by legislative duties and living in Washington while Congress was in session, Garfield typically returned to Mentor in late June or early

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<sup>64</sup> *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume IV*, 261 (July 7, 1879)

<sup>65</sup> *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume IV*, 322 (November 10, 1879).

<sup>66</sup> Sally McMurry, *From Sugar Camps to Star Barns: Rural Life and Landscape in a Western Pennsylvania Community* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2001), 62.



July and remained there until October. During this time he observed improvements, planned for the coming planting season, and helped with the harvest.<sup>67</sup>

Between 1876 and 1880, Garfield spent more time living in Washington, D.C. than in Mentor. He was accustomed to city living and probably recognized its advantages. However, his heart lay in the countryside of the Western Reserve.<sup>68</sup> In the pages that follow, I will illustrate that agricultural experimentation interested Garfield not as a means of reform, but as a means to satisfy his curiosity and thirst for knowledge. Garfield farmed, in part, for the experience, and he recognized his wheat-sown fields, orchards, and barnyards as an escape from the hectic rhythm of political life in Washington, D.C.

### **Agrarian Tradition**

In *Mixed Harvest: The Second Great Transformation in the Rural North, 1870-1930* (1997), Hal Barron writes:

The family farm in the nineteenth-century rural North was, in the words of two economic historians [Jeremy Atack and Fred Bateman], “simultaneously a complex, successful economic activity as well as an engine of family and social organization with strong noneconomic motivations.” This dual nature meant that northern farmers constantly straddled the fence between agriculture as a way of life and as a way of making a living . . . .<sup>69</sup>

Like many other farmers of his time, Garfield walked the line between farming for economic and non-economic reasons. Nowhere is this mediation of values clearer

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<sup>67</sup> In 1877, Garfield and family departed the Mentor farm to return to Washington on October 11. *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume III*, 528. He returned to the farm on June 22, 1878, only to depart again on October 14, 1878. *Diary, Volume IV*, 84 and 131. This pattern continued; Garfield arrived home the following summer on July 5. He returned to Washington on November 5. *Diary, Volume IV*, 260 and 321. Garfield’s diaries entries detail his activities while on the farm.

<sup>68</sup> Garfield’s connection and fondness for his Ohio home is evidenced by numerous diary entries and personal letters, which are explored in detail in the pages to follow.

<sup>69</sup> Barron, 13.

than in diary entries and letters that portray Garfield's feelings about his Mentor farm.

In September 1879, Garfield juxtaposed his desire for more time to spend on experimental farming with his expression of life on the Mentor farm as "idyllic." He wrote the following entry when he was too ill to complete his planned work in support of the Republican Party's campaign for the governorship and state legislature. Here, he expresses the dual values of agrarian tradition and agricultural progress:

[I] spent the day resting and enjoying the healthful quiet of the farm. I am so hoarse that I feel perfectly justified for being away from the Campaign; and almost rejoice in the illness that gives me this sweet touch of idyllic life. I went over the farm, examined the condition of the newly sown wheat fields on which, by way of experiment, I have sown 1,100 pounds of ground limestone to the acre -- except upon a portion where I have put about 300 lbs. of ground bone per acre. I long for time to study agricultural chemistry, and make experiments with soils . . .<sup>70</sup>

Other expressions of adoration for the Mentor farm found in family letters and diary entries reveal that Garfield valued farming most for its lifestyle. When he purchased the farm, Garfield acknowledged that it was not the wisest financial investment; however, he confided in his diary that the farm's value lay in the opportunity it provided to teach his sons how to work the land.<sup>71</sup> Letters that Garfield exchanged with his wife Lucretia while he was in Washington reflect the tranquility that the farm held for the family. "You can scarcely imagine the sweet quiet peace the dear home is giving me," Lucretia wrote to James in June 1879, ". . .

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<sup>70</sup> *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume IV*, 298-299 (September 24, 1879).

<sup>71</sup> *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume IV*, 373 (October 31, 1876).

our yard and garden are a delight and so thrifty and tidy.”<sup>72</sup> One week later Lucretia again expounded on the joys of life in Mentor. “The old farm bursts into gladness under each caress, and grows beautiful with every touch, and I want you here to catch the inspiration which it breathes out with grateful generosity.”<sup>73</sup> After taking in the condition of his farm one fall day in 1879, Garfield wrote of the bright “autumn tints,” which beautifully adorned the trees. “How I wish I could rest a week in the sweet seclusion of this very perfect home life!” he exclaimed.<sup>74</sup>

James, Lucretia, and their five children adored their time on the Mentor farm, and they yearned to be there when they were away. In an 1880 letter (see Figure C), the Garfields’ second-oldest son Jim expressed excitement about returning to the farm after a year at St. Paul’s boarding school in New Hampshire. Jim proclaimed that he would soon be home, scrambling up a tree to retrieve the cherries that he hoped would be ripe upon his arrival. “Don’t let Papa go away this week or any time this summer,” he begged his mother. “He ought to stay on the farm all summer.”<sup>75</sup>

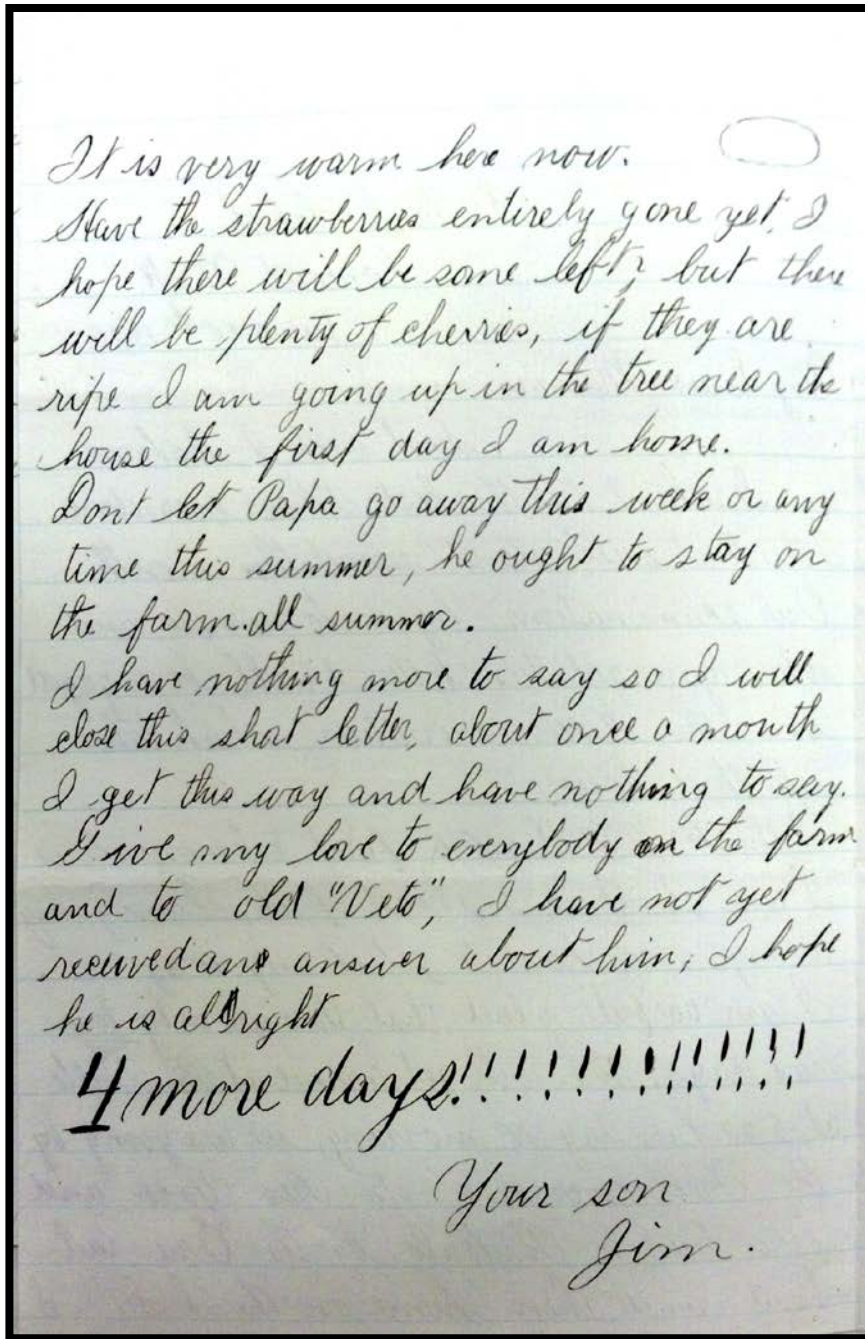
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<sup>72</sup> Lucretia Garfield to James A. Garfield, June 17, 1879, James A. Garfield Papers, reel 8, WRHS.

<sup>73</sup> Lucretia Garfield to James A. Garfield, June 22, 1879, James A. Garfield Papers, reel 8, WRHS.

<sup>74</sup> *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume IV*, 304 (October 5, 1879).

<sup>75</sup> James R. Garfield to Lucretia Garfield, June 6, 1880, James R. Garfield Papers, Box 22, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C.



It is very warm here now. ○  
Have the strawberries entirely gone yet, I  
hope there will be some left; but there  
will be plenty of cherries, if they are  
ripe I am going up in the tree near the  
house the first day I am home.  
Dont let Papa go away this week or any  
time this summer, he ought to stay on  
the farm all summer.  
I have nothing more to say so I will  
close this short letter, about once a month  
I get this way and have nothing to say.  
Give my love to everybody on the farm  
and to old "Veto", I have not yet  
received an answer about him; I hope  
he is alright  
**4 more days!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**  
Your son  
Jim.

Figure C: Letter from James R. Garfield to Lucretia Garfield, June 6, 1880 reveals Jim's feelings towards the Mentor farm. James R. Garfield Papers, box 22, Library of Congress.

Garfield and his family members probably did not write about their home with a consciousness of the symbolic, even mythical quality of the landscape of the farm. However, the family's personal perceptions and emotional attachments to

their home were at least subconsciously shaped by the cultural power of the agrarian myth. The language with which the Garfields described their landscape is strikingly similar to the language campaign biographers used when describing the farm during the 1880 campaign. Their words indicate that the family's experience of the farm was influenced by their cultural context and the prevalence of the agrarian myth.

### **Landscape**

Garfield's progressive agricultural practices and his desire for a rural retreat found expression in the spatial arrangement of the landscape of the Mentor farm between 1876 and 1880. The changes that Garfield made to the property before he became president facilitated the growth and productivity of the farm. At the same time, the agrarian meanings that the Garfield family attached to their home resulted in the separation of utilitarian and domestic spaces on the farm.

In 1877, the *Painesville Telegraph* noted the Garfield family's purchase of the farm, and a contributor wrote, "The farm is a good one and the situation very pleasant, but the buildings and grounds need renovation. A new dwelling house would be desirable if it could be had; but unfortunately the savings of our Congressman has [*sic*] not been as great as some persons have surmised."<sup>76</sup> Garfield made annual payments of \$1,000 plus interest to George Dickey, from whom he had

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<sup>76</sup> *Painesville Telegraph*, March 8, 1877.

purchased the forty-acre portion of his farm in 1877.<sup>77</sup> Garfield's congressional salary was approximately \$5,000.<sup>78</sup> Financial obligation likely prevented the Garfields from immediately renovating the modest house that sat on the property (shown in Figure D).

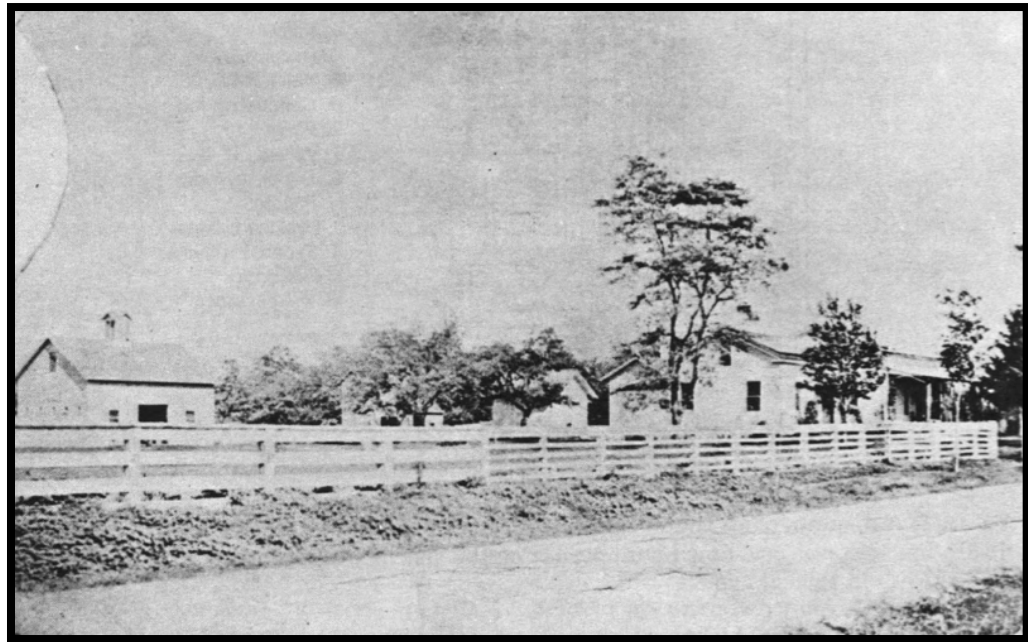


Figure D: The Dickey Farm c. 1877, from Cultural Landscape Report, 71.

In 1878 Garfield wrote, “[I] have abandoned . . . my purpose to overhaul and enlarge the farmhouse.”<sup>79</sup> Nearly one year later, he mentioned the possibility of building a house in Alvord’s grove, to the west of the farm.<sup>80</sup> I have not found

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<sup>77</sup> Garfield’s agreement to make annual payments to George Dickey, April 11, 1877, James A. Garfield Papers, reel 140, WRHS. The agreement indicates that Garfield agreed to make these payments for two years from the date of the agreement (April 11, 1877).

<sup>78</sup> Ida A. Brudnick, *Salaries of Members of Congress: Recent Actions and Historical Tables* (Congressional Research Service, 2014), 11.

<sup>79</sup> *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume IV*, 146 (November 14, 1878).

<sup>80</sup> Julia Alvord owned thirty-three acres of land, which, in 1874 adjoined the Dickey property on its west boundary.

documentation that explains why the house was never built. However, Garfield writes in his diary about putting off new construction or renovation of the house immediately following observations regarding the value and economic viability of his farm.<sup>81</sup> This is further evidence that he practiced agriculture for pleasure and relaxation, but maintained a pragmatic approach informed by finances and the potential of making an income off of the land.

Instead of enlarging the farmhouse right away, Garfield focused his resources on improvements to the utilitarian landscape. This improvement plan resulted in the unification of the remnants of the Dickey farmscape and the new components—a barn, a hog pen, an icehouse, two sheds, and a hen house—that Garfield added between 1876 and 1878.<sup>82</sup> Garfield’s workers moved existing barns away from the road, making them less visible from Mentor Avenue (as shown in Figure E).<sup>83</sup> This rearrangement also created a slight division between the farm’s domestic and utilitarian spaces. The men covered the barns already present on the property with battens to match the new structures. The alterations to the old barns were part of Garfield’s plan to create a more “harmonious and picturesque” landscape.<sup>84</sup> An addition and renovation to the farmhouse eventually took place in 1880.

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<sup>81</sup> On November 14, 1878 Garfield wrote, “Have abandoned . . . my purpose to overhaul and enlarge the farmhouse.” *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume IV*, 146. Two days earlier, he had noted that “The price of farm products is steadily falling, and I must reduce my expenses to the lowest practical point.” *Diary, Volume IV*, 145.

<sup>82</sup> Eliza Garfield (mother of James A. Garfield) to Sister Alpha, June 2, 1877, James A. Garfield Papers, reel 4, Western Reserve Historical Society; *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume IV*, 146 (November 13, 1878).

<sup>83</sup> *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume III*, 473 (April 14, 1877).

<sup>84</sup> Eliza Garfield to Sister Alpha, June 2, 1877, James A. Garfield Papers reel 4, WRHS.

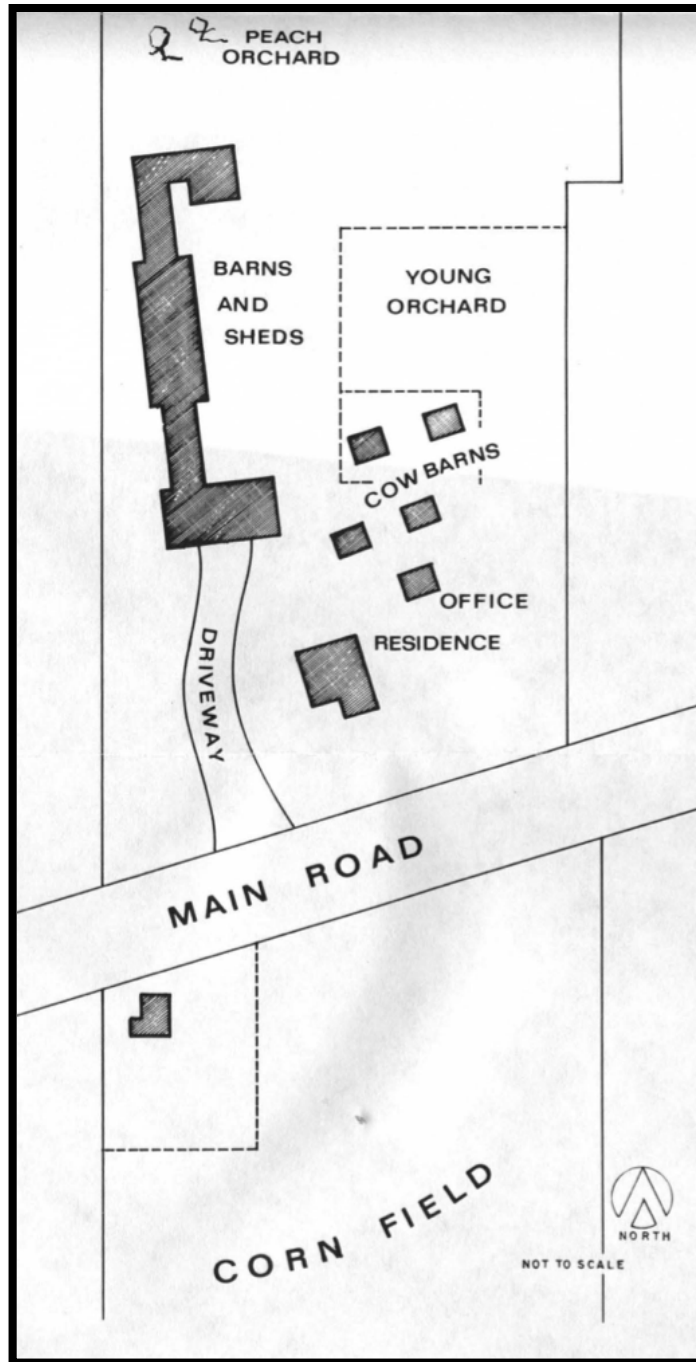


Figure E: Illustration of the Garfield farm from *The New York Herald*, September 26, 1881, reproduced in the Cultural Landscape Report, 103.

The construction of new fences also bestowed a sense of order upon the farmscape. These enclosures partitioned the land into distinct spaces that served specific purposes. The apple orchard was separated from the meadow, and a fence



divided the lane from the surrounding barnyard and cultivated lands.<sup>85</sup> By June 1877, Garfield and his men had replaced a rail fence on the property with a board fence.<sup>86</sup> Sometime during the summer of 1880, a newly constructed picket fence replaced the aging horizontal board fence in front of the house. This new fence improved the aesthetic appeal of the farm as it would have been seen from Mentor Avenue.<sup>87</sup>

McMurry explains that different types of fencing reinforced hierarchies of space on farms. “The farther from the core”—the core being the house and its associated domestic living spaces—“the cruder the fencing.”<sup>88</sup> The very fact that the Garfield farm contained visibly separate spheres reveals that the property served dual purposes. Garfield not only wanted space in which he could cultivate crops for both sustenance and profit; he also wanted space in which he could relax.

Spatial hierarchies dictated in what order farmers made improvements to their landscapes and how they organized barnyards, meadows, orchards, and fields. When Garfield began his improvements to the landscape by moving the barns in 1877, he imposed a hierarchical structure on the landscape.<sup>89</sup> Although Garfield prioritized improvements to the farm’s utilitarian landscape, the act of moving the outbuildings away from the road and the house lowered their status in the landscape hierarchy. On this scale, domestic and leisure-oriented spaces ranked

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<sup>85</sup> *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume III*, 480-481 (May 9-12, 1877).

<sup>86</sup> Eliza Garfield to Sister Alpha, June 2, 1877.

<sup>87</sup> Cultural Landscape Report, 80.

<sup>88</sup> Sally McMurry, *Sugar Camps*, 78.

<sup>89</sup> *The Diary of James A. Garfield, Volume III*, 473 (April 14, 1877).

highest in terms of aesthetics. Removing utilitarian structures from obvious view resulted in a neater appearance for the domestic landscape.

The 1876-1880 landscape of the Garfields' Mentor farm reflected Garfield's embrace of the progressive notion of never-ending improvement. It also expressed Garfield's belief in farming as the good life in the spirit of the agrarian myth. Orderly rather than run-down, the farmscape during Garfield's tenure evoked a sense of balance or mediation between progressive utility and agrarian values.

There are arguably many stories that the landscape of the Garfield farm can tell. Garfield's participation in the progressive agricultural movement as an imitator, and the traditional agrarian meanings he attached to his landscape is just one of these stories. By learning more about how Garfield and his workers cultivated the fields and orchards of the Mentor farm, we discover a landscape that was shaped within the context of agricultural transformation.

In March 1881, the Garfields left Mentor to move to the White House. President Garfield would never see his beloved rural home again. Only four months later, the unimaginable happened. On July 2<sup>nd</sup> Garfield left from Washington, D.C.'s Baltimore and Potomac Railroad Station for a trip to New England. Assassin Charles Guiteau entered the station and shot him twice in the back. Garfield lingered with his wounds for over two months before succumbing to infection. He died on September 19, 1881.<sup>90</sup> Later that year, the Mentor farm came under the

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<sup>90</sup> For a more thorough analysis of Garfield's assassination, see Candice Millard, *Destiny of the Republic: A Tale of Madness, Medicine, and the Murder of a President* (New York: Doubleday, 2011).

management of Lucretia Garfield and her brother, Joseph Rudolph.<sup>91</sup> The years following President Garfield's death would bring continued change to the landscape, both in its physical appearance and associated meanings.

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<sup>91</sup> Lake County Probate Judge George Shepherd, Order of Administration to Joseph Rudolph, November 4, 1881. Rudolph was Lucretia's brother. Found in the Garfield Family Papers, MS 4575, reel 1, or box 1, folder 17, WRHS.

### Chapter Three: The Garfield Farm Transitions to Estate, 1885-1905

After President Garfield's assassination 1881, Lucretia and the children returned to the Mentor farm. Between 1885 and 1894, Lucretia and other family members oversaw the enlargement of the farmhouse, as well as the construction of a gasholder, a carriage house, a windmill, and a tenant house.<sup>1</sup> In 1900, J. Wilkinson Elliott, a Pittsburgh landscape architect, created a comprehensive landscape design for the property. These changes resulted in the Garfields' Mentor home transitioning from a farm into a country estate. At the same time, the landscape took on meaning as a memorial to the late president.

According to Clive Aslet, scholar on country homes, "The American country home stands on its own land [an estate], beyond the suburbs and other planned developments, out of sight of other houses, possessing at least the appearance of an independent, possibly self-sufficient, landed life."<sup>2</sup> Aslet's definition guides my interpretation of the Garfield home and landscape as a country estate.

In this chapter, I will examine the function, form, and meanings of the landscape as it became both a country estate and a memorial to James A. Garfield

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<sup>1</sup> Construction on the memorial library addition to the main house began in 1885. The gasholder was built in 1885, and in 1893 a carriage house was built. In 1885, a new well was dug in the old orchard, and in 1894, the windmill was constructed to pump water from the well into the house. (See Lawnfield Historic Structures Report for more information on these buildings).

<sup>2</sup> Clive Aslet, *The American Country House* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), vi. For more thorough treatment of the "country place movement" as a cultural phenomenon around the turn of the twentieth century, see Robin Karson, *A Genius for Place: American Landscapes of the Country Place Era* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, in association with Library of American Landscape History, 2007). While Aslet characterizes country homes as being "beyond suburbs," I argue that Mentor, Ohio, while it remained predominantly rural and saw a number of country homes built in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, took on characteristics of a suburb -- most notably increasing accessibility to Cleveland, and increased attention on formal design and middle-class exclusivity.

between 1885 and 1905. As it evolved, the landscape retained its function as a working farm. It also continued to hold special meaning as a family home. However, the farm also took on the qualities of an estate, and formal design became a prominent feature of the landscape. In addition, the division between the property's utilitarian and domestic or leisure spaces, increased. The evolution of the farm during this time resulted in the landscape that visitors to James A. Garfield National Historic Site see today. Thus, examination of the 1885 to 1905 time period creates a deeper understanding of the preserved physical landscape.

Lucretia did not keep a diary to detail her daily activities and thoughts after her husband's death. I have therefore largely relied on letters exchanged between Lucretia and her children, as well as other family members and close friends, to better understand the evolution of the landscape between 1885 and 1905. Farm account books that detail dairy and field crop production for the first few years of the twentieth century, as well as Elliott's landscape design, have survived. Maps and landscape surveys dating to the mid-1890s through 1924 also provide invaluable insight into the function and prescribed appearance of the landscape during this period.

### **Mentor Context**

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, Cleveland, Ohio evolved from a "regional center of commerce" into a thoroughly industrial city.<sup>3</sup> The emergence of

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<sup>3</sup> "Industrial" refers to the production of goods for the market as well as to the rapid expansion of the production of goods. The development of industry in Cleveland was fostered by the establishment of transportation networks including the Ohio and Erie Canal, as well as railroads. The Civil War was

streetcars and the interurban rail line correlated with urban challenges such as increased immigration from Eastern Europe, industrial expansion into previously residential neighborhoods, pollution, and government corruption. Better public transportation facilitated the migration of residents out of the city into suburbs and rural areas farther afield.<sup>4</sup> In the late nineteenth century, wealthy businessmen began to commission country homes to which they could escape from the commotion of the city.<sup>5</sup>

As wealthy urbanites left Cleveland, Mentor and its neighboring towns—once a cradle of small family farms—became the setting for country estates. The fertile farmlands of Lake County appealed to many businessmen, and if an appropriately stately home could be built, the meadows and fields provided a summer escape, and an opportunity for gentlemanly agrarian pursuits. The *Willoughby Independent* reveals that as early as 1892, Lake County boasted at least nine grand “country homes.”<sup>6</sup>

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the catalyst for the growth of the iron industry in Cleveland. John D. Rockefeller established Cleveland as a major oil refinery center in the 1870s. Cleveland’s period of rapid industrial growth ended by 1930. By then, the city was second to Detroit among American cities employing workers in industry. Darwin Stapleton, “Industry,” in David D. Van Tassel, and John J. Grabowski, eds., *Encyclopedia of Cleveland History* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), 566-567.

<sup>4</sup> James Borchert, “Suburbs,” in David D. Van Tassel, and John J. Grabowski, eds., *The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*, 966-976.

<sup>5</sup> Among these men were Edward Moore, co-owner of the Cleveland, Painesville and Eastern Interurban Rail Line and Herman VanCleve, owner of a successful Cleveland building supply company. Moore discovered and purchased the Norton farm around 1897 and hired Cleveland architect Arthur N. Oviatt to design Mooreland, a mansion for him and his family. VanCleve purchased a farm on Mentor Avenue in the 1890s and also hired Oviatt to design a home. His mansion’s façade was an almost exact duplicate of George Washington’s Mount Vernon. A number of guest houses were also built and the property contained gardens, orchards, and lawn. Joan Kapsch, Sue Muehlhauser, and Kathie Pohl, *Mentor: The First 200 Years* (Mentor, Ohio: Mentor Bicentennial Committee/Old Mentor Foundation, 1997), 121, 125. A number of other Clevelanders built homes in Lake County after the turn of the century, including Liberty E. Holden, President of the *Cleveland Plain Dealer* newspaper, and Horace E. Andrews, a wealthy Cleveland railroad executive.

<sup>6</sup> *Willoughby Independent*, February 5, 1892. The newspaper does not make it clear to whom these homes belonged.

As estates populated the landscape, Mentor took on the appearance and some characteristics of a suburb, which I define based principles of separation and affluence.<sup>7</sup> Suburbs were within commuting distance (via roads, railroads, or interurban lines) to a city or major center of commerce or industry and attracted wealthy urbanites, who sought country homes as escapes from city life.

In 1896, the Cleveland, Painesville and Eastern Interurban Railroad opened and facilitated travel between Cleveland and lakeshore towns to the east.<sup>8</sup> The rail line traveled along Mentor Avenue and became an important landscape feature symbolizing the connection of Mentor to the neighboring towns of Painesville and Willoughby, as well as to Cleveland. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the social columns of the *Willoughby Independent* brimmed with notes about Lake County residents visiting relatives and friends in the city and of Clevelanders traveling to spend time in the country.

Increased attention paid to an aesthetic of formal design also characterized the suburbanization of Mentor. Thomas A. Knight, an amateur historian and reporter with the *Cleveland Leader* described the transition of Lake County farms into country estates in *Country Estates of Cleveland Men* (1903). “Where, formerly,

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<sup>7</sup>Kenneth T. Jackson wrote the first comprehensive work on American suburbs in 1985. In *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 11, he identifies three “essential similarities” that all suburbs share. Affluent or middle-class people who work in the city populate suburbs; suburbs contain homes with large yards; and suburban residents own their own homes. Jackson goes on to define suburbs based on function (non-farm, residential), class (middle and upper), separation (daily commute into the city), and population density (low). In *Borderland: Origins of the American Suburb, 1820-1939* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), John Stilgoe traces the emergence of America’s suburban landscape—what he calls the “borderlands.” Geographically, he defines the borderlands as being on the outer edges of cities. I have worked within these definitions to come to my own understanding of what “suburban” meant, and how Mentor fits this characterization.

<sup>8</sup> “Cleveland, Painesville and Eastern,” in *The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*, 272.

there was nothing but an occasional potato field to relieve the monotony of the scene, there are now handsome trees and beautiful flowers.”<sup>9</sup> With these words, Knight summarized a tangible shift in the culture and function of the agricultural landscape of Lake County. The virtue of a rural landscape, once determined by the quality or quantity of crops that a field produced, became determined by the presence of grand homes, carefully composed gardens, and other designed features.<sup>10</sup>

Many of the country estates in Mentor were agricultural. The owners, however, typically did not farm for a living. Knight wrote that the estate owners farmed as “avocation.”<sup>11</sup> Wealthy farmers sought to produce the best field crops and to raise well-bred livestock. They did so with an interest in “perfecting . . . agriculture to a point never reached before” and in part for their own pleasure.<sup>12</sup> These farmers wanted to gain recognition and respect through their agricultural practices, whether by winning ribbons at local agricultural fairs or being known as dealers of well-bred livestock.<sup>13</sup> In Mentor, many estate owners specialized in dairying, raising poultry, and cultivating fruit.<sup>14</sup>

The country estates of Mentor, Ohio were, in one respect, a late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century cultural expression of agrarianism. American art and garden historian May Brawley Hill notes that farmhouses, as “relics of a vanished

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<sup>9</sup> Thomas A. Knight, *The Country Estates of Cleveland Men: Views and Descriptive Matter, Illustrating the Country Seats of Prominent Cleveland Business Men* (Cleveland, Ohio, 1903), 32.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 7.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> “Some of the Farms that have made Lake County Famous,” in *Leading Financial, Professional, Commercial, and Industrial Interests of Lake County, O., 1915*.



America,” became desirable retreats.<sup>15</sup> They represented an escape from urban life, though one that only the wealthy could achieve. In another respect, the country estates represented a changing landscape, as they transformed Mentor from an agricultural village into a middle-class suburb.

### **Evolution from Farm to Estate**

The landscape of the Garfield farm once again reflected the values of tradition and progress within the context of this local transformation. Lucretia made numerous changes to the landscape after her husband’s death, representing her desire to make the home into a country estate. The changes she made to the home and grounds were made possible by funds raised by the American people. After President Garfield’s assassination in 1881, Lucretia received \$360,345.74, which was collected via a public subscription fund started by family friend and prominent businessman, Cyrus Field.<sup>16</sup>

Despite the changes being made to the landscape, the Garfield property retained its main functions as a farm and as a family home. By 1900, two of the Garfield sons had built houses adjacent to Lawnfield. Aslet notes that it was common for American country estates to contain multiple family homes. “The family

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<sup>15</sup> May Brawley Hill, *Furnishing the Old-Fashioned Garden: Three Centuries of American Summerhouses, Dovecotes, Pergolas, Privies, Fences and Birdhouses* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., Publishers, 1998), 96.

<sup>16</sup> *The New York Times*, October 18, 1881. Cyrus Field and other businessmen created the American Telegraph Company and laid the first telegraph cable across the Atlantic Ocean in 1858. For more information on Field, see the detailed description of the Cyrus W. Field Papers, 1831-1905, held at the New York Public Library, [http://archives.nypl.org/uploads/collection/pdf\\_finding\\_aid/fieldcyr.pdf](http://archives.nypl.org/uploads/collection/pdf_finding_aid/fieldcyr.pdf) (accessed January 24, 2014).

compound, where several households had independent dwellings on the same estate, was an entirely American phenomenon,” he writes.<sup>17</sup> In 1893, the second-oldest Garfield son, James R., and his wife, Helen Newell Garfield, purchased the parcel of property previously owned by Julia Alvord, which abutted the west side of the Garfield farm.<sup>18</sup> James R. and Helen built their home, called Hollycroft, on the property. Then, in or around 1900, Harry Garfield and his wife Belle Mason Garfield commissioned their home, Eastlawn, on the property abutting the east side of the Lawnfield. Belle’s mother had purchased this land from the Garfields’ neighbor, E.T.C. Aldrich.<sup>19</sup> A study of the 1904 landscape of the Garfield estate produced by the Bureau of Forestry states that after the turn of the century, the farm contained a total of 240 acres.<sup>20</sup> It is likely that this report included the acreage of the homes of James R. and Harry Garfield in this total.

Just as James A. Garfield created a unified appearance throughout the landscape of his farm by facing old buildings with facades to match new buildings, Lucretia sought to aesthetically integrate the three family homes and other structures being built. The stonework on the memorial library (constructed in 1885), the gasholder (constructed 1885), and the base of the windmill (constructed 1894) resembled one another, creating a common visual theme throughout the landscape.<sup>21</sup> Lucretia, Helen, and Belle also worked together to commission a

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<sup>17</sup> Aslet, 87.

<sup>18</sup> Cultural Landscape Report, Lawnfield, James A. Garfield National Historic Site (Denver: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1994), 32.

<sup>19</sup> Lucretia R. Garfield to Helen N. Garfield, February 18, 1900, container 26, James Rudolph Garfield Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress, as cited in Cultural Landscape Report, 59.

<sup>20</sup> Wesley J. Gardner, “Recommendations for Forest Planting Upon the Garfield Farm (“Lawnfield”) at Mentor, Lake County, Ohio,” September 15-16, 1904, 1.

<sup>21</sup> Cultural Landscape Report, 31.

landscape design for the property, presumably with the goal of tying the three homes together in a formal manner.<sup>22</sup>

In his 1900 plan for the Garfield estate (seen in Figures A and B), Pittsburgh landscape architect J. Wilkinson Elliott proposed the creation of curvilinear paths leading from the main house to the carriage house and connecting Lawnfield and Hollycroft.<sup>23</sup> Figure B shows the northern portion of Elliott's plan for the Garfield estate. The design shows the carriage house (labeled "barn" and located just south of the chicken yard), as well as the chicken yard, orchard, barns, and formal gardens with a shed and greenhouse on the site where a tenant house was instead built. Although this version of the plan does not show them, Elliott proposed additional ornamental screen plants lining the west side of the lane that led from the main residence to Hollycroft, located northwest of the tenant house. Figure A shows the plan for the southern portion of the Garfield estate. The carriage house (labeled "barn") divides the sphere of the landscape, where most of the utilitarian work would be done, from the domestic sphere of the landscape, which contains the main

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<sup>22</sup> Helen Garfield to Lucretia Garfield, March 14, 1900, container 26, James Rudolph Garfield Papers, Manuscript Divison, Library of Congress, as cited in Cultural Landscape Report, 37.

<sup>23</sup> According to the Cultural Landscape Report, Elliot was listed in the 1900 Pittsburgh City Directory as a landscape architect. Elliott designed landscapes for two country estates prior to creating the landscape plan for Lawnfield in 1900. He continued designing until around 1910. Cultural Landscape Report, 37; The Cultural Landscape Foundation, "Landscape Designs by J. Wilkinson Elliott," <http://tclf.org/sites/default/files/J.%20Wilkinson%20Elliott%20Resources.pdf> (accessed March 4, 2014). Elliott also planned a scenic park for the city of Massillon, Ohio. A series of articles in *The Massillon Evening Independent* chronicle the plans to build the park as well as the alleged controversy surrounding the city's budget for the park. See "What about Sippo Park?," June 1, 1908 (p. 4 c. 3); "Council Disowns Sippo Park at Tuesday Meeting," August 21, 1912 (p. 1 c. 7); and "Council Receives Modification of Sippo Park Grant," May 18, 1915 (p. 1 c. 2) in *The Massillon Evening Independent*. It is not known why Elliott did not include Eastlawn in this plan; The Cultural Landscape Report speculates that Elliott may have prepared two separate plans for the Garfield estate because Hollycroft sat on land owned by Lucretia Garfield, while Eastlawn was owned by Mrs. Mason, Harry Garfield's mother-in-law (37). I have not been able to locate further evidence for the existence of this second landscape design plan.

residence, the icehouse, the windmill, and the campaign office. Ornamental plantings are concentrated at the entrance to the property along Mentor Avenue.

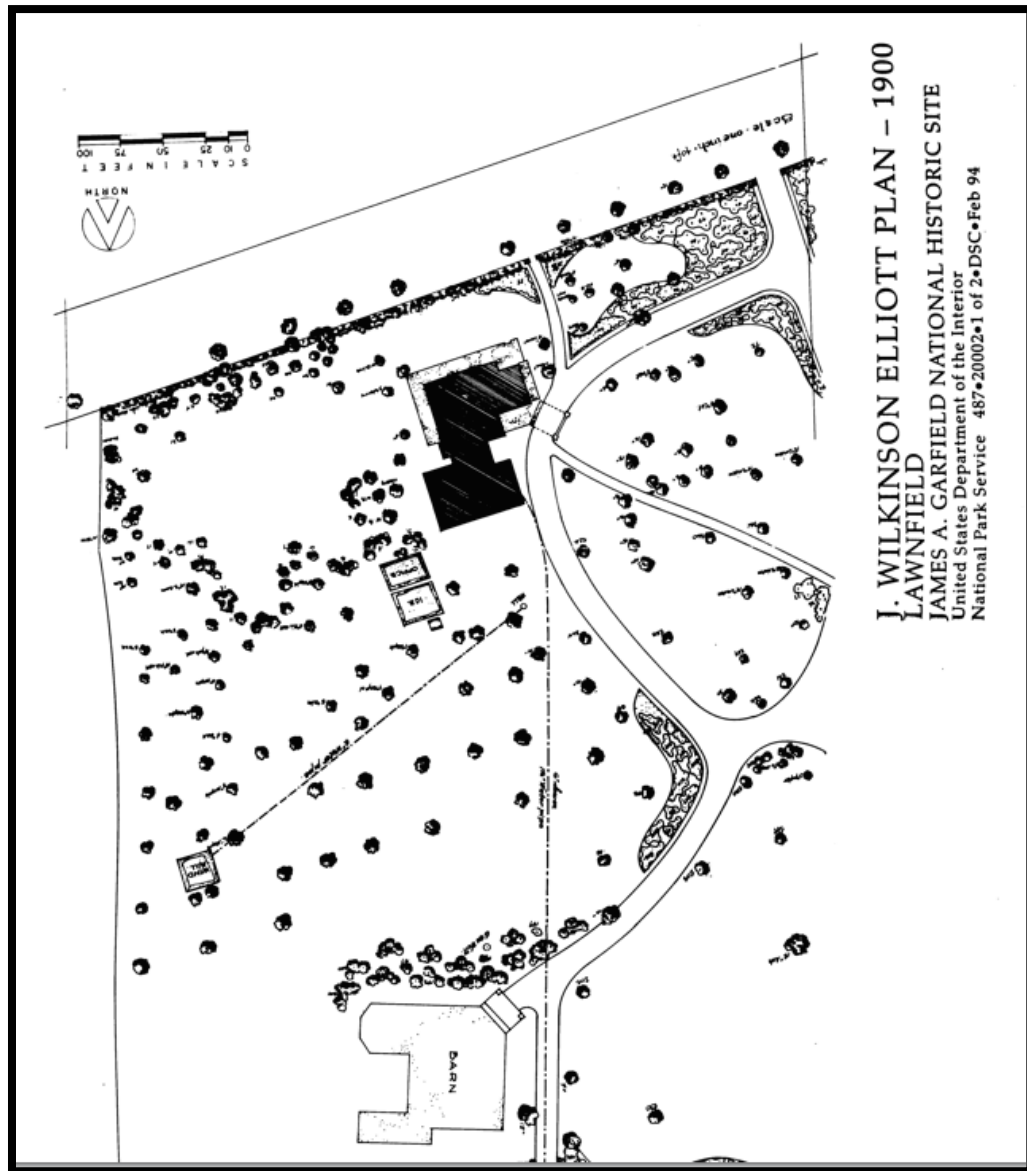


Figure A: A portion of Elliott's 1900 landscape design for the Garfield estate. This figure shows the southern part of the property. The u-shaped barn (carriage house) at the bottom of the drawing also appears on Figure B. As printed in the Cultural Landscape Report, 109.

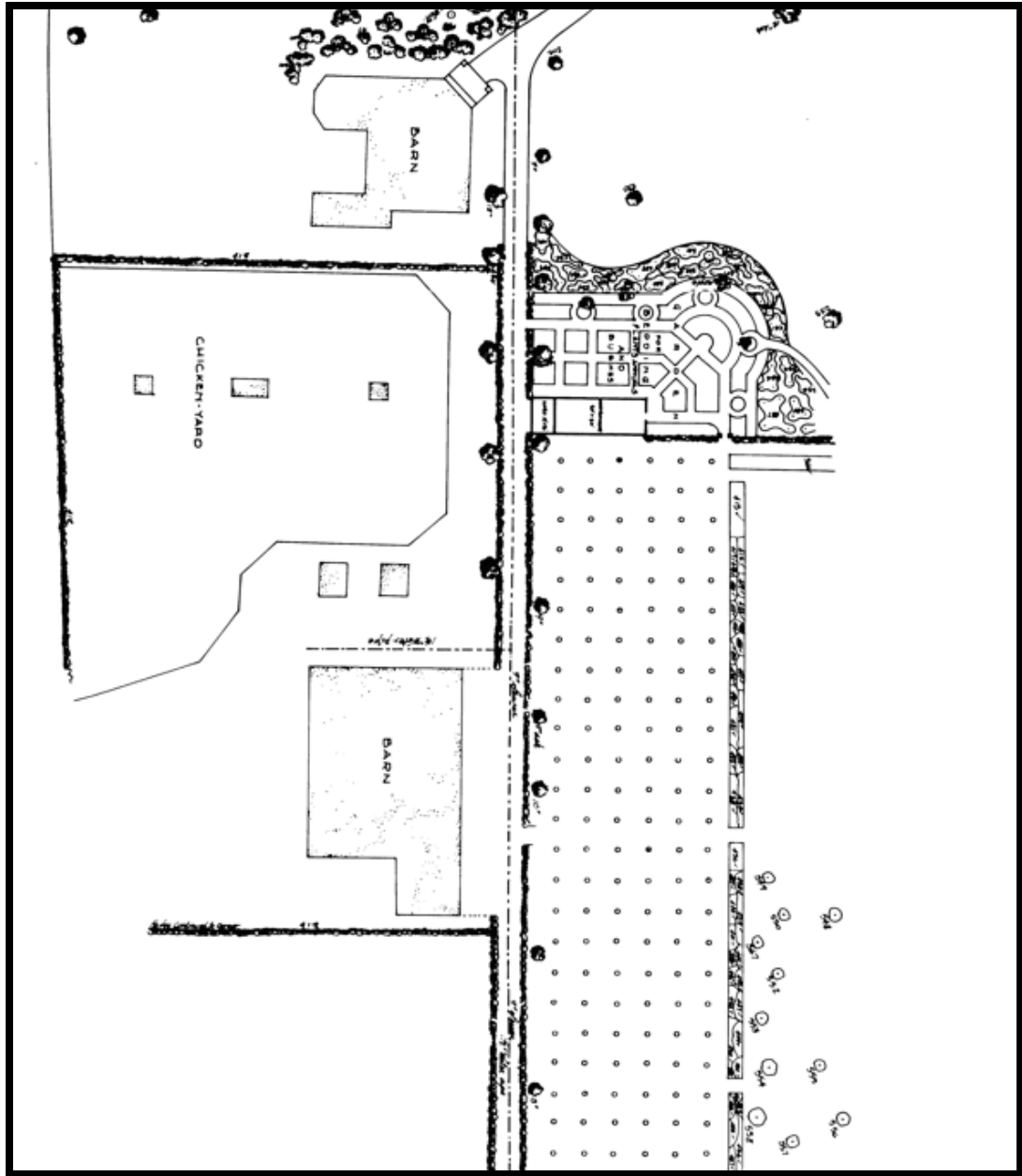


Figure B: A portion of Elliott's 1900 landscape design for the Garfield estate. This figure shows the northern part of the property. The u-shaped barn (carriage house) at the top of the drawing also appears on Figure A. As printed in the Cultural Landscape Report, 109.

The sense of access and welcome that was present in the landscape between 1876 and 1880 gave way to an increasing sense of privacy as the farm became an estate (see Figures C and E). Photographs from Knight's 1903 publication and from the mid-1890s suggest that Lucretia implemented some of Elliott's suggestion for plantings, or that she already had plantings screening structures such as the windmill. One photo taken facing the entrance to Lawnfield from Mentor Avenue (see Figure E) shows imposing columns marking either side of the main driveway. By 1900, trees lining Mentor Avenue obscured the property from outside view.



Figure C: The interurban rail along Mentor Avenue in front of the Garfield home in 1900, from the Cultural Landscape Report, 79.



Figure D: Mentor Avenue in front of the Garfield home, c. 1880, as printed in Cultural Landscape Report, 79.



Entrance to Garfield Estate at Mentor, O.

Figure E: "Entrance to Garfield Estate at Mentor, O.," Knight, *Country Estates of Cleveland Men* (1903), 6. The columns pictured also matched the stonework on the base of the windmill, on the gasholder, and the Memorial Library.

At some point after 1900, the picket fence along the street was replaced by a wire fence, on which screen plants grew.<sup>24</sup> By the 1880s, “a green barrier was . . . preferable to an impenetrable wall,” as it “[did] not irritate the public by a too conspicuous and candid desire to be private.”<sup>25</sup> Limited access and plant screenings ensured that country estates remained exclusive and that their aesthetics were to be enjoyed only by residents and their guests.

The most splendid views of Lawnfield were meant to be observed from inside the grounds. “Someday the stables will be moved back and put in such shape as to be well worth a step to the back door to see them, to say nothing of the handsome grove just growing up on the west lawn,” envisioned Joseph Stanley-Brown in 1881. Stanley-Brown was President Garfield’s former personal secretary and husband of Garfield’s daughter, Mollie.<sup>26</sup> His vision of an elegant stable for the estate’s horses came to fruition in 1894 in the form of the carriage house (shown in Figure F), which contained stable space. Although this structure was utilitarian in function, Lucretia recognized it as being an attractive feature in the new landscape that she was creating.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Cultural Landscape Report, 43.

<sup>25</sup> Hill, 99; Jessie Frothingham, as quoted in Hill, 99.

<sup>26</sup> Joseph Stanley-Brown to Lucretia Garfield, May 22, 1881, James A. Garfield Family Papers, MS 4575, reel 1, WRHS.

<sup>27</sup> Lucretia Garfield to Abram Garfield, April 28, 1893 and May 14, 1893, Container 2, Lucretia Rudolph Garfield Papers, Manuscript Division, LOC.



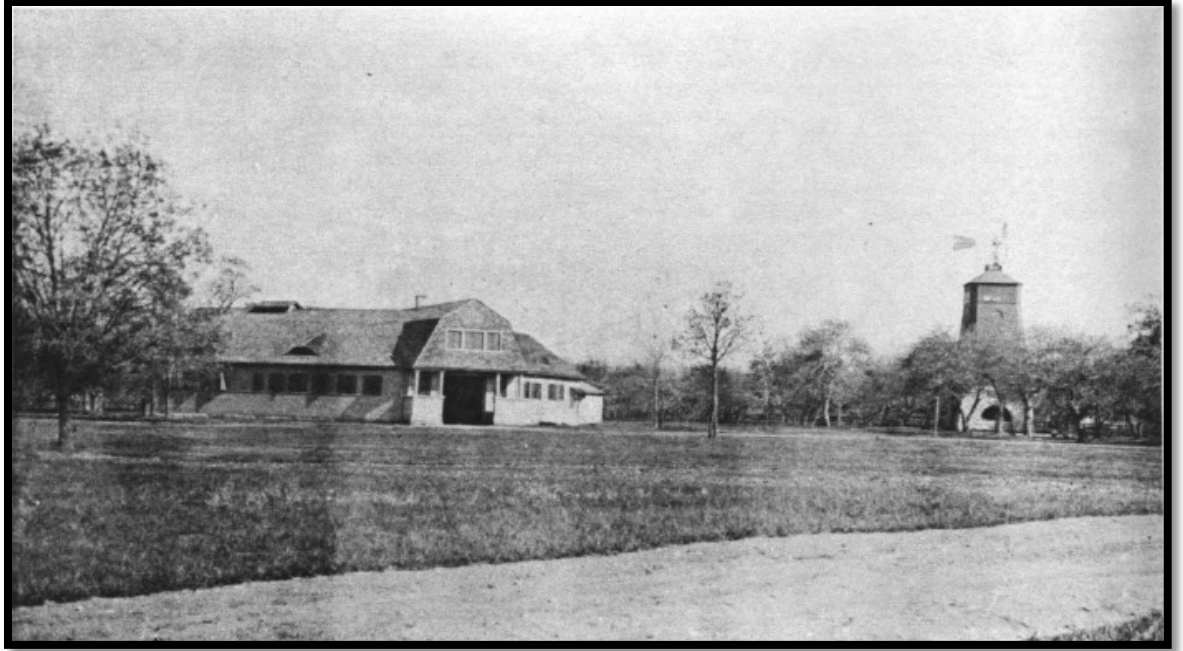


Figure F: Carriage House, stable, and windmill, c. 1896, as printed in Cultural Landscape Report, 89.

A trip that Lucretia and Mollie took to Europe in 1887 may have inspired some of the changes in the landscape of the Mentor farm. Lucretia wrote to her brother, Joseph Rudolph, commenting on the “thoroughness and neatness” of the estates that she saw in England.<sup>28</sup> She wrote,

From the grounds and parks I have noticed, I have gotten an idea about planting shrubs and small ornamental trees which helps solve the problem of taking care of the grass. The grass plots are left quite clear and the shrubs are gathered into groups, on borders, in beds, which are filled in closely with shrubs and any left spaces are used for flowers.<sup>29</sup>

Some aspects of Elliott’s plan, as shown in Figures A and B, reflect Lucretia’s “idea.” Elliott proposed planting shrubs and ornamental trees throughout the property,

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<sup>28</sup> Lucretia Garfield to Joe Rudolph, December 27, 1887, James A. Garfield Family Papers, MS4575, reel 1, WRHS.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

especially along lanes and driveways. A photograph from Knight's book depicts the farm lane (Figure G), which led from the south end of the property to the north, lined with hedges.<sup>30</sup> A photo of the east lawn of the residence (Figure H), taken during the same period, shows young ornamental trees and shrubs dotting a corner of the lawn.



Figure G: A farm lane, from Knight, *Country Estates of Cleveland Men* (1903), 29.

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<sup>30</sup> Knight, 29.



Figure H: View of the Garfield home from the east lawn. From Knight's *Country Estates of Cleveland Men* (1903), 28.

Elliot's plan shows other such trees scattered across the landscape, in contradiction to Lucretia's statement about keeping the lawns clear for easy maintenance. Some of these trees may predate the 1900 landscape design.<sup>31</sup> Elliott's plan reflects some European influence in its carefully placed hedges and formal gardens, but it also represents the philosophy of landscape architects such as Andrew Jackson Downing (1815-1852), who proposed that American country estates should to be grand, yet also conform to rural American contexts.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> See James A. Garfield National Historic Site's study on the site's trees.

<sup>32</sup> Downing's writings emphasized the importance of the rural, or agricultural setting in America. *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850) is divided into sections on rural cottages, farmhouses, and country houses, or villas. "... it is impossible rightly to understand how to design such a dwelling [a country house or villa], without knowing something of the locality where it is to be placed. The scenery, amid which it is to stand, if it is of a strongly marked character, will often help to suggest or modify the character of the architecture," Downing wrote. A.J. Downing, *The Architecture of Country Houses*, with new introduction by George B. Tatum (New York: Da Capo Press, 1968 reprint), 271. For

As Lucretia made over the landscape of Lawnfield, she reinforced the spatial hierarchy—in which utilitarian structures and grounds were separated from the leisure grounds in the sphere of the house—that James A. Garfield began to establish between 1876 and 1880.<sup>33</sup> The house, ornamental plantings, and the windmill and carriage house occupied the southern portion of the property. This space took on a suburban appearance, the focal points being the columns at the front entrance, the large residence, and tasteful landscaping.<sup>34</sup>

In 1893, Lucretia moved the barns farther north on the property.<sup>35</sup> Positioned directly behind the carriage house, the barns were concealed from view from the house. Beyond the carriage house lay the chicken yard, orchards, barn and barnyards, sheds, gardens, and fields for planting. Whereas between 1876 and 1880 the utilitarian and domestic spheres of the landscape existed in relative proximity to each other, in the 1890s, these two spheres became more distinct and separate.

Agricultural practices continued at Lawnfield into the early twentieth century.<sup>36</sup> Although the 1900 landscape design linked Lawnfield, Hollycroft, and perhaps Eastlawn, each property maintained an identity as a somewhat

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more on Downing, see Aslet, 28-29. For more on European influence on American estates, see Aslet 63-83.

<sup>33</sup> Here I am exploring the spheres of utility and domesticity as they would have existed for Lucretia during this time period. These spaces would have held different meanings for the servants, gardeners, and farm hands whom she employed.

<sup>34</sup> Cultural Landscape Report, 34.

<sup>35</sup> Lucretia Garfield to Abram Garfield, June 4, 1893, Container 2, Lucretia Rudolph Garfield Papers, Manuscript Division, LOC. The relocation of the barns is also represented by a partial site plan completed around 1895. See Cultural Landscape Report, 105.

<sup>36</sup> The Federal U.S. Census, Productions of Agriculture is not available for 1890 or 1900. In 1891, Lucretia makes reference to “over a hundred little chicks” hatching on the farm. She purchased an incubator in preparation for “a hundred or two more.” She also references plum, cherry, pear, apple, and peach trees. “Peas, onions, lettuce, and radishes are making resolute effort to grow, and the oats are struggling into faint greenness. Corn is being planted in the hope that it rains . . .” Lucretia to Abram, May 14, 1891, Container 2, Lucretia Rudolph Garfield Papers, Manuscript Division, LOC. See also Lawnfield Farm Records, MS 4574, WRHS.

independent estate.<sup>37</sup> Lucretia's brother Joseph Rudolph took over management of Lawnfield's farm operations from Robison after the Garfields moved to the White House, and he continued in this role after Lucretia and the children returned to Mentor. Rudolph oversaw financial matters and farm operations, although not without substantial input and direction from his sister. Lucretia remained involved in choices regarding what to grow, what animals to raise, and the improvements made to the property.<sup>38</sup> She also consulted with her sons, asking them to approve plans of improvements to be made. Prior to the 1893 relocation of the barns, Lucretia wrote to her youngest son, Abram,

We do want to move the barns next spring and if I can by any possibility manage the cost of building a horse barn we will undertake it. He [Joseph Stanley-Brown] and Uncle Joe have reduced the plans to such order that movers, stone masons, and carpenters can make estimates, and we want all the boys to consider plans with reference to making the place as attractive as possible.<sup>39</sup>

In September 1904, Wesley J. Gardner, Forest Assistant for the United States Bureau of Forestry, conducted a survey of the Garfield farm and made recommendations for planting a forest on part of the property. His report reveals that the Garfields sought to have the northern portion of the farm—the land lying north of the railroad tracks and containing one hundred, forty-seven acres—planted with trees. The Garfields asked Gardner to make his recommendations so that they

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<sup>37</sup> Farm Production 1903-1905, Container 99, Lucretia Rudolph Garfield Papers, Manuscript Division, LOC; Agricultural production books from 1903-1905 account for crops produced at Lawnfield, Eastlawn, and Hollycroft, as well as the amount of money made off of their sale. Lawnfield consistently produced more than the other two estates.

<sup>38</sup> See letters: Lucretia to Joe Rudolph, December 27, 1887; Lucretia to Lida Rudolph, January 3, 1896; Lucretia to Lida Rudolph, January 6, 1896, James A. Garfield Family Papers MS 4575, reels 1 and 2, WRHS.

<sup>39</sup> Lucretia Garfield to Abram, November 13, 1892, Container 2, Lucretia Rudolph Garfield Papers, Manuscript Division, LOC.

might establish “a plantation of valuable timber trees,” which would bring more profit than the farm’s grain crops.<sup>40</sup> Gardner recommended planting trees that would be expected to grow quickly, and that would yield an income within fifteen to fifty years.<sup>41</sup> He also recommended only planting one hundred, twenty-seven acres of the total parcel, as the other approximately twenty acres would require clearing already present trees, a costly task.<sup>42</sup> Gardner’s survey and recommendations indicate that the Garfields hoped to reduce their arable farmland, while still making a profit.

In March 1905, Harry Garfield, the President’s eldest son, wrote a letter to H.P. Winter, the Garfields’ horticulturalist.<sup>43</sup> Harry forwarded to Winter garden plans from Lucretia, who, by the early twentieth century was spending the majority of her time at her second home in Pasadena, California. Harry instructed Winter to begin planting clover ground cover in areas being cultivated with other crops. Harry also requested that Winter nearly eliminate all vegetables (cabbage, carrots, parsnips, turnips, squashes, peppers, and pumpkins) being grown in the gardens, with the exception of a few of each plant. Harry then referred to Gardner’s report, stating that he desired to follow the recommendations for foresting as closely as possible.<sup>44</sup>

It is not clear whether the Garfields implemented the recommendations exactly as Gardner advised; however, both the forestry survey and Harry’s letter

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<sup>40</sup> Wesley J. Gardner, “Recommendations for Forest Planting Upon the Garfield Farm (“Lawnfield”) at Mentor, Lake County, Ohio,” September 15-16, 1904, 5. LCHS.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> Harry A. Garfield to H.P. Winter, March 4, 1905, Container 124, Harry Augustus Garfield Papers, Manuscript Division, LOC.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

illustrate that by the early twentieth century, the Garfields were decreasing the scale of their agricultural operations. Implicit here is the sense that Lucretia was altering the landscape in acknowledgement of her inability, as well as her brother's inability to maintain an extensive agricultural operation as they grew older, as Lucretia began to spend more time in California, and as the children moved away or obtained jobs that limited the time they could devote to the family farm.

Lucretia balanced the function of the estate as a farm and family home with her desire to honor her husband. She made it clear that she intended to maintain the Mentor farm as a testament to James A. Garfield's desire for a rural home for his family. In an 1881 letter from Joseph Stanley-Brown to Lucretia, Stanley-Brown offered suggestions and modifications for Lucretia's plans to enlarge her home and create a memorial library to house her husband's personal and political papers. Stanley-Brown wrote, "The general plan I shall not criticize . . . If memories of the past incline you to the adoption of a scheme that avoids the changing of things that were done in accordance with the wishes of another, then all my comments are withdrawn."<sup>45</sup> This letter gives a clear sense that the changes going on at the Mentor farm had a very personal meaning and purpose.

Although Lucretia made many changes to the landscape, I believe that she also maintained certain aspects of the landscape in keeping with what she thought her husband would have wanted. The most obvious aspect of continuity in the landscape of the Garfield farm between 1876 and 1905 is its agricultural function, despite the decline in cultivation after the turn of the century. Although Lucretia

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<sup>45</sup> Joseph Stanley-Brown to Lucretia Garfield, May 22, 1881, James A. Garfield Family Papers, MS4575, reel 1, WRHS.

aspired for the farm to be seen as a country estate, it continued to function as a working farm intended to supply some household needs and also provide produce for market.<sup>46</sup> There also continued to be a staff of paid laborers and servants, and it is likely that they grew in number between 1885 and the turn of the century.<sup>47</sup>

Lucretia also kept alive James A. Garfield's dream of having one of the best-blooded dairy herds in the area. In an 1896 letter to her sister-in-law, Lucretia noted that she was very anxious to have one of the best herds of cows in northern Ohio.<sup>48</sup> By the early 1900s, Lucretia had a herd of sixteen dairy cows. According to the dairy report for 1905, Lawnfield's dairy herd produced 103,512 pounds, equivalent to 12,295 gallons of milk.<sup>49</sup> By 1905, other agricultural activities at Lawnfield were dwindling. Nevertheless, dairy production at the estate during this period was much higher than it had been between 1876 and 1880.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> On January 12, 1896, Lucretia instructed her brother Joe and his wife Lida to keep track of market prices of butter, so as to be sure that they did not charge two women, Mrs. Mason, and Mary Black, more than market price. Then Lucretia commented, "If we are going to continue having so much [butter], I wish we could find a purchaser who would give a steady price . . ." Lucretia to Lida Rudolph, January 12, 1896, James A. Garfield Family Papers MS 4575, reel 1, WRHS. The farm also supplied Lucretia with butter while she spent time in Cleveland and Washington, D.C. Throughout the winter of 1896, she repeatedly requested that Joe and Lida send butter to her while she was away. See Lucretia to Lida, January 12, February 15, and March 19, 1896, James A. Garfield Family Papers MS 4575, reel 1, WRHS.

<sup>47</sup> See references to the farmers in letters such as Lucretia to Abram Garfield, June 12, 1892, Lucretia Rudolph Garfield Papers, Library of Congress Manuscript Division, Washington, D.C. According to the 1900 Census, there were also seven boarders living at Lawnfield and Hollycroft (three servants, one dairy woman, one governess, a housekeeper, and one woman to look over the nursery). U.S. Bureau of the Census, *1900 United States Federal Census*, Mentor, Lake, Ohio, page 13B, [www.ancestry.com](http://www.ancestry.com) (accessed January 28, 2014).

<sup>48</sup> Lucretia Garfield to Lida Rudolph, January 6, 1896, James A. Garfield Family Papers, MS4575, reel 2, WRHS.

<sup>49</sup> Dairy Report for the Year Ending Dec. 1, 1905, written by Henry Winter, Lawnfield horticulturalist, in 1905 farm production book, Container 99, Lucretia Rudolph Garfield Papers, Manuscript Division, LOC.

<sup>50</sup> Personal receipts for the Garfields' account with Tuthill Creamery indicate that at the height of milk production between 1876 and 1880 (January-December, 1880), the family sold 48,889 pounds to the creamery. While we do not know how much milk the Garfields reserved to drink at home, it surely would not have been nearly as much as was produced in 1905. I calculated the amount of milk sold in 1880 by adding the amounts recorded on Tuthill Creamery receipts for each month of 1880.



The landscape of Lawnfield took on the identity of a memorial, not as a place of pilgrimage for mourners of the late president, but as a testament to Garfield's dedication to his family and to his varied personal interests.<sup>51</sup> In 1892, Lucretia wrote in a letter to her son Abram, "I somehow feel that the house here is a much more interesting monument to your father's memory than anything that can be built merely as a monument, and I want it to be worthy of him."<sup>52</sup>

Lucretia's decision to implement parts of Elliott's landscape proposal, while rejecting other parts, proves her desire to maintain a landscape memorializing President Garfield. Lucretia approved the creation of Elliott's proposed curvilinear path leading to the new carriage house; however, she also chose to maintain the historic path, which in the 1870s led from the north side of the house to the far north end of the property.<sup>53</sup> In 1880, Americans had traveled in large delegations to the Mentor home of the presidential candidate. Lucretia's decision to maintain the lane on which these delegations had walked to the house shows her recognition of the importance of remembering and honoring the landscape as a site of political ritual and celebration during her husband's campaign for the Presidency.

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For some months, two receipts exist. For other months, only one receipt was present. I am not sure if receipts are missing, and as a result, this evidence is not completely reliable. See Tuthill Creamery receipts, James A. Garfield Papers, reels 139-140, WRHS.

<sup>51</sup> As changes were taking place in and around Lawnfield, a formal effort to memorialize President Garfield was underway in Cleveland. In May 1890, citizens, military officers, and government officials gathered to dedicate the Garfield Memorial in the city's Lakeview Cemetery. The mausoleum contained the late president's casket, and soon become a place of pilgrimage for Garfield mourners. *Willoughby Independent*, June 6, 1890.

<sup>52</sup> Lucretia Garfield to Abram Garfield, November 13, 1892, Container 2, Lucretia Rudolph Garfield Papers, Manuscript Division, LOC. The memorial library contained Garfield's books, as well as personal and presidential papers.

<sup>53</sup> See historic maps in the Cultural Landscape Report. Topographic Survey dating to 1924, and J. Wilkinson Elliott Plan of 1900, pages 113 and 109.

Throughout the landscape's evolution, its sense of place as a family home persisted. The estate also continued to function as a farm. However, the landscape also reflected common characteristics of American country homes, and took on new meaning as a memorial to the life of President Garfield.

The historic integrity of the modern day landscape of James A. Garfield National Historic Site lies primarily in the survival of numerous landscape features from the home's estate period. However, as this chapter and the two previous chapters have illustrated, the changing landscape of the Garfield home is a reflection of changing personal tastes and desires. In addition, numerous intangible meanings and values rooted in cultural contexts resonate throughout its features. Therefore, visitors to James A. Garfield National Historic Site should be prompted to think about the landscape not only as what it is today, but also as it has been, and perhaps, what it will become.

## Conclusion

The landscape of James and Lucretia Garfield's Mentor, Ohio home no longer resembles a farm, and expanding suburbs have nearly consumed the sprawling property on which the family's country estate sat. However, what remains of the farm and the later estate – an approximate eight acres – is enough to prompt visitors at James A. Garfield NHS to express interest in the historical forms, functions, and meanings of the landscape.

The three layers of landscape I have explored in Chapters One through Three relate to interpretive themes that NPS staff identified during long-range interpretive planning in 2013. James A. Garfield's presidential campaign is a central component of the site's current interpretive narrative. However, critical analyses of political representations of the farmscape and of Garfield as a farmer are left unexplored at the site. Illustrations and descriptions of Garfield and his farm found in 1880 campaign biographies and other political ephemera reveal the late nineteenth-century convergence of traditional agrarianism and agricultural progress, a cultural context that can enhance understanding of the site's historical significance. The seemingly conflicting cultural value systems of tradition and progress shaped representations of the Republican candidate, in which Garfield and his farm were often portrayed as the epitome of *both* traditional and progressive values and practices.

The contrast between the period's agrarian ideals and agricultural progress were not only manifest in political media. James and Lucretia Garfield navigated these dual value systems in their day-to-day lives. Scholarship on the new rural

history contextualizes Garfield's farming practices and supports the argument that like many northern farmers in the late nineteenth century, Garfield created his own blend of traditional and progressive farming. His agricultural practices were advanced; however, the meanings he and his family attached to their farm and its surrounding rural landscape were rooted in the values of agrarianism.

Although the "evolution of Garfield's home and farm" as "representative of the period's agrarian ideals as contrasted with growing urbanization" is a main interpretive theme at James A. Garfield NHS, site interpreters do not thoroughly address Garfield's mediation of changing agricultural values.<sup>1</sup> But, Garfield's farming practices shaped the form of the landscape between 1876 and 1880. Thus, deeper analysis of this story, as I have presented in Chapter Two, facilitates increased understanding of the historic landscape.

The interpretive theme of the evolution of the farm in the context of urbanization/suburbanization also encompasses the period after President Garfield's assassination. Between 1885 and 1905, Lucretia Garfield altered the landscape of the farm as she and her children created a country estate similar to those that wealthy Clevelanders built in Lake County. Despite substantial changes to the Garfield farm, it retained meaning as a family home. The landscape also continued to function as a working farm, though agricultural production decreased after the turn of the twentieth century. The interpretive theme of memorialization is also pertinent to this time period. As Lucretia made changes to the home and the

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<sup>1</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, Long Range Interpretive Plan for James A. Garfield National Historic Site, prepared by James A. Garfield National Historic Site, the Midwest Region of the National Park Service, and Harpers Ferry Center for Interpretive Planning (Draft June 24, 2013), 8-9.

landscape, she sent subtle messages regarding her desire to maintain certain landscape forms, functions, and meanings in honor of her husband.

Examining the multi-layered nature of the landscape of the Garfields' Mentor home broadens understanding of a place that continues to hold significance in the consciousness of Americans. As one of over four hundred federally designated lands that make up the National Park system, James A. Garfield NHS receives visitors from down the street and across the country. A deeper understanding of the landscape of the home of the twentieth president is crucial to the communication of the site's significance to visitors and to the continued stewardship of this valuable cultural resource.

Although there are clear links between the three layers of landscape I explore in this thesis and James A. Garfield NHS's main interpretive themes, the history of Garfield's farm and the twentieth president's identity as a farmer remains under-interpreted for public audiences. The landscape stories in this thesis provide the historical underpinning for a broader interpretation of the politicization, agricultural function, and evolution of the landscape at James A. Garfield NHS. However, the question of how to effectively communicate these stories to visitors remains. In the Applications of Research section that follows, I will explore an interpretive method called deep mapping, which has the potential to enhance landscape interpretation and draw connections between the site's main interpretive themes to create a more complete story of the site's historic landscape.

## **Application of Research: “Be Relevant or Become a Relic,”<sup>1</sup> Deep Maps in Historic Site Interpretation**

Historic landscapes are valuable resources, and the experience of the tangible landscape can be a gateway to the intangible themes and stories at James A. Garfield National Historic Site. Catherine Howett summarizes the importance of historic landscapes when she writes,

Developing a curiosity about how places have come to be what they are is the beginning of a proper sense of history, connecting [the public] with what has happened in the past. Historical awareness and understanding, in turn, make it possible for [them] to make informed judgments of quality and significance related to places that concern [them].<sup>2</sup>

In other words, cultivating stronger connections between visitors and the landscapes of historic sites results in a stronger sense of history and fosters investment—financial, emotional, or otherwise—in cultural and historical resources.

Despite the importance of landscape interpretation, the task comes with significant challenges. Here, I will note the challenges that scholars and public history professionals have associated with interpreting historic landscapes, briefly analyze current landscape interpretation at James A. Garfield National Historic Site,

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<sup>1</sup> This title references David L. Larsen’s “Be Relevant or Become a Relic,” originally presented at the George Wright Society Conference *Journal of Interpretation Research* 7, no. 1 (April 19, 2001), 21, 23. Larsen argues that “Interpretation has the responsibility to provoke new feelings and new thinking.” He concludes with a poignant statement about interpretation in the twenty-first century, “We face ever greater acceleration of change and an ever more diverse public. Can your resource afford to communicate only one meaning . . .? If your resource does not clearly communicate a variety of meanings and values that engender care for, what will it be like in fifty years? One hundred? Two hundred? Forever is a very long time. Interpretation can help. Be relevant or become a relic.”

<sup>2</sup> Catherine Howett, “Grounds for Interpretation: The Landscape Context of Historic House Museums,” in Jessica Foy Doyle, ed., *Interpreting Historic House Museums* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002), 112.

and explore one potential method of landscape interpretation that may overcome the challenges at hand.

Howett articulates the first major challenge of landscape interpretation in her essay. She explains that changes to a landscape over time compromise the ability to interpret how that landscape actually looked, and how people experienced it in the past. As a result, landscape stories are often left untold.<sup>3</sup> Unlike houses and furnishings, which can survive over long periods of time, and, in some cases, remain largely unchanged, historic landscapes involve living materials and are often victim to irreversible change or decay.<sup>4</sup>

A second challenge of landscape interpretation lies in how to apply the theories and methods of landscape studies scholarship to public history practice.<sup>5</sup> I established at the beginning of this thesis that cultural landscape scholars hold that landscapes must be understood as multilayered subjects. Landscapes possess physical characteristics, but are also embedded with cultural and personal meanings. Scholars have integrated these tenets into landscape research, but public historians have been slow to incorporate these principles in the realm of historic site interpretation.

Howett suggests that practitioners of public history—specifically interpreters at historic houses—find it difficult to overcome the challenges of interpreting dynamic landscapes and applying cultural landscape theory to

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<sup>3</sup> Catherine Howett, “Grounds for Interpretation: The Landscape Context of Historic House Museums,” in Jessica Foy Doyle, ed., *Interpreting Historic House Museums* (Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press, 2002), 120.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

interpretation because they strive, in vain, to recreate historic landscapes with the aim of making them “absolutely verifiable.”<sup>6</sup> I argue that it is crucial that interpreters and public history practitioners stop trying to reproduce or revive landscapes as they existed during one moment in time. Instead, they should embrace the multilayered character of historic landscapes.

Larger issues facing museums and historic sites in the twenty-first century compound the challenges of landscape interpretation. It is an unfortunate reality that some visitors leave museums and historic sites feeling alienated, uninspired, or dissatisfied. We must realize that visitor expectations are changing. Many twenty-first century museum-goers want to be active participants in learning, rather than passive recipients of historical information.<sup>7</sup> In “Participatory Design and the Future of Museums,” Nina Simon outlines five of the public’s most common complaints and frustrations about cultural institutions. According to Simon, visitors lament that:

1. Cultural institutions are irrelevant to their lives.
2. The institution never changes—they have visited once and they have no reason to go back.
3. The authoritative voice of the institution doesn’t include their view or give them context for understanding what’s presented.
4. The institution is not a creative place where they can express themselves and contribute to history.
5. The institution is not a comfortable social place for them to talk about ideas with friends and strangers.<sup>8</sup>

Simon’s findings ought to resonate in all discussions about museum and historic site interpretation. We should not only approach landscape interpretation with the goal

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid., 125.

<sup>7</sup> For more on informal learning in museums, see Chapter Four: Informal Learning, in Graham Black, *Transforming Museums in the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 77-107.

<sup>8</sup> Nina Simon, “Participatory Design and the Future of Museums,” in *Letting Go?: Sharing Authority in a User-Generated World* (Philadelphia: Pew Center for Arts and Heritage, 2011), 21-22.



of representing multiple layers of stories and multiple temporal contexts; we must shift landscape interpretation while also addressing the more general needs and expectations of visitors. In light of the concerns presented by Simon, the challenge of interpreting historic landscapes also encompasses issues of relevancy, static presentation of the past, lack of context, desire for creative expression, and the need to encourage conversation.

The landscape that audiences see when they visit James A. Garfield National Historic Site contains physical remains of two periods of historical significance (roughly 1876-1880 and 1885-1899). Many visitors arrive with little prior knowledge about James A. Garfield, about the history of his Mentor, Ohio home or the region in which it is located. It is not likely, therefore, that they will be conscious that the tangible landscape of 2014 is a manifestation of multiple landscapes entrenched in various temporal and cultural contexts.<sup>9</sup>

The current landscape of James A. Garfield National Historic Site does not evoke the sense of a nineteenth century working farm, nor does it look as it did when Garfield was alive. What were once crop fields in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries are now residential neighborhoods. Garfield's campaign office still stands where it did in 1880, but it now rests in the shadow of the imposing Memorial Library and beneath the bowed branches of the European Weeping Beech tree, both of which were not present during his presidential campaign. Other buildings that Garfield would not recognize include the tenant house, carriage house, gasholder, and windmill. Elements of the 1876-1880 landscape -- including

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<sup>9</sup> This observation is based on the personal experience of the author as a Park Ranger and volunteer interpreter at James A. Garfield National Historic Site, 2009-2013.

the lane and a barn – remain. Museum exhibits in the Garfield house and wayside exhibits throughout the property interpret the landscape.<sup>10</sup> The National Park Service installed both the indoor and outdoor exhibits when the agency undertook a multi-million-dollar restoration of the house and grounds in the mid 1990s.

The wayside exhibits at James A. Garfield National Historic Site meet the four criteria outlined by the National Park Service (waysides should interpret a significant landscape feature with a well-documented story; they should contain at least one graphic that “illuminates the story,” (or stories) told at the park or historic site; they should exist in a “safe, accessible place for visitors;” and a successful wayside exhibit and its surrounding landscape should be well maintained).<sup>11</sup> However, they are inherently limited as an interpretive medium. The National Park service guide to producing wayside exhibits admits that waysides are not ideal for telling complex or dynamic stories.<sup>12</sup> They can only represent a few of the characteristics of historic landscapes, and they are not interactive. These exhibits do not challenge visitors to think critically about the landscape by proposing questions or presenting issues that link the site’s history to modern day issues, do not provide opportunities for visitors to interact, and do not offer deep historical context. Nor do they have the ability to tell new stories to returning visitors.

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<sup>10</sup> A wayside is a low-profile exhibit that gives visitors site-specific information about landscape features that they can see. “The low-profile wayside exhibit is a caption on the landscape. It is not designed to stand alone any more than a caption for a photograph is intended to be read by itself. It is incomplete until it is placed within the environment it is meant to interpret.” From National Park Service, “Wayside Exhibits: A Guide to Developing Outdoor Interpretive Exhibits,” (Harpers Ferry, WV: Harpers Ferry Center, 2009), 11. The visitor center includes exhibits that provide biographical information on James A. Garfield. They do not interpret the landscape.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., 10.

Despite these shortcomings, wayside exhibits can serve as gateways to landscape stories, drawing visitor interest before prompting audiences to engage with supplemental interpretive tools. There are nine wayside exhibits at James A. Garfield National Historic Site. The map in Appendix A illustrates their placement throughout the grounds. The table in Appendix B describes the information they provide and the sources they utilize. The information the waysides provide is general; however, the exhibits illustrate the depth and variety of sources available on the landscape by including photographs, maps, quotations from family letters and diaries, and landscape plans. An example of a wayside exhibit at James A. Garfield NHS is shown in Figure A.



Figure A: This is an example of a wayside exhibit panel at James A. Garfield NHS. John R. Spinnler. "James A. Garfield NHS Wayside Exhibit Plan." Harpers Ferry: National Park Service Harpers Ferry Center, Division of Wayside Exhibits, 1993.

Exhibits in the Garfield house also tell the story of the landscape of the Garfield farm and estate. The house museum is located in the post-1885 section of the Garfield house, on the first floor. The space was a kitchen during the estate

period, but today houses exhibits related to Mentor's agricultural heritage, the 1990s restoration of the home, and the house as it looked after Garfield's assassination. Guided tours of the house end in the house museum, and visitors have time to look around at the exhibits at their own pace. Park Rangers and volunteers usually do not provide oral interpretation of the space.

Landscape exhibits in the house museum titled "What Garfield Saw at Mentor," "Garfield's Wish for the Country," "Agrarian Vision: A Move to the Country," and "Spirit of Lawnfield" describe Garfield's motivations for purchasing the farm, his progressive agricultural practices, and Lucretia's vision for a family home after her husband's death. Like the outdoor waysides, the house museum exhibits include illustrations, landscape design plans, and direct quotations from family members and county histories. Three-dimensional models of the property, shown in Figure B, illustrate the scale and spatial orientation of buildings on the site during two key time periods. However, the location of the house museum exhibits is not ideal for interpreting the landscape. Visitors examining the indoor exhibits may have difficulty making connections between the information in the exhibits and the physical landscape.

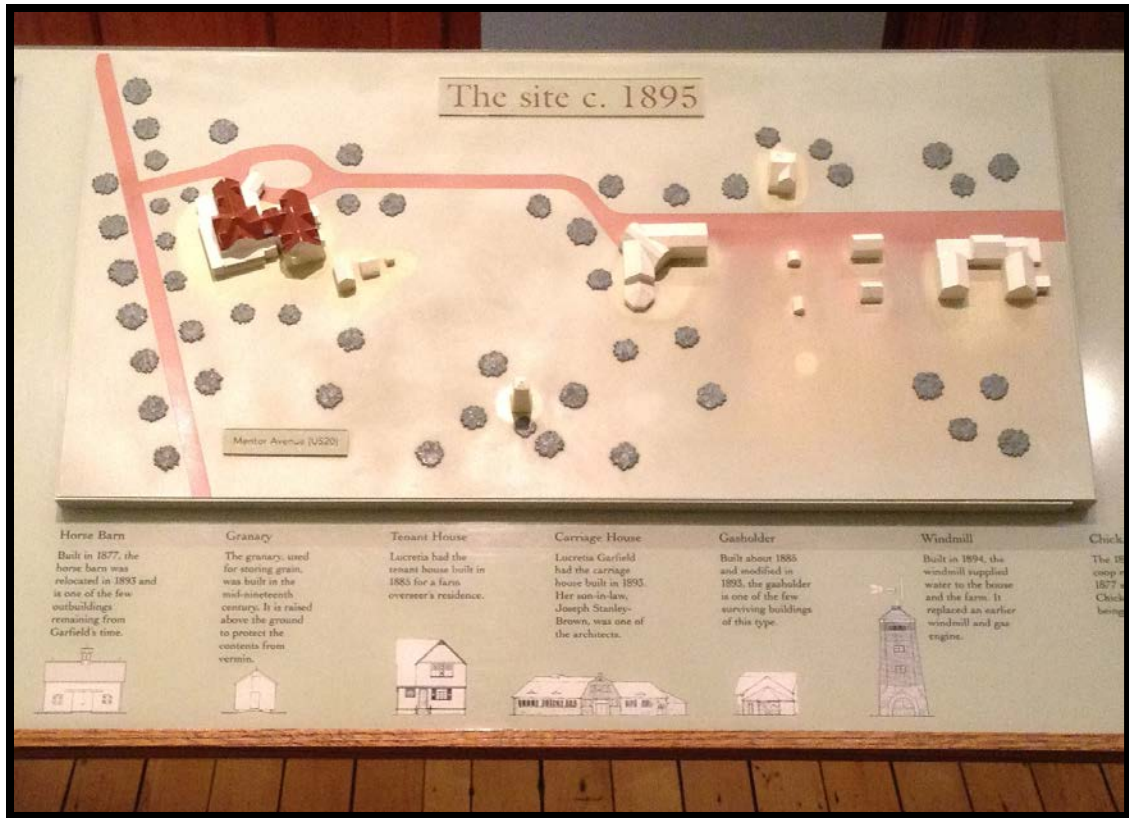


Figure B: Three-dimensional model of the spatial relationship of buildings on the Garfield estate around 1895 is found in the museum exhibits. Photo by the author.

Although the interpretations presented in the wayside and house museum exhibits are certainly valuable, they are limited. The National Park Service guide to creating wayside exhibits notes that the average visitor attention span at a wayside exhibit is thirty to forty-five seconds.<sup>13</sup> There have not been any evaluations of visitor attention span at James A. Garfield National Historic Site; however, this data from the NPS suggests that if visitors (especially those who come to the site but do not take a guided tour of the house) are learning about the landscape of the site from the wayside exhibits, they are likely not walking away with a thorough

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 12.

understanding of the landscape's history and meanings. The house museum and wayside exhibits also fail to provide visitors with the historical context needed to understand the landscape's greater historical significance. The research I presented in this thesis fills this gap.

David J. Bodenhamer, et al.'s *The Spatial Humanities: GIS and the Future of Humanities Scholarship* (2010) forms the framework for a method of landscape interpretation that integrates the field of landscape studies, the growing field of spatial humanities, and digital technology. In the introduction to *The Spatial Humanities*, the editors write, "This book proposes the development of spatial humanities that promises to revitalize and redefine scholarship by (re)introducing geographic concepts of space to the humanities."<sup>14</sup> Throughout the essays, the contributors explore the potential of GIS technology and virtual reality to uncover landscapes of the past. I propose that historic sites provide an ideal environment in which to (re)introduce geography, place, and landscape to history.

Spatial analysis has existed since the 1970s/1980s. In early scholarship, spatial analysis focused on metaphorical concepts such as frontiers, boundaries, crossroads, centers, regions, and margins.<sup>15</sup> Today, spatial humanists recognize place and landscape as not simply settings in which events take place, but as rich cultural artifacts. David Bodenhamer writes,

Spaces are . . . a significant product and determinant of change. They are not passive settings but the medium for the development of

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<sup>14</sup> "Introduction," in David J. Bodenhamer, John Corrigan, and Trevor M. Harris, *The Spatial Humanities: GIS and the Future of Humanities Scholarship* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), vii.

<sup>15</sup> Edward L. Ayers, "Turning Toward Place, Space, and Time," in David J. Bodenhamer, et al., *The Spatial Humanities: GIS and the Future of Humanities Scholarship*, 2.

culture. All spaces contain embedded stories based on what has happened there. These stories are both individual and collective, and each of them link geography (space) and history (time). More important, they all reflect the values and cultural codes present in the various political and social arrangements that provide structure to society.<sup>16</sup>

The contributors of *The Spatial Humanities* explore how the intersection of places, events, and human experiences can be represented in more dynamic ways.<sup>17</sup>

As I have demonstrated, the landscape of the Garfields' Mentor, Ohio home has a complex history. This history encompasses both broad cultural issues related to agrarian tradition and agricultural progress, as well as very personal feelings and identities. My research shows that, just as Bodenhamer states, the landscape of the farm and estate is dynamic and contains layers of embedded stories. However, the questions remain: how can National Park Service employees and volunteers at the Garfield site bring landscapes to life for visitors? How does one create a visualization of a landscape's many layers that goes beyond that which visitors see with their own eyes, and transports them into the past, while also asking them to think critically about how the landscape's history is relevant today?

An interpretive approach known as deep mapping holds answers. As defined by David Bodenhamer, deep maps are "genuinely multimedia and multilayered," containing all information available on a place, including oral and written recollections, biography, memoir, images, and maps.<sup>18</sup> This method or platform allows the viewer to see records individually or as a whole, in order to better

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<sup>16</sup> David J. Bodenhamer, "The Potential of Spatial Humanities," in David Bodenhamer, et al., *The Spatial Humanities: GIS and the Future of Humanities Scholarship*, 16.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, 7-8.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, 24, 27.

understand landscape layers. Deep mapping “is heavily narrative-based and interlace[s] autobiography, art, folklore, stories, and memory with the physical form of a place to ‘record and represent the grain and patina of place through juxtapositions . . . of the historical and the contemporary, the political and the poetic, the discursive and the sensual . . . .’ ”<sup>19</sup> Deep mapping can be an appropriate public history methodology, because it acknowledges multiple interpretations and points of view, as well as invites contributions from users.<sup>20</sup>

Deep mapping, as defined above, has powerful implications for historic site interpretation. It requires the historians to leave behind what Howett describes as the desire to recreate historic landscapes with complete accuracy and interpret them as static artifacts, fixed in a single temporal context. Deep maps allow historians to embrace the often ambiguous and subjective, yet rich and multifaceted stories that historic landscapes can tell.

A deep map of the agricultural landscape of the Garfield home would live in a digital platform and would contain illustrations, descriptions, maps, photographs, and landscape plans that visually represent the landscape over time. It would also include descriptions of the property found in newspapers, diary entries, letters, campaign biographies, and local histories. These sources reveal not only what the landscape looked like, but what its owners wanted it to look like, and what it represented in the context of late nineteenth-century political culture, agricultural change, and suburbanization. They also evoke a sense of the highly personal

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid., 26-27; David J. Bodenhamer, Trevor M. Harris and John Corrigan, “Deep Mapping and the Spatial Humanities,” *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing* 7.1-2 (2013), 174-175.

<sup>20</sup> David J. Bodenhamer, “The Potential of Spatial Humanities,” 27.



meanings embedded in the landscape. (See Appendix C for an annotated list of deep map data for the Garfield landscape).

Visitors would be able to contribute to the deep map by adding their own experiences of the historic site.<sup>21</sup> A born-digital deep map would allow users to upload photos, videos, and comments. Users could also read and see what other visitors have left behind in the map. This interactivity can encourage visitors to start conversations about what they have seen and learned at the historic site. By implementing a deep map, James A. Garfield National Historic Site eventually will have a living digital archive housing years' worth of additional experiences of the landscape. It may also be possible to link digital media already being used at the site, such as a Wordpress blog, behind-the-scenes podcasts, Twitter, and Flickr, to the deep map to build a fully integrated digital "third place" for the history of the site.<sup>22</sup> Social media can allow visitors' thoughts, questions, and ideas to become part of the map itself, creating a record of their own interpretations of the landscape.

To facilitate a deep map that successfully communicates the site's main interpretive themes, as laid out in the 2013 Long Range Interpretive Plan, developers should create a "foundational set" of questions that tie the documents and sources back to the main stories interpreted at the site. The deep map must be

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<sup>21</sup> Opening this platform to the public in the spirit of shared authority would, of course, require conversations to be had about the curation of contributed material.

<sup>22</sup> In *Plant Yourself in my Neighborhood*, Cathy Stanton explores the potential for a web-based "third place" for the farm history of Martin Van Buren's Lindenwald. Cathy Stanton, *Plant Yourself in My Neighborhood: Ethnographic Landscape Study of Farming and Farmers in Columbia County, New York* Martin Van Buren National Historic Site Special Ethnographic Report (Boston: Northeast Region Ethnography Program, National Park Service, in cooperation with University of Massachusetts – Amherst, 2012), 290. Stanton's work served as a model for me throughout this process. She analyzes the landscape of President Van Buren's farm at various stages in history (both before and after he occupied the property), and makes recommendations for future research and interpretation. She emphasizes making the history of agriculture relevant by finding "synergy" between it and modern day farming issues and practices.

thoroughly thought out and source materials must be linked together to highlight overarching themes or questions, as well as broad historical contexts.

The need for interpretive alternatives to the house tour, as well as a self-guided landscape experience at James A. Garfield National Historic Site was made clear during the site's long range interpretive planning process in 2013. The plan, drafted by a consultant from the Harpers Ferry Center (the interpretive planning center for the NPS), includes recommendations such as a cell phone tour of the grounds. The plan identifies the implementation of the audio tour as a "medium priority." It also proposes the eventual incorporation of "tactile elements" into the wayside exhibits.<sup>23</sup> Because much of the site's significance is rooted in the landscape, I argue that enhanced landscape interpretation is something that the staff at the Garfield site should be thinking about now. The site's long range interpretive plan states that as "resource protection issues, staffing limits, and visitor needs" become more pressing, the site will need to provide visitors with alternative interpretive opportunities.<sup>24</sup> Mobile technology is one of the most relevant media to employ.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, Long Range Interpretive Plan for James A. Garfield National Historic Site, prepared by James A. Garfield National Historic Site, the Midwest Region of the National Park Service, and Harpers Ferry Center for Interpretive Planning (Draft June 24, 2013), 39, 41, 46, 53. An updated draft of the Long Range Interpretive Plan was completed in November, 2013. However, the information cited here remained unchanged. The updated plan lacks page numbers. Therefore, I have cited the June 24 draft of the plan.

<sup>24</sup> Long Range Interpretive Plan for James A. Garfield National Historic Site, 3, 8.

<sup>25</sup> For research and case studies on the relevancy of mobile technology in museums, see Nancy Proctor, ed., *Mobile Apps for Museums: The AAM Guide to Planning and Strategy* (Washington, D.C.: The American Association of Museums Press, 2011), also accessible online with additional essays, at <http://mobileappsformuseums.wordpress.com/>; There is little research on technology in National Parks and at National Historic Sites. As a related article, see Larry Beck, "WebQuests, Wikis, and Wilderness," *Interpreter* 4, no. 3 (May, 2008): 16-17.

Three recent projects illustrate the current movement toward a spatial humanities approach to interpreting historic places and the potential of a deep mapping methodology put to work in a digital platform. These three projects have been proven successful in early evaluations or have been recognized as models by professional organizations. Further study of these projects' methods may prove helpful if the Garfield site undertakes the creation of a deep map of its landscape.

In 2009, the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill in cooperation with the North Carolina Department of Natural Resources, the Carolina Digital Library and Archive, and others, undertook the development of *Driving Through Time: The Digital Blue Ridge Parkway*.<sup>26</sup> This project invites “digital tourists” to “take a virtual trip through the history” of the Blue Ridge Parkway. It explores the parkway’s “hold on the public imagination,” its hidden stories, “forgotten voices,” and “the often wrenching choices that the construction and preservation of a scenic parkway . . . have necessarily entailed.” Finally, the project emphasizes the importance of “placing historical materials in their geographic context.”<sup>27</sup> *Driving Through Time* includes thousands of historic photos, drawings, maps, letters and diaries, and oral histories pertaining to the relationship of local people and communities to the parkway, as well as ephemera and promotion materials, all available in a digital

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<sup>26</sup> University Library, the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, *Driving Through Time: The Digital Blue Ridge Parkway*, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/blueridgeparkway/> (accessed January, 2014). This project was made possible by a grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, as administered by the State Library of North Carolina.

<sup>27</sup> University Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, “Welcome to Driving Through Time: The Digital Blue Ridge Parkway,” on *Driving Through Time: The Digital Blue Ridge Parkway*, <http://docsouth.unc.edu/blueridgeparkway/> (accessed January, 2014).

format.<sup>28</sup> Tags and metadata connect the source material to geographic locations along the parkway. Historic maps have been georeferenced—“aligned with their proper location on the present-day landscape”—to allow users to compare the past landscape to the present landscape.<sup>29</sup> A series of “overlooks” completes *Driving Through Time’s* interpretation of the parkway. These short interpretive essays bring materials together to tell stories of the parkway’s past.

Gore Place, the early nineteenth-century Massachusetts home of Governor and gentleman farmer Christopher Gore, began its digital project in 2009 when staff at the historic site began to “think of the grounds as an exhibit that should be interpreted for visitors.”<sup>30</sup> The site launched a contemporary farming operation, complete with vegetable gardens, livestock, and a farm stand where visitors and the public could purchase fresh produce and meat.<sup>31</sup> In 2013, the staff of Gore place won an American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) Award of Merit for *My Farm at Waltham*, a mobile app developed to enhance landscape interpretation. The AASLH recognized the project for excellence in “increasing the educational value of

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<sup>28</sup> University Library, The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, “What’s Included,” on *Driving Through Time: The Digital Blue Ridge Parkway*, [http://docsouth.unc.edu/blueridgeparkway/about/about\\_project/materials/](http://docsouth.unc.edu/blueridgeparkway/about/about_project/materials/) (accessed January, 2014).

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Gore Place, “My Farm at Waltham: Watch us Grow,” (May 8, 2009) on *My Farm at Waltham*, <http://goreplace.blogspot.com/2009/05/my-farm-at-waltham-watch-us-grow.html> (accessed January, 2014).

<sup>31</sup> Gore Place, “What’s Growing?” (May 22, 2009); “Now you can eat veggies grown at Gore Place!” (August 19, 2009); “Lamb meat for sale” (September 10, 2010) on *My Farm at Waltham*, <http://goreplace.blogspot.com/> (accessed January, 2014).

the grounds” by relating the site’s history to modern farming, and providing additional primary source material for visitor interaction.<sup>32</sup>

Visitors can download the *My Farm at Waltham* app on their smartphones or use a museum-owned iPod Touch to experience the landscape. The tours provided in the app use quotations from letters and journals and images from paintings, maps, and other primary sources to teach visitors about the history of the estate and the working farm. The staff at Gore Place has conducted evaluations of the mobile app and has concluded that the new technology has resulted in a “positive change in attitude and behavior with mansion and grounds visitors.”<sup>33</sup> For the first time, there is a self-guided interpretation option that allows visitors to explore the grounds at their own pace. With its modern day farm operation and interpretive app, Gore Place invites visitors to think not only in terms of how the landscape looked and functioned in the past, but how that appearance and purpose compares to modern-day farms.

Washington State’s Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, a unit of the National Park Service, has also developed a mobile app to interpret the many facets of the site’s history. The National Endowment for the Humanities notes that it is the first interpretive app in the National Park Service system.<sup>34</sup> Washington State

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<sup>32</sup> American Association for State and Local History, “My Farm at Waltham: Outdoor Multimedia Tours at Gore Place,” <http://awards.aaslh.org/award/my-farm-at-waltham-outdoor-multimedia-tours-at-gore-place/> (accessed January, 2014).

<sup>33</sup> Ibid. Gore Place does not elaborate on the meaning of “positive change in attitude and behavior.” This might refer to increased attention paid to the grounds and positive attitudes related to visitor experience at the site.

<sup>34</sup> National Endowment for the Humanities, “The Fort Vancouver Mobile Project: Enhancing Historical Interpretation Through Mobile Technologies,” <http://www.neh.gov/films/the-fort-vancouver-mobile-project> (accessed January, 2014). Also see Fort Vancouver National Historic Site, “Park Staff and Partners Receive National Award for Fort Vancouver Mobile Application,” March 13,

University developed the app in partnership with the National Park Service with the objective of telling stories that are currently hidden, or not commonly interpreted. A National Endowment for the Humanities digital start-up grant made the development of the app possible. In the style of a deep map, the app includes videos, maps, and sound effects, and allows visitors to “complete the circuit” of interpretation by contributing to a digital archive on the app. Like *My Farm at Waltham*, the Fort Vancouver app gives visitors the option of exploring the site at their own pace. Evaluation of the app based on observation has shown that visitor attention span in the village area of the site increased from six minutes (with no digital technology) to twenty-three minutes (with an early prototype of the mobile app).<sup>35</sup> Some historians and interpreters fear that mobile technology will result in visits to historic sites becoming phone-centric; however, Chief Ranger Greg Shine notes that visitors using the app are more curious about their surroundings.<sup>36</sup>

While these three projects vary in content and appearance, they share a common goal. They seek to tell stories in a geographic context using a deep map-level experience. The digital projects also support the argument that visitors should be prompted to think critically about and make connections to the historic landscapes that they are experiencing. The success of these digital projects is encouraging for the potential creation of a digital deep map at James A. Garfield National Historic Site.

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2013, <http://www.nps.gov/fova/parknews/parkstaffandpartnersreceiverregionalaward.htm> (accessed January, 2014); *Fort Vancouver Mobile (Sub Rosa): A Behind-the-Scenes Blog of the Mobile Storytelling Project at the Fort Vancouver National Historic Site*, <http://fortvancouvermobilesubrosa.blogspot.com/> (accessed January, 2014).

<sup>35</sup> National Endowment for the Humanities, “The Fort Vancouver Mobile Project: Enhancing Historical Interpretation through Mobile Technologies.”

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

What a deep map of the landscape of the Garfield home would look like is not a main concern here. However, after reading Mia Ridge, Don LaFreniere, and Scott Nesbit's "Creating Deep Maps and Spatial Narratives through Design," it is clear that there are at least two main design requirements of a deep map. Deep maps must be flexible. They must promote user-exploration of their content, allowing audiences to seek answers to their own questions, make their own paths through data, and search and sort documents in unique ways.<sup>37</sup> Deep maps must also avoid the creation of linear narratives by acting as an archive of historical data.<sup>38</sup>

Deep mapping is one method of addressing the challenges of interpreting dynamic landscapes and acknowledging the needs and expectations of twenty-first century museum visitors. While this discussion about deep mapping at the Garfield site relates to my research on the agricultural landscape, many other landscape stories can be told in a single deep map. Interpretive themes and fundamental resources and values such as politics, Garfield's personal character, and the suburban context surrounding the site can also be incorporated.<sup>39</sup> As these themes come together in the deep map platform, interpreters can draw links and connections between them, (e.g., through tagging, or other means of data-linking) creating an innovative way of moving from one theme to another and visualizing the interconnectedness of the stories at the site. In addition, items in the map can be tagged geographically and temporally, allowing visitors to view all items that relate to a particular place or time period.

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<sup>37</sup> Mia Ridge, Don Lafreniere and Scott Nesbit, "Creating Deep Maps and Spatial Narratives Through Design," *International Journal of Humanities and Arts Computing* 7.1-2 (2013), 177-178.

<sup>38</sup> Ridge, et al., 178.

<sup>39</sup> Long Range Interpretive Plan for James A. Garfield National Historic Site, 9-10.

In order to better understand the potential for digital deep mapping at James A. Garfield National Historic Site, staff members or outside researchers should conduct a visitor study. As a first step they should evaluate the effectiveness of current wayside and house museum exhibits in communicating the site's main interpretive themes as they relate to the landscape. Then, visitors should be asked whether they feel that mobile technology would improve their interest in or experience of the landscape while visiting the site.

Deep mapping has the potential to become a platform for a broader and deeper interpretation of the landscape of James A. Garfield National Historic Site. Although this thesis is thematically and temporally specific, the site could build a deep map that encompasses the years prior to the Garfields' occupation of the farm, as well as the years after the home became a public space. Such a map would be a novel approach to highlighting the multi-layered nature of the landscape and facilitating a more participatory audience experience. As visitors explore the former farm of the twentieth president using the deep map, they will interact with revived landscapes of the past, which have become, as Elizabeth Goetsch advocates, "characters" in the stories interpreted at the site.<sup>40</sup>

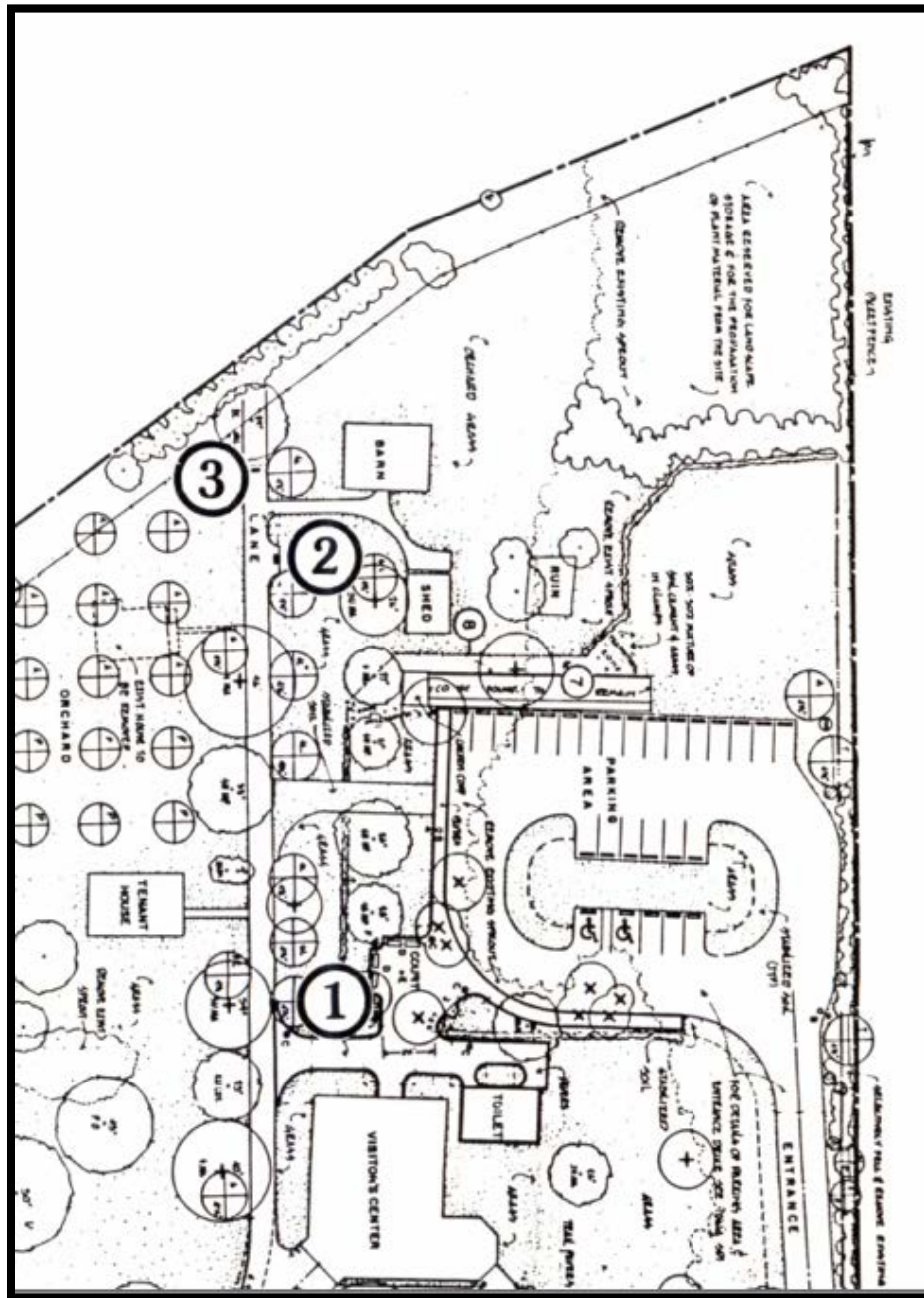
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<sup>40</sup> Elizabeth Goetsch, "An Integrant Part: Using Cultural Landscapes in Interpretation of Difficult History," in Samantha Weber, ed., *Rethinking Protected Areas in a Changing World: Proceedings of the 2011 George Wright Society Biennial Conference on Parks, Protected Areas, and Cultural Sites* (Hancock, MI: The George Wright Society, 2011), 411.

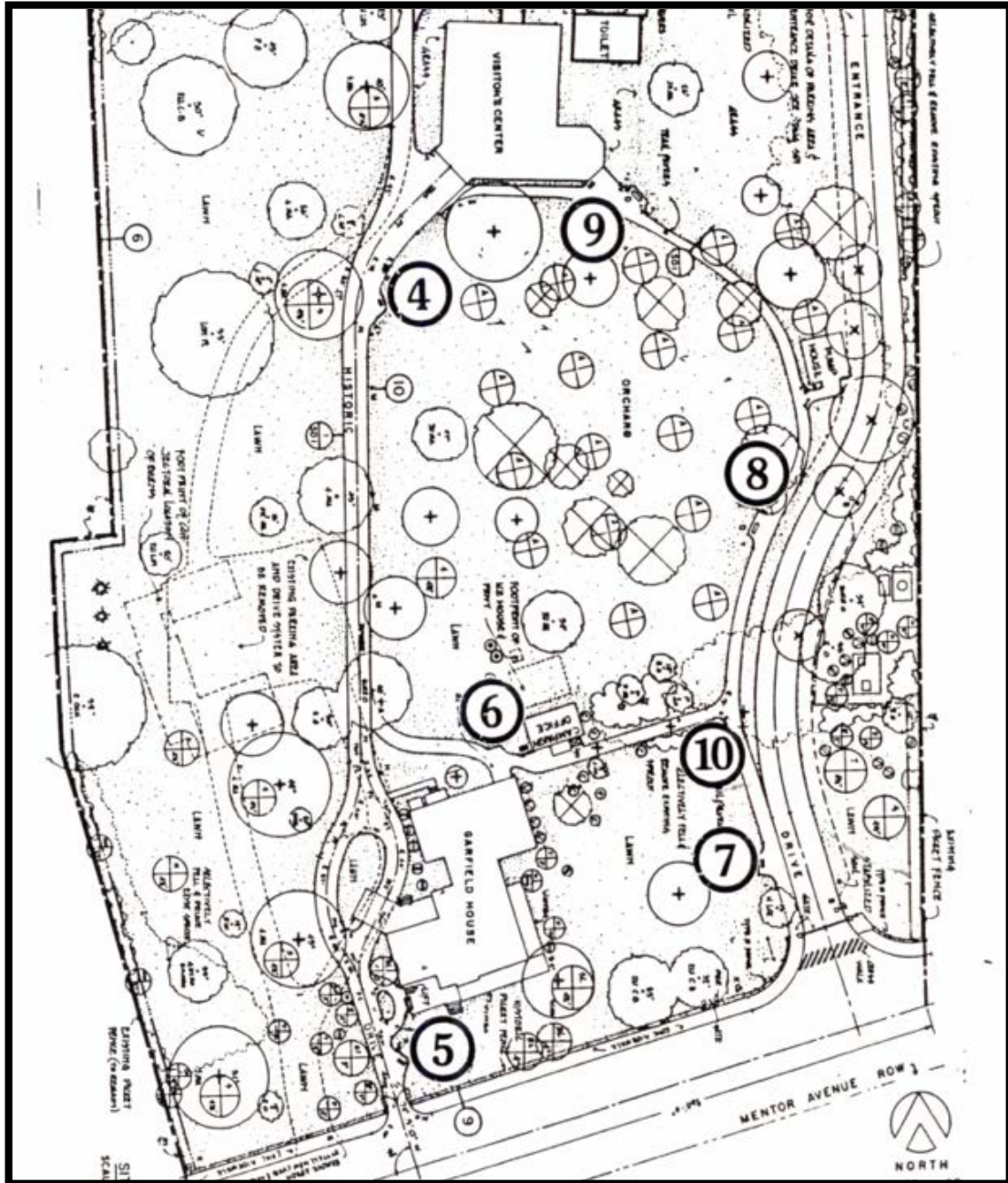


## Appendix A: Map of Wayside Exhibits

Map A: This map illustrates the placement of wayside exhibits on the northern half of the landscape. The numbers correspond to the wayside exhibits listed in the chart in Appendix B. The visitor center is the old carriage house, and the parking lot sits where the chicken yard once was. The top of this map is north. From John R. Spinnler, "James A. Garfield NHS Wayside Exhibit Plan" (Harpers Ferry: National Park Service Harpers Ferry Center, Division of Wayside Exhibits, 1993).



Map B: This map illustrates the placement of wayside exhibits on the southern half of the landscape. The top of this map is north. John R. Spinnler, "James A. Garfield NHS Wayside Exhibit Plan" (Harpers Ferry: National Park Service Harpers Ferry Center, Division of Wayside Exhibits, 1993).



## Appendix B: Wayside Exhibits

Wayside Number and Title	Interpretive Theme or Story	Sources
1. Garfield's "Lawnfield"	Describes Garfield's purchase of the farm and alludes to the changes that would take place on the landscape after his assassination.	Artist's depiction of Lawnfield during the 1880 campaign; site plan showing major landscape features present today.
2. Garfield's Farm	Briefly mentions activities on the farm and notes that the barn that visitors see from this location used to be closer to Mentor Avenue.	Photograph of the "old barn," 1890; 1880 illustration of the original location of the barn, near Mentor Avenue (shown on page 35, Figure E); site plan showing major landscape features present in 1894; quotation revealing Garfield's motivation for purchasing the farm
3. Railroad Connection	Tells visitors that the lane on which they are walking once led to the Lake Shore and Michigan Railroad tracks. During the 1880 presidential campaign, the railroad carried visitors to the Garfield farm.	Photograph of locomotive number 53 of the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railroad; 1880 photograph of the historic lane that ran to the northern end of the farm, where it met the railroad; 1881 map of the Garfield farm printed in the <i>New York Herald</i> (shown on page 72, Figure E).
4. Carriage House	Lucretia oversaw the construction of the Queen Ann style carriage house. Today, the carriage house holds the visitors' center.	Photograph of the carriage house and windmill, c. 1900 (shown on page 90, Figure F); photograph of farmhands and horses outside the carriage house, 1908.

5. Front Porch Campaign	Garfield ran his presidential campaign from his home. This changed the character of presidential campaigns.	Photograph of the front of the Garfield house, 1880; photograph of African American Civil War veterans who came to hear Garfield speak in 1880; photograph of the Garfield Band, a musical ensemble during the 1880 campaign.
6. Campaign Office	Describes use of technology, such as the telegraph during the presidential campaign.	Photograph of the campaign office, 1880.
7. Expanding the House	Illustrates the growth of the Garfield house from its 1880 addition to Lucretia's 1885 addition of the Memorial Library.	Photograph of the farmhouse as it looked when Garfield purchased it in 1876 (shown on page 70, Figure D); photograph of the house, 1880; photograph of the house, post 1885.
8. Windmill	Explains that the windmill was built to overcome problems with the hydraulic ram. It pumped water into the house.	Photograph of the windmill, early 1900s; technical illustration of the process of pumping water into the house.
9. Gasholder Building	Interprets the discovery of natural gas on the property and the conversion to a gas system in the house.	Photograph of the inside of the gasholder; technical illustration of the process of delivering gas to the lights, fireplaces, stove, and furnace in the house.

## Appendix C: Annotated List of Deep Map Materials\*

### Materials that convey the tangible characteristics of the landscape over time:

County atlas maps of Mentor, Ohio

- These maps illustrate how the village of Mentor changed between 1874 and 1915.

Photographs

- Photographs of the Garfield farm and estate from Western Reserve Historical Society, Lake County Historical Society, and Knight's *Country Estates of Cleveland Men* provide visual evidence of changes to the landscape.

Property plans and surveys

- These illustrate the evolution of the farm, specifically the spatial relationships of buildings and croplands

Newspaper articles

- Newspapers offered descriptions of the Garfield farm, particularly during the campaign of 1880. They also give detailed contextual information about crop production, weather, and the activities of other farmers in Mentor and throughout Lake County

Census of agriculture records (1880)

- These records provide information regarding production of the Garfield farm and other Mentor and Lake Counties farms.

### Materials that convey the intangible meanings, values, and emotions attached to the landscape over time:

Letters

- Letters between James A. Garfield and Lucretia Garfield; James A. Garfield and the children; Lucretia Garfield and the children; Lucretia and her brother and sister-in-law; Lucretia and Joseph Stanley-Brown reveal the emotions and intangible meanings attached to the landscape. They can be found in the James A. Garfield papers and Garfield Family Papers at WRHS, the Lucretia Rudolph Garfield Papers at the Library of Congress, and other family manuscript collections.

Diary entries

- Volumes III and IV of James A. Garfield's four-volume diary give insight about Garfield's feelings about his Mentor farm.

Political Cartoons

- *Currier and Ives*, "Farmer Garfield Cutting a Swath to the White House," and *Puck*, "It Makes Him Sick" illustrate the politicization of Garfield's identity as a farmer.

Excerpts and illustrations from campaign biographies

- These sources illustrate the politicization of the Garfield farm and reveal cultural values embedded in the landscape of the farm.

***\*Permission must be obtained to use any materials under copyright. This list is not exhaustive.***

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# **CURRICULUM VITAE**

Abby Curtin

## **Education**

M.A. History, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, 2014

B.A. History, John Carroll University, 2012

- Minor: Spanish
- Honors Thesis: Cleveland's "Othermother": The Multifaceted Social Activism of Jane Edna Hunter

## **Professional Experience**

Special Initiatives Intern, Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology, August 2013 – May 2014

Collections and Library Intern, Indiana Historical Society, August 2012 – May 2013

Park Ranger, Interpretation, First Ladies National Historic Site, May – August 2012

Curatorial Intern, Smithsonian National Postal Museum, May – July 2011

Education Intern, Western Reserve Historical Society, January – April 2011

Visitor Use Assistant, James A. Garfield National Historic Site, June – August 2010

## **Research and Training**

Archives and Records Management

Digital Humanities

Museum Evaluation

Historic Site Interpretation

## **Conferences and Presentations**

Poster Presentation: "Digital Sandbox: Playing with Public Humanities," at the annual meeting of the National Council on Public History, March 20, 2014

Presentation: "Deep Mapping: Interpreting Multi-Layered Historical Landscapes," at Indiana's Statewide Historic Preservation Conference, April 10, 2014

## **Honors, Awards, Fellowships**

Eppley Institute Grant for Interpretation Research, 2014

IUPUI University Fellowship, 2012-2013

Women Historians of Greater Cleveland Award, 2012

Outstanding Graduating History Major, John Carroll University, 2012

Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History Scholar, 2011