HARVESTING SKETCHES FROM A COMMUNITY OF GARDENERS

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For

Harry, Mary, Josephine, John Francis

and

Hazen S. Pingree and Sarah Orne Jewett

My Community Mentors

ABSTRACT

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This dissertation creates a bridge between American cultural and horticultural discussions related to the topic of suburban community gardens, based on a new model called "A Lot to Grow." As an alternative to the conventional garden model that limits individual participation in local food production on municipal land, the A Lot to Grow model provides opportunities for greater numbers of participants to engage in organic garden practices, but also in the hands-on advocacy though a community based mission; to grow fresh vegetables and herbs for distribution to local soup kitchens and food pantries. As a result, this community garden model generates a wider range of public discussions about the economic, environmental, and social viability of American communities. The overarching topics of "suburban food insecurity" and "environmental greening initiatives" create a literary collage of related subjects that exemplify how the writing component of this garden model stimulates the ongoing production of new works of literature. This cultural intersection between community gardens and American Literature was inspired by the contributions of two Maine natives acknowledged through nineteenth century American cultural studies: Hazen S. Pingree, a Detroit Mayor and Progressive Republican politician, who is credited with the establishment of the first allotment gardens in the United States, and Sarah Orne Jewett, a Regionalist writer from

Maine, who is a widely acclaimed author of "narratives of community." While this politician and writer approached the subject of "American community life" in different ways, their shared interest in this topic was influenced by their personal observations during the second wave of the Industrial Revolution's and three socio economic "Depressions" that took place during their lifetimes. This dissertation examines how the traditional values practiced by Jewett and Pingree are at risk of further erosion in the twenty first century, as American participation in a world economy, global environmental remediation, and the advancement of educational and career opportunities for women takes place.

Given the challenges inherent in the sustainability of community based initiatives, this dissertation offers a time tested model that supports American community health and the viability of its cultural heritage through scholarly and imaginative texts.

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INTRODUCTION

"It's that time of year, hedgerows hung with bittersweet. Potato time."
Rennie McQuilken from Potato Time

The establishment of A Lot to Grow (hereafter, ALG) coincided with an increase in American public and literary discussions about "local food production" and a current trend in the development of suburban community gardens in New Jersey. Since its inception, ALG has produced over ten thousand pounds of vegetables and herbs, but these gardens also yield opportunities for volunteers to learn more about the issues that are impacting more suburban communities since 2001, including "suburban food insecurity" and "greening practices." For this reason, ALG was designed as a creative medium that offers informal space in which a wider range of cultural discussions can take place within the context of "suburban community." ALG is structured as a volunteer organization that includes men, women, and children of all ages, who maintain six raised bed gardens located in the suburban towns of Glen Ridge, Montclair, and Nutley.

While there is significant historical record of community garden practices in American urban cities, this dissertation will predominately focus on the suburban realm of community garden practices. At this juncture, it is important to make distinctions between ALG's model and conventional models used in the development of rural, suburban, and urban community gardens. Conventional models follow an "allotment design" that generally involves the use of municipal land and in which only a limited amount of residents can participate due to such space restrictions. A designation of each garden lot is determined through a lottery process and the winners of that lottery pay a municipal fee for personal use of the space. This garden model is financially dependent

on city, state, or federal support in addition to lottery fees. The ALG's model is distinguished by its status as a 501 (c) 3 corporation seeking financial support through non government resources and its predominate use of private land.

This dissertation will predominately focus on the suburban realm with only marginal discussions about urban and rural community gardens. Essays on community garden practices in nineteenth and twentieth century America provide a popular literary context for discussions related to nature that are both philosophical and apolitical and include scientific, economic, and political perspectives in addition to literary and romantic concepts. Many of the cultural discussions that take place in the ALG gardens lend themselves to further scholarly and creative explorations. Indeed, this is how my thesis question first came into mind: How can the ALG model provide a context for writing scholarly and imaginative literature that explores modern definitions of "American suburban communities?"

Since the 1990s, academic and government sectors predominately place their focus on community sustainability research within the context of "environmentalism." These discussions are framed in a specialized language that involves "greening practices," generally defined as an effort to minimize the negative impact of industrial practices on global and local environment, community, society, or economy. In this dissertation, I refer to the use of such language as "green talk." Since ALG was established, I have noticed how many people outside of government and academic sectors are often confused or intimidated by this specialized language even though they possess a strong desire to express their opinions about how such greening practices directly impact

their lives in local communities. Many of these people are ALG volunteers or involved in other community garden organizations. These people make up my reading focus group.

This dissertation is divided into two distinctive community narratives. “Part One: A Lot to Grow: Acquiring Social Capital within Suburban Communities” is comprised of two chapters. Chapter One describes the ALG stages of development since 2009. My objective is to acquaint the reader with the trial and error processes involved with the design of both ALG’s built spaces and its sustainability. Knowledge of such processes is crucial for people involved in planning new community garden initiatives. Less than two thirds of modern American community gardens remain sustainable after the third year, and only one third of this reduced number includes participants with the necessary knowledge and willpower to maintain these gardens’ viability for extended periods of time. (Lawson and Drake) Such discussions related to my ALG field work expand within this chapter to include four distinctive ways that ALG builds social capitol as a “knowledge resource” within suburban Essex County; the overall physical and mental benefits of garden activities, methods for increasing the number of residents who benefit from such activity through a community focused goal, a schedule of community outreach efforts that potentially increase volunteer interest, and to advance scholarship and develop literary ideas related to cultural studies and literature.

My practical experience involved with the creation of both ALG and Writing over Winter (hereafter, WOW), a literature focused group supported by ALG, is interwoven throughout Part One: Chapter One discussions but a concise guide to the initial steps in this creative medium’s development are provided for readers interested in specific day to day aspects of directing a community garden. In essence—it’s all about establishing

sound working relationships with others. ALG sites build upon mutual trust between neighbors and a non legal binding document called a Memorandum of Agreement. This document describes in writing the responsibility of both parties in the maintenance of a ALG site. Development of such a document was based on common sense and willingness on the part of both parties to promote ALG's mission statement.

What can readily be observed now within ALG's built spaces is a localized reenactment of "nature" experiences by volunteers within these garden settings. While ALG's mission statement anchors such experiences to the sober realities of local food insecurity, it is gratifying for me to see so many people utilizing ALG gardens as a touchstone for emotional and physical health. They tend to use this suburban space in much the same way that people enjoy new trends in urban planning that bring natural elements into cityscapes. Such urban space is exemplified by New York's Hi-Line and other re appropriated industrial space throughout the world.

Chapter One discussions provide readers with information that places ALG is placed in conversation with an informal group of suburban Essex County based municipal and non profit social service providers. Their work is mostly conducted prior to the publication of statistical information and other data that affirms the need for extensive social services within the community at large. In *Confronting Suburban Poverty in America (2013),* Elizabeth Kneebone and Alan Berube document reasons for changing the established anti poverty infrastructure used by the American federal government to determine how citizens' tax dollars are spent to help America's poor. These authors assert that since the year 2000, "suburbia" is now home to the largest and fastest growing poor population in this country. During my attendance at local food

insecurity themed meetings, I was introduced to two Essex county non profit administrators, Anne Mernin of Toni's Kitchen and Michael Bruno, director of the Human Needs Pantry. They generously allowed me to include brief interviews of subsequent conversation in this text that offer readers intimate examples of how local food security providers address such needs as presented in Kneebone and Berube's scholarship. Statewide discussions are also included in these discussions, in order to provide readers with examples of two statewide food security organizations, America's A Lot to Grow and LocalShare, New Jersey's Hazard Mitigation Plan, and other non profit food security resources.

Chapter One discussions are based in my own journey through "potato time" which began in the third week of January 2007. I had just begun to conduct scholarly research in the basement of the Detroit Public Library, a place as cold and damp as any root cellar in the third week of January. It was Martin Luther King Day and on the floors overhead the library staff was promoting the hopeful themes found within King's *"I Have a Dream Speech*" (Jun 1963), first delivered close by in Detroit's "Cobo Hall" (Staes). The funds to build this early Italian Renaissance building had been donated in 1910 by Andrew Carnegie (1835-1919). His donation was given less than two decades after the first American vacant lot garden scheme, known as the "Pingree Potato Patch Experiment" (herein after, "Experiment"), was established by the Mayoral Administration of Hazen S. Pingree (1840-1901). Many of these vacant lot gardens were located within walking distance of where this "Main Branch" stands today.

Plans were under way within months of the "Panic of 1893," a financial crisis that involved a run of banks, bankruptcy, and a massive increase in unemployment. Pingree's

call to action saved thousands of lives in Detroit in the four years that followed it. The Experiment was initiated by Captain Cornelius Gardener. Melvin Holli (1933-2016), offers the makings of an "American Dream" profile in his text, *Reform in Detroit, Hazen S. Pingree (1969).* "The [Great] depression [1894-97] provoked severe social and class tensions during 1893 and 1894. During the winter the poor commission was absorbing an additional 250 welfare cases per day. This expanded the load six-fold to 6,000 families, all of the dependent upon alms for survival." Holli writes, ". . . 3000 families applied to the municipal agricultural committee for a chance to till the soil, but because of budgetary limitations only 945 were assigned to one-half acre lots." (Holli-64;72) A key word in this Holli passage is "families," which leads to other discussions presented later in this text, but what can be noted here is Pingree's reservations about the long term significance of his administration's effort. Holli writes, "Although the Mayor gained wide fame when his potato patch scheme was adopted in such cities as New York, Boston, Chicago, Minneapolis, Seattle, Duluth, and Denver, Pingree had few allusions about the long range value of work relief or almsgiving in any form" (72-73). The mayor's concerns about such 'work relief' are central to modern discussions about government and non government plans to address modern "food security" that has increased in all sectors of American life—and in increasingly significant percentages within suburban communities.

Throughout the stops and starts necessary in the development of ALG, memories of my time spent in that library basement still surface every so often to remind me of how many Americans are only steps away from impoverished people in public spaces and how passively resistant we are to these people's needs. Old biases about the poor have

deep roots in American society and it is possible to discern how these views permeate all sectors of class, gender, and race. I tend not to forget my own participation in such understanding upon remembering the morning activity that took place on all levels of that library. Several homeless people lined up to use the two desk top computers that were located in the 'root cellar's' alcove. They seemed to take little notice of why other people might be busy at work at the library tables but their disheveled appearance and loud conversations became a persistent distraction for me. Most of these men and women were improperly dressed for the Michigan winter that I knew only too well as a Detroit native. I tried to imagine what Carnegie, a strong advocate of American public libraries, might have thought about these disenfranchised people sprawled out on the building's marble floors upstairs and lined up downstairs to access modern computer technology. Their clothing looked like and smelled like those of poor Dickensian characters of old but their bags of fast food, stealthily pulled out from under their shirts to hide them from the rule-oriented librarians, brought Detroit's significant place in food insecurity discussions full circle for me. This kind of local color was something to write about in contrast to my initial thesis ideas related to conventional American community gardens. Upon arriving at the library that morning I was ready to embrace this less controversial subject but as the midday winter darkness set in I found myself at the emotional intersection of my personal connection to Detroit, the discovery that America's first "community" gardens were established in this city, and how Pingree's good idea had applications for my own potential vacant lot experiment.

During the first year of my field work and scholarly investigations, it was possible to see many of Detroit's newest vacant lot gardens scattered around Detroit's disheveled

landscape. I learned through word of mouth then how this city's homeless frequently make safe harbors out of such gardens on hot summer nights, and in turn, how these disenfranchised people express their gratitude for less troubled sleep. They stand watch to protect the gardeners from street crime during scheduled maintenance times on "the lots." With every day spent either in Detroit or New Jersey libraries, it was possible to create a timeline of poignant literature that is shaped by similar personal experience with food insecurity and homelessness. This experience was insightful in placing my own parents' conversations about such difficult times during the twentieth century's Great Depression (1929-39) in conversation not only with the Experiment but also within the larger American story as it relates to the emotional trauma of food insecurity. Recessions that were a common part of every Midwesterner dependent upon industry for employment wages have now become the everyday challenge of people within all sectors of the United States socio economic environment. As we move farther away from the Great Depression years, less people survive to tell such stories and other people are reluctant to bring the topic into personal discussions. Food insecurity has become a silent affliction in the United States although evidence is apparent if one choses to look at it.

My Detroit field work was set into motion at the Detroit Capuchin Mission when a family friend, Sr. Mary Ellen Walenta, SSJ, invited me to survey this campus and meet her colleagues, many of which are members of the Province of St. Joseph Capuchin Order. These introductions made it possible for me to ask questions and receive candid answers that would be less likely to derive from conversations with strangers working in a similar capacity back home in New Jersey. What I learned quickly was how the Capuchin campus radiates from the heart of Detroit, where it provides numerous

charitable services under the guise of the Capuchin Soup Kitchen and its Earthworks Urban Farm Program and Gleaners Food Pantry Program. I would return to this site on intervals during monthly visits with my infirmed parents, who still lived nearby in a Detroit suburb among other family and friends. Volunteering in the Earthworks gardens also made it possible for me to speak informally with other suburban based volunteers that return to Earthworks gardens each week, to help with everything from planting seeds to building a hot house. They had lived in the surrounding Corktown neighborhood as children and shared their memories with me about when Detroit was thought of as a vibrant city.

This shared harvest of childhood memories has been an essential part of keeping communities intact since ancient times, and in this case they also framed the Capuchins' participation in Detroit's significant history of poverty and food insecurity. During monthly intervals in 2008, I also met two key leaders of their mission: Patrick Crouch, Earthworks Farm Program Director, and Vincent Reyes (1941-2010), a Capuchin friar and chaplain of the Michigan Press Photography Association. While these men were not born in Michigan, they had already established their individual marks on Detroit by that time. Reyes' sudden death was a significant loss to this intimate community and I remember him now with gratitude for the way he thoughtfully welcomed me onto his home ground. Crouch, on the other hand, is neither a friar nor an outwardly religious man, but affection for his Detroit neighbors and his passion for urban agricultural practices is amplified by his "agrarian persona." In speaking to him, one can imagine how he channels both the Capuchins' "venerable" Solanus Casey (1870-1957) and influential agrarian president, Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826). At a later point in my research, I was

amused to note the similarities among all three of these men who sport chest length red beards in their published photos. I continue to follow the Capuchins' mission updates on line now and it is possible to see how Crouch's Earthworks efforts continue to honor his deceased colleague's memory each day in much the same way as Francis of Assisi (1181-1226). Reyes was fond of telling me on several occasions how Francis mentored his followers: "He who works with his hands, his head, and his heart as an artist" (Mc Fadden 151).

Reyes informally introduced me to his friend, Rick Samyn, by way of a telephone call that initiated my own phone conversations with this Washington State resident in 2008 and 2015. Samyn was the original founder of Earthworks and within minutes of speaking with him it was possible to discern why Reyes wanted us to communicate—the story of Earthworks initial failure is one told candidly only by Samyn now. Although the Capuchins' website acknowledges the establishment of his first garden in 1992 as part of Earthworks' legacy, the politically incorrect spin that Samyn relays is less troublesome from a distance than it is on Meldrum Street where the new and expanded Earthworks is located today. A large swath of Detroit's urban wilderness is now a part of this city's renaissance. What is observed there is a "social transformation," defined in the work of Peter Drucker (1909-2005), a management consultant and author of philosophy and practical foundations related to modern business corporations. I am optimistic again about Detroit's comeback strategies, which are possible to discern through the lens of the Drucker article, "The Age of Social Transformation," written for the *Atlantic* in 1992. Returning to the 1990s for several texts placed in conversation with my dissertation thesis helped me to create a timeline of modern discussions about ideas like Drucker's social

transformation that are in fact rooted farther into the past. His text serves as a lynchpin that holds together all of these existing discussions that were instrumental in the development of ALG's alternative community garden model.

Since 2010, my time has been spent among groups of ALG's volunteers and supporters in Glen Ridge, Montclair, and Nutley. Their decision to participate in ALG confirms my own seed ideas to shape this organization as a "creative medium." Such validation of my experiment's success is determinable in three ways: by establishing a relationship within a "local food security network," made up of several non profits and municipal health departments, the continued support within the community that keeps the ALG model sustainable, and the antidotal evidence compiled in the last six years about ALG's alternative community garden model. As a result of my conversations with Samyn, evaluations of such failures are key to the development of new and successful aspects of this creative medium. My time and emotional investment in ALG makes it difficult to be objective about such failures and to report them accurately within this text's scholarly chapters, and for this reason, the details of such disappointments are left to the imaginative settings within texts found in Part Two: *The Sketches.* These valuable lessons involve many people who could, perhaps, tell a different version of my own stories. For this reason, it seems only fair to place such information within a fictional realm to respect their privacy, in much the same way that ALG's social transformation is alluded to through *The Sketches* fictional narratives.

Although my work with ALG was initially informed by people within Detroit's homeless community, a personal experience with one particular homeless man in Glen Ridge reflects the passive resistance felt by others in relation to helping America's

disenfranchised. I would often see this homeless man on Monday afternoons while placing our family's recycling containers at the street curb on the side of our home. He rode on a rickety old bike with white plastic bags tied in bundles on the handle bars and as the bags shifted their weight it was difficult for this man to steer in a straight direction. I assumed that he was returning from Pathmark a few blocks around the bend in Montclair. What drew my closer attention was the way he appeared oblivious to oncoming traffic at this busy time in Glen Ridge. Only later would news travel in town that a homeless man was found dead around the corner from there in a wooded area that divides a soccer field from a Panera Bread franchise. To make matters worse, an elementary school aged girl had discovered his body while retrieving a soccer ball from the shrubbery beneath the trees. Although it is impossible to be sure it was "my homeless man," friends with municipal connections validated the facts: there was evidence on site at the soccer field that someone had been camping on the edge of this sports field and that this person's family friend expressed guilt about ineffective attempts to bring this man to a hospital for appropriate medical treatment. Since that time, my ALG role has placed this memory in conversation with stories about homeless people in my town library and other public spaces within the bucolic setting of this suburban place. These are the stories that sustain my energy level to keep nurturing ALG's seed ideas.

For many Americans, childhood experiences in nature impact their choices for such adult experiences as observed in the ALG gardens. This tendency is noted in many conversations among them during maintenance intervals but also in their choice of nature activities beyond the scope of the ALG creative medium. For purposes of discussion within this dissertation, I call such activities a "modern agrarian experience." More often,

discussions relate to it begin with "green talk." ALG volunteers are only a cross section of Americans who have legitimate concerns about the impact of modern industrial practices on a world to be inherited by their grandchildren. Discussions within Chapter Two expand to include the origins of "green talk" spoken most readily by people that support the American Environmental Movement, (hereafter, AEM). Such AEM discussions have evolved from three influential twentieth century social movements with agendas related to "civil rights," feminism" and "ecology" that now tend to act in unison under the guise of what I have determined to be "modern agrarian ideology," based in the argument that agrarianism represents the "American Ideal."

Although my role as ALG's director often involves mentorship in horticultural practices and supplementing volunteers' knowledge about food insecurity initiatives on the whole, I became curious about the agrarian ideology after the six ALG gardens were up and running by 2012. ALG had been invited the year prior to build a garden space on public land in Glen Ridge, around the corner from my home as part of this borough's recently acquired "Sustainability Element Plan." In return for their offer of land and water hook up, Glen Ridge was able to attain *Sustainable Jersey* Gold Status. This environmentally focused non profit is a state wide resource that offers financial and academic support to local communities that initiate green practices. As a means of self preservation, I needed to know what ALG had committed to by means of extension to Glen Ridge's planning objectives. In addition to this tangential involvement in such AEM greening practices it was possible to discern that ALG also has a place within the "food justice movement" discussions through its participation in the local food security network. The term "food justice" is defined in several ways based on varied political

perspectives found within this sub movement within the AEM, but for purposes of discussion here it is broadly defined as ". . . communities exercising their right to grow, sell, and eat healthy food." (justfood.org/advocacy Np)

The timeline for such discussions begins in the earliest years of the American Revolution and end in the moments leading up to my scholarly work's conclusion in this text. The contention that agrarianism is predominately promoted by the artistic and upper classes of American society are at the heart of these discussions and the responsibility that is assumed by them as part of what Drucker determines is a knowledge society. This point is essential to understanding the flaws in an American educational system that purports both the agrarian ideal and the agenda of the AEM primarily through fictional literature. Dennis Moore, a Distinguished Professor of English at Florida State University, puts forth a provocative argument in *Letters from an American Farmer and other Essays (2013)* that challenges the literary establishment and begs attention from readers who embrace the notion of a "modern agrarian experience." Moore asserts that these essays were written by a French born American J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur, as works of fiction, and he implies that such fiction was initially fashioned as parody of the warring British colonists in the beginning years of the American Revolution; this naturalized citizen's personal ambition was not as much to establish the American farmer and "the ideal," but rather to establish his place as a distinguished author of fiction. Although the scope of such historical analysis is beyond the scope of this chapter's discussions, they include the systematic reinforcement of the American farmer as the ideal citizen by iconic political and literary figures. Within these chapter discussions, it is noted that all three sectors of Drucker's knowledge society participate to a degree in the

perpetuation of agrarian ideology in spite of the articulate and Pulitzer Prize winning argument made by Richard Hofstadter (1916-70) in *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R.(1955).* Hofstadter was a Colombian University professor of History who later was distanced from his Columbia colleagues in part due to their perception of Hofstadter as a political traitor, in spite of the fact that in most ways Hofstadter held fast to his all of their liberal political positions. I found it interesting to note the blatant use of intellectual capital to diminish works of literature that challenged agrarianism, which in turn made me skeptical about the extensive use of "green talk" in local community based conversations.

In *The Call of the Land: An Agrarian Primer for the 21st Century(2011)*, Steven Mc Fadden, an independent Nebraska based journalist, calls agrarianism "the Mother of All Arts." As a noted contributing writer to *The Prairie Fire*, a newspaper marketed as "the Progressive Voice of the Great Plains," Mc Fadden supports the idea that community supported agriculture farms, commonly referred to as "CSA," have a place in local communities which supports my own belief that ALG's alternative community garden is also a natural fit for *suburban* communities. On the other hand, Mc Fadden's text can readily be placed in conversation with Hofstadter's declaration that artists promote agrarianism as a means of deriving their own emotional objectives. He digs deep down to make his emotional connection between centuries of political ideology and Art: "from the beginning of the agricultural era, people have created sculptures . . . Painting, and otherwise express themselves creatively around essential themes of land, food, and the people who worked the land . . ."(Mc Fadden 151-152).

Several artists on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean embraced "potato" themes. Museum visitors in Boston were the first to be introduced to the powerful symbolism instilled in this vegetable depiction in art. Barbizon painter, Francois Millet (1814-75), is noted for two of these paintings, *The Gleaners (1857)* and *The Angelus (1859).* They in turn inspired works of Literature, written by American Regionalist Sarah Orne Jewett (1849-1909) who like Pingree was a native of Maine. Jewett (here after, SOJ) was friendly with American painter, William Morris Hunt (1824-79), who had been mentored by Millet during Hunt's time spent at the Barbizon School years. Her biographer, Paula Blanchard writes in *Sarah Orne Jewett: Her World and Her Work (1994)* about the powerful connection that SOJ made between Maine's "potato industry" and this noted French painters' realist works. Millet's depictions of potato farmers at work in fields could be used to support agrarian ideological arguments that were elevated in public discussions by the late nineteenth century's highest American class. Modern artistic discussions have once again dug up the theme of "potatoes sustaining human life," in *The Martian (2015).* This film's viewers are placed in conversation with a powerful message about how advanced science technology and ancient farming methods are used to grow potatoes in Space.

In the same way that many writers' literary journeys are circuitous, my own scholarship return frequently to my initial discoveries within the Detroit library almost a decade ago. Near the eastern facing windows of the Detroit library's main branch, it is possible to see Detroit Institute of Arts on the other side of Woodward Avenue. Two more iconic painter's works are on display there. *The Diggers (1899)*, painted by Vincent Van Gogh (1853-1890), is an impressionist rendering of a potato farmer and it hangs in

the shadows of the more famous *Detroit Industry Murals (1932-33)*, painted by Diego Rivera (1886-1957). As I began to note the dates on Pingree archival documents, it was possible to note Detroit's significant place in American food insecurity history. In the midst of the new century's Great Depression (1929-39), vacant lot gardens were being tilled outside of the recently built Institute of Arts while Mexican painter, Diego Rivera was busy working on his *The Detroit Murals.* What many people do not know is that these Rivera murals were completed at double the cost from their initial estimate. Edsel Ford (1893-1943) would lose Rivera's initially escrowed monies in another panicked bank crisis in 1933.

Part One: Chapter Two's discussion begin with discussions related to ALG's mission to alleviate suburban food insecurity through published research about this subject and also includes insights from administrators of charitable food resources that participate in the same local food network as ALG. These chapter discussions expand to include aspects of my Detroit historical scholarship and field work that took place between the years 2007-09. The historical significance of this city in the history of "food insecurity" and "vacant lot gardens" made it a viable place to begin such scholarship and my familial connection to Detroit made it possible to make direct contact there with local food charity administrators. My notes from this period, between the years 2007-09, are juxtaposed with Detroit's progress since then in serving its residents' basic needs. There is evidence of a real estate boom there and the expansion of local food production business that was only in their initial stages when I spent a concentrated amount of time there. People now feel safe enough to walk around Grand Circus Park again, where its

earliest twentieth century immigrant citizens built a statue to honor their own beloved "potato patch mayor."

Pingree's link to the revival of "back to the land experience" can be linked to this period of time in which starving European immigrants' labored on city lots during the second wave of the American Industrial Revolution. References to early American literature, visual art, and interdisciplinary texts in this chapter follow the development of a political ideology known as "agrarianism" that has played a storied part in idealist renderings of the "American Farmer" since the earliest years of the American Revolutionary War. This powerful elixir of agrarianism and patriotic ideals continues to evoke political patronage today through enterprises associated with federal and state greening practices and legally sanctioned public protests. The full breadth of such literary discussions are well beyond the scope of this dissertation, and for this reason, I have chosen a selection of nineteenth and twentieth century American authors and artists' works that frame key points in agrarian history. These authors and artists present agrarian based arguments but recent historical scholarship reveals their greater emphasis on personal motivations, such as career fame and monetary gain, rather than patriotic social ideals. The objective of these historically based discussions is not to infer a political position myself, but rather to encourage a healthy dose of skepticism as it relates to the moral implications of "green talk. These chapter discussions were developed with the help of interdisciplinary research that creates a historical and literary timeline specifically of interest to ALG volunteers and supporters, but these texts also form a suggested survey course of reading for others interested in community gardens place with the AEM.

Chapter Two's discussions again narrow the scope of discussion to focus on two American literary figures commonly associated with the American genre of "Pastoral": Sarah Orne Jewett (1849-1909) and Willa Silbert Cather (1873-1947). While both of these authors engaged in agrarian themed literary discussions, they later found greater writing inspiration through a daily ritual spent in direct contact with "nature." SOJ is famously regarded as an influential mentor of Cather's talent as both a social critic and pastoral writer. Through this brief but intense mentorship, it is possible to see how vital this kind of activity is for nurturing the interests of the world's future's caretakers, our youngest citizens, who will inherit our local communities.

All of these discussions return to "potato time" in some way, as I prepared for this chapter's final discussions based on published Pingree and SOJ biographies that richly portray factual information and place these formidable Yankees within the "everyman" realm of American history and Literature. The combination of these biographies and additional interdisciplinary research eventually led me to an intersection in their lives through a Boston vacant scheme adapted from "the Experiment." Such life experience frames SOJ's literary illusions to the American Westward Expansion (1807-1910) in *The Country of the Pointed Firs (1896),* (hereinafter, *Country*), and *The Queen's Twin,* (hereinafter, *Queen's Twin).* As children of Maine, their respective career successes in literature and political arenas can be attributed to the traditional community values they learned from parents and family members, and other community mentors. The recipe for such discussions requires a grain of salt in which such a blending of two distinct personalities, whose life choices appear to be in direct contrast with each other, have measurable emotional similarities in the way that they approached their individual

challenges. The context of their "Maine roots" affirms the value of regionalist literature in modern global discussions related to the subjects of "community," "women's traditional roles," and "American food insecurity," and other American literary themes.

My idea for an ALG supported writing group, Writing Over Winter (hereinafter WOW) is the result of all the research conducted for Part One's chapter discussions and my ongoing work to expand the ALG creative medium. It was possible for me to discern throughout this process how published scholarship related to "American suburban community garden" themes lag behind real time. I believe that scholars can benefit from ALG volunteers' anecdotal record of day to day experiences in these gardens and their communities at large. Scholars can determine if such record has relational qualities with their empirical research, within varied genres of medical and social science. In this way WOW participants also play a valuable role in the popular revival of national horticultural traditions, the dissemination of sound greening practice objectives, as well as resurgence in regional literary traditions that are rooted in American village life. While most of the WOW participants are not professional writers, they are excellent storytellers, and left to their own creative devices they can relay their individual perspectives as both informative and entertaining subject matter. The idea for WOW is also based on my tangential knowledge about Drew University's annual summer writing workshop. In similar ways, WOW invites new authors to "tell it like it is," in the community gardener's case, but also in the writing tradition of SOJ, Cather, and other American writers who place emphasis on such themes. While many academically structured writing workshops take place in the summer when colleges and universities are not in session, WOW is planned for winter sessions, between late November and mid March, when the ALG

gardens are not in production. This calendar stretch of approximately sixteen weeks is commonly a time when the Garden State's winter conditions keep avid gardeners from digging in their beloved soil. Such interruption in their preferred social interaction can result in a sense of personal loss for them on par with several other psychological syndromes related to human isolation. In essence, WOW provides a different kind of practical garden experience for its participants that potentially encourage others to join the ALG's volunteer roster. It also extends an invitation to non garden residents to join in a creative "nature experience." Peer reviews of WOW generated texts will involve intergenerational and intercommunity critiques based on the participants' shared ALG experiences as well as informally recruited professional writers who are welcome to offer their own work to this community based project. A selection of historical and cultural texts for WOW reading discussions will focus on local history that is widely accessible through town libraries, historical societies, and university agricultural extensions. In many ways today, these traditional information resources are at risk of reduced significance in local community culture, especially where increased attention is paid to website based knowledge. WOW's community outreach efforts provide a supportive model for these community based resources that are vital to the emotional and physical health of its residents. Examples of such intercommunity relationships involve stronger ties to municipal health education departments and health based non profits that already support ALG's creative medium, including the Partners for Health Foundation in Montclair, New Jersey and the Montclair and Nutley health departments. ALG has exceeded the average length of community garden sustainability as it enters its seventh

season. The WOW group plans to evolve by the same trial by error processes used in ALG development since 2010.

Part Two: *The Sketches* is a sampling of new literature of that can be generated within ALG's creative medium. *The Sketches* are rough drafts based on the American literary *sketch* tradition commonly associated with early American writer, Washington Irving (1783-1859) and the publication of his *Sketchbook of Geoffrey Crayon(1783-1859)*. Through the course of interdisciplinary research for this dissertation, I was able to locate an intersection between my ALG work, my creative writing project, and the nineteenth century aesthetic maintained in the Borough of Glen Ridge, New Jersey. Although it is not a rural town, Glen Ridge is a twenty first century approximation of the rural villages that existed within a day's carriage ride from America's urban industrial areas, during SOJ's and Pingree's time. It is a municipal priority to maintain Glen Ridge's quintessential nineteenth century accents which include six hundred and fifty gas lamps that provide the town's only illumination in public spaces, its predominately Victorian styled architecture throughout its rambling neighborhoods, and the post hundred year old shade trees that grace the landscape within Glen Ridge's 1.27 sq. mile boundaries. Further validation of Glen Ridge's potential to inspire imaginary space is the town's prestigious listing on the National Register of National Historic Places and its designation as a New Jersey Historical District. Glen Ridge's small population of less than seventy three hundred residents creates a village-like aesthetic that complements its built spaces and natural settings. Most of the children who live here attend one of the town's two grade schools or upper elementary schools before completing their high school education together at the town's high school with its own history of high academic

achievement. There are clear views of New York from the high points in Glen Ridge, which reminds residents and visitors that both the benefits and challenges of an urban space are within close proximity to Glen Ridge idyllic setting. The nineteenth century aesthetic of Glen Ridge has always worked for me in conjunction with my powerful memories of a suburban Detroit childhood, which like Glen Ridge, is similarly steeped in local history, and lends credence to America's storied place of industrial innovation and human resilience.

The literary structure of *The Sketches* is based on the scholarship of Sandra A. Zagarell in *Narratives of Community: The Definition of a Genre (1988)*. Although her article was published almost three decades ago, it underlines a literary form and several cultural themes that are applicable to my interest in developing ALG inspired literature. Zagarell places her discussions within the context of nineteenth century British and American women writers' that shared an interest in preserving record of rural life during the times of their respective Industrial Revolutions. This was a point in time when large migrations of people left their rural villages for what many believed to be greater socio economic opportunities in the urban industrial cities. This was also a time in which Victorian-styled societal restrictions were placed on women. As a result, they excelled in their traditional domestic roles, as both family and community nurturers, and they placed great emphasis in keeping neighborly traditions in place during their communities' good and bad times.

The personal choices that American women experience now, in relation to their modern societal roles, are complicated by the advancements of education and career opportunities for both genders since the nineteenth century. The modern American

woman's social options now place greater time constraints on her ability to share her intrinsic nurturing qualities with the community at large. An inward focus on family and career is increasingly justified by the United States current economic environment. As ALG's Director, I find it possible to note how several cultural shifts have taken place through the course of my Glen Ridge residency in the last twenty five years. My discovery of Zagarell's prescriptive scholarship enables me to adapt her 'narrative of community's' creative structure for use in modern times. With appreciation for the simple truth that American small village and town life can never return to its nineteenth century landscape, efforts to maintain community oriented values is part of ALG's contribution to Glen Ridge, Montclair, and Nutley. Returning to this lesser known literary form helps to distinguish the importance of such values but also provides examples of how they are passed along through generations.

Writing models for this artistic style include the works of British authors Elizabeth Gaskell (1810-65) and George Eliot (1819-80), nee Mary Anne Evans, as well as the famous American writer, Harriet Beecher Stowe (1811-96). It was Stowe's younger friend, SOJ, who would elevate this literary form to a place of greater esteem among these women's literary peers. SOJ's talent for local color and her layered meanings within literary passages in *The Country of the Pointed Firs (1896)* places her work within significant cultural discussions that stirred in her day on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. *Country* was first published in the *Atlantic Monthly's* serial form, but within months, SOJ's loosely knitted sketches would be published in unison and with wider distribution. SOJ would revive this literary form once again for *The Queen's Twin (1899)* much to the delight of her loyal followers. *Queen's Twin* frames additional

sketches that resume *Country's* timeframe and feature *Country's* two most popular characters; "Mrs. Todd," a local herbal business owner who rents summer lodging space to SOJ's "omnipresent narrator." This narrator remains an unnamed female visitor to the fictional town of Dunnet, Maine. Similarities between *Country* and *Queen's Twin* are immediately evident to SOJ's readers, but *Queen's Twin* narrows the scope of SOJ's historical allusions to the American Westward Expansion (1809-1910) in order to parody the American public's preoccupation with popular cultures through allusions that involve the bombastic Detroit Mayor, Pingree.

The Sketches are loosely drafted as interconnected stories which take place in households, business offices, and nature settings within the fictional town of Ridge Pointe. In keeping with the SOJ's traditional framework and innovative adaptations from earlier examples of this style, the main characters in *The Sketches* include an omnipresent narrator, who remains unnamed in these stories, and a middle aged female protagonist, "Mary Jo Herbert," who initiates a fictional community garden initiative called "Let's Grow," in part to alleviate her bouts with empty nest syndrome. In the background of these conversational styled narratives is the town's shy "lamplighter" based on the authentic worker who is employed by PSE&G and solely repairs all of Glen Ridge's six hundred and fifty gas lamps. The lamplighter oversees Ridge Pointe's comings and goings from up on his wooden ladder and he holds fast as a literary device through which larger portions of local and state history can also be referenced in *The Sketches'* modern cultural experience. *The Sketches'* structure, narrative themes, and characters also serve to achieve my goal to write within an alternative literary structure to the more commonly used "memoir." *The Sketches'* cultural discussions related to the themes of "community,"

"women's roles," and "food insecurity" offer greater diversity and authentic insights in this way. This writing goal correlates to ALG's alternative garden model that expands the potential for a community-based creative medium to meet the emotional and physical needs of the community as a whole, rather than just an individually satisfying experience with "local food production" and other kinds of "back to the land" activities.

My twenty year college experience as an "adult learner" also informs my community work and this creative writing project. As a late comer to university based education, it was possible to note how this kind of literary training overlays my practical life experiences as a career women, wife, and mother. My early childhood preference for women's literary expression would later be placed in conversation with my 1970s participation in civil rights demonstrations, organized as part of my high school experience. In retrospect, I understand how all of these youthful experiences set the tone for my ongoing community participation. As my academic life comes to a logical conclusion with the submission of this scholarly and creative work, it is possible for me to look back on the breadth of knowledge gained with the traditional realm of a liberal arts education and how such knowledge correlates to the development of ALG. The literary themes that take shape in *The Sketches* involve such overall life experience within the context of Mary Jo Herbert's efforts to participate in modern community life. Her journey has its highs and lows, but she works to keep her enthusiasm, imagination, and lofty expectations for the Let's Grow initiative anchored on solid middle ground.

The Sketches also involves a concerted effort to minimize the prescriptive use of green talk related to ALG, based on this organization's alternative model. While I generally support initiatives that can heal the earth's natural elements and the important

work of ecological innovation in sustaining the world's food supply, my inclination is to address optimistically all sides of opposing arguments related to green talk. Such optimism is reflected in scenes within Mary Jo Herbert's kitchen that point toward positive change from the traditional uses of gardens and kitchens in the twenty first century. These non gendered spaces have become social laboratories where "food discussions" are a popular pastime for men, women, and children today.

My textual citations related to *Country* and *Queen's Twin* are found within SOJ texts, *The Country of the Pointed Firs and Other Stories (1969)*, edited by another noted writer from Maine, Mary Ellen Chase (1887-1973). I have found that the farther we move away from SOJ's writing years, volumes of literary criticism related to her four decade career have been predominately shaped by "feminist" scholars' perspectives based on emotional and intellectual biases. On the other hand, Chase offers her personal recollection of a brief encounter with SOJ, at the special request of Chase's father, a Jewett family friend. This meeting with SOJ took place within the seasoned writer's beloved clap board residence in Berwick. SOJ often alluded to real settings like this one based on Berwick homes and other public buildings in her fiction. Chase's introduction inspired me to do the same with my own local settings portrayed within *The Sketches.* This authentic occurrence is depicted in the same brushstrokes of local color that are a trademark of SOJ's conversational literary style. In addition to Cather, SOJ would mentor her fair share of young writers, but none might have been as impressionable as the thirteen year old Chase. She declares for the first time, on this her thirteenth birthday, that she also wants to be a writer when she grows up. SOJ's soft touch, for close friends and youthful acquaintances, is evident here and this polite gesture was enough to send this

birthday girl off with gentle affirmation. SOJ was correct in her assessment of Chase as this twentieth century writer of good books also taught them and others to her students.

This scene that takes place between Chase and SOJ reminds me of the the intimate manner in which my own childhood was nurtured. As a young girl of thirteen, and even younger, my interests in both local and national history and the political arena were nurtured around the kitchen table. These cultural discussions were synthesized and often reshaped to the tune of local socio economic conditions. I especially remember the girl talk between three generations of French-American and Austrian-American women who also knew how to tell a good story. To a larger degree, these stories remain in my working memory longer than any classroom discussion or independent readings of such cultural and literary criticism. It is now possible to see how challenging it is for families to replicate intimate conversational settings in the technologically-based society where children are often left in the care of non relatives. One aspect of the ALG experience that I enjoy immensely is the opportunity to listen to other women's communal discussions in these gardens. It is comforting to note the way their nurturing qualities are similar to those delicately folded into my memories now. The journey to this place of memory was not obvious to me when my research and field work first began in 2007, but now more than ever, I understand the important role they play in the ongoing writing of *The Sketches*. The completion of the initial "*Sketches*" represents not just a compilation of my own thoughts and words—but those of all the communities I have been joined since then.

Chapter 1

THE DEVELOPMENT, CONTEXT, AND AIMS OF "A LOT TO GROW"

I. Planting Seeds for the ALG Model

The development of the ALG model was initiated in response to a series of state and federal economic crisis, beginning with the first New Jersey state shutdown in 2006, in which the state legislature and governor failed to agree on a state budget by the constitutional deadline in July. This call for an orderly shutdown of non essential services was a microcosm of national political wrangling that also took place in this federal election year. Gradual cuts in state aid to local New Jersey communities were exasperated by the Subprime Mortgage Collapse in 2008 and state unemployment rates increased to just under ten percent a year later. By the time ALG built its first garden in 2010, and state wide charitable food resources were unable to meet the demands of local residents' who were experiencing food insecurity.

Also of concern by this time was the need after 2009 for New Jersey municipalities to initiate "shared municipal services" between local adjoining communities to Glen Ridge. The realities of this strained economic environment became a reality for this tiny borough when it could no longer afford to maintain its own health and fire departments and sectors of this community would attempt to propose a plan to close its library in order to save on property tax dollars.

Social capital is the most valuable currency in American suburban communities today as municipal budgets tighten to unprecedented limits. I understood that the reason that many community gardens are not sustainable is because they lack a roster of reliable individuals who are willing to support these local community projects. Just the same, my

two decades of participation in school and civic events in Glen Ridge suggested to me that there was enough social capital within Glen Ridge to sustain a community garden, but concerns put forward by my *ad hoc* committee indicated that my sense of community was dated. When my family moved to Glen Ridge in 1991, we were fortunate to meet many like-minded people through the Kelly children's enrollment in a local nursery school. I was also fortunate enough to share in community based projects with other town mothers that, while not participating in careers in a traditional office environment, used their valuable skill sets to enhance their everyday domestic lives. Now, as previously noted, the cultural landscape of this town has shifted. The majority of women in Glen Ridge are known as "working mothers," as is the case throughout the United States. ALG's *ad hoc* committee questioned whether it would be possible for women who were already juggling both domestic and professional responsibilities to participate in a community garden initiative. This was an important question, and one that was answered soon after the first ALG garden was established.

In the first summer season, I worked in the ALG garden located across the street from Mountainside Hospital and with the help of a few dedicated volunteers, but when the first seeding was completed in May, most of this promising volunteer roster evaporated. This change in volunteer enthusiasm can be attributed to that summer's record high temperatures and volunteers' previously scheduled vacations. Several important issues needed to be resolved in these first months including the way in which the vegetable harvests should be distributed. While traditional community gardens delineate specific plots for individuals to grow vegetables and flowers for their own consumption, it was my vision that ALG would establish a working partnership with

charitable organizations primarily focused on "Suburban Essex County food insecurity." While these organizations were enthusiastic to receive one hundred percent of the vegetables and herbs to be donated to people in need, my vision for a partnership with local charities was also challenged by ALG's *ad hoc* committee for two reasons. First, the *ad hoc* committee argued that volunteers would expect to receive something tangible in return for their time and physical efforts. Allowing volunteers to take their own fresh vegetables from the garden would resolve this matter. Therefore, if our intention was to send the produce from the community gardens to local charities, it would be necessary to find an alternate means of rewarding the volunteers. As a result, ALG now places a premium on the offer that volunteers can take away invaluable learning experiences from the gardens as opposed to tangible rewards. Second, the *ad hoc* committee pointed out that dealing with local charities would entail educating the staff in the soup kitchens and food pantries about the storage of fresh vegetables, which was challenging at the time. Fortunately, members of local health departments helped to resolve this matter through a series of meetings during which representatives from the food pantry and soup kitchen learned that fresh vegetables do not require refrigeration and can be distributed in their natural state.

In a short season, ALG produced over five hundred pounds of vegetables that were distributed to the Human Needs Food Pantry and Toni's Kitchen among others, a routine that we have maintained ever since. We quickly learned however that there were major drawbacks to gardening on private land. The first ALG garden was established on property across the street from Mountainside Hospital on the border of Glen Ridge and Montclair. At the time of the garden's founding, this land was owned by a private equity

group that not only allowed ALG to use the space, but also absorbed the cost of water piped into the raised beds from a house it owned at the rear of the property. Before setting up the garden on the hospital's plot, I was advised that the hospital was up for sale, and it turned out that ALG was only able to use this space for one season because the hospital was tentatively sold the following autumn. In order to keep ALG sustainable, it was necessary to relocate the garden. In the end, the *ad hoc* committee agreed to split up the raised beds among three different properties, where they remain today. In the same way that an army of volunteers and supporters were needed to build the first garden site, it was also necessary to recruit volunteers again to move the gardens to the other sites. As a result, I spent the winter months working to rebuild the volunteer roster with civic and school groups that could commit to "one off" projects.

Over this winter break, I returned to my research on Detroit's community garden history and followed Detroit's revival through conversations with family and friends in Detroit. Although it was possible to find scholarship related to "American community gardens," this topic was placed most often within the context of "landscape design" and "urban planning." This limited context made me consider how the practices of "urban farms," "urban gardens," are culturally different from "suburban community gardens," and as previously mentioned this subject had not been addressed in a meaningful way, especially in a form that would be of interest to actual community "gardeners." In addition to this analysis, most of the research had been supported by "for profit" companies or state and federal government funding, which renders intrinsic bias in these texts' final analysis.

Following my initial fits and starts in gathering academic resources, I began to

rely more heavily on local newspapers and other media resources for information about community gardens. These resources more accurately record the community trends. I followed the example of field reporters who pay early morning trips to local garden centers where the owners and managers are already in place at least an hour earlier than the arrival of the day's first customers. A few minutes of their valuable time now helps me keep a pulse on the overarching garden trends that they observe in the course of doing "garden related business." Many of these owners also live in the same communities where their businesses are located and they continue to offer ALG support through gifts and donations. An informal relationship is now established and I make an effort to maintain them in order to gain valuable advice on how to stretch ALG's maintenance budget. Having considered all the practical information I gained from these local business owners as opposed to my academic research on community gardens, I have determined that the best practice for sustaining ALG's creative medium is based in old fashioned community values that require developing personal relationships within the community at large.

II. Nurturing ALG from the Ground Up

For the most part, traditional community gardeners have the common goal of creating a space in which individuals can pursue their own gardening interests within a designated space known as a "plot." Within each of these garden sites, there is a director who is either employed or appointed without compensation by the municipality, on the behalf of such gardeners. Bylaws for each garden are established at its founding, and all members must abide by these laws the same way that a homeowner is required to obey his or her town's ordinances. It should be noted that in typical community garden models,

this assignment of designated plots by lottery do not necessarily foster new relationships with other gardeners, as they have access to the space at all times, rather than the set days and times that the ALG gardens are open to the public. I can attest to the social limitations of this solo style of gardening through my own experience in ALG's initial season and through years of home gardening. I believe ALG is an authentic community garden in which large numbers of residents from all sectors of the community participate in its process as represented in the way they have helped to develop ALG from the ground up.

My responsibilities as the developer of the ALG model also involve the day to day maintenance of the garden sites, staying informed about issues related to ALG's mission statement, and building relationships with the communities where ALG sites are located through outreach programs.

ALG obtained 501 (c) 3 tax status in 2011. This organization continues to seek out financial donations, but also works to maintain relationships within these communities that result in gifts in kind. The bulk of our expenses involve administrative costs for insurance and tax services, in which we receive a professional courtesy discount and the upkeep of the larger garden components such as the drip line systems and wooden raised beds. Gifts in kind from local garden retailers and contractors go a long way in offsetting the cost of soil, plants, and seeds and we also appreciate other professional services by local service-based companies in the businesses of garden design, graphic design, printing, and sign-making.

As the popularity of community gardens continues to spread in New Jersey, more grant money is available for distribution to smaller non profits organizations focused on

environmental and health issues. ALG is cautious in how we approach these tempting offers. We seek to benefit from financial support only from resources that do not directly attempt to influence ALG management decisions. Our largest financial support is given by the Partners for Health, in conjunction with their own mission statement, to strengthen health and fitness in fifteen communities in the Montclair area. ALG's 501 (c) 3 status also validates our involvement administrators from health department and charitable food security non profits, who maintain a regular schedule of organized meetings underwritten by Partners for Health Foundation (hereafter, "the local charitable network").

The search for new ALG's garden properties has happened predominantly via word of mouth through which private property owners extend invitations to ALG to survey their proposed sites. If the site meets the basic requirements of sun and water, an initial meeting takes place between the ALG Director and the property owner's exploratory committee. This meeting includes a presentation of the ALG's model and mission statement. The four main responsibilities of the designated ALG site property owners are discussed, which are (1) the prerequisite agreement of a full partnership with ALG for a minimum commitment of three years, (2) a commitment that all produce grown on the site will be distributed at an ALG designated charitable food resource, (3) a commitment that the property owner will pay for the water used in the garden site, and (4) the mandatory appointment of a site manager for the garden, to be completed before the next meeting. The committee must secure a mandatory site manager and also prepare a roster that practically includes a backup manager and at least six volunteers that will be necessary to maintain even the smallest of ALG sites. ALG is responsible for the construction costs, including the raised garden beds, in line drip system, soil, mulch,

seeds, fence, bench, storage shed when needed, and miscellaneous garden tools and supplies.

After a site meeting takes place to determine the viability of the proposed space, a second meeting takes place in which the two parties agree on the MOA's tentative division of labor. These meetings usually take place in the host organization's administrative buildings. At this point in the process, it is necessary to interview the plan with ALG Board Members, the landowner's exploratory committee, and their designated site manager. If all parties are in agreement, a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) is drawn up and presented for review to ALG's Board of Directors before it is signed. The MOA is not a legal document. At best it becomes a written act of good faith between the two interested parties. To date, this arrangement has been satisfied without any violations of the MOA agreement. The success of this non legal relationship between so many different people also validates ALG's alternative community garden model.

During the initial site planning meetings, I find it important to stress that while five of ALG's six gardens are located on church properties, ALG is a secular organization focused on the common sense notion that food security benefits everyone in a community. This caveat is necessary in order to remind everyone involved that ALG is inclusive of people of all races, gender, and class sectors. To date, no one has challenged ALG's doctrine of secularity and tolerance.

ALG utilizes vacant and privately owned properties and to date five of them are owned by churches and one is located on a public space in Glen Ridge. None of these sites are perfect. A water hook up is necessary in order to connect a drip line system to all the raised beds to maintain consistent watering of the plants. The challenges involved in

reclaiming such property involve the potential volunteers' enthusiasm to build a garden but without funds for plumbing and landscaping that are often necessary to have a viable water source and to build the garden on even ground. One example of this is the Nutley site. It was necessary to hire a backhoe contractor in order to dig a twelve-foot ditch from the garden site to the street curb to install the appropriate pipes for hook up to the public meter. Another site did not have a clear and free property deed to the site which is necessary in order to receive a building permit required by municipal public works. In many cases, local contractors will give ALG a professional rate as a courtesy but the remainder of the funds has to be made up in additional fundraising. It is also necessary to remain on good terms with public works employees who have the power to either cooperate with ALG or interfere in our building processes.

My administrative responsibilities have expanded along with the developmental processes of building and maintaining one additional garden each year between 2011 and 2014. The substantial legal fees involved in this process and the development the ALG website were graciously donated as gifts in kind. Everyone who donates service to ALG knows that time is money and it is important for this reason not to go to the same professional well too often. An important aspect of sustaining this gift in kind connection is to keep the donors current about how their time and money not only sustains ALG's model but also how it is used to expand it. This is also the case with grant monies.

Sustaining the ALG mission involves attendance at public forums where professionals speak about the growing problem of homelessness and food insecurity in Essex County. I approach these lectures as a mentoring process by which I have learned how to talk to people about food insecurity. In similar ways to the members of the local

charitable food network, these administrators are professionally trained to evaluate specific programs and statistical information necessary to accomplish their goals. They provide me with valid information that I can take into the informal settings of our gardens in order to inform volunteers. These speaking engagements are also helpful in familiarizing me with new "green talk" trends as many of these organizations are tangentially associated with AEM through its sub movement to promote "food justice." Based on their experience and the opportunity to ask questions, this aspect of my work has been helpful in defining terms that are part of my own chapter discussions, including "organic food production," "food deserts," and "food insecurity."

My Master Gardener designation earned through Rutgers Agricultural Extension Program was helpful in expediting research in a short period of time between the final touches of the ALG model and the building of its first site. This course involves two semesters of participation in lectures given by Rutgers professors and other horticulture professionals that comes in handy now for three reasons; the course work gave me a sense of how to evaluate the wide range of academic resources available on the web, and this designation instills confidence in the people who have the necessary resources to support ALG. The third reason is even more practical. When tension arises between volunteers about how to approach contested issues related to garden maintenance, it is helpful to mediate such discussions based on this academic designation. ALG now benefits from close ties to the Master Gardeners of Essex County, (herein after, MGEC) an organization dedicated to helping the public learn more about horticultural practices. MGEC donates enough tomato plants each spring to fill out the designated space allotted for them in all six ALG gardens. Their organic garden processes are the same as those

used by ALG and this collaboration between us goes a long way in preserving the integrity of our carefully nurtured soil. MGEC's sprawling property is located in Roseland, New Jersey where several ALG volunteers now purchase organically grown plants from their hothouse.

The ALG creative medium continues to expand the use of the six gardens for extended use within Glen Ridge, Montclair, and Nutley. These events have involved various church and school functions. There have been four of the six Eagle Scout projects completed on the ALG sites between the years 2010-2015. Other ALG community participation includes: "open garden tours" sponsored by the Cornucopia Network of New Jersey and the Master Gardeners of Essex County.

Some of the best times as a community garden director take place outside of the gardens when I am invited to speak in the neighborhood schools. My long-term goal is to create a bond between ALG and the community at large, as neighborhood children grow up alongside these gardens and take lessons learned forward into their chosen adult communities. The encouragement to keep the ALG mission on track stems from a conversation I had with a high school senior and ALG volunteer, at the beginning of the 2015 season. We hauled bags of mulch into the Benson Street site while he shared his thoughts about the value of ALG's overall experience. Prior to this conversation, I had relied on feedback from adult chaperones, in order to access the young volunteers' levels of interest. In this young man's case, there had been a span of six years between his participation in the construction of our first built site on the Mountainside Hospital property and the work we were doing that day in the Benson Street garden. I sensed the pride he felt as a participant in five additional Eagle Scout projects conducted on ALG

sites as well as larger one time per season projects. This memorable conversation affirms the value of youthful experiences in ALG gardens, as this student and many others leave their local communities to live on college campuses. By the time we say our farewells, they have the basic skills to participate in community garden work within these academic environments. These efforts can support a national trend, to prepare college students for volunteer work in their communities after graduation.

Preparation for these visits includes the development of support materials to enhance the children's experiences. My survey of children's books with community garden themes perpetuates the same dominate rural/urban dichotomy that is found in adult literature. In addition to my own community narratives, I see a place for other locally produced texts that teach children about the diversity of places in which community gardens are established. Collaboration among local gardeners and artists make it possible to place other sectors of the community in conversation with the ALG mission. As a result, I initiated discussions with volunteers about the ALG Writing over Winter project (WOW) near the end of the 2015 season, and have received favorable responses to my invitations to begin in January 2016.

More seed ideas for WOW were sowed in 2012 when the Giving Garden/ALG site was established on the grounds of the Glen Ridge Congregational Church. The site is managed by members of this congregation who sponsored a contest to name the garden. It's a small space in comparison to the wide span of lawn that stretches across this parcel of land used for farming until the early twentieth century, but its presence there offers something larger within this community. Pilgrim Nursery School rents space in this congregation's administrative buildings. The school is a child's walk from the Giving

Garden's six raised beds and the school's playground. The students have access to this garden and have planted seeds and pulled radishes from its soil, in similar pattern to school-oriented gardens, but in addition to their hands on experience, the children can see adults working in the garden. This makes it possible to create the idea that growing food locally is as much a part of their community's everyday aspects as children's romps on the town's playgrounds.

I accept invitations to visit Pilgrim on seasonal intervals and the teachers graciously offer guidance on how to connect with these little people. Stepping about a nursery school like Pilgrim has a similar feel to me as puttering around in a garden. Dressed in work clothes and a wide brimmed hat, I am introduced as the "Garden Lady," also emphasizing this character through a few smears of dirt on my face and hands. The children settle on the classroom rug with purpose, like the "great treasures and rarities among common herbs" (*Country* 4) found in Mrs. Todd's *Country* garden and rouses dim memories of my own childhood imagination. Associations between gardens and imaginative writing are part of our literary traditions, but in this modern setting this shared experience is as fresh as the vegetables the "Garden Lady" brings to these sessions.

On my last visit, the teacher's advised me that our time together was scheduled between the children's yoga sessions and Spanish lessons and *Our Community Garden*, was a good reading fit. This children's book is illustrated and written by Barbara Pollack. I pulled a copy of her book from the Garden Lady's basket of fresh tomatillos, egg plants, and hot peppers just like those found in Pollack's imaginary garden. Other young characters in this book plant vegetables that suit their diverse personalities and the story's

narrative reinforces the very real image of people working together in a community setting like the Giving Garden. The little ones at Pilgrim are making connections between other community projects and the garden that was built alongside their playground. I frequently run into the Pilgrim teachers in other parts of town and we have the chance to share the positive results of our mutual effort. The children frequently talk about the garden alongside their playground when the Garden Lady is not even there.

Interacting with adolescents in the ALG gardens keeps the adult volunteers in touch with American teenager culture. Although the ALG teenage volunteers have similar characteristics to past generations of people their age, the opportunity to spend time with them promotes a youthful energy in the regular garden maintenance. There is something about a teenage boy's desire to heave a shovel of dirt onto the backs of friends or the sight of teenage girls flip flopping their way around a community garden.

ALG began to expand our relationship with Montclair State University, through the coordination of volunteer service in our gardens by students involved in MSU's Nutrition and Food Science programs. In exchange for their help, these students learn in our "test kitchen" for organic gardening practices. Many of these young students have never worked in a garden before their ALG service and they are eager to gain practical knowledge about growing food, an important component of nutrition counseling.

III. The Physical and Emotional Benefits of Community Gardening

There has been wide spread attention given to the correlation between volunteerism and healthy life styles as well as the health benefits of spending time in the garden. This knowledge goes a long way in helping ALG maintain its volunteer roster as it reaches into its seventh year of community activism. It also helps to have designed

ALG as a creative medium rather than a traditional community garden. This alternative design allows us to recruit new volunteers while they participate in a variety of community-oriented activities; including art shows and bike tours, environmental fairs, and church sponsored events. The result is that ALG's creative medium benefits from a wide range of knowledge and interests that these potential volunteers bring to this organization and their life experiences shared with us inform ALG's place within the community at large. We understand that not every potential volunteer is interested in organic garden practices but that the same people might want to participate in ALG's food security mission, delivering produce to designated food charities, helping to design ALG promotional materials, seeking out potential sites, and soliciting donations from individuals and businesses.

Although school gardens are a popular way for students to learn about organic gardening practices, the opportunity for them to engage in ALG's community based project involves lessons in both nurturing and nutrition that provides them with "adult role models" other than their teachers and school administrators. Several aspects of such mentoring benefit everyone involved. Students learn basic skills that will prepare students for a lifetime of potential volunteerism. This intergenerational activity can alleviate negative connotations associated with both teenagers and senior citizens. I can attest to the fact that this is an exhilarating experience. Molly Latham, an "area extension specialist" for the University of Nevada/Reno Cooperative Extension, affirms my observations in "Young Volunteers: The Benefits of Community Service" (Latham), with statistical information related to the personal health benefits of youth volunteerism:

1. Youth who volunteer just one hour or more a week are 50% less likely

> to abuse alcohol, cigarettes, become pregnant, or engage [in] other destructive behavior. 2. Teens say that the benefits. . .Learning to respect others; learning to understand people who are different. . . developing leadership skills, becoming more patient, and better understanding of citizenship. 3. Youth who volunteer are more likely to do well in school, graduate, and vote. (Latham Fact Sheet-03-23)

A considerable amount of people in ALG's core volunteer group are categorized as "seniors" in health studies. Their life experiences and high energy level are highly valued assets in our community work. I remember in the 1960s and 1970s that "baby boomers" were rebellious enough to earn a bad rap as the "me" generation but in retrospect, many Americans have come to realize that there was justification for their protests. These 'boomers' came of age during the Vietnam War (1955-75), a time in these young people bonded in peer specific social movements. Most of the people I know that are within this age group have channeled such energy into activities that are beneficial to their local communities. Such examples of my own observations were published in a February 2013 edition of *Aging Health*. In "Altruism, Helping, and Volunteering: Pathways to Well-Being in Late Life," research doctors from Case Western Reserve University, Cleveland State University, and Columbia University worked together to validate the following fact: "With the aging of the Baby Boom generation there will be greater numbers of older adults seeking meaningful civic engagement though volunteerism" (Kahana 59).

Carol Gilligan's ground breaking study, *In a Different Voice (1982)*, led to changes in the compilation of data for scientifically based studies related specifically to

women's cultural perceptions but her new observations published in a second edition of her text in 1993 correlates to such "me" involvement that culturally undermines women's powerful role as nurturers of community in American society. She writes:

> Within the context of U.S. society, the values of separation, independence, and autonomy are so historically grounded, so reinforced by waves of immigration, and so deeply rooted in the natural rights tradition that they are often taken as facts: that people by nature separate, independent from one another, and self governing. And yet this is not at all the case. The questioning of separation has nothing to do with questioning freedom, but rather with seeing and speaking about relationships." (Gilligan xiv-xv)

The change that the research doctors affirm in "Altruism, Helping, and Volunteering" is a significant if one considers the facts that not only did this generation experience high levels of anxiety during the peak years of the Vietnam War (1955-75), their age group also made up the highest number of casualties in the 9/11 World Trade Center terrorist attack. Many of them watched as their children's generation made up the soldiers that continue to serve in two twenty-first century wars. These worries were exasperated by the fall out of the 2008 Prime Mortgage Collapse that resulted in drastic reductions in American retirement savings plans from which most people have yet to fully recover. I also observe such positive result determined by this 2013 study in the core group of ALG senior volunteers. They are actively involved in their grandchildren's lives, and often babysit while the children's mothers and fathers are both at work elsewhere. This additional time spent with younger family generations is capable of reinforcing stronger intergenerational bonds than, perhaps, the "me" generation felt were lacking in their own

child-parent relationships. ALG benefits from the seniors' "new attitude" when these people are in the company of younger ALG volunteers when these school age children and adolescents see someone's "grandparents" pitching in too.

There is also a change in the information found on university agricultural extension websites. These researchers are building on cultural studies to place conversations about "healthy lifestyle" within the context of "gardening." Julia Darnton, a Michigan State University Extension researcher, published such information in her May 2014 online article, "What Are the Physical and Mental Benefits of Gardening?" Darton writes:

> According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), moderate-intensity level activity…for 2.5 hours each week can reduce the risk for obesity, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes, osteoporosis, heart disease, stroke, depression, colon cancer and premature death. Additionally, those that choose gardening as their moderate-intensity exercise are more likely to exercise 40-50 minutes longer on average than those that choose activities like walking or biking. (Darnton)

Her scholarship correlates to scheduled maintenance times on the ALG's sites. In the peak of summer, these garden tasks take place twice a week between nine and eleven o'clock. Many of our volunteers ride bikes to the garden sites or combine their volunteer time with other activities like dog walking, completing errands in the town centers, and in church-related activities. In addition to discussions about organic gardening, the topics of healthy eating, artisanal cooking and dining, and fun types of exercise are most common and as people get better acquainted the gardens provide a non medical space to share

personal experiences with other ailments including back strain, bug bites, carpal tunnel syndrome, rashes, and sunburn.

More complicated health issues can arise when people have a dramatic change in their daily routines in the suburbs. Such alteration in a family structure can trigger health issues that on the surface appear to be part of the ordinary life. These common occurrences include the extended absence of college age students from the family home, the necessary adjustments that that survivors must make after the loss of a long term partner, the added responsibility of special needs children, and caring for aging parents and other relatives. These are all justifiable reasons to minimize social interaction outside of one's immediate circle. Mental Depression continues to be a major health problem among all sectors of American society and also places huge demands on the financial resources within the country's health system. Two common categories of Depression can be reduced through volunteerism: "empty nest syndrome" and "side by side isolation syndrome."

While it is undisputable that Depression is a disease, it is reasonable to conclude that it can help to change the environment in which symptoms of empty nest syndrome and side by side isolation syndrome occur. The Mayo Clinic website defines empty nest syndrome as "a phenomenon in which parents experience feelings of sadness and loneliness when the last child leaves home. Although you might encourage your children to be independent, the experience of letting go can be painful." (mayoclinic.org/empty nest Np) Financial burdens placed on many seniors after the 2008 Prime Mortgage collapse also contribute to the phenomenon of "side by side isolation." Many parents put their house up for sale in places like suburban Essex County neighborhoods like Glen

Ridge when the increased demand for real estate can translate into substantial financial gain for property owners. It is also common for this population sector to move away to eliminate the responsibilities associated with home ownership, including property taxes and general maintenance. A sense of isolation can set in among their neighborhood peers who chose to stay behind and these remaining neighbors must seek out new relationships within town in order to maintain their links to community social life. New families purchasing the old neighbors' houses are generally part of a younger generation of child-focused parents who both work outside of their homes. Their work and family commitments result in less time to socialize within neighborhoods.

Peter Lovenheim, a suburban Rochester based attorney, offers definitive answers to how people are affected by isolation in his account of a locally based social experiment. The results of his local field work were compiled for *In the Neighborhood: The Search for Community on an American Street, One Sleepover at a Time (2011)*, in which Lovenheim analyzes what he defines as side-by-side isolation in suburban communities and takes an analytical approach to understanding this cultural phenomenon. He summarizes his findings in a 2013 article in *The Washington Post*, "How Well Do You Know Your Neighbors," in which he lists five potential causes for this type of isolation: "(1) increasing numbers of two-career couples, (2) more time spent watching television and using the Internet, (3) larger lot and house sizes leading to increasing the distance between neighbors, (4) new homes that come with fences already built, and (5) the fear of strangers." (Lovenheim, "How Well" 2-3) His experiment—asking his Brighton neighbors, whom he had never met previously, for permission to stay over in their homes—inspired me to adapt his bold perspective in order to initiate own

social experiment—ALG. I did not understand at the time how common side by side isolation is within American suburban communities as a result of our modern lifestyles.

One of Lovenheim's neighbors told him, "You can write about me…but it will be boring. I have nothing going on in my life… My life is zero. I don't do anything" (Lovenheim 1). This man's comment reminds me of several of the elderly people who live in the senior citizen residences that receive ALG's fresh produce. Many of these people lack access to relatives or friends nearby. Although they socialize with other residents at dinner time and at frequently planned social evenings, it is still possible for them to feel isolated from younger people. They crave the kind of intergenerational experience that ALG offers in its gardens. In his epilogue to *In the Neighborhood*, Lovenheim concludes that most of his neighbors "wanted more or less the same thing: to live among others with a sense of common humanity" (Lovenheim 232). I found it ironic to discover that Lovenheim left this community, perhaps with concerns about his own empty nest syndrome, as he indicates that his daughter was about to leave home for college soon after his text's publication time.

Many ALG volunteers that are over fifty years of age tend to forget things at times. We assure each other that modest decline in memory loss is a common part of the aging process, but heightened awareness about Alzheimer's through media outlets still leaves many people anxious about their potential symptoms of this disease. The Mayo Clinic website provides information about how to acquire a medical assessment of memory loss and how to cope with its results. Recent research shows that gardening can help relieve the stress caused by diagnosed Alzheimer's disease. Angela O'Callaghan, a specialist in Social Horticulture at the University of Nevada Cooperative Extension,

presents such data in “Garden Benefits for the Elderly.” She writes: “Gardening is listed as one of the five ways older adults can be more physically active…it is an important way for a person with Alzheimer’s to continue enjoying outdoor activities… [A] sense of control over one’s environment is often predictive of good health and higher quality of life among the elderly” (O’Callaghan).

ALG established Retired and Senior Volunteer Program (hereafter, RSVP), that promotes the physical and emotional benefits of an active senior lifestyle through local community volunteerism. West Orange RSVP Chapter Director Stephanie Grove conducts interviews with both of the interested parties, the potential senior and a representative from the local community organization that will welcome such volunteers. Grove initially became aware of ALG through signage placed in front of one of the gardens in the town where she lives. This relationship pays off in spades for everyone involved and has been my first experience in “qualifying” volunteers.

ALG maintains a garden on the property of the Montclair Inn, a non profit senior residence for people who are able to function independently of nursing care. Younger ALG volunteers are often surprised to learn that these older seniors, most beyond age seventy five, are familiar with organic garden principles, and in turn, these seniors are often amused by the green talk is they hear spoken when the volunteers deliver fresh garden produce to the Inn’s common kitchen. One of my own memories is a good example of the first of many times residents enlightening questions arise involves a Montclair Inn resident’s question: “What the heck is an ‘heirloom tomato’?” Regular maintenance days since then have worked to establish informal but routine visits with the Inn’s residents. Most of them have physical issues that prevent them from actively

participating in the garden but an attractive wooden bench is provided for them by ALG and is located just outside the garden gate. It represents a standing invitation to come and sit for a while and "just talk." It can be surprising to learn what the residents take away from these visits and how quickly they pick up the threads of earlier conversations. If residents are not up for friendly chats, they can still see the garden from the dining room windows of this Victorian building. I look forward to my director rounds to check on the Montclair Inn garden's progress and interaction with the residents, especially after the loss of my parents in ALG's start up years.

IV. ALG's Food Security Mission

Many of the people that seek charitable food donations are part of a group called "the working poor" and these people are likely to work in at least two jobs and in addition to family obligations. My involvement with the local charitable food network has made it possible for me to learn more about programs aimed at incorporating more healthy food choices in hot meals prepared in Toni's Kitchen. Recent media reports have led many people to think that reductions in state and federal unemployment figures are encouraging enough for them to forget about the thousands of New Jersey residents who continue to struggle in spite of these reported gains. Two administers that address these concerns on a daily basis agreed to brief interviews with me that expand into larger discussions about suburban food insecurity. Their work takes place within walking distance of the ALG gardens.

Anne Mernin is Outreach Director of Toni's Kitchen, a program sponsored by St. Luke's Episcopal Church. Toni's Kitchen was established in 1982 and serves up to seventy guests three noon meals each week in its cafeteria. A hot breakfast is also offered

during the winter months to provide additional sheltered hours for its guests. ALG's specific gardens plans work in collaboration with food charities like Toni's to supplement these healthy meals. Mernin explains:

> Our guests are afflicted with several diet-related diseases, like hypertension and diabetes, so our dinner menus are focused on reducing sodium intake and including high-quality protein options like ground beef and chicken… Of late, the staff feels encouraged by the positive reception of our guests to daily menu options that include fresh fruit salad, whole grain pasta, brown rice, and sweet potatoes, and even quinoa. (Mernin)

In the last four years, Toni's has developed an outreach program to bring bags of food directly to families in need, in order to alleviate their negative feelings about eating in the communal dining area. This extension beyond the traditional model for soup kitchens involves a sad fact that has been made in every meeting that I have attended that involves the local charitable food network: Almost everyone living in the Montclair community at large knows someone in need of charitable food resources, whether they are aware of it or not, a fact also validated in state wide speaking forums about food insecurity. Statistics may show increases or decreases in food insecurity within New Jersey suburban communities, but the lingering fact is that there are just too many people without adequate food for themselves and their families. Michael Bruno, the Executive Director of the Human Needs Food Pantry, is responsible for interviewing eligible registrants who are food insecure:

> Most are good decent people with self-respect and [a strong] work ethic who for one reason or another find themselves in this horrible position.

> Some are laid off from jobs, others were uninsured and stricken with illness and are now faced with astronomical bills. Some suffer from disabilities, physical or mental, which have taken away their ability to hold down a job. Some are simply unable to find work in an economy that has a vast number of overqualified people vying for available job openings. (Bruno)

I asked Bruno if food insecure people are really as adept at hiding their food insecurity from their neighbors and extended family members as often as media reports suggest and why they just do not ask for help. Bruno responds directly:

> Not only is it fair to say that there are people in Montclair and the surrounding area hiding their food insecurity, but almost all of our clients are fiercely private about the fact that they come here, not wanting anyone to know that they receive help. In fact, pride keeps many people in need from coming here at all, foregoing assistance to avoid being "embarrassed." I often deal with men who are upset that they find themselves needing help, many telling me, "I'm supposed to be providing for my family." I usually respond by telling them that by swallowing their pride and coming here they are doing exactly that. I always ask the question "Is there anything you would not do to provide for your family?" When they say "no," I tell them that making the sacrifice of putting pride aside is doing exactly what a man is supposed to do—whatever is necessary to care for his family—and that usually sinks in and makes them feel a little better… I told the story of a lady who came here to register but

> was hiding it from her husband, who refused to allow her to do so because he wanted to be the sole provider for the family. I registered her, and we pack her food in local supermarket bags so he thinks she goes food shopping rather than coming to a pantry . . . I also registered a man who used to volunteer here for years and was devastated to find himself on the "other side of the line". . . From my own experience, I can tell you that perhaps the most surprising thing about hunger in suburban areas is just how pervasive it really is and how there is no stereotype that encompasses the majority of pantry clients. (Bruno)

Bruno uses his knowledge, discreetly but effectively, during public speaking engagements, to make Essex County residents more aware of their neighbors' troubles, but the demands on his time each day are enough to fill twenty four hours. This is where ALG can also support this food pantry's effort. Our link to other community groups in Glen Ridge and Nutley makes it possible to participate in food drives during the winter months that supplement the efforts of many individuals and groups within Montclair that support the Human Needs Pantry.

ALG's food security mission is in conversation with state wide food security organizations that also work in the ongoing development of its alternative community garden model and I closely monitor the progress of several charitable food production non profits that are engaged in the practice of "gleaning" a small percentage of the vegetables and herbs grown in community gardens. Gleaning is a "time honored tradition of gathering food that is either left over from a harvest or left in the fields on purpose for people who don't have enough to eat" ("Grow Your Own Food").

Two agriculture-based food charities, America's Grow-a-Row and LocalShare, have recently offered organized gleaning services for community gardens in New Jersey. However, although their gleaning efforts increase the volume of fresh vegetables available to many suburban communities, their delivery system limits the impact that their efforts can make to heighten community awareness of local food insecurity. These organizations are valuable resources for the Community Food Bank of New Jersey, which receives produce from western New Jersey farms maintained by Grow a Row and Local Share partners, and distributes these donations to multiple charitable food resources throughout this state through two locations, in Hillside and Egg Harbor Township. Although farm based gleaning organizations can deliver high volumes of much need food, ALG's food delivery system is based within suburban neighborhoods where these gardens heighten awareness of suburban food insecurity whether they are open for business or not. ALG volunteers complete their entire process of harvesting and delivering freshly picked vegetables on the same day that the local food pantries distribute them. The volunteers often see trucks delivering farm produce to the same places that we deliver our vegetables and herbs, and it is important for me to remind them that Mernin and Bruno are in need of both resources.

I put my trust in local food security administers the first time that ALG produce was delivered to these locations based upon my observations of change within my community at large immediately following the Subprime Mortgage Crisis. There were a lot more mothers and fathers dropping off children at the bus stop in their leisure clothes than normally seen in this affluent area with employment connections to Wall Street. Local retailers and home service providers confirmed my suspicions while I solicited

ALG gifts in kind from them. Large percentages of these local residents had lost their jobs and were not able to replace them or they could not replace them on the same pay scale. Although my instincts were correct about how deeply the Wall Street busts cut into community well being, it is still important to remain abreast of the state and federal developments related to this subject. This makes it possible to address questions that arise through the course of ALG's food security mission.

Who are the recipients of ALG's produce? In 1964, President Lyndon Johnson (1908-73) declared "The War on Poverty," but the black and white photos that represented twentieth century poverty, images of Johnson's "all-out war on human poverty and unemployment" (De Silver), are not representative of where many of these people live in America today. Poverty has moved to the suburbs, a phenomenon confirmed by both government and non-governmental research.

In the last six years, local scholarship and interviews with people who have firsthand experience with homeless people and food insecurity have reinforced the efforts of A Lot to Grow. The subprime mortgage collapse in 2008 highlighted the changing demography of American suburban dwellers. In 2009, The Brookings Institution published *Confronting Suburban Poverty in America (2013)*, by Elizabeth Kneebone and Alan Berube. The authors write: "Suburbs have never been as monolithic as historical stereotypes would suggest. Suburbanization in the prewar period included residents of all classes. Low-income residents have long been a part of suburban development" (9).They call for more discussions "around the intersection of poverty and placed largely in an urban or rural context" (4).

Defeating the myth of affluent suburban life is possible, but in order to achieve

this goal it is necessary to understand New Jersey's food-insecurity problem as a whole. U.S. Department of Labor Bureau of Labor Statistics can be interpreted in several ways that either support or contest improvements in the American economy. For instance, their report from within the last year states: "Regional and state unemployment rates were little changed in February," which qualifies the improvements that are widely reported in the media. When these statistics are juxtaposed with state data related to New Jersey's homeless population, it shows how this kind of media reports undermines the efforts of charitable food organizations that focus on the people who come to them for help in spite of political perspectives on state and federal economies. Essex and Ocean counties challenge the subjective perception that job growth can be unilaterally equated with the idea that the need for charitable are less throughout New Jersey. The nonprofit organization NJ Counts narrows the scope of the federal government's state by state analysis, and presents even less encouraging information for cities and towns in Essex County. Based on a point-in-time homelessness survey conducted on February 3rd, 2015, Jessica Mazzola, a reporter for NJ Advance Media, offers county to county reports that indicate that Essex and Ocean counties have increased populations of homeless people. In "Essex County Homeless Count on the Rise*,"* she writes:

> The results of the report, which counted the number of homeless people living in every county across the state…[indicate] 1,732 homeless people counted in Essex County, New Jersey, a 4.1 percent increase over the 2014 count number… Essex County accounted for 16.9 of the state's total homeless population—more than any other county. Over the past five years, the number of homeless people reported in Essex has gone up by

> 14.5 percent… Essex bucks statewide trends, which reported an overall reduction in homelessness. Statewide, the study counted 10,211 people—a 13.9 percent decrease from last year. (Mazzola 1)

The Social activists throughout New Jersey interpret these statistics in practical ways. They must remain on the food security battle lines, between a "little changed" national economy and politically driven media reports that either support or dispute these "facts." In the meantime, they understand how the working poor are one step away from living on the streets or in their cars because of credit-card debt, medical expenses, or other extenuating circumstances. Much like everywhere else in the United States, there are people hiding food insecurity and attempting to cope with extreme life changes in a minute to minute reality.

The NJ Office of Emergency Management prepares a plan each year to prepare for catastrophic occurrences. *The State of New Jersey 2014 Hazard Mitigation Plan (HMP),* which takes historic disaster experiences into account and reflects on the natural and human caused hazards that New Jersey currently faces, confirms the fact that New Jersey's economic resources are spread thinner than most residents are willing to acknowledge. The plan identifies the Recession of 2008 as a trigger for loss of tax revenue:

> The effects of the recession continue to linger to the present. … [It has] led to a significant tightening of the State budget. . . In 2009, New Jersey had a budget gap of $9 billion, or roughly 25% of the State's budget. . . It is forecasted that it will take until 2019 for New Jersey to fully recover from the recession (NJ Office EM).

It is possible to mend tears in the suburban safety net through more locally-based initiatives like ALG, but it is also necessary to change national public rhetoric about American food insecurity among suburban dwellers in order to do so. Many local people and organizations support important causes to alleviate impoverished conditions but they tend to place greater emphasis on travel to places outside of the local area to lend support. For this reason, many American suburban residents still associate food insecurity with Appalachia and Africa. They do not even have to leave their arm chairs to be a social activist. Child Fund International, for example, is a well-known international charitable organization highly visible on local television commercials. Its founder, J. Calvitt Clarke, is featured pleading with audiences on behalf of hungry children in Africa, Asia, and South America. According to Charity Navigator, an online database that compiles financial information on nonprofit organizations, ChildFund had a total budget of 239 million dollars in 2014, of which over 27 million, or 11.4%, went toward marketing and fund raising (ChildFund International). In suburban Essex County, by contrast, most charitable food organizations face the challenge of generating financial support without the benefit of advertising dollars, relying instead upon the support of local civic, religious, and school administrators to get the word out through community initiatives and school food drives.

There is a need for more support from organizations like the Partners for Health Foundation, a non profit that was established in Montclair, New Jersey in 2010. There outreach efforts to promote local organizations like ALG go a long way in keeping agents of social change not only sustainable but also effective in their minute by minute realities.

Some confusion about green talk language contributes to intrinsic biases in local

and national perceptions about food insecurity in neighborhoods within walking distance of where they live. For purposes of discussion related to "healthy skepticism" about green talk, I refer to the scholarly text, *Food Justice (2013)*, written by Robert Gottlieb and Anupama Joshi. The term "food justice" cited in this text is one of several definitions of this term based on three perspectives; professional, political, and personal. The focus group for scholarly texts like this are "other scholars" or "professional social activists" that are predominately given the responsibility of shaping national views on social activism that links smaller realms of social activism to green talk. For purposes of discussion here, the definition of food justice cited in the Gottlieb and Joshi text is found within the *The Food System: a Guide (1995)*, written by Geoff Tansley and Tony Worsley. These define food justice as: "the food system is best described as the entire set of activities and relationships that make up the various food pathways from seed to table and influence the how and why and what we eat" (Tansley and Worsley 8). Gottlieb and Joshi attest to strong links between charitable food agents and community garden initiatives that by association also participate in the AEM: "Food justice, like environmental justice, is a powerful idea. It resonates with many groups and can be invoked to expand the support base for bringing community change *and* a different kind of food system" (Gottlieb and Joshi 5). Yet this 'powerful idea', based on their perspective, emanates from urban communities. "The urban agriculture and community garden initiatives in Milwaukee, Chicago, Detroit, Seattle, and Denver are examples of a movement that has metastasized across the United States and taken multiple forms . . ." (Gottlieb and Joshi 148), although suburban community gardens on a whole, and specifically ALG's alternative model, have a proven track record of charitable food

activism that in conjunction with Toni's Kitchen and the Human Needs Food Pantry totals over fifty years. It appears that in addition to the commonly proposed "flyover zone" between coastal placement of environmental scholarship, academic biases are also made that minimize the value of suburban-based scholarship like the Kneebone and Berube study. The wide breadth of urban studies about urban farms and gardens and related topics reflects scholars' hesitation to move beyond their comfort zone in urban based university studies. In the meantime, ALG will continue to pursue its "food justice" mission and the WOW group will be ready to give scholars a taste of suburban-styled perspectives on local food production.

Chapter 2

ALG'S HISTORICAL INSPIRATIONS:

From the Ground Up

I. Detroit Tutorial: The Roots of Food Insecurity

There are several reasons why I found Detroit to be a better place to learn about food insecurity than other urban cities closer to my home in New Jersey. To start, Detroit consistently ranks at the top of America's twenty most impoverished urban cities unlike Newark, New York, and Philadelphia. There is no getting around the face of poverty and food insecurity. It has been front and center in good times and bad times, ever since I can remember. The good news is that Detroit's landscape has greatly improved since Rebecca Solnit last wrote about it in 2007 and many people there are paying more than just a visit to this city—their buying in. Solnit's predilection for "the political qualities of art and the environment" (Cohen) influences the context in which she views this city's blight in her essay of almost a decade ago. Her essay declares Detroit to be a ". . .a remarkable city now, one in which the clock seems to be running backward as its buildings disappear and its population and economy decline"(Solnit 66), but the worm has turned in the last few years, as Detroit lives up to its 1805 motto: "Resurget cineribus"—as it rises from its ashes. A diverse group of people view this city in a different way now, as more historic building conversions are underway. Young traditional-styled families, single professionals, and members of Detroit's "art crowd" are all investing in the city's future with their eyes wide open. They anticipate challenges around the bend, like modern day de Tocquevilles. While the Frenchman first saw Native Americans steering their canoes on the banks of Detroit's Fort Pontchartrain, these real estate investors recognized

Detroit's promise again by 2003, when the rest of the United States had yet to be ushered into the new millennium's sluggish economy.

Freelance reporter Amy Gamerman wrote about what is driving this upwardly mobile population sector in her *Wall Street Journal* article, "Detroit Luxury Revs Up," which may well be connected to socio economic discussions presented later in this chapter. "Detroit's distinctive urban lifestyle is attracting a new professional class to its downtown. . . ," Gamerman writes, ". . . there's stiff competition for rental apartments in landmark skyscrapers that has been transformed into well-appointed residences, some after standing vacant for decades." (Gamerman M7). Given the city's intrinsic problems as a result of its well-publicized racial divide, these real estate prospectors are taking an emotional gamble too that is mirrored in this city's hope for economic prosperity when Detroit's three casinos were established there twenty years ago. After seeing Detroit in far worse condition, these "gamers" looked past cultural and political doomsayers, with Pingree-like determination. Gamerman spells out entrepreneur Rick Ghersi's authentic memories of this place as a yardstick of where Detroit has been in order to reinforce her reporting on where this town is going. Ghersi is quoted in this article: "The neighborhood was dark, desolate and unsafe; visitors risked finding their car windows punched in, glass glittering on the sidewalk. 'We used to call them Detroit diamonds,' he said. . . ." (M7). This is not to say that Solnit's elegy-like essay was off base and deserving of retrospective criticism. As I look back on my notes from 2007-08, they too form a portrait of hopeful lament as city politicians were positioned to steal my idyllic childhood memories and it is naïve to think that that it will ever be possible again to retrieve those memories in quite the same condition. Detroit was at its lowest watermark then and these

grown up realities cannot easily be brushed off--Solnit's dreamy poetics actually help to soften this heartfelt loss. Gamerman makes note of such realities: "Despite its growing popularity with the professional crowd, Detroit faces serious challenges. The unemployment rate in the Detroit-Dearborn-Livonia triangle is 6.4%--the highest of any comparable metro region in the country according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics." She continues, "Detroit's cash-strapped public-school system is under state emergency management. Teachers staged a sickout in January to protest health, safety and working conditions" (M7). Detroit still has a long way to go before its 139 square miles of neighborhoods are safely back on track. In the meantime, the fine line between urban legend and reality has been drawn.

ALG was in its first season when collaboration between Policy Link, a non profit national research and social action group, and The Food Trust, a non profit organization, declared Detroit to be a "food desert," in a report that is still available online. The term "food desert" is generally defined by them as a geographic area where affordable and nutritious food is hard to obtain without access to an automobile (Treauhaft and Karpy). Although my 2007 notes and accompanied photos record two sizeable grocery stores on Detroit's west side and public access to locally produced agriculture at "Eastern Market," where the city's yield from the Experiment had been sold over a hundred years before, I was persuaded to accept such emotional declarations made by the Food Trust. As Detroit became front and center in national news reports, other socially conscious activists and writers listed Detroit among other United States food deserts. In fact, there were always gray areas in this research analysis that makes it possible to dispute their claims based on emotional reasoning. The political aisle that divides support or rejection of Detroit's food

desert status has become more obvious over time. In “Is the Detroit ‘food desert’ a myth?” (MI Radio, N.p.), Auday Arabo, CEO and past president of Associated Food and Petroleum Dealers, (hereafter, AFPD), challenges the Food Trust declaration among others that frame Detroit as a food desert, based on his own political perspectives. Arabo’s responsibilities at AFPD involve his representation of four thousand grocery stores located in Michigan, Ohio, and other states nearby. He believes that employees who have worked at these grocery stores since the early 1990s would back up his understanding of Detroit’s less abundant but reasonable access to fresh food within the city limits. His comments are reported by an unnamed Michigan Radio Stateside Reporter: “To find out where the stores are, Arabo says they actually put all the data together and made up a map [found online at] (http:..www.detroitnews /article/20140807/SPECIAL01/140728003/). . . ,” and the trade lobbyist provides his own homespun summation of this AFPD study.: “Once we showed people what the stores looked like on the inside, it really changed a lot of hearts and minds.” The article states, “Arabo says instead of [Detroit being] a ‘food desert’ [the real problem is that] it’s more [of] a ‘food access’ issue, because lack of transportation and crime are the two major challenges in Detroit. However, Arabo says the grocers in Detroit have always been there, especially independent stores, even though they don’t market as much as the big chains do” (MI Radio).

It is undisputable, no matter who you talk to in Detroit, as to how poverty and food insecurity is perpetuated by this city due to its lack of reliable mass transportation. This problem is difficult for people in New Jersey to understand even though constant attention is given to New Jersey transit's flawed business plan. Residents of places like

Glen Ridge, Montclair, and Nutley have transportation options. Public transportation in Detroit is limited to a municipally managed bus service that has been unreliable for decades and this highly touted “People Mover” constructed in the 1990s remains an icon of lucrative political deals in much the same way as Detroit's casinos are today. The simple truth is that Detroit's reputation as America’s “Motown” prevented its residents from making the cultural leap to mass transportation is the readily available in other American metropolitan areas since the beginning of the twentieth century. When Henry Ford's first automobile rolled off the assembly line in Detroit's Highland Park neighborhood, it marked the beginning of the end of this city’s street car culture. Men and women who watched those shiny cars with their chrome trimmings loaded on to Ford’s car carrier trailers in their comings and goings from the factory parking lot also wanted to be seen driving the latest model after they punched out that the time clock from the daily shiftwork. In Detroit today, it can often take as long as two hours for a person to travel one way by city bus to the outlying suburbs where there are employment opportunities capable at least of reducing their food insecurity issues. *Detroit Metro Times* reporter, Ryan Felton draws similar analysis to mine in “How Detroit ended up with the worst public transit.” He writes: “It’s an unfortunate reality for the residents of roughly 60,000 households in Detroit, of whom 80 percent are black, [and] who have no access to an automobile” (Felton).

Based on federal, state, and city census data and additional reports published by non-profit organizations, and widely distributed through multiple web resources, the range of poverty in Detroit’s residential neighborhoods continues to vary between 72 percent and 82 percent, in a city with a population of less than a million people. The

crowds of homeless people I first saw in the Detroit Public Library were only a part of the nineteen thousand homeless people and a majority of residents without full time employment that is widely reported as Detroit related statistics. Detroit natives and long term residents understand the value of the Gamerman styled press, but it is important for people, like West Coast based Solnit and Guilford, Connecticut-based Gamerman to return more often in order to report responsibly on how long the spit and polish remains on this city motto. The simple fact is that along with me, they choose to live among affluence in places like my New Jersey suburb, where financial hardship and food insecurity is hidden from neighbors like us.

The modern community gardens found in Detroit, in 2007-08, grew between emotionally scorched lots that were left abandoned after houses were burned down as part of the city's unofficial tradition called "Devil's Night." This display of destructive pranks became an annual pre Halloween ritual that cultural scholars often correlate with another local cultural phenomenon, "White Flight," which also occurred on a national basis in the mid twentieth century. Although major urban centers across the United States experienced similar migrations, the mass exodus from Detroit by Caucasian residents and business owners escalated in the post riot years not as much do to racial fears as the political dominance of Mayor Coleman Young during the beginning stage of his two decade administration between the years, 1974-94.

This demographic change is still notable in Detroit's Corktown neighborhood, where Irish and German immigrants had settled in the late nineteenth century and where a large number of the city's modern community gardens took root at the end of Young's political career. Detroit's food justice movement has become more organized since my

field work there concluded in 2009 and many of the make shift vacant lot gardens that I noted before then are missing from the map now. Two Corktown food gardens in particular informed the development of ALG's built space.

I discovered the first of these gardens on property owned by the Greater Faith Missionary Baptist Church, located on Rosa Parks Avenue. While most of the other gardens I surveyed resembled "the Experiment's" utilitarian space, this container garden provided me with several clues as to the contrasts between Detroit's most powerful residents and its most vulnerable ones. The garden was less bountiful than others but it marks a symbolic place in Detroit's "industrial history." My notes indicate elements that were striking to me at the time—a bald truck tire garden design put together as horizontally spiraling shelves that reached the height of six feet and were filled to the brim with soil. The weight of the soil held the giant multiple tiers in place--an impractical design that hinted at the garden architects' inexperience and the potential for this structure to topple over in a strong rain storm. It would not be easy to reach the top of it in any case. No one was in the garden during my visit, but a long stretch of hose drew a line the full length of the yard from the wood chips that surrounded the tires to a water spigot on a side wall of the white clapboard and brick church. It would have been easy enough for me to end the nozzle's slow drip except for the fact that an arm's length of chain secured to a fence gate to its steel gauge post.

The Motor City Casino could be seen at a distance from the sidewalk of the garden as the landscape slopes downward on a steep angle from there. One can see the shimmering waves of rolled steel that make up the casino's roof and how it is supported by a traditional red brick foundation. These design elements are intended to honor

Detroit's past glories as the Cradle of America's twentieth century industrialization but it also heightens the steep decline in this city's national significance by memorializing Detroit's most sustainable industry: political machinations. From this vantage point, the casino is framed in the foreground accompanied by other commercial buildings and campuses of higher learning appear to be in the background. A view of City Hall from there is hidden, even if one climbed to the highest tier of the makeshift garden. In retrospect, this landscape symbolically reveals what people since de Tocqueville's time have always known. Detroit residents have always had 'greater faith' in their twenty 2400 neighborhood churches than in their local government.

The Capuchins have filled the political voids in Detroit social services for over a century. It was my time investment spent there that paid off in my deeper understanding of the meaning of "food insecurity." When I met Brother Vincent Reyes, he had just published a compilation of photos and stories called *My Name Is. . .: Portraits and Table Stories from the Capuchin Soup Kitchen*. It was possible to learn from poignant work how there are differences between "situational poverty" and "generational poverty." Reyes' collaboration with several local photojournalists puts a face on the subject of "food insecurity." The people featured in Reyes' text were given the chance to tell their own stories which are recorded in the same manner in which his collaborators heard them. Their stories undermine nationally entrenched biases about "the poor." *Detroit Free Press* writer Bill Mc Graw explains the innovation of the *My Name Is* collaborators in his comments on this text's back cover. He writes: "The book is a unique document that makes human beings out of the figures we normally see only in the shadows of forlorn neighborhoods" (qtd. in Reyes). The photos are revealing and the

autobiographical text that accompanies each of them confirms the fact that poverty does not discriminate in gender, race, and class. In the preface to this work, Reyes writes about his time spent among these soup kitchen guests:

> I jointed the guests for breakfast and lunch for the chance to know them. . .and they would know me. . . [but] Audiences [I speak to outside of the Kitchen] always want to know the "numbers": The number of meals provided. . .[of] people served at the Capuchin Services Center; the tons of food provided to needy families; the number of children attending the various programs. . . how many men have benefited from our Addition Program and are still drug-free. Numbers are important. . .impressive, but they can never tell the whole story. . .cannot capture the impact of our services in the lives of countless people who are forgotten. It is easy to forget—or ignore—people who barely leave a footprint on our society. (Reyes 5)

I was not invited by Reyes to meet people who dine in the Capuchin Soup Kitchen and in retrospect it occurs to me that I did not ask to do so in spite of my inclination to be one who can ask for the order. It is quite possible that Reyes was protective of the Capuchins' guests but in reading text that accompanied their photographs it was possible to hear their voices define the far reaching roots of poverty and food insecurity in American culture. I have included three samples of such story lines that defy stereotypical ideas about this social problem in modern society.

"Susie" describes herself as the only child and the baby daughter of a twenty year old nurse. She doesn't look that much older in her portrait and she describes her

upbringing in ways that still reflect in her confident stature: “She [my mother] taught me well. She taught me to go to school, get an education, and [to] finish school. She used to show me how to cook and not depend on a man. They is gonna hurt your feelings but God says, ‘Forgive them” (39).

“Anthony (Pops)” is an elderly African American man who begins his story with grade school memories of Our Lady of Sorrows School in Detroit. He went to Mass there each school day at 7 a.m. and Pops tellingly remarks about the school’s traditional rules: “We had a dress code. I wore Buster Brown shoes, blue pants, blue shirt and a purple tie. One day I was late and the nun hit me so I hit her back” (95). After this incident, Pops went to public school and graduated high school at age 16. He obtained a Wayne State University undergraduate degree before these achievements were sidelined by drug abuse. He was a recovering addict at the point in which this photo was taken and he was comfortable in the Soup Kitchen’s warm community, as he recalled this down ward spiral. “I did my time and then you’re ready for industry. They say, ‘You can go out and make money. You have your apprenticeship for Tool & Die’. . . In looking back, all my life, God has been good to me. I asked for wisdom, knowledge, and understanding, and I’ve always not been disappointed” (56). Pops’ traditional belief in the power of prayer becomes more poignant as he declares his Alzheimer’s diagnosis.

“Debra” was born in Grosse Pointe Farms. “My favorite part about being a kid was running around, having big fun playing in the trees, swinging off the trees, just having fun. I had a bad childhood, I mean, a really painful childhood” (57). She spent time in foster homes in which she was subjected to physical and emotional abuse by non family members and members of the family’s local church. Debra’s resilience is

measurable in the way she remembers good childhood memories in spite of the bad ones, but this middle aged woman's eyes are downcast in her portrait. "I would like to have a place that I can call home . . . I'd like to be on a farm, grow my own food, [work in] my own garden" (57). Debra uses her opportunity to talk about herself to remind others to acknowledge who it is that they walk past that live on the street: "I come from the street, but I'm just like everybody else. That's what I want people to remember about me . . . Don't look at a poor person like they're a bad person. Some people do better than others. Nobody wants to be poor" (57).

Reyes also encouraged me to speak with his long standing colleague and friend, Rick Samyn, who had left the Detroit area a few years earlier to take on a different kind of ministry in Washington State. While Reyes spoke thoughtfully about the Capuchins' work with Detroit's poor, Samyn delivered the back story about how Earthworks' first garden failed. There were no signs of any such failure by the time of our conversation and it was apparent afterwards that Patrick Crouch was hired to direct a second attempt with a business plan. It was, however, possible to determine that Samyn held fast to his childhood memories of Detroit as he told me about such family ties, perhaps to infer his willingness to let bygones be bygones. Samyn grew up not far from Mt. Elliot street where the Capuchins' main campus is located and he waxed sentimental long enough to offer fond memories in addition to a strong dose of Detroit's reality. His father had been a neighborhood grocery merchant who often kept his store open on summer nights so that his customers, many of which were working women, would have access to grocery items they needed after their long work days were over. He spoke of neighborhood backyards as his playground and described quintessential American summer nights in which he

joined in the high jinx of such freedom as a city kid and how the mixed group of siblings and neighbor children would catch fireflies in Mason jars taken from basement shelves in in the family grocery store. In trying to recreate these bucolic memories for the Capuchin neighbors' good, he was profoundly disappointed in the end to discover that there was little support for his Earthworks experiment. After three years of garden seasons without any volunteer help, Samyn evaluated this failure and then later provided me with the result. He spoke of intrinsic problems that challenge Detroit's positive move forward and it was obvious that Reyes wanted me to see such realities that are not directly spoken about within Detroit's Capuchin community in Detroit. Although neighborhood people would stop to chat from across the fence on their way to and from the Soup Kitchen, many of the African American men expressed different kinds of childhood experience that included family stories reaching far back in time as the American Civil War. Since that time, these generations of these Americans living within Detroit's prejudicial culture, held their own biases related to "agricultural practice" that percolated in memories of their own Detroit childhoods. Compounding the challenges of reversing this bias was the easily access that neighborhood residents had to a hot meal prepared in the Soup Kitchen or to groceries collected from Gleaner's Food Pantry shelves.

Earthworks now embraces this ancient tradition on almost a full city block of municipal land that was reclaimed by Detroit in default of property owners' tax obligations. Houses like this were common to see in city neighborhoods there in 2007, but the Capuchins' non profit status makes it possible for them to till this soil without tax lean and in reciprocation to fill a portion of Detroit's social services gap. This business agreement is similar to the agreement in the Experiment's divisions of vegetable yields

between the city, the property owner, and the vacant lot gardener, as stated in the "Detroit Common Council Report" on October 27, 1894. Harvests from Earthworks are divided in two ways; some of the produce is used in the Capuchin Soup Kitchen but a large portion of artisanal vegetables are sold at Eastern Market. This working capital offsets the total funds needed for implementing Earthworks' business plan that is otherwise provided through undesignated financial donations made to support the Detroit's Capuchins' ministry. Local food production has increased in popularity in Detroit since my fieldwork concluded there in late 2008. As more professionals and successful artists move into this city's neighborhoods, the demand for high quality produce has increased and presents an opportunity not only for the Capuchins' to earn money with their harvests, but also to educate neighborhood youth about market sales in their Eastern Market booth. The more I learned about this organization it was possible to see how one seed idea can grow into a healthy variety of productive ideas.

For this reason, I make note of what is written on the Detroit Capuchin website under the title: "Frequently Addressed Questions." It reads:

> While we would like to think that our staff is relatively representational of our city . . . our leadership within the larger organization . . . is also largely white men . . . our volunteer base is largely made up of white volunteers from outside of Detroit . . .While all of this could be considered problematic we see opportunity . . . to discuss issues of race and class with a broader community [and] we still work hard to address underlying issues of racism . . . ." (Capuchin Soup Kitchen)

The Earthworks' emphasis on community building has also evolved to include the

following environmental goals in its mission statement: “We seek to build a just, beautiful food system through education, inspiration, and community development. As a working study in both social justice and in knowing the origins of what we eat . . .” (Capuchin Soup Kitchen).

I read a change in tone from “spiritual” to “inspirational” in this more recent update that addresses criticism about the Capuchins’ business model. It underlines another racial tone that sharpens with consideration for the fact that Detroit elected its first Caucasian mayor since the long term Mayoral Administration of Coleman Young (1918-97.) Democrat Mayor Mike Duggan will encounter his own political challenges as Detroit continues to position itself to see how the new influx of social capital, reported by Gamerman, is now invested there along with by J P Morgan Chase’s hundred million dollar investment made in 2014.

In a morning television interview with NBC commentator Matt Lauer, this investment bank’s Chairman and CEO Jamie Dimon offers his reasons for gambling on Detroit. In “Jamie Dimon $100M Investment in Detroit,” Scott Stump reports: “We invest and develop communities around the world. . .we’ve been doing this since our heritage started 200 years ago. . .that’s what banks do. . .” (Stump). Of particular interest was the way that Dimon softens the hard edges of American banking practices at least long enough to persuade Laurer’s television following. Dimon perceives this financial investment to represent the powerful cultural marker of the “American Ideal.” He attributes his personal viewpoint to be influential in his business practices. “I also look at this as an American Patriot” (Stump). The J P Morgan Chase investment was made to provide Detroit with twenty first century interactive technological capabilities. All who

are financially and emotionally invested in Detroit understand how necessary technology is to Detroit's socio economic renaissance, as evident in similar projects being developed in other urban cities of the Midwest that are traditionally industrial in nature.

Although some of Detroit's problems are unique among other American cities, it also represents a microcosm of other cultural challenges that have taken on global proportions, including the sustainability of the world's food supply and the inefficiencies of global educational policies. It is important to note the steadfast role that the Capuchins' have played in Detroit's sustainability since 1883, with consideration for the cyclical nature of American socio economics, but also to take into account the influential role that Earthworks has taken on in less than a decade. The wheels turn slowly, but it is possible to see how Earthworks contributes to the progress through educational opportunities that include the power of community networking, bridging racial divide, and by teaching marketing skills to Detroit youth through their joined efforts with Uprooting Racism Planting Justice, a local non-profit organization, established in 2007 and Michigan Youth Farm Stand Project, supported by the C S Mott Group for Sustainable Food Systems at Michigan State University.

In adapting several aspects of the Earthworks Urban Farm model to develop the ALG model, it was also possible to see how this Detroit based organization is placed in conversation with the "knowledge society" model offered by Peter F. Drucker, in "The Age of Social Transformation" (1994) in the *Atlantic Monthly.* His model is one that Samyn instinctively tried to develop through his work. Drucker was a leading educator and author, widely known as a contributor to the philosophical and practical foundations of modern business corporations. He defines a "knowledge society" as having three

sectors: ". . .the "public sector" (government) and the "private sector" (business) . . . [and] in the past twenty years the United States has begun to talk of a third sector, the "non-profit sector"--those organizations that increasingly take care of the social challenges of a modern society" (75). As the United States economy remains sluggish, it is the non profit sector that continues to pick up the slack in government social services paid for by American taxpayers. Drucker writes: "Indeed, if this century proves one thing, it is the futility of politics. Even the most dogmatic believer in historical determinism would have a hard time explaining the social transformations of this century as caused by the head-line making events, or the head-line making events as caused by social transformations" (54). I liked Drucker's choice of poetic imagery to convey his concrete ideas. He makes the effort to reach a wider audience of people that can benefit from his scholarship in their everyday lives. He continues his discussions:

> But it is the social transformations, like ocean currents deep below the hurricane-tormented surface of the sea, [sp] that have had a lasting, indeed, permanent effect. They rather than all the violence on the political surface, have transformed not only the society, but also the economy, the community, and the polity we live in. The age of social transformation will not come to an end with the year 2000–it will not even have peaked by then." (54)

Following his thesis to its end, it is possible to see the role that Detroit's community gardens can play in social transformation. He writes: "And I submit that it is becoming increasingly clear that through the social sector a modern developed society can again create responsible and achieving citizenship, and can again give individuals--especially

knowledge workers--a sphere in which they can make a difference in society and re-create society" (76). There is measurable value in Drucker's scholarship as it provides a sophisticated business model that academic and financial institutions strongly relate to in the information society today. The Capuchins have intuitively fulfilled such a role in Detroit for over eighty years. This fact suggests that the basis for such business models is intuitive, and that the need to serve the community as a means of self-fulfillment is validated by all sectors of a knowledge society. Drucker affirms this statement: "As a volunteer in a social sector institution, the individual can make a difference" (76).

II. Agrarian Persuasions: A Legacy of Environmental Fiction

In 2011, my Detroit experiences were placed in conversation with my writing life when the Borough of Glen Ridge offered ALG an opportunity to establish a garden on a recently reclaimed plot of land that is now AGL's Benson Street garden. In subsequent years, this opportunity has been mutually satisfying for both the Borough of Glen Ridge and ALG. The town has used ALG's garden as proof of its fulfillment of *Sustainable New Jersey's* certification process and ALG has gained a desirable garden location as well as a healthy working relationship with Glen Ridge's local government. In addition to these benefits, the use of this Benson Street location has also taught me how the Drucker's theory of social transformation could be applied to a suburban model. While I was initially enthusiastic, I understood very little about how the "green" initiatives taking place in town celebrated its Victorian aesthetics. The emphasis on "self" in American culture that Lovenheim identifies as a potent undermining agent in American communities is less apparent in this tiny borough, where residents fulfill many community-oriented roles in local government and non profits. There is still potential for

side by side isolation to exist here as the shift in natural cultural values manifests in Glen Ridge. While the town council and borough supervisor work diligently to maintain continuity in the town's basic residential needs and greening initiatives, they often do so without public recognition. Despite national news reports about Detroit's spoiled cultural landscape, suburban residents in towns like Glen Ridge can believe that they are immune from Detroit's fate and the fate of other cities that lack the full civic participation of its residents. An example of such resident behavior took place in Glen Ridge in early 2015. In this instance, few people seemed to aware of a potential disruption to the town's waste management services after an agreement between the borough and a local contractor ended abruptly due to the contractor's financial problems. Glen Ridge council members and the town supervisor worked hard in this case to find a proper replacement quickly enough to create a seamless transition in services without interruption of the weekly recycling schedules, but there was little acknowledgement of this accomplishment. As ALG increases its borough presence, I have learned how naiveté about the expansive range of cultural and historical issues related to "green" initiatives is not unique and how many people are agreeable to efforts to "save the Planet" just as long as these green initiatives do not interfere with their everyday lives. This passive behavior is complicated the fact that even in America's smallest towns and villages, like Glen Ridge, many people do not know their neighbors well enough to call them by name. These facts lead me to ask how long residents can expect suburban town leaders to volunteer for such an elevated level of community responsibility if residents are not even aware of who lives next door. I also question why such residents are more comfortable accepting town leaders' decisions on face value when these people are strangers to residents in most

cases.

When ALG established its first Glen Ridge garden in 2011, the opportunity to expand this organization's mission intensified the personal nature of my volunteer work, but the timing could not have been worse as green initiatives became an increasingly polarizing topic in Glen Ridge. Between 2007 and 2014, the town's residents engaged in a series of highly divisive conversations regarding the maintenance of the largest sports fields in town. One argument maintained that a grass seeded sports field complimented the town's bucolic landscape. This argument also maintained that property tax dollars should be directed more closely toward the implementation of the "Glen Ridge Sustainability Element Plan" that involves storm water and shade tree management. The opposing argument advocated for the retooling of these playing fields with artificial turf, in order to better protect student athletes from injuries associated with ill groomed facilities, and to reduce the long term maintenance costs involved with grass playing fields. The argument in favor of artificial turf focused on athlete safety rather than ecology. As a twenty five year resident of Glen Ridge, I recognize how these "turf wars" to light other controversies that have culturally divided this town in the past and how such debates are often based on socio economic issues. The question of "how far" Glen Ridge residents were willing to go with green initiatives was especially intriguing as such decisions would potentially contribute to health risks for a large percentage of the town youth. Questions like this one generate thematic inspiration for the WOW group and are introduced in *The Sketches* chapter discussions.

By 2012, the Benson Street garden was fully functional. It became evident to me that the notion of a "modern agrarian experience" had become a popular incentive for

many people to volunteer with ALG. I also had become more aware of a specialized language spoken by environmentalists that melded scientific terms and commercial jargon into "green talk" and how it was used in ALG volunteers' conversations. In order to effectively direct this organization, it would be necessary for me to "get up to speed" on the cultural links between modern environmentalist ideology and the political ideology of "agrarianism." This intersection between my ALG responsibilities, preparation for *The Sketches*, and my research into the origins of agrarian literature provided some interesting points to consider during my ongoing community work and the reestablishment of my writing life.

In this chapter, I use the term "modern agrarian experience" in order to differentiate between the practical experiences that community gardeners embrace and historical discussions related to American environmental literature. The "modern agrarian experience" pertains to the twenty-first century Green Movement, which I will discuss later on in this chapter. Meanwhile, references to agrarian Literature and related art pertain to a concerted effort among artists throughout American history to invoke the aesthetic of agrarian political ideology. The key difference between these two ideologies is that the "modern agrarian experience" is colored by a strain of social activism currently supported in government and education institutions while "agrarian literature" involves the perpetuation of the rural landscape and farmers that represent the American Ideal. This discussion directly relates to SOJ's role as an artistic linchpin between such nineteenth century and twentieth century discussions.

In Dana Gioia's introductory remarks to *Reading at Risk*, he calls to attention a recent trend in overall reduction in the American public's interest in reading in 2004.

Media outlets now generally fill the knowledge gap with regard to "ecological" issues while at the same time, younger generations continue to gravitate towards alternative economic and cultural models as America's existing models continue to fail them. This lack of independent reading amongst adults is now coupled with young people's attraction to new ideas that will secure their place in a sustainable society. Together, these intergenerational trends have created a perfect storm wherein activists who subscribe to the tenants of the "modern agrarian experience" are politically powerful. This power allows them the opportunity to impose moralistic perceptions onto those people who resist their brand of social activism. This group is generally associated with Capitalist ideology and practices.

The idea of "modern agrarian movement" is rooted in the Green Revolution of the 1960s. Fifty years later, the political agendas that initially propelled the Green Movement into the public spotlight are still with us. As the line between political rhetoric and facts continues to blur, the intrinsic flaws in both agrarianism and capitalism are less apparent for young Americans who embrace the Green Movement's politicized views based on practices nurtured by a federal and state mandated educational curriculum. Years of academic study for children and adolescents proposes the "green talk" as emphatic moral doctrine without emphasizing the standard of living for humans as greatly improved in modern industrial society. Further complicating the situation is the fact that the Green Movement's social reform objectives are often intertwined with those of other social reform movements including the civil rights and women's rights movement. For example, discussions about food insecurity are often intermingled with socio economic conversations about poverty, which are intermingled with both ethical and practical

conversations specific to women's poverty. When these conversations all blend together, it becomes unclear where moral discussion end and where politically driven agendas begin. For example, in "The Radicals: How Extreme Environmentalists Are Made" (Feb 2012), reporters Zachary Fryer-Biggs and Malcolm Cecil-Cockweil interview Dave Foreman and Christopher Irwin, founding members of the radical environment group "Earth First!" about their reasons for founding this organization. Based on this interview, it is clear that both Foreman and Irwin's passion for environmentalist causes is intertwined with the availability of ideal memories from their childhoods. The *Atlantic* reporters cite research that presents a provocative spin on these male interviewees' psychological motivations for such environmental protest. "These epiphanies are often reminiscent of spiritual awakenings, according to Dr. Harold Herzog, a psychology professor at Western Carolina University who specializes in moral decision-making and infinity with the outdoors." These *Atlantic* reporters write, "The similarities between [activists' moments of] commitment and religious conversation is astounding . . . there is the evangelism side. . . traced back to an activist's own wilderness moment" (Fryer-Biggs and Cecil-Cockweil). In this interview, Foreman recalls his early experiences reading his mother's copies of *Wildlife Illustrated* and *Wildlife of the World.* "He adored those two hardbound red volumes with their gold lettering and endless renderings of animals. Today he still handles them lovingly, always careful to set them down with both hands;" the *Atlantic* reporters' write, "[T]hey are in pristine condition, the covers still attached and the pages bearing few marks. Whenever someone else handles these cherished items, Foreman's eyes stay fixed on his books"(Fryer-Biggs and Cecil-Cockweil). Foreman and Irwin's dogmatic approach to environmental issues is influenced by a strong emotional

component divorced from the facts.

In *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture (1995)*, Lawrence Buell, a professor emeritus of English and noted eco critical scholar, continues this train of thought when he cautions readers about the "dramatic upgrading in recent years of the environment as a public issue, such that feature articles, even in middlebrow newsmagazines have been regularly devoted to it, shows the hastiness of diagnosing environmental representation even in precontemporary[sp] times as a screen for another agenda" (Buell 14). Buell defines "eco criticism" as an umbrella term used to refer to "environmentally oriented study of literature and (less often) the arts more generally, and to the theories that underlie such critical practices" (*The Future of Environmental Criticism* 138).

As the number of "green" discussions has increased, the role of the imaginative realm of literature has been usurped by scientific studies through a cultural bias that purports scientific reasoning to be more objective than the stuff of poets and other dreamers. Part of the reason for this intellectual dominance is that Americans are simply not exposed through public education to the layers of meaning within pastoral literature. Most Americans' available memories of this literary genre involve their brief introduction to the British and American Transcendentalism Movements in a high school or college survey course. Buell identifies the challenge of teaching young people about Transcendentalism based on a government sanctioned curriculum and intellectual bias on the part of faculty to correlate these lessons with agrarian ideals. He writes: "the (sub) urban sophomore [wonders] why Emerson was justified in thinking that country living stimulates the mind better than city life" (Buell, *Environmental Imagination* 15). Students

take two lessons away from such learning: A strong sense that they are being lectured to by old, dead, white men as well as the notion that these and other authors only adopt pastoral writing as metaphor for their civic idealism. "By highlighting representations of rusticity and wilderness the American literary canon," Buell writes, "from Emerson to Faulkner perpetuates a historic tendency within American culture for intellectuals to imagine the heart of America as more rural than their own positions of culture at the time of imagining" (Buell *Environmental Imagination* 15). In his text, Buell encourages serious contemplation by new readers of eco criticism and by new writers of nature themes. Buell writes, "The conception of representative nature as an ideological screen becomes unfruitful if it is used to portray the green world as nothing more than projective fantasy or social allegory as if *Walden* were to be read in the same way as Rene Chateaubriand's *Atala* or George Orwell's *Animal Farm"* (36).

In *Back to the Land: The Enduring Dream of Self Sufficiency in Modern* American *(2011),* Dona Brown, an associate professor of history at the University of Vermont, writes: "Americans have been dreaming of going back to the land for a hundred years or more. . .At the very moment when the population of the United States was turning decisively urban, some people were already calculating what they were losing" (Brown 3). Brown explains how a timeline for "back to land" experiences evolved in American culture that was significant for me in determining my choice of literary form and themes in *The Sketches*. Brown writes: "From that time on, the back to land impulse would be an enduring feature of American life, fading in and out of view but never disappearing" (3). She notes that, "The writers responsible for this outpouring came from a wide variety of ideological backgrounds: they were anarchists, socialists, and

progressives; promoters of the arts and crafts, the 'simple life,' or the single tax" (3). Brown reminds us that in SOJ's time, "the immediate trigger was a series of financial crises; a panic in 1893 had brought severe depression that lasted years" and how this 'panic' created a pattern of "...reoccurring crises. . .the mushrooming industrial cities and the social disequilibrium they generated" (4). This was the same panic time that produced unprecedented food insecurity in Detroit that was alleviated through the Pingree Potato Patch Experiment.

Literary stirrings similar to those noted by Brown actually began taking place as early as the American Revolutionary War (1760-91) and continued to be produced well after the war had ended. One of the most famous of these texts is J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur's (1735-1813) *Letters of the American Farmer (1782)*. Crevecoeur was a French born American immigrant who would later become famous as an early American framer of the American Ideal. Although this text did not receive critical acclaim among eighteenth century Americans, "Letter III: What is an American," is the first text listed in the Canon of American Literature. Crevecoeur's writing places his fictional narrator, the American "Farmer James," in a one-way conversation with an unspecified European farmer. In *Letters from an American Farmer and Other Essays (2013),* edited by Dennis D. Moore, a distinguished teaching professor of English at Florida State University, Moore calls for a reevaluation of *Letters.* His text addresses factual information that many scholars are at least marginally familiar with today but look past for their own political reasons. Moore begins his introduction to his comprehensive scholarship by acknowledging that Crevecoeur's original text was amended several times in order to advance this early American writer's career as a published author. The Crevecoeur text

that most Americans would remember reading is a revised text about the warring factions of idealistic British Colonists at the beginning of the American Revolution (1775-84.) These letters are fictional correspondence between Crevecoeur's character "Farmer James" and a European counterpart and include the writer's descriptions of this continent's rural landscape and culture. It should be noted that while *Letters* gained only modest attention in America after its original publication, it became a runaway success in Europe after the author reworked some areas of the text to appeal to his much desired European audience. "Crevecoeur does not include any particular details or descriptions in *Letters* that would have led a contemporary reader to believe Farmer James was recording first hand observations. . . ;" Moore writes, ". . . supposedly lives on a farm . . . in Pennsylvania, rather than in Orange County, New York . . .where this ambitious young French-born author established a life as, literary, an American farmer" (xi). Moore places emphasis on Crevecoeur's naturalized American citizenship and alludes to more recent scholarly discussions of Crevecoeur's political ambitions and his ownership of slaves. "Most scholarly discussion of Crevecoeur continue to zero in on Letter III: What is an American?. ;" Moore writes, ". . . Given the increase in knowledge, over the past century, about the world in which Crevecoeur and his contemporizes live, it can be helpful to consider a broader perspective and see a fuller set of Crevecoeur's writings" (x-xi). If Brown's premise holds true, then all American agrarian-themed literature that builds upon Crevecoeur's fictional text is at risk of political impropriety and in danger of naively favoring sentimentality over reason. "In writing what would become the early selections within *Letters,* Crevecoeur made the fictional Farmer James appear to be a simple bumpkin from the Pennsylvania countryside. That seeming simplicity can help

reinforce the assumption that the book's title is echoing . . . John Dickenson's 1768 *Letters from a Farm in Pennsylvania.*" Moore writes, ". . . Another book, which had been in circulation for nearly half a century, stands out as much more as of a model that Crevecoeur seems to have had in mind: *Letters Concerning the English Nation,* by the brilliant satirist, Voltaire. . .he had written many of those essays in English" (xii). Moore questions the use of Farmer James as role model for the American Ideal and whether Crevecoeur's original intention was to mock ". . .a certain level of credulity on the part of some English colonists" (xiii).

After completing multiple readings of SOJ's *Country* in order to study this community narrative's structure and themes, my first reading of Crevecoeur's epistolary made it was possible to denote how closely passages of SOJ's text reflect the earlier American author's poetic imagery in the space of a hundred years. Crevecoeur writes about his fictional Pennsylvania landscape: "I wish I could be acquainted with feelings and thoughts which must agitate the heart and present themselves to the mind of the enlightened Englishman, when he first lands on this continent. . ." (qtd. in Moore 28). SOJ, known for her mastery of local color sentimentality, portrays her fictional Maine landscape with similar word choice in *Country's* Chapter XVIII: The Bowden Reunion: "Such is the hidden fire of enthusiasm in New England nature that, once given an outlet, it shines forth with almost volcanic light and heat" (96). The United States was rapidly becoming the decisively urban place that Dona Brown describes and this trend threatened the agrarian aesthetic of America's upper class by the time the *Atlantic Monthly* published chapters of *Country* in serial form. As a member of an elite American female sector, it is questionable whether SOJ's loyal female readership at the time knew enough

about such the entanglements of American history and literature to recognize how a skillful and calculating writer like SOJ might pull threads of Crevecoeur's agrarian values through the tightly woven fabric nineteenth century American communities in order to promote her own emotional reasons. SOJ's readers were aware of this woman's socially rebellious and it is reasonable to discern that the societal restrictions of their time elevated SOJ's status as a trailblazer. The case could be made that SOJ was ignorant about Crevecoeur's personal motivations and his lack of authenticity in writing about places like South Carolina, described in detail within his fictional letters, but nonexistent in the man's published travel records. Based upon widely published accounts of SOJ's emotional attachment to both Maine's rural landscape and her family tree, it is reasonable to discern that SOJ may have experienced childhood trauma similar to that of modern environmentalist activists, Foreman and Irwin. The deforestation of Maine was a necessary component of her Grandfather Jewett's shipbuilding business and the success of her relatives' East Indies trading store in Berwick. Her adult interest in the work of Swedish philosopher and mystic Emanuel Swendenborg (1688-1772) is also well documented, and his influences contributed to SOJ's ongoing spiritual awakening and evangelical-like nature descriptions. (Donovan, *Jewett and Swedenborg*) Her biographers widely attest that SOJ had access to several well stocked libraries as a result of her family's and friends' literary interest and wealth. Such libraries may well have stocked several editions of Crevecoeur's *Letters* and therefore, she may well have chosen to overlook Crevecoeur's lack of authenticity in the best interest of promoting agrarian ideology. "Central to Crevecoeur's many concerns and interests is his acute awareness of human feelings," Moore writes, "and considerable recent scholarship has helped to place

his writings within the eighteenth century context of sensibility, with its emphasis on feelings" (Moore xvi). Moore asserts that Crevecoeur was the son of a French marquis and marquees and that his ancestry may well have appealed to SOJ's pride in her own French ancestry. Francis Otto Mathieson (1902-50), a Harvard professor, noted author of literary criticism, and distant relative of SOJ, made note of such interest in his biography, *Sarah Orne Jewett* (1929). The compilation of her biographical information was primarily based on his visit with her sister, Mary Rice Jewett (1786-1854), in 1929. He writes: "Dr. Jewett [SOJ's father] had inherited a wide knowledge of human nature, and from a strain of French blood in his mother's ancestry [,] a lightness and gaiety of heart. . ." (Matthiessen 13). The author further asserts the influence of Dr. Jewett over SOJ's developing aesthetic. Perhaps the French blood in SOJ's veins worked like an emotional elixir that was capable of softening the hard edges of the Jewett family's Puritan origins and business practices. In any case, the presence of French merchant ships at port near her grandfather's ship manufacturing company would have been a sight to behold for many a young girl and certainly one that I would have liked to have seen. SOJ's cousin suggest the potential for such romantic stirrings in his writing: "She [SOJ] heard too of the great excitement in Portsmouth when French ships came in looking like gardens, for the Frenchmen had lettuces for salads and flowers growing in boxes that were fastened to decks" (Matthiessen 9).

In any event, SOJ's decision to superficially embrace Crevecoeur's essays perpetuates the false premise American traditional values based on self motivated literary ideals. Although SOJ is famously quoted as saying: "Conversations got to have some root in the past . . ." (*Country* 61), it is important for new writers to take her themes related to

American idealism with a grain of salt. Alan Taylor published a review of Moore's text, *In the American Beginning: The Dark Side of Crevecoeur's "Letters of an American Farmer" (Jul2013)* in which he alludes to the consequences of building upon such idealistic premises. In this text, he writes: "Often misread as a champion of American independence and democracy. . . Crevecoeur instead mourned the demise of British America. In its full arc, *Letters* reveals a descent into political madness; it better resembles *Heart of Darkness* than *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*" (Taylor).

Several other famous authors were enamored by Crevecoeur's idea of the American Farmer including the British novelist D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930). Moore cites the anthology, *Studies in Classic American Literature*, in which Lawrence writes, "while '[Benjamin] Franklin is the real practical prototype of the American, Crevecoeur is the emotional' and emphasizing that Crevecoeur's *Letters* are written in a spirit of touching simplicity" (Moore x). It seems fitting that like SOJ, Lawrence would relate to Crevecoeur's professional ambition. One of Lawrence's famous quotes is frequently alluded to in popular culture today: "When genuine passion moves you--say what you've got to say and say it hot!" (Bartlett).

Five years after *Letters* was published, Thomas Jefferson assumed the mantle of the American Farmer in his published essays, *Notes on the State of Virginia (1787)*. In essay Number XIX, Jefferson writes: "Those who labour [sp] in the earth are the chosen people of God, if ever he had a chosen people, whose breasts he has made his peculiar deposit for substantial and genuine virtue" (Jefferson 276-77). Many quotes attributed to Jefferson continue to promote his agrarian political views. For instance, found within the same document under the title "Summary of Public Service" (after Sept. 1800), Jefferson

writes: “The greatest service rendered any country is to add a useful plant to its culture” (Jefferson). In addition to his writings, other laurels bestowed upon Jefferson contributed to his agrarian persona including his contributions of scholarly papers to the scientific chronicles of agriculture practices and his invention of the moldboard plough. As the third president of the United States and a framer of the Declaration of Independence, Jefferson continued to use his social capital to impart his personal agrarian values upon the American reading public, especially those in the learned upper classes. It should be noted that for all of Jefferson’s talk of his love of farming, he was a slave owner and it was these slaves who made Jefferson’s idealized agrarian life possible. Incidentally, it was the memory of such forced labor on American plantations that later contributed to the challenges Samyn experienced during the first Earthworks Farm initiative in Detroit.

Crevecoeur’s and Jefferson’s writings have definitely permeated the minds of Americans today whether they are aware of this or not. To my knowledge, none of the core group of ALG volunteers had a traditional farming background. Surprisingly, many of my volunteers know very little about the distinctions between community gardening practices and the practices of American agribusiness. They understand even less about the published philosophical musings about nature and farming or the idea of the American Farmer purported throughout American literature. They are content with the enjoyment of back to the land experience through their work in the ALG gardens. These discussions have led me to believe that the seeds of agrarian idealism have altered our American cultural DNA, much in the same way that genetically modified seeds (GMOs) have surreptitiously infiltrated our food systems and impacted our nutritional intake without our ever consciously knowing why.

By the time SOJ's nature writing reemerged from obscurity in the 1980s, the truth about our American agrarian roots had already been systematically modified by politicians for decades. Twentieth century American Pastoral writers were challenged by the emergence of industrialized agriculture, and they wrote extensively about the impact of such practices on community life. There novels challenged the sentimental notions that SOJ's first community narratives presented. In *Country's* "Chapter XVII: The Bowden Reunion," SOJ's narrator tells the reader that, "Mrs. Blackett took me into her old house when we came back from the grove: it was her father's birthplace and early home, and she had spent much of her childhood there with her grandmother" (110). This description of Mrs. Blackett's childhood home reinforces generations of community since ancient times, but SOJ departs from this world view to a frame more intimate portrait of early New England values associated with the "Protestant Ethic." SOJ's narrator asserts her opinion: ". . . in fact, I could *imagine* that the house looked almost as exactly to her" (110). SOJ's readers soon learn what is hidden from the most visitors' sight: "I could see the brown rafters of the unfinished roof as I looked up the steep staircase, though the best room was as handsome with its good wainscoting and touch of ornament on the cornice as of any old room of its day in town" (110). This chapter concludes with a fine example of SOJ's local color, as she describes a scene quite possibly from her own experience with Jewett family reunions: a communion between the earth's natural elements and the acknowledgement of men, women, and children that they play an important role in sustaining this community balance. The reunion sequence of events is commonly thought of as a mystical experience. These passages correspond to several SOJ biographers' accounts of the writer's fascination with such experience and her in depth investigations

into Swedenborg's theoretical work.

By 1899, SOJ baited her enthusiastic female readership with the return of her two most popular characters, *Country's* narrator and Mrs. Todd in *Queen's Twin.* Her additional community narratives correspond to a nineteenth century cultural trend to reestablished emotional ties to Britain after the American Civil War (1863-65). A sentimental reunion between the mother country and her rebellious offspring was in direct opposition to a federally supported reunification campaign that was also in support of capitalist ideals. At the same time, the Westward Expansion (1807-1910) expanded the New World and it was necessary at times for American women to forego the comfort of their nurturing place in rural communities in order to keep in step with the times. Mrs. Todd and *Queen's Twin*'s narrator allude to such a journey also reflected in the famous painting *American Progress (1872),* by John Gast (1842-1896), Mrs. Abby Martin's home on the outskirts of Dunnet, but only after the herbalist returns home after her solo journey. "Truth is, I've been off visitin'; there's an old Indian footpath leadin' over towards the Back Shore though the *great heron swamp* that anyone can't travel over all summer" (190). SOJ is known for her dualistic meanings, which in this passage alludes to de Tocqueville's record of his own journey on the St. Lawrence Seaway and his crossing of Lake Huron after leaving the French fort in Detroit. This Great Lake is named for a Native American tribe that lost not only its ancestral landscape but also its distinctive American culture during the Westward Expansion. SOJ biographers note the extensive reach of Jewett family members into Michigan, Ohio and beyond as well as the writer's own travel experiences to the Midwest. In several ways, Abby Martin's home projects the traditional essence of America's forefathers and British roots commonly found

throughout New England. At first glance the narrator describes “a low gray house standing on a grassy bank close to the road. . .door at the side, facing us, and a tangle of snowberry bushes and cinnamon roses grew to the level of the window-sills” (201), similar to those found in Nathaniel Hawthorne’s (1804-64) earlier works.

The Martin home’s interior reflects the complicated psychological make-up of the woman who lives there. The narrator partakes of Mrs. Martin’s hospitality and enjoys her hostess’ “lovely imagination and true affection” but she is brought back to earth by the common social interaction within a traditional kitchen setting. “I looked about the plain New England kitchen, with its wood smoked walls and plainly braided rugs on a worn floor, and all its simple furnishings,” SOJ’s narrator tells readers, “a loud-ticking clock seemed to encourage us to speak . . .” (206). Part of SOJ’s inspiration for this scene involves the aesthetic of the nineteenth century Arts and Crafts Movement, supported by artistic social activists on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean, as a response to the Industrial Revolution’s increased output of machine manufactured goods. Industrial innovation had reduced the prestige of local craftsmen; a central component of traditional community life. The new ideas and shapes of SOJ’s community narrative allude to a new social order. The “loud-ticking clock seemed to encourage us to speak,” the narrator observes, is a reminder to female readers to evaluate their priorities and to consider the intrinsic power of unification; “. . . at the other side of the room was an early newspaper portrait of Her Majesty the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland. . .” (206). I read this passage to also be an allusion to SOJ’s agrarian fervor, and after multiple readings of this passage it is possible to see how it coincides with Harold Hertzog’s research presented in “The Radicals: How Extreme Environmentalists are Made.” SOJ writes: “On a shelf below

were some flowers in a little glass dish, as if they were put before a shrine" (206). When SOJ revived her popular characters, Mrs. Todd and *Country's* narrator, in *Queen's Twin*, it was to call to attention her loyal female subscribers. The female characters in *Queen's Twin* arrive in this traditional kitchen setting as distinct personalities who represent three generations of American women, but they return to the world outside with profound understanding of the intrinsic power that manifests in women's collaboration with each other. In this way, she urges her readers to use common sense in crafting their futures by including "the old cousin" who carries the social burden of being labelled as not "all there," a "poor old talking body" (209). SOJ's passage struck a chord with me too. It validates the ongoing activism of the food justice movement through which modern food insecure women are also given voice. If SOJ failed to see through Crevecoeur's sly wit and ambition or was partially blinded by her own moral commentary, she understood how important it is to nurture others, especially women. Abby Martin lives in a world that is shaped by her fantasy but her peculiar lifestyle is described by Mrs. Todd as "natural" (192). This is SOJ's humorous way of reminding her female readership that such natural characteristics are in the eye of the beholder. She encourages her readers to rise above such biases and to embrace their roles as nurturers to others, even those people who do not share their own points of view. Mrs. Martin performs such an act. SOJ writes: "She wasn't all there. . .but harmless enough and a kind of poor old talking body. . . we sat down to supper together; t'was a supper I should have had no heart to eat alone" (208). The reader also notes within this passage that Mrs. Todd and Mrs. Martin move their chairs closer, a sign of American women's solidarity and the clock that ticks away as a measure of the new social order that these women anticipate as part of the America's

new century. This author makes a point to also remind her female readership to be inclusive to all sectors of American women who stand to benefit from this new social order. Our lives would take their natural courses. In doing so, SOJ encourages her readers to look to nature and not men for this path. SOJ's chosen remedy for the cultural anxiety that plagued many women in the late nineteenth century was a perfected elixir with equal measure of time spent in libraries as time spent in nature.

Works by Crevecoeur and Jefferson are no longer part of the mandated reading in American public schools, but the American Farmer continues to represent the American Ideal. The paradoxical term "urban farm" is an example of the way that this ideal is perpetuated in modern cultural discussions and trends. One example of how this myth is kept alive today can be found embodied in Grant Wood's (1891-1942) iconic painting, *American Gothic* (1930). In this painting, the artist depicts a pitch fork holding farmer and his wife standing in front of their worn farmhouse and fields. The house appears stilted in its rural surroundings, a remnant of America's Victorian era values, much like those depicted in SOJ's *Country* and *Queen's Twin* through the use of local color. The pitchfork looks much the same as it would have looked in Jefferson's days. The figure of the wife appears to stand slightly behind her husband, deferring to his lead even though women had had the right to vote in America for more than a decade at the time of this painting's creation. Modern viewers will immediately notice her outdated fashion. It is much like the clothing that SOJ wore during a brief meeting in 1900 with thirteen year old Mary Ellen Chase (1887-1973), who would later become another noted Maine author. Chase recalled how "Her [Jewett] dress was lavender with long sleeves and a high waistline, a simple frock" (Chase viii), which was modest attire for America's most

famous women writer of her time. This painting alludes to national political discussions that can be linked to *Country* and *Queen's Twin* narratives. Although SOJ's strong female characters live in a genteel coastal village in New England, the dangling threads of their local community values in 1886 and 1899 contrast with those people that left to gain "larger sense of proportion" (*Country 20)* beyond their childhood village homes. Similar kinds of tension were the basis for inflammatory interpretations of *American Gothic.* They either wax poetic on the loss of the "simple" life, framed earlier in this chapter in as "back to the land" experiences in Dona Brown's scholarship, or as a parody of America's rural lifestyle as an ideal. One interpretation of *American Gothic* manifests in a symbolic return to agrarian life and in doing so, a return to the values that Chase alludes to in describing Jewett's descent of the winding staircase of her family's home in rural Maine (viii). In "Chapter XI: The Old Singers" SOJ's narrator observes how Mrs. Blackett and William sing in unison. "I had never heard Home, Sweet Home sung as touchingly and seriously as he sang it; he seemed to make it quite new;" SOJ's narrator explains, ". . .he paused for a moment at the end of the first line and began the next, the old mother joined him and they sang together, she missing only the higher notes, where he seemed to lend his voice to hers for the moment and carry-on her very note and air" (52). While SOJ brought visual art into this conversation, she used a popular song that is still recognizable by Americans today. By way of this traditional song, Mrs. Blackett participates in a maternal rite of passage, among her "best things" (51), her son and daughter. Their tune reinforces the aesthetics most admired about Victorian life; a sense of community and social manners that existed in both urban and rural American culture. SOJ describes the intimate connection made through the development of social skills utilized by this woman

as, “you felt as if Mrs. Blackett were an old and dear friend before you let go her cordial hand” (36).

A second interpretation is based in the tragic realities for both urban and rural inhabitants following the American Stock Market Crash (1929). Gertrude Stein (1874-1946), the influential ex patriate and art critic, led the charge of dissenting voices that called Wood’s composition “devastating satire” (Vowell). Stein based her critique on the casual relationship she developed with Wood in Europe. This Pennsylvanian county girl was born into an upper class Jewish family, and in contrast to SOJ, she preferred urban culture over country life. Stein held fast to the characteristics of a Parisian intellectual lifestyle, including the rebellious nature of visual and literary artists and as a result, she was instrumental in stimulating contrary discussions about *American Gothic* on both sides of the Atlantic. Through the course of the twentieth century’s Great Depression, *American Gothic* tended to be viewed as a national symbol of strength in the midst of hard times, but later, it would be parodied as a protest symbol in support of emerging social movements in the century’s second half.

Additional political discussions surrounding this painting’s unveiling mark a point in American literary history in which two significant biases had become entrenched in America’s reading life. Several American authors had already addressed the changing landscape of the American Farmer in their imaginative literature including Upton Sinclair (1878-1968), Willa Cather, and Sinclair Lewis (1885-1951). Cather, whose literary mentor was SOJ, would suffer the same cultural accusation of “sentimentalist” as other American women writers of Regional fiction. They were relegated to second tier positions in the American Literary Canon. Meanwhile, Sinclair Lewis was awarded the

Nobel Prize in Literature at around the same time that *American Gothic* was completed. Lewis' literary peers recognized him for his critical thematic views of Capitalism and his portrayal of strong women characters in *Main Street (1920).* Although this author had been given the opportunity to partake of a well heeled education at Oberlin Academy in Ohio and then later at Yale University in Connecticut, he shared SOJ's viewpoint that that one needs to acquire practical life experience in order to benefit from intellectual opportunities. In his Nobel Lecture, Lewis affirmed the work of several writing peers in an attempt to resurrect a sense of balance in American literary scholarship. Within this lecture's text, he calls to light the creative impulse to see things differently and, by extension, draws attention to the "female voice" that had been crowded out by both the talented and the mediocre voices of their male peers. Lewis writes against political script when he declares that "in America most of us—not readers alone, but even writers—are still afraid of any literature which is not a glorification of everything American, a glorification of our faults as well as our virtues," and he ceased this public opportunity to convey how "Our American professors like their literature clear and cold and pure and dead" (Bartlett).

The dichotomy between "rural" and "urban" had been in place well before Lewis was a published writer. It was documented during the 1920s during a groundbreaking sociological study conducted by Colombia professor, Robert Staughton Lynd (1892-1970) and Sarah Lawrence College professor, Helen Merrell Lynd (1896-1982). Their findings were published in *Middletown: A Study in American Culture (1929)*. It became the fodder of American Radio talk shows. The cultural biases associated with urban and rural settings were also well entrenched by this time and promoted a new cultural class

system wherein urban dwellers participated in “high culture” and rural inhabitants participated in “low culture.” Interestingly, the lingered specter of the agrarian ideal caused many Americans to sympathize with the “poor farmer” and his values. While they did not have an opportunity to lead the romanticized life of the American farmer, the descendants of urban dwellers forced off the farm and into the factory benefited from the industrial age’s prosperity, which allowed for the construction of libraries, museums, parks, hospitals, and most importantly, universities, in their cities. As a result, urban centers often boasted a highly educated population. Ironically, many of the intellectuals who would later participate in the Green Movement were direct beneficiaries of the access to educations and medicine in urban centers that was made possible by the industrial age.

A rapidly growing international population demanded an increase in food production on American farms. In particular, this burden was felt by the Midwestern states, which became known as the “Heartland’s Breadbasket” for the next three decades. Farmers in these states grew cash crops including soy, corn, wheat flax, and sorghum that were strategically planted to provide the world with food for one season and then as an economic measure, left the soil bare for the next. The storied reputation of the noble but poor American Farmer, while once a tall tale, was transformed into pure myth as wealthy agricultural lobbyists gained increasing power through their ability to fund federal, state, and local political campaigns. Richard Hofstadter (1916-1970), a Columbia University trained historian, published *The Age of Reform: From Bryan to F.D.R. (1955)*, a scholarly investigation into the history and impact of American farm subsidies on our society. *Reform’s* publication coincides with not only the development of America’s suburban

model (Levittown, New York) and the increase in women entering the workforce, but also the expansion of the university system. Hofstadter's writing continues to be controversial in the academic realm where his central theme has been alternately criticized as class politics and class anxiety, both of which promote suspicions about social movements. In keeping with Moore's scholarly premise that calls for consideration of the full breathe of an author's text, it is important to place Hofstadter's overall analysis within the same context. Hofstadter's historical perspectives are in conversation with the more famous work of Thomas Paine (1737-1809). In his *Age of Reason (1794)*, Paine calls upon his readership to expand their intellectual horizons by moving beyond the myths that still held sway within communities then.

In Chapter One: "The Agrarian Myth and Commercial Realities," Hofstadter presents a broader analysis of an intense period of progress and reform that was undertaken from 1890 to 1940. Hofstadter suggests this period of reform was based in the literary roots of Crevecoeur and Jefferson agrarianism, and he challenges the notion of a Jeffersonian persona as an ideal and the projection of such ideal upon the yeoman farmer. Hofstadter argues that the perceived historically accurate depiction of the American farmer represented in American Literature was distorted. "The early American politician, the country editor, who wished to address himself to the common man [drew] upon a rhetoric that would touch the tillers of the soil," Hofstadter writes, and takes his point further to note that "even the spokesman of city people knew that his audience had been in very large part reared upon the farm" (23). As a left leaning political voice, Hofstadter based his own literary perspectives on historical record of the American farmer and places blame for this unauthentic portrayal upon the shoulders of formidable politicians.

"Writers like Jefferson. . .admired the yeoman farmer not for his capacity to exploit opportunities. . .but for his frank spirit of equality, his ability to produce and enjoy a simple abundance," but as Hofstadter interprets these historical facts, he concludes that "in most cases [the American farmer was] inspired to make money, and such self-sufficiency as he actually had was usually forced upon him by a lack of transportation or markets, or by the necessity to save cash to expand his operations" (23). This certainly was not a new concept for older generations of readers that could recall the publications of Sinclair, Cather, and Lewis narratives in the earliest decades of the twentieth century, but the larger population of young people entering college in the 1960s would be reliant upon their professors' political idealism to acquaint them with these agrarian themes. This brought them almost full circle to the classroom conversations that Buell describes earlier in this chapter. Hofstadter defines the agrarian myth as an offshoot of a social movement and makes a distinction between it and a political movement. "I do not mean only the People's (or Populist Party) of the 1890s; for I consider the Populist Party to be merely a heightened expression, at a particular point in time" he writes, "[and] of a popular impulse that is endemic in American political culture" (4). He expands upon these declarations through his concise history of the loosely formed group of Americans that were behind this popular impulse:

> The utopia of the Populists was in the past, not the future. According to the agrarian myth, the health of the state was proportionate to the degree to which it was dominated by the agricultural class, and this assumption pointed toward an earlier age. The Populists looked backward with longing to the lost agrarian Eden, to the republican America of the early

> years of the nineteenth century in which there were few millionaires and, as they saw it, no beggars, when the laborer had excellent prospects and the farmer had abundance, when statesmen still responded to the mood of the people, and there was no such thing as the money power (62).

Hofstadter's intention was to link Crevecoeur and Jefferson as well as members of the American Transcendentalists movement to their collective obsession with "the lost agrarian Eden," in which the Hofstadter perceives the "agrarian myth was not a popular but a literary idea, a preoccupation of the upper classes. . .A learned agricultural gentry, coming into conflict with the industrial classes, welcomed the moral strength that a rich classical ancestry brought to the praise of husbandry" (25). Peer reviews of Hofstadter's scholarship include criticism of his uneven research and the extension of his academic training as a "historian" to his amateur status as a "psychologist," unlike the nineteenth century author, William James (1842-1910). Hofstadter would initially take an ambiguous political position among his liberal peers, but in a similar attempt to Grant Woods' determination to please everyone involved in American culture's widening divide, he satisfied no one. He wrote: "My comments, then, on the old agrarian and entrepreneurial aspirations are not intended to disparage them as ultimate values," the historian writes, "but to raise some safeguards against political misuse of them that was and sometimes still is attempted. . .to shed some indirect light on the methods by which that part of them that is still meaningful can be salvaged" (12).

Rachael Carson's (1907-1964) published text, *Silent Spring (1962)* triggered more public discussions about environmental pollutions. Her politically motivated text resulted in public policy changes that President John F. Kennedy supported during his brief

administration. Hofstadter's award winning argument had become a thing of the past as Carson's environmental themes begin with "A Fable for Tomorrow" which ends with an epitaph: "A grim specter has crept upon us almost unnoticed, and this imagined tragedy may easily become a stark reality we all shall know. . ." (Carson 3).

The Green Movement used hard science to strike political blows against corporations, federal and state environmental policies that countered their objectives. At the same time, other social movements looked to change intrinsic cultural modes that were interrelated with civil rights discussions of interest to the majority of American youth and specifically to the country's long disenfranchised citizens: non whites and women. This progress was only momentarily stopped cold by the young President's assassination, but within a year of this tragedy, his successor, President Lyndon Johnson, had signed the Wilderness Act (1964).

By the 1970s, women's voices in American culture were heard in larger numbers as a result of government laws and the advancement of educational and career opportunities. The Green Movement would gain a stronger voice in American culture by the new millennium and inspired more female scholars to contribute to "green" discussions as "feminist eco critics." These genre scholars dug deeper for new insights into SOJ's rich and layered textual passages in *Country*, establishing premises for their own literary biases for over four decades, and volumes of literary criticism beyond the scope of my own SOJ discussions.

A brief survey of such discussions, and particularly the work of groundbreaking eco feminists, was an important component in understanding how important *Country* and *Queen's Twin* became in the ongoing study of American feminist and environmental

history. *The Lay of the Land: Metaphor as Experience and History in American Life and Letters (1975)* was written by Annette Kolodny, an activist and professor of American Studies. Kolodny surveys two centuries of American agrarian and wilderness themed literature, including Crevecoeur's '*American Farmer'*, which examines women's relation to nature within the context of gender bias. Although her point of view is decidedly second wave feminist, Kolodny like Moore views an underlining political agenda in the literary establishment's refusal to examine Crevecoeur's Farmer James within the full context of his "Letters" rather than exclusively in Letter III. "The tendency of a number of critics to ignore the tensions and warning signals that disrupt the otherwise idyllic early narratives, however, leads them to read the final letters as sudden and angry responses to the Revolution," Kolodny writes, "rather than as inevitable consequences of problems that had been given expression with Letter II" (Kolodny 58).

Vera Norwood is a prominent feminist scholar and author of southwestern themed literature. In *Made from the Earth (1993),* she focuses on American women writers' nature themes, including the works of illustrators, landscape and garden designers, and pioneers of horticultural cultural-based science. Norwood's feminist textual analysis of *Country* takes liberties with SOJ's propensity for layered meaning and my critique of Norwood's text is based on my own interpretations of *Country* after multiple readings. Her scholarship places SOJ's text in conversation with "the constraints of nineteenth-century sensibility" in order to survey distinctive qualities in SOJ's nature writing: "An early British traveler meeting any of Jewett's heros[sp] in *The Country of the Pointed Firs* or her other short stories would have celebrated the discovery of another American Eve" (Norwood 195). Norwood's analysis was only partially right when she determines

that SOJ "crossed the boundaries between the literary domestic novel and the nature essay" (Norwood 195). Her later suggestion that a "early British traveler meeting any of Jewett's heros[sp] in *Country of the Pointed Firs*" (Norwood 195) might view SOJ as "another American Eve" (195) leads Norwood's readers to associate the story of female banishment or retreat as reenacted in SOJ's nature setting. It is possible through independent and close readings of *Country* to dispute Norwood's analysis. It fails to make an important distinction in "Chapter One: The Return" and alters the intended meaning of the SOJ's word choice and her description of the female narrator: "a lover of Dunnet returned to find unchanged shores" (2). Norwood leads her reader into the realm of false premise: "The narrator of *The Country of the Pointed Firs* retreats to Dunnet Landing "seeking the 'center of civilization'" (196) and validates her feminist reading: "Such opposition of a civilized rural community to the impinging city has earned Jewett a reputation as a pastoralist" (196), without noting SOJ's description of *Country's* narrator as a visitor through her "choice of a summer-lodging" or the fact that *Country's* final chapter, "XXI: The Backward View" places the narrator on her return voyage back to the city. "Presently the wind began to blow, and we struck out seaward to double the long sheltering headland of the cape," SOJ writes, "and when I looked back again, the islands and the headland had ran together and Dunnet Landing and all its coasts were lost to sight" (133). Norwood's interpretation negates the work of SOJ biographers. They are in agreement that SOJ preferred Berwick to Boston but also that she also maintained a commuter's schedule to maximize her enjoyment of both village and city settings. To suggest that Norwood's overall text does not on the whole make some important contributions to feminist literary criticism is not warranted here, but the SOJ references

that are included in this groundbreaking text rely upon secondary resources that perpetuate biased interpretation of SOJ's original text.

Literary passages from *Country* are a reminder to new readers that while this formidable writer grew up surrounded by farms; she also knew her way around a garden. I am in agreement with Buell's reasoning that there is a place for both imaginative and intellectual conversations in the "modern agrarian experience." The communal rites of growing food are an example of the energy transfer between two creative outlets; gardening and writing. One can see how these processes have become a meaningful part of social transformation today each time that ALG's seasoned volunteers offer their knowledge of ancient gardening skills to new generations of people interested in this process. Without the interference of politics, this energy travels in circuitous ways from old to young, or young to old, as adults and children express their own ideas about this process.

III. **Jewett and Cather: Tap Root and Tumbleweed**

SOJ's writing career ambitions were established early, like those of Crevecoeur, but she honed her observation skills with the rich sounds of language. In the competitive world of book publishing, she was recognized by her peers; including the British author Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936) and her friend, Henry James. Her works are still admired by new readers and discussed at length in several genres of literary critics. Although SOJ was disenfranchised from American literature for several decades after her death, the full breadth of her fiction and non fiction writing of four decades continues to be heralded for her use of local color. For example, in *New England Color Literature: A Women's Tradition (1983)*, Josephine Donovan focuses on SOJ's use of this literary device to

describe the inner workings of nineteenth century "matriarchal community" and, Ursula Kroeber Le Guin, an prominent children's author encourages those readers of her online writing workshop syllabus to study how *Country* generates "quietly powerful rhythms" of local color (Le Guin Np.). Many feminist critics emphasize the strong attachment SOJ had with her father, Theodore H. Jewett (1815-78), but her biographers also note the closeness felt between SOJ's female relatives, including her socially engaged mother Caroline F. (Perry) Jewett (1855-97). SOJ understood the importance of the mother-daughter relationship to the stability of the community at large and she repeatedly stressed this point in her characterization of women, as represented in *Peg's Little Chair (1891)*. "Mother and I always loved to be together as long as I can remember," SOJ's narrator writes, "as I can remember, she always knew what I wanted before I spoke" (SOJ, *Peg's Little Chair* 204).

Such an idyllic beginning to her life would later be tempered by adolescent experiences that brought evidence of a harsher world beyond Berwick. Her family tree included a wide breadth of intrinsic intellectual gifts that were passed down to her from earlier generations of pilgrims, medical doctors, entrepreneurial shipbuilders, and potato starch manufacturers. The group of elderly women in town that SOJ's befriended in childhood maintained traditional households full of quaint household furnishings that opened upon rose scented gardens (Blanchard 39-40), that were financially supported by these men. SOJ studied at the coeducational Berwick Academy and travelled extensively throughout several regions of the United States and countries in Europe.

Her idyllic childhood was tempered by persistent rheumatoid arthritis symptoms which often kept her away from school and in the company of her father on his medical

rounds, often to impoverished homes around Berwick. In the midst of the splendid countryside that awaited her on these horse drawn carriage rides were the stark realities of illness and poverty that this bright and sensitive child saw at too close of a distance. Profound emotional suffering would also be witnessed. In *Sarah Orne Jewett: Her World and Her Work (1994),* biographer Paula Blanchard describes scenes from SOJ's adolescence in Berwick, in which the young girl's school memories of the coeducational Berwick Academy run simultaneously with the Civil War years. "The town sent 192 volunteers to the conflict, and many were maimed or killed. Graduating at fifteen, Sarah was too young to lose any of her classmates, but families she knew were hurt or changed, as women struggled to raise families alone or children were introduced to new stepfathers" (Blanchard 42). Although SOJ scholars place emphasis on her free run of Maine's bucolic nature settings, she would see first hand the sorrows that stained photo albums and personal diaries of women across New England during these war years. "Black gowns and veils became common among her mother's and aunt's friends, and on the outlying farms she visited with her father, widows and newly bereft, middle-aged mothers were wondering if they would finally have to go and live with the grudging daughter-in-law in the city" (Blanchard 42). It is reasonable to discern that through the course of SOJ's life, these traumatic memories would surface again and again under the threat of the United States' involvement in other wars and the three bank-oriented Panics that she witnessed in 1893 and 1907.

Although biographers pointedly state that SOJ intrinsically felt the loss of Maine's natural surroundings, as discussed previously in this chapter, she also valued time spent in her family relation's trading store as a girl. This is where she later drew

aspects of local color from the conversations she overheard between the store merchant and the "upcounty" lumber jacks that were his customers. She had sought the affections and insights of the village residents in Berwick throughout her life, starting with the women that maintained home based tailor and dressmaker's business during her childhood. It was this "mixture" of local color that SOJ sought out as conduit to her own rich childhood memories. The narrator steps onto Dunnet's Landing with an idealistic perception of the area's "unchanged shores" and "remoteness" with "childhood certainty of being the center of civilization." This passage mirrors SOJ's understanding that such places were becoming a thing of the past and the writer's use of memory as a literary device throughout her chapter narrations. While Norwood interprets the narrator's summer adventures as a *retreat* from the outside world, in order to support a feminist premise, SOJ's unsentimental viewpoint leads to appreciate how powerful childhood memories can empower our place within the adult world. As a mature writer in 1896, SOJ's chose imagination as her ideal rather than the seeds of eco feminism.

As a seasoned writer, SOJ invoked a similar pattern of social transformation in her mentorship of several writers. She had worked on her craft for over thirty years between the publications of *Deephaven (1877)* and *Queen's Twin* (*1899)*, shared the company of several prestigious American and British literary and visual artists, and enjoyed the mutual nurturing of a wide circle of friends. Much like ALG, this community of people included the young and old, men and women, and children—like "Stubby," Theodore J. Eastman (1879-1931), her fun loving nephew. SOJ had a substantial yield of both personal experience and literary success to share with new writers in the closing decade of her life and if she had decided to let her ink well dry up it could be done with

the understanding that her contributions to literature thus far were American treasures. It is also important to note that her stories were also her business. Throughout her adult life she had remained financially independent, and upon her father's unexpected death, SOJ and her sister Mary jointly inherited the Berwick familial home. Distancing herself from a literary career would allow SOJ more time for to pursue her leisure interests, but the simple truth about SOJ is that to *retreat* was not this formidable lady's style. Like women everywhere past and present, she was a nurturer, although less inclined to act upon this trait in traditional ways; she made a point to reach out to young people to satisfy her maternal inclinations. In her biography, Paula Blanchard devotes a chapter to discussions about SOJ's other artistic interests aside from writing. They include photography, her collaboration with amateur writer friends to create "a little privately printed book called *A Week Away From Time*" (225) and "a zeal for historical preservation" (Blanchard 226) shared with her friends, Harriet Prescott Spofford (1835-1921), Celia Thaxter (1835-94), and Sarah Whitman (1842-1904). These women participated in the Arts Crafts Movement which provided "a context for the pastoralism and historical consciousness that was central to [SOJ] work" (226-7). SOJ participated in Boston's Associated Charities philanthropic meetings (316), along with Fields, and she shared her financial good fortune by helping along her friends in need of financial as well as emotional support. To *retreat* was simply not SOJ's style. Her sense of community had developed into a daily adult routine in much the same way as her walks in natural settings when she was young, to remedy her juvenile rheumatoid arthritis. SOJ continued to experience bouts of pain with her disease but her correspondence reflects the thoughts of a woman determined to focus on others more than herself. "[H]er art, important as it was, reflected only a part of

an enormously complex life. A devout Christian, she taught Bible classes at Trinity Church [Boston] and in Beverly[MA] for about three decades; she also taught at Boston's Museum of Fine Arts and served on its permanent committee, and she was a Radcliffe trustee" (Blanchard 218).

SOJ found deeper meaning than civic responsibility in her brief mentorship of Cather. A horse drawn carriage accident in 1908 had resulted in serious injuries that had left SOJ in a less than desired physical state that she would describe in a letter she wrote to Cather as "too tired--spent quite bankrupt" (Fields 245). These two women had met previously in Boston earlier in 1908, while Cather was on assignment for *McClure's* (1893-1929), a muck raking styled magazine published in New York. SOJ had found promise among Cather's earlier writing in *The Troll Garden* (1905) when she was given a copy of this book by a young Boston friend, Louise Imogen Guiney (1861-1920), an American poet and essayist. Guiney worked with Cather at that point in time and the ambitious Nebraskan was aware of the fact that SOJ had previously mentored Guiney. "In a letter that Cather must have seen," Blanchard writes, "Jewett commented that she was disappointed by their [*Troll Garden*] pessimistic strain; ever the moralist," (355) but in SOJ's characteristically polite and optimistic way, she refined her critique of this Cather work in her famous correspondence with the younger writer. SOJ wished that so promising a writer had chosen to show in her work ". . .the hopeful, *constructive* yes—even the unpleasant side of unpleasant things and disappointed lives" (355). SOJ could not have known at the time that this young woman writer of 'promise' possessed many similarities to the genteel characters that the seasoned writer portrayed in *Country.* This would happen over time, when the two of them "should have much to say if we could talk

together" (355). In turn, Cather would fuse her own rural childhood and youth experiences, with the archetypal pioneer spirit of her character "Alexandra Bergson" in *O Pioneers!* Cather and SOJ shared a "profound belief in conservatism," Blanchard writes, and "a distrust of all things mechanistic and commercial" (360), but their philosophical unity diverges in discussions about religion. "Jewett's Emersonian faith in universal order and her personal connection to eighteenth-century colonial ideals were not available to Cather, whose spiritual discomfort finally led her to believe (as Jewett had been led, but much earlier and for different reasons) into the Episcopal church[sp] and possibly into Catholicism" (360).

It is widely agreed upon by her readers that SOJ's ability to return to a "place" of childhood imagination in her artistic compositions had been rooted in the landscape of both her physical and emotional life in Berwick. After these writers would spend a short but fruitful period together, Blanchard writes: "Cather saw her as most people did, as a native plant, belonging to the place where she had grown up as Cather herself never had" (356). This is an important distinction to be made between their "rural" childhood memories. Rooted in her faith, family, and friends, SOJ was from strong emotional stock. Cather was more like the prairie tumbleweed that breaks from its dry roots and rolls with the wind. She had a strong desire to succeed as a published author of fiction but the residual Victorian values of the early twentieth century posed challenges for Cather and she would struggle with issues of her faith and sexuality in her earlier adult years. It is also noted through many resources that Cather desired a retreat from public life after she became famous and that she preferred an urban lifestyle over the rural existence that SOJ enjoyed as an adult living in Boston. In *Willa Cather in Person (1986)*, editor L. Brent

Bohlke cites Bernice Slote (1913-83), a former editor of the *Prairie Schooner* and a noted Cather scholar. Slote affirms this distinction between the friendly women writers. Slote was privy to statements made by Cather's college friend, Louise Pound, and she maintained that Pound was fond of saying: "there was a good deal of myth about Willa. . .standard biographical sketch begins. . .an untutored western girl running wild on her pony. . .talking to old Bohemian women. . .the abrupt transformation. . .amateur writer to Eastern editor. . .serene novelist for whom books almost write themselves" (qtd. in Bolke xxi-xxii). This aspect of Cather's personality is similar in form to the urban sophistication of SOJ's narrator in *Country*. Blanchard asserts: "Cather's pastoralism is more defiant than Jewett's" (360).

The act of nurturing is an important component of feminist values, but this point is often misunderstood because of the way it is defined in modern society. ALG female volunteers often bring their work anxieties into these gardens. I observe frequently how these worries dissipate through social interaction away from their job and other obligations. While modern technology has made it easier to keep up with the domestic aspects of women's lives, the combination of career and home responsibilities still manages to spill over from one day until another for many of them. The adage as old as the American Revolution still applies: "A woman's work is never done!"

SOJ encouraged her protégé to "get at the right conditions" (Fields 248). To find the 'right conditions' is more complicated for the majority of American women today, than in SOJ's upper class lifetime. Cather was a self supporting woman and she had to consider the risk of leaving established employment in order to spend time pursuing her literary craft. "At thirty six Cather was still painfully uncertain of herself as a writer;"

Blanchard concludes, “she had spent all of her working life as a teacher and journalist” (355). By the time of her brief but intense visits with SOJ in Boston, Manchester, and then South Berwick, Cather had taken on the responsibilities of “reporter, researcher, ghostwriter, office manager, and general dogsbody[sp] for Samuel McClure, who drove her as mercilessly as he drove himself and all his people. Exhausted, Cather wanted to break away and write full time but doubted she had enough talent to justify the financial risk” (Blanchard 355). It was SOJ, her “Dear Lady” (356) mentor, that repeatedly urged Cather to move away from day to day distractions of her city life, and in doing so both SOJ and Cather played a part in the splendid contributions that Cather would later make to American literature.

Nature themes had long inspired works of literature, but in 1908, SOJ would mentor Cather to drop the “crudeness” (Fields 249), associated with the muckraking journalism that was popular reading in their day and to “find your own quiet centre[sp] of life and write from that to the world” (Fields 249). Her intention was to see in Cather’s future writing a place where a fiction writer’s civic scolding could be marginalized in favor of a more intimate connection with the reader. Cather would find such a place in her literary craft but not until she worked harder to break with literary tradition. She would pocket her mentor’s advice long after the ‘Dear Lady’ was silenced. “The serene old house in Berwick, with its wide center hallway leading straight from formal walk to shaded rear garden,” Blanchard writes, “and with sunlight spilling over its polished floors, was a place which Cather returned to several times after Jewett died, so intimately did its peacefulness belong to the woman whose life it had helped to shape” (Blanchard 356).

In *Conscience and Purpose: Fiction and Social Consciousness in Howell, Jewett, Chestnutt, and Cather (2005)*, professor of English, Paul Petrie describes *Country* as ". . . the seamless narrative union between ethically purposeful literary communication of local social realities and the almost mystical evocation of the "unwritable things" that bring the local fully to life" (Petrie 78). This effort has greater significance in the context of American literary history of the late nineteenth century, in which William Dean Howells (1837-1920) held center court in literary circles through his *Editor's Study* column in *Harper's Monthly* magazine (1886-92). Howells influenced a variety of American Realists, including Henry James (1843) and his brother, William. Petrie writes that Howellsian literary aesthetic is "based on an impassioned commitment to literature as a uniquely potent and crucial instrument for constructive public discourse about American social realities" (x).

The delicate word choice within SOJ's nature imagery is enough at times to forget that she knew her way around publishers' desks. As a result, she knew how important it was to write in her authentic literary voice without biting the hand that fed her. Her cultural values were rooted in the Victorian values reinforced by her community of family and friends, and although she was not as overtly rebellious as Cather, SOJ also embraced the aesthetic of the author and writing mentor, Gustave Flaubert (1821-80). Blanchard translates his French words into English: "Write about daily life as you would history" and "It is not to provoke laughter, nor tears, nor rage, but to act as nature does, that is, to provoke dreaming" (84).

Cather would dedicate *O Pioneers! (1913)* to SOJ, after adopting aspects of SOJ's 'mystical evocations' that place her work more in conversation with Dorothy

Wordsworth (1771-1855) than the prescribed Howellsian social-ethical aesthetic of SOJ's day. Cather's acknowledgement of SOJ at the beginning of the *O Pioneers!* manuscript reflects her mentor's "nudge in the direction of particular sets of social material waiting for her literary transcription," Petrie writes, "but a hint that the delicate emotive evocations at which true art is aimed would be best served by those essentials of Cather's personal experience in which she was most fully invested emotionally" (178). Affirmation of this widely agreed upon point is found in Cather's first full length interview, with *The Philadelphia Record* in 1913, in which she reveals that "in this book I tried to tell the story of the people as truthfully and simply as if I were telling it to her [SOJ] by word of mouth" (Bohlke 9).

In the introduction to *Cather Studies*, Editor Susan J. Rosowski (2003) places Cather in conversation with "the greening of literary studies" while also the "Cather we risk forgetting in recent decades' focus first on gender, then on class and race. . .the Cather who is profoundly identified with the places that shape her and what she wrote about" (Rosowski). This scholar cites *Willa Cather, Learner*, written by Thomas J. Lyon, within her own textual reflections on Cather, as a way to address the contrast between Cather and her rural characters. Lyon writes: ". . . the learning state is one of intense empathy, involving transcendence of the usual self, and when consciousness is awakened, our nature sensitivity to relationship comes alive. . . ," and he declares Cather to be "one of our greatest nature lovers---without being a nature writer—because she had a living sense of biotic community. Her capacity to feel for places and trees. . .came from the same well of consciousness as her novelist's sympathy for character" (Rosowski).

Lyon's choices of the word "transcendence" and phrases like "nature sensitivity

to relationship" are frequently made by literary scholars who are in Cather's own words, "existing to pass on the merits of productions." In order to get the gist of what Lyon means, it is best to seek out the writer's perspective in her own words about new writers. On her way back from Red Cloud in mid-October 1915, Cather was interviewed by Ethel M. Hockett of the *Lincoln Sunday Star*. In "The Vision of a Successful Fiction Writer," Hockett informs her readers: "For the benefit of the many young people who have literary ambitions. . .Willa Cather was persuaded to give time from her busy hours in Lincoln. . .to give a number of valuable suggestions from her rich fund of experiences" (Bolke 12). Cather began this mentoring session with a seasoned observation that new writers "imitate too much, often unconsciously" (13), and ends with a description of how to find the best place in which new writers can find inspiration: "When a writer reaches the stage where a tramp on a rail pile in Arizona fills him with as many thrills as the greatest novel ever written, he has well begun his career" (14).

Cather's call for authentic writing could not have come at a better time for those new writers. There would soon be more for her and them to write about. Within six months of her mentoring effort, Ford Motor Company made an announcement that their one millionth automobile had rolled off a Detroit assembly line. This city would plant the first American stop sign. Agrarian ideology was being overrun with news of pending world wars after the RMS Lusitania was torpedoed by a German U Boat after departing from New York and on its way to Liverpool, England. Within two years of her school visit the United States would make a declaration of two wars and Ford's factory would be booming to fill orders for military vehicles.

IV. Finding Common Ground: Sarah Orne Jewett, Hazen Pingree

My inspiration for all aspects of this dissertation research and creative writing emulates from the personal and professional lives of SOJ and Pingree. Although their pairing is unconventional in modern discussions, I view both of them as cut from the same Yankee cloth. They shared tried and true sensibilities that were a necessary to weather the bitter winters in Maine's rural landscape. SOJ and Pingree biographers, Blanchard and Holli, provide some insight into how bits and pieces of their lives fit together and I have worked to combine interdisciplinary scholarship derived primarily from Holli's Pingree biography and Blanchard's SOJ biography to create a road map in which their similar but different childhoods and early adult lives to bring to light how Pingree came to work his bombastic personality into SOJ's writing themes and text.

By the late 1880s, they both had worked against the grain of traditional American thought, but this does not mean that they were compatible in nature. Pingree's home town of Denmark can be found on a state map less than sixty miles directly north of Berwick, "the sleepy village in which she [Jewett believed she] had 'been placed'" (Blanchard 244). Blanchard affirms SOJ's "sympathetic understanding of the lives of country people" (244), but it becomes clearer through her allusions to Pingree in *Country* and *The Queen's Twin* that SOJ made an exception in his case. Holli's text maintains that a fourteen year old Pingree left Denmark in search of better job prospects across the state in Saco and by age twenty this young man would leave Maine altogether, and for all practical purposes, he never did return (3). Blanchard writes that SOJ firmly believed in the local moral code that "one stands in one's lot and place" (245) and from the writer's native Maine perspective, Pingree who thereby be known going forward as a "meecher"

(245). Blanchard explains: “Meeching people run out on their responsibility to God, themselves, and their community, and because they feel guilty about it they generally are a fairly noisy bunch” (245). By 1899, there was not a noisier political voice on the national stage than Pingree.

Pingree was nine years older than SOJ and the son of a cobbler and factory worker. Known as one of the “Doctor’s girls,” SOJ was a popular member of a large extended family and for generations before her these relatives would become successful business entrepreneurs; shipbuilders, and merchants.

Holli writes that “the Pingree children had only sporadic schooling during the early months and that Pingree’s early education in economics was probably gleaned from watching his father barter a pair of repaired boots for an unneeded, rusty plowshare. . . exchanged at another farm for a side of beef, a tanned hide, or possibly some cash” (3). It is widely known that aside from SOJ’s formal training at the Berwick Academy, a coed institution, this writer also had access to her extended family’s selection of their personal library books. She too had a practical education in money matters while spending time in her relative’s West Indies trading store located on Main Street in Berwick. In the course of times in which they both lived, Pingree and SOJ would come to observe poverty and food insecurity during four major economic downturns as well as a phase of rapid economic growth in the last third of the nineteenth century.

“Sarah’s years at Berwick Academy, 1861 to 1865, exactly span the Civil War,” Blanchard writes, and although SOJ “was too young to lose any of her own classmates, but families she knew were hurt or changed, as women struggled to raise families alone or children were introduced to new stepfathers” (42). Having left Demark for Hopkinton,

Massachusetts during a similar time period, Pingree "interrupted his apprenticeship in August, 1862," Holli writes, ". . . and with less than thirty days of military training, his unit received its first taste of war in the Second Battle of Bull Run on August 29 and 30, 1862" (3). He would circuitously make his way from Massachusetts to Washington D.C., only to be captured as a prisoner of war, and subsisted on a "daily half-pint of corn meal when it was available" (4) while in a Confederate prison in Andersonville, Georgia. Holli states that Pingree escaped from an enemy stockade in Millen, Georgia where he "engineered a clever but ungallant escape by answering to the name of a prisoner that was too ill to be exchange" (4). During his time in prison, Holli also notes how Pingree learned about employment opportunities in Detroit. The soldier had met several other prisoners that came from Detroit before he rejoined his regiment in further combat until the war ended in 1865.

Holli describes how Pingree had arrived in Detroit in late 1865 and after accumulating a modest savings, he purchased a small boot and shoe factory with outdated manufacturing equipment with a partner. They divided their responsibilities in such a way as for Pingree to handle production and sales, while his partner was responsible for bookkeeping. By 1868, this Yankee merchant had sent for his brother, Frank, to take on the job of supervising the plant. Holli states that by 1883, Pingree & Smith "were grossing upwards of a half million dollars annually" (7). He had married Frances A. Gilbert of Mt. Clemens, Michigan in 1872, a union that would eventually produce three children. Holli describes this wife as one that "frowned upon the use of alcohol, tobacco, and profanity and looked with a jaundice eye upon politics." He would eventually send to Maine for his parents, settling them into a Detroit home nearby, and that it was said that,

unlike the James' character, the American businessman, "Christopher Newman," Pingree "lived a "quiet and orderly life" (7).

SOJ held a lifelong interest in medical science and horticulture, and as a voracious reader, she would have learned about the sixty-acre Morton Farm project in local newspapers, if not directly from Fields. The Colorado beetle had invaded farmland clear across the country in 1896. In *To Dwell in the Garden: A History of* Boston's *Community Gardens (1987),* Sam Bass Warner, Jr., a cultural historian, reports that "each gardener was required to sow a row of beans at the outer edges of *his* garden to mark the boundary, and to put in many rows of potatoes" (Warner 15). In similar circumstances to Detroit, these gardens were meant to eradicate hunger, but while Pingree's official report suspiciously refers to the gardeners as "families." Warner reports that for the most part, Morton Farm was tended to by "men physically unable to do a day's full work, which [in]fact prevented them from taking permanent employment" (15). This initiative reported success that year, as "the gardeners' harvested 20 to 50 bushels of potatoes per plot," but the chemical methods used to achieve this yield, "doping up the potato plants with Paris Green (a commonly used chemical of the era, a mixture of trioxide of arsenic and copper acetate) to fight off the blight" (15).

The Morton Farm project managed to hold its own for two more years, but political force worked against its success after that. Unlike the Detroit 'Experiment', where the gardens were planted aside houses and other built spaces around town, the Boston 'Farm' was located on the outskirts of town, adjacent to a stretch of land adjacent to where a Boston Park Department plan for an urban forest was in the works. This wooded area would later become Franklin Park, one of several landscape jewels that

became part of Frederick Law Olmstead's (1822-1903) "Emerald Necklace," which also included New York's Central Park but also Belle Isle[sp] in Detroit. The Morton Farm project was terminated after 1897, as Warner explains, "for want of fresh land' and that the "Boston Park department commissioners of that day then aggressively expanded their chain of public land." "Boston's small experiment with allotment gardens then died," Warner concludes, "not from the Colorado beetle but from lack of imagination" (15).

SOJ would published her first story, *Deephaven (1887),* five years later, and then eight more stories before *Country* was serialized in the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1896. Among these published stories was *The Country Doctor (1884)*, a fictional account that is widely reported to have been inspired by her father. Although Feminist literary criticism tends to focus on this father-daughter relationship, Blanchard emphasizes that SOJ maintained deep lasting attachment to female relatives, including her mother, Caroline Frances Jewett (1820-91), and her two sisters Mary Rice Jewett (1847-1930) and Caroline August Jewett Eastman (1855-1897).

Although the "studiously amoral tone" (355) that Blanchard describes as permeating aspects of SOJ's mature writing, this biographer introduces her readers to what is meant to be SOJ's child-like perspective that was carried into adulthood. Blanchard describes how SOJ steers her young nephew's sled down a snow covered hill on the outskirts of Berwick, most likely a place and experience of joyful memories for her in the past and a reflection too of her perennial sense of humor. Also noted is Blanchard's reference to "meechers." This is a term used by natives of Maine to distinguish those people who remain rooted in the communities of their local ancestry from meechers, the disloyal kind that pick up and leave without concern for the

community's loss, and in most cases they never return to their previous village life. Blanchard asserts that SOJ held this bias throughout her life. There is no doubt about Pingree's status. He was a full blooded meecher and a pest too, but unlike the Colorado Beetle that made its way slowly to Morgan's Farm, Pingree was quick to criticize Boston's private utility companies for their price gouging. He would visit Boston as part of his national campaign to recruit newly minted Americans from northeastern urban cities for a national election fight. Pingree sent to Maine for his brother, and then later for his parents to join him in Detroit. SOJ would have applauded this kind of generosity if it originated with her affluent group of friends, but I perceive Pingree's abandonment of Maine and infringement upon Boston's political business to be the kind of actions that could unnerve the polite sensibilities of this cultured woman.

SOJ and Fields had many common interests included a shared sense of humor. She vented her frustration over the country's willing loss of an agrarian aesthetic and anger over perceived offenses against friends by first alluding to Detroit's royal place in the escalating industrial America where Pingree, the meecher, parked his throne. *Country a*nd *Queen's Twin* both include references to Queen Victoria and her son, Edward, widely known at the time to have remarkable physical and psychological similarities to Pingree. King Edward was a beloved prince in his mother's kingdom before her death and in spite of the numerous scandals that surrounded his social antics. The British people went so far to honor him as to name a specific variety of potatoes after Edward.

Pingree had developed a thick skin after being mocked persistently in the Detroit newspapers, prior to the 'Experiment.' If achieving national recognition during the 1886 presidential election campaign was not enough, this attention propelled him into the role

of a widely sought after public speaker. His simultaneous role as Mayor and Governor of Michigan added to the public's curiosity about him. Pingree became a champion of the nation's immigrant workers, and proceeded after 1884 to take on the private utility companies and railroads that were financially benefitting from the expansion of Detroit's place in the cradle of American industry. In short time, he would take his Progressive political agenda on the road to meddle in other major urban cities across the country, including Boston.

It is reasonable to discern that "credulity" was a sentimental ingredient in SOJ's self-prescribed elixir of Maine stoicism and ancestral pride. As a regionalist writer, SOJ was known to resent "meechers," a term used in Maine to describe people that ignore the moralist viewpoint that "one stands in one's lot and place" for a lifetime (Blanchard, 229-245), of which Crevecoeur's known history repeatedly underlines, but her own childhood emotional trauma is widely alluded to by her biographers. SOJ spent a great deal of time in her relatives' Berwick based trading store where upcountry loggers spent their profits gained from within SOJ's beloved natural landscape. Further complicating matters for this agrarian idealist was her Jewett relatives' personal involvement in Maine's deforestation through their shipbuilding ventures in Maine and Michigan, and her Perry relatives' involvement the American textile industry through her maternal grandfather's invention of a lucrative potato starch recipe.

SOJ biographers make mention of her friendship with Grover Cleveland (1837-1908), who summered on Boston's north shore and was a frequent guest along with SOJ in the stately homes in this Brahmin summer retreat. SOJ was a loyal friend and so it is reasonable to conclude that she would hold biases against anyone, including Pingree, and

the political party defeated the expansion of Cleveland's conservative Democrat agenda.

The combination of national political attention, Pingree's strong resemblance to a dandy of a British King, and the rumors that had begun to circulate about Pingree's upstaging of other participants in the Detroit 'Experiment' would have made him an irresistible character to literally play with in *Country* and even more so in *The Queen's Twin.* These two prominent men within their own countries would never meet. When Pingree fell ill on his stay over in London after a month long safari, Edward learned of the mayor's predicament and dispersed his Royal physicians to Pingree's hospital bedside. Edward had survived a similar experience within only a year of Pingree's death because of new medical intervention on the part of these prestigious doctors. News of the princely mayor's death was taken to heart by his Detroit supporters. They built a monument in his honor and commemorated it with a parade led by a brass band. This generous outpouring of affection for the politician would certainly have impressed Edward and his subjects.

Conclusion

I end this dissertation with *The Sketches* as the last presentation of how social experiments like those noted in my scholarly chapter discussions inspire new works of imaginative literature. Through the course of developing this collage of literary discussions it was possible to create a bridge between horticultural and cultural discussions that validate more than just how the ALG gardens are different than other community garden models. The possibility of harvesting stories within this setting is the most valuable yield that I could ever hope to attain on personal level through my community work. The everyday aspects of developing the ALG model are in the past now but the future holds great promise for the expansion of my own experiment through the ongoing composition of *The Sketches.* In this way, I find myself in conversation with the many American women writers cited in this dissertation, and especially "Miss Jewett." I take to heart her own observations about myself and other new writers of narrative of community: "Whoever adds to this department of literature will do an estimable good, will see the truth about it . . . in what we are pleased to call the *everyday* aspects must bring out the best sort of writing" (Cary 51-52). SOJ's encouragement is also the premise for the establishment of the WOW group. I look forward in earnest to this suburban group of community gardeners and activists as they begin the process of writing 'what they know'. After getting to know many of them in the last six ALG seasons, it is apparent to me that even the novices among these gardens know an awful lot.

In addition to Zagarell's definitive scholarship in *Narratives of Community*, I am also guided in the choice of *The Sketches*' form by an essay written by Susan Gillman, a

professor of Literature and American Studies. In *Regionalism and Nationalism in Jewett's Country of the Pointed Firs (1994),* Gillman writes at length about the political environment in which SOJ crafted her community narratives. Written almost a hundred years after *Country*, I found myself attune to the 'unwritable things' expressed in Gillman's essay. In essence, she determines why a mature SOJ resisted the conventional first person literary forms that other American writers used at the time. Gillman writes: "In Jewett's *Country*, as in so much regional literature, the point of constructing a more harmonious 'imaginary' past is to look away from and toward the disturbing present. . .[S]imilarly, Janus-faced is the category of regionalism itself, which constructs region as both separate from and engaged with nation. . ." (Gillman 115). SOJ was close to my age at the point in which she wrote *Queen's Twin*, and this delightful page turner works to frame Gillman's point of view, as SOJ reveals her true coming of age in her use of parody in this text. The tale of Abby Martin is representative of the power of rebellion through Literature. Unlike her male colleagues, she revels in the intimate female conversations that take place not only in kitchens and gardens, but also on the high seas between places like Dunnet and Green Island, and under the sylvan splendors of Maine's pointed firs. She left her male counterparts to the Howellsian styled speeches given by her arched characters, "Tilley" and "Littlepage." She enjoyed a spell of friendly banter with the likes of men like her characters "brother William" and "upcounty" born Asa." as much as with her old standby "Susan Fosdick." As a result of reading multiply texts related to Pingree and the Experiment, it was possible to find evidence of a strong rumor that sprouted up on intervals since the Detroit gardens were labelled a success. His own daughter, among many local women, claimed that in fact the idea for such an undertaking

actually was put forth by Pingree's wife!

My experiment with Janus faced literature coincides with my sense that the national political landscape is in upheaval since I first returned to Detroit to begin my academic fieldwork, and I have watched the proverbial pot boil over since, as I settled into directing the ALG creative medium. Although our volunteer group enjoys the role we play as rustic philosophers, it is with full knowledge that "we are never ever going to get back together" (Swift) as Taylor Swift sings, with our beloved American landscape--at least not in the fully realized ways that SOJ-styled agrarians might have hoped for in her day. Now that we all live on the other side of the American Industrial Revolution we are reminded of our global loss each time we apply sun block lotion and pull our straw hats and baseball caps down over our brows. At this point, I find that writing narratives of community is like taking a spoonful of SOJ's sunny optimism at the start of the day, and then heading out into the neighborhood with its main ingredient; an emboldened sense of humor. As modern American women today, we gals are challenged by the educational and career choices of that the suffragettes craved in their time. In the last few years, after reading the storied texts of this earlier era, I am reminded of what they already knew—to be careful what we wish for overtime.

Leaning over fences in the last six years to get to know my neighbors better, it became more evident that the local color of my tiny borough is a blend of regional flavors, and that it is getting hard to find true Glen Ridge natives around the borough these days. Just the same, if you were to ask townspeople from the neighboring streets of Bloomfield, East Orange, and Montclair, they would be more than happy to identify some of Glen Ridge's better known and distinct cultural characteristics. These kinds of details

inform *The Sketches* as my journey into the imaginative setting of Mary Jo's Ridge Pointe. As many of my neighbors pack up their memories of our shared time together at Memorial Day Parades and Christmas tree lightings, it is possible to see that more than just houses are turning over. There is just something about this place, however, that makes it special enough for me to forego a traditionalists' wallowing over the loss of the comradery felt in the borough during my almost thirty years here. I am staying put! The opportunity to now embrace the best my radical younger voice and my mellowing perspectives is what I hope to achieve in the presentation of *The Sketches.*

Chapter 1

The Return

Perhaps it is the simple fact of acquaintance with this place that made it so attaching, and gave such interest to its sedimentary rocks and ancient streams, rivers, and lakes in northeastern New Jersey. This area's industrial legacies were inspired by these natural settings and contribute to an array of stories about art colonies, factory and mill towns, sandstone quarries, and railways that added another layer of interest. Balsam firs clung to the limestone ridge and white cedars and wild callas grew in the salt marshes below. Mary Herbert had visited many of the towns that established roots there in the nineteenth century. She was in search of a place in which to raise a family, but there was something about the gas lamps and shade trees that line the streets of Ridge Pointe that made this place seem more attractive than other towns. Soon after her first visit, the Herbert family packed their bags in anticipation of a new start in the suburbs. They have lived there ever since.

Gas lamps have provided this tiny borough with its only means of illumination in public areas since 1895. The three low flames that burn inside each of the lamp's mantles are barely visible in the daytime, but at night they form the illusion of yellow stars that penetrate their glass enclosures and dance on the pitch-black air that surrounds them. The town's boundaries make up less than one and a half square miles, a small town by comparison to others nearby, but it is the gas lamps that complete the staging of Ridge Pointe as the kind of quintessential American village depicted in a Currier and Ives print. The town's origins are as old as America itself but earlier settlers here resisted a century of urban planners who would reshape physical space and the natural course of things in

other places.

The local utility company used to employ a crew of full time lamplighters before Ridge Pointe marked its centennial year, but this group of men had dwindled in numbers since then, until just one lamplighter was left to care for all six hundred and fifty of these lamps that are planted under Ridge Pointe's celebrated maples and oaks. Although he is close to retirement age now, he still enjoys his work day spent on the top rung of his wooden ladder. It is "a place of honor," his college professor son likes to say, "with a happy seat of various views."

Right out of high school, the lamplighter would climb the poles to repair modern lighting as a utility mechanic apprentice. This is when he could see what was left of the Meadowland's salt marshes and to watch New York's famous cityscape change from a higher perch. His father used to tell him stories as a boy about the white cedar forests that used to grow in the Meadowlands, until Dutch settlers drained the tidal lands in order to produce salt hay which they sold to the farm owners living nearby. Another kind of job was taken up by the local hired hands when their dike system fell into disrepair years later. The clay soil that the cedar trees had once clung to would be dug up and hauled to the brick makers' factories, up the Hackensack River in the Bergen county town of Little Ferry. This was where the lamplighter's father and his grandfather before him had worked consecutively for the same German immigrant family for over fifty years. The lamplighter carries on his father's tradition of being a story teller, a tender role that he plays out among his grandchildren, and in quieter times spent babysitting for them, these eager listeners let him know how good he is at it.

Over a hundred million bricks were produced in that factory where these men had worked before the factory closed down in the 1950s. The brick business had lasted longer than most businesses of its kind, until after the Great Depression, when cheaper European bricks flooded the American market. These blocks of fired clay became the primary construction material used in the new buildings going up in Newark and Patterson, as well as the City during the company's peak years. The children especially like it when he takes them for car rides, moving slowly past the apartment buildings and office spaces where the bricks have recently been sandblasted to make them look new. "What goes around comes around," the lamplighter is known to say, but few in Ridge Pointe have ever heard him speak about anything at all.

Now when the lamplighter goes about his business in late autumn through early spring, Ridge Pointe's towering shade trees have already dropped most of their leaves around the gas lamps' iron bases. This is when the clearest views of Manhattan can be seen from residents' easterly facing windows. The automobile traffic between Ridge Pointe and New York can make for a loathsome weekday commute, as four lanes of traffic are funneled through the Port Authority managed tunnels and the George Washington Bridge. The New Jersey's Transit's high speed rails carry Ridge Pointe residents into Penn Station in less than an hour from the glen in the center of town. Gas lamps, shade trees, and views of New York have been known to cause the most resolute urban dweller to fall hard for this place. When they return to climb the concrete staircase that leads back up to Ridge Pointe's main avenue, it is more often than not with the childish certainty of being in the center of civilization.

On a bright autumn day in recent memory, the lamplighter was at work within steps of where Mary Jo Herbert was herself busy at work, as she attempted to press a long handled bulb spade into hard dirt, under a willow tree near the front corner of her property. She had not quite got the hang of it. Although the cylinder shaped blade was made of steel, it was not sharp enough to sever the naturally woven surface roots before penetrating the layers of soil. This tool had been given to her as a Mother's Day gift from her children, after she had spoken too soon to complain that this space, and the other gardens scattered around their family home, had become less of a pleasure and more of chore at this stage of her life. Although she appreciated their best intentions to out of her empty nest funk, the tool reminded Mary Jo of the quad canes her parents first relied upon, before later giving in to the convenience of their wheel chairs.

To make matters worse, she had impulsively ordered a hundred fresh tulip bulbs before the glow of Mother's Day honors wore off. She had forgotten about this impulsive buy almost immediately after typing the tulip bulbs code numbers into the garden catalogue on line form. A resolution came to mind just as she noticed a woman walking along the bluestone sidewalk toward her and the lamplighter. Mary headed toward the garden shed out back and on the side of the garage. That is where she had buried quite a few of her garden catalogue mistakes; including the upside down tomato plant hanger and a pair of lawn aerator shoes.

Mary Jo was trying to remember where she had filed away the name and number of a recently recommended professional gardener as she headed back toward the willow tree. She intended to have them finish the job she had started. The lamplighter had been intent on his work when she had left the front yard only a few minutes before, but now he

was balancing precariously on the ladder, while it appeared that the strange woman was in the process of taking his picture with her smart phone.

Mary Jo was busy at smoothing over the disturbed soil under the willow tree when she heard the later part of my intentions. The lamplighter had failed to turn around and acknowledge that I was standing at his feet. “I want to email it to my parents,” I said, explaining what seemed to be an interloper’s request. “They live in Peru and we just moved into town. I’m trying to give them a taste of the local color.” Mary Jo saw a glow rise on the lamplighter’s face as he turned around. It was a soft light that one could also expect to see when he finished the job at hand.

His body language had also made it clear that he would politely address her simple request with gracious compliance. Three clicks must have done the job. “Thank you,” the young woman said, looking down at the photo grid on her phone, “They’re gonna love it!” To Mary Jo’s recollection, she had never seen the likes of such a photo where the lamplighter is actually posing near one of Ridge Pointe’s greatest treasures. Images of these iconic lamps stood alone in every other photo she remembered seeing in the local newspapers or on the borough’s web site. The fact that I had seen these historic lamps from a different perspective appeared to intrigue her. The lamplighter had turned his back again to head off any further petition. By then, Mary Jo had stepped out from under the tree with an extended hang and a smile on her face. This marked the first time of many to come when we exchanged our “hellos.”

Chapter 2:

Making Acquaintances

The lamplighter had mistaken Mary Jo for one of the professional gardeners that tend to the sweeping lawns and flower beds along Ridge Pointe's main thoroughfare. She wore a dingy Rosy the Riveter T-shirt outside of her khaki pants. The frayed stitch creases on the pants indicated their years of wear. A Tiger's baseball cap created a shadow over her face and the high ponytail sticking out substituted for the wide brim straw hat that he remembered that she wore on other occasions. This change was enough to have caused the lamplighter to miss her cue, but her distinctive way of addressing this younger woman affirmed his understanding of her as a Ridge Pointe lady.

"You have the perfect day for picture taking" Mary Jo Herbert had said enthusiastically, as I checked to be sure that the lamplighter's photos had been sent. "I know," was how I responded, not quite yet knowing who was talking at that moment. Mary Jo's formality was a throw-back to earlier times, when people living in Ridge Pointe would have thought it rude to let a stranger pass by, without finding some way in which to say hello. The new mantles in the lamp were nearly installed and the sound of these women's easy conversation had just begun to flow. It sounded like the soft hum of the natural gas that the lamplighter would expect to hear once he turned it back on. Looking down at them from the ladder, it was possible to identify them both as the friendlier types in Ridge Pointe; the type of folks his grandfather would call "two peas in a pod."

"Oh, you live across the street from the Murphys," Mary Jo had said to me when she found out that I was her neighbor around the corner. "That was a wise decision on your part!" she said, and I made note of wide eyed look of surprise as she said. "They are the best kind of neighbors you can find. 'Not the kind that builds their hedges too high as to miss noticing when someone could use a little help." She asked me where I was going, and I told her how it had been my intention to get out and explore these new surroundings as soon as the last of our moving boxes was out on the curb. "Do you have the town recycling schedule?" It was a good feeling to know that this new neighbor of mine was friendly, but it was hard to follow her as she continued to talk. Mary Jo jumped around from idea to idea, letting one comment on my part about something she said trail off in a different direction. It was hard to keep up. "You've got to be sure of your days," she said emphatically, "Now that there's more recycling than garbage." I found the way she separated trash in two like glass bottles and cardboard, while to my way of thinking it is just as easy to refer to these cast away items as waste. That's the English word I chose to say during engineering school, an easy one syllable reference that worked just as well in any case.

"Oh! Peru!" Mary Jo said in the kind of voice that suggested that the other woman's native country held her fascination. I had just explained how my time in the States only began with university. "Is Lima far away from Machu Picchu?" she asked. This was a classic question that Americans tend to ask Peruvians, as if it is just around the corner like the distance between Mary Jo's property and my own. "That's a place 'I want to see someday," she said, right on cue with my previous discussions about Peru with Americans. "You do know that Machu Picchu is not the lost city, right?" I said with

a false hesitantly that begged the answer of how well travelled Mary Jo would turn out to be or at least how much she read. Her clothes were out of style and this initially led me to believe that she may well have not left Ridge Pointe in decades, but then she completely reversed any opinion I might have had about her at the start. “I’ve read that when the seismic activity occurs underneath Machu Picchu, the stone buildings move in Latin rhythm. Is that true?” Mary Jo asked me a question that made me stop short. Then she laughed and I joined in as she performed a little two step dance. “That’s about as mystical as it gets up there,” I said in good humor. After a morning of dropping off the twins at school, and facing another day alone in the house emptying more boxes, it felt just about the right time to let off a little steam myself. This comment had stopped Mary Jo in her tracks and the same time the lamplighter coughed as if to clear his throat.

“I think we have an audience,” I said. The lamplighter was not part of the congenial picture we made of two neighbors pleasantly chatting on one of Ridge Pointe’s scenic corners, but the lamplighter quickly wiped his mouth with a handkerchief and returned to his work, without any notice of us at all. “He’s not the type to eaves drop,” Mary Jo said, as if to allude to some deeper knowledge of who this man was and what interested him. Leaning in, she shared only a sliver of what I would come to know about my neighbor around the corner. She had lived long enough in this town with its gas lamps and canopy of trees to have seen a lot and to forget very little about it. Mary Jo leaned in. “He’s the proper type and not inclined to get any real conversation going in with the neighbors here,” she whispered just loud enough for me to hear, “but I think he likes the idea of a little arm’s length company.” The older neighbor knew enough not to make me feel any greener than one is likely to be when they first move into Ridge Pointe. Mary Jo

then paid me the compliment of saying, “I don’t think he’ll forget soon how you took his picture,” and then changed the direction of the conversation altogether. “If you are hungry after your walk, there is the best deli in the world around the corner and a little further down the bend,” she offered pointing in the direction of the bordering town of Claremont, “but whatever you do, stay away from their grilled cheese and tomato sandwich. It’s a killer!” She slapped herself on one of her ample hips. “My husband and me joke around about how conveniently located it is to the hospital.” We ended our first conversation with one more laugh and thoughts of how good a little comfort food sounded in that moment. I walked away from the lamplighter and Mary Jo fumbling in my purse for a pair of sunglasses. The noon sun was shining from above, as if to applaud all the three of us on that quintessential Ridge Pointe morning.

Chapter 3

Mrs. Herbert

Mary Jo Herbert had arrived in Ridge Pointe through a circuitous journey that began in Detroit and with time in between spent in New York. This area of the country was very different in both physical and cultural ways than where she grew up. All of her family in Michigan had stayed there since the time her immigrant grandparents had made their way from Brooklyn to Detroit in search of better work opportunities. Ridge Pointe had caught her fancy in part because of the fond memories she held of family camping adventures in New England. Her father led the charge in his 1964 Ford County Squire. That's when she swam in the Atlantic Ocean as a girl, after travelling from Michigan, across southern New Hampshire, and then into Maine by way of the Piscataqua River Bridge. By the time she settled in Ridge Pointe, she was frequently behind the wheel of a Ford Aerostar minivan for the kid's sake, but now she could choose any car of her liking again. Mary Jo Herbert bought herself a compromise. It was a smaller version of a station wagon that served her well in picking her adult children up occasionally at the Ridge Pointe train station.

The morning's brief conversation with her new neighbor was the correct remedy for Mary Jo's earlier bout of ill temperament. After collecting the box with the one hundred tulip bulbs, she decided to sit on front steps for a few minutes before going inside to call the garden service. It seemed like old times to spend this much time in the Herberts' yard, but on the other hand, it also seemed to Mary Jo like a new beginning.

She breathed in the natural aroma of the Angelica musk from the herb gardens on either side of the porch, and she resisted the thought of being indoors a few minutes longer, to watch the lamplighter secure the glass enclosure into its place over the tiny flames.

Although Mary Jo Herbert was a collector of less common herbs and vegetables than the ones that most everyone else grew in their gardens in Ridge Pointe, this interest played second fiddle to her curiosity about how others came to live in the borough. She watched the lamplighter methodically take each descending step on the ground. His ladder was closed and carried to his truck in rote fashion. Mary Jo saw the lamplighter take his seat in the PSE & G truck. As he started up the engine Mary Jo saw the filmy exhaust fumes waif into the air as the vehicle pulled away from the curb, paused at the stop sign at the corner, and made a right hand turn onto the main road past the gas lamp in front of her house before leaving Ridge Pointe. Mary Jo says something about the lamplighter that gives a cue that she knows him better than she let on to her neighbor.

I was mistaken to think that Mary Jo Herbert had stayed behind our town borders for years at a time. Over time I would come to learn that in fact, she was a world traveler. Mary Jo's appreciation for atlases and maps had been honed from an early age and stories told by her father. He was a merchant Marine during World War II, and had made his way on many a ship heading up from Sheepshead Bay to upstate New York on the Hudson River. She had come to appreciate his painterly descriptions of this famous landscape that are commonly associated now with the Hudson River School. A century earlier, her father would have felt comfortable among this group of artists, as his own oral sketches were composed on the decks of beloved ships and recorded as memories in his

mind's eye, before carrying them home to regale family and friends in Detroit. When she listened to her mother and aunts' stories, her imagination was carried in the opposite direction, along railway adventures between Michigan Central Station and New York Penn Station. As young child, Mary Jo's mother had sat on her mother's lap for the duration of a six hundred mile trip to New York City. The family's Brooklyn relatives greeted them upon arrival at Penn Station with cries of "Julie's baby!" Much later, she would come to appreciate why her mother had such profound recollection of this specific detail. Mary Jo's foreign speaking great grandmother had severely scolded her daughter within minutes of this joyful arrival when it was discovered that the Michigan toddler was only able to respond to her extended family in English.

Chapter 4

The Village Green

The building of the garden site on the village green had taken longer than expected. The weather had everything to do with this late start. People are starting to pull their winter wools from closets and drawers after Thanksgiving in northern New Jersey, but in this particular year this ritual came early. The weather pattern was most familiar to Mary Jo; in earlier years, Ridge Pointe had changed so much that the climatologists have altered the standard chart of regional growing zones in New Jersey to reflect the state's increasing temperatures on an annual basis. This made life just a little more confusing for people when three days before the Halloween ice storm rattled the feeblest branches in Ridge Pointe's canopy of trees. Wind and frozen rain caused tree branches to coat the borough's electric wires and this extra weight caused the utility poles to bow and eventually snap when fallen branches came crashing down. Much to the disappointment of an army of trick-or-treaters this annual holiday romp under the glow of Ridge Pointe's gas lamps was canceled that year. If the town's children would have had anything to say about it, they would have risked life and limb to hop, skip, and jump over the live wires still lying on residents' lawns that Saturday evening, just for the chance to wear their princess, witch, and vampire costumes again. Parents and grandparents of Ridge Pointe's youngsters had already gathered on Friday afternoon for the traditional Halloween parades that took place on the playgrounds of Ridge Pointe's two elementary schools. Disappointment over not being able to fill plastic pumpkins and pillow cases with sugary treats was readily expressed by the children and their complaints lasted until the first snowfall dusted every nook and cranny in town and provided a delightful distraction.

That was just about the time that Mary Jo Herbert received a telephone call from the Borough of Ridge Pointe City Hall. She lifted the land phone receiver from its cradle to note the number that appeared on the caller ID. It was a surprise to hear the town supervisor's voice. She had thought this call would be a friendly reminder from the Dog License Clerk to send proof of Brydie's alteration and rabies vaccination as well as a check for eighteen dollars to cover administration fees.

"Hello," Mary Jo said, expecting to hear her neighbor, Karen's voice. "Good Morning, Mary Jo, its Gerry Townsend calling on behalf of the mayor and council members," the supervisor said. Although his call was completely out of the blue, Mary Jo knew that its purpose would be explained in the most concise way possible. She knew Matt to direct Ridge Pointe's business in the most efficient way possible without allowing too much space for inconsequential discussions about how to get things done.

"We would like to offer Let's Grow space to build a community garden on the Village Green," he said, moving right into time frames for this offer. "Your people could start this project in the spring—that is whenever it actually comes next year." As reticent as Gerry could be about Ridge Pointe's business, he was also a resident in town and he was susceptible to the same bouts of winter blahs as everyone else there. He spelled out the parameters of what was to be our business relations. "The town will cover the expense of the season's water and you will be responsible for everything else related to this project." Mary Jo had always found it difficult to stay on point when discussing her beloved gardens, and her pause to take in what Gerry had said was sure to send her mind reeling. She was, however, a wise saver of steps, at the point in which people made offers to support the community garden's mission. Not wanting to look a gift horse in the

mouth, Mary Jo Herbert politely accepted this offer without quite understanding one very important thing.

"Before I let you go, Gerry," she said, taking the reins of this discussion long enough to keep the busy supervisor on the line to get the answer she needed, "I can't quite place where the Village Green is--," she said, feeling like a newcomer to Ridge Pointe. "It's around the corner from your house, Mary Jo," he answered in a matter of fact way that did not quite successfully hide the impatient air of his response; "it's what we call the train station parking lot now that it's covered in soil." She paid no mind to this curt reply. The news of a new garden around the corner from the Herberts' home was the perfect Christmas gift for Mary Jo that did not require the traditional wrapper, to her way of thinking. Mary Jo completed the half dozen sentences that took place between them. She said, "Well, that sounds like a great offer, Gerry," handing over the terse control of their words to the supervisor. "OK, then. We'll be back in touch after the new year settles in," he said. There was a brief pause to note the conclusion of this business negotiation just before Mary Jo softened its edges. "Merry Christmas, Gerry. All the best to your family," she said emphatically. "Same to yours, Mary Jo," the supervisor said before hanging up.

Looking out her bedroom window on the second floor, Mary Jo's vision became aligned with the birds nest balancing atop the red Maple out front. The woven twigs were the size of a small bushel basket. Snowflakes had settled into these grooves and provided the kind of shadow and light that painters work hard at to duplicate on their canvases. This mess is void of any occupancy by the noisy family of birds and spent three seasons of their in this custom high-rise, before they quickly slipped out of town on autumn winds

to make their way south along the Atlantic Coast. “Smart of them,” Mary Jo commented to her husband who was standing in front of the dresser mirror. She let the sheer fabric that covered the window fall back into place. He was making a Windsor knot in his tie, as he has always done each weekday morning since first becoming an insurance broker. “What’s that supposed to mean?” This was a familiar response to his wife’s propensity to begin discussions in the middle. “I feel like this winter can’t end soon enough,” she said with the new garden site in mind, but Jack Herbert unknowingly thought she was talking about the weather as a reasonable determination about where to enter their final discussion before he left for work. “Who was that on the phone?,” he asked. He knew that that a response to this question might delay his morning commute to work in Manhattan. He preferred the privacy of driving his car rather than to take the train. The aggravation of sitting in traffic was minimized by his efficient use of this time to talk to London brokers about their common business, without the risk of being overheard on his neighbors while on the train.

“It was Gerry Townsend--,” she said as they left the bedroom and went down the house’s back stairs in single file. “He told me that Bill and the Council want us to build a Let’s Grow site on the Village Green,” Mary Jo said with optimism. There was no need to address the mayor by his official title. He had long been part of her husband’s casual poker group that would meet up once a month when all of the children were still living at home. “Where the heck is the Village Green?” Jack Herbert asked. Having never boarded a train from Ridge Pointe, with the rare exceptions of the Nor’ Easterners that happened to blow in on weekdays, Jack Herbert was even less likely know than Mary Jo that this parking lot had been remediated and then designated as Ridge Pointe’s newest green

space. “It’s around the corner, where the train depot parking lot used to be--,” Mary Jo explained as if she had always known it to there. “Well that’s a good thing,” he replied. “You can walk to this garden then. When do they want you to get started?” Like Gerry Townsend, Jack Herbert knew how to navigate business conversations efficiently and he was also an astute negotiator, but just the same, when discussions of this kind took place between his wife and him, it required an approach that was decidedly different. He knew to tread lightly in Mary Jo’s space after an agreement was reached between them at the start of their marriage. Although they equally shared the responsibilities of parenthood, the demands of his business career made it necessary for the woman of the house to take on the everyday aspects of maintaining their hearth and home. This division of familial labors extended into most relationships in the neighborhood as well. Mary Jo occasionally affirmed her role by paying her husband a compliment. Jack Herbert was the kind of husband that knew how to get out of his wife’s way.

Chapter 5

The Gist of It

The warming temperatures of late March were interrupted by one last winter's blow in which the Village Green was covered by another three inches of snow. By the time this precipitation had settled into the earth, it was late April. Parents of school-age children shifted their worries about childcare coverage on "snow days" to concerns about losing their rental deposits on Shore houses if they cancel out of their contracts that began with the Memorial Day weekend. The extreme weather conditions at the start of the year had created havoc with the local school calendars, and the children, who enjoy building snowmen and playing their electronic games on weekdays when schools were forced to close, were now subject to the rising heat in their classrooms. Although the idea of air conditioning had been developed at the start of the twentieth century, the newfangled notion also increased electrical bills for the Ridge Pointe Board of Education, and so it had long been a policy to crack the windows just enough to let the cooler air outside float over the school's steam heat radiators.

Toward the rear of the gardens and of her backyard, Mary Jo saw the makings of a physical comedy routine take place about the birdfeeder. It rivaled the best of what Jerry Lewis could have offered. The birdfeeder was free standing and tucked between the entanglements of a red bud tree, a gift from her husband last Easter and planted the farthest distance away from the house, a foot short of the property line. Two gray squirrels had managed to balance near the bottom of the feeder's long plastic cylinder, where short metal perches stuck out and were meant to support the weight of small birds.

The Herberts' back yard was a familiar hoarding ground for all kinds of scavengers with tails and wings. Each fall, a calculating game ensued between them. The rodents scattered their food under the soft pines that afforded privacy along the yard's Baldwin Street fence. By spring this entire habitat was depleted of nuts, with the squirrels' own species to blame along with the plump blue jays that especially captured Mary Jo's fancy. This pair of squirrels appeared to seek revenge with the aggressive pursuit of the birds' easily spotted cache. Their performance was a natural remedy for Mary Jo's blues, as she watched their furry tails tip backward and forward into exhaustion so that all they could do was catapult backward into a pile of stripped sunflower seeds on the ground below. "Those filler seeds are good for something," Mary Jo said out loud with a laugh to no one in particular. She wished her husband had been there to see it happen too. Then she noticed dabs of dark olive green layered onto a background of raw umber and wenge that had dominated the late winter palette after the snow had melted. The unexpected warmth of middle March had been enough to coax the red bud's leaves from their bark while the Herberts' had slept on their worries the night before. At times like this, Mary Jo held fast to these gifts from nature. One good laugh followed by one soulful moment of contemplation was all it took that morning. Her headache was gone.

When the Herbert family moved into their new home in town, only a few visible remnants of the town's original industries could be seen along Toney's Brook. It had once been a small tributary that flowed south to east through upper Claremont, Ridge Pointe, and Brookfield and joined increasing larger ones that fed into the Passaic River. This brook had been dammed in the 1980s to create a series of ponds that enhance the settings of several Essex county parks, but it was nothing more than a stream that runs

through Ridge Pointe's glen. In the heat of summer, it appears to completely give up as it trickles over the gravel where bits of torn paper and Styrofoam cups get caught on by stone's shards. When Mary Jo first heard people in town make references to Toney's Brook, it was as if the great current of water that powered Ridge Pointe's mills in the remained intact since the late 1800s. One can imagine the power of this water as it filled up the breast wheel's buckets and took them on a ride. This kind of industrial wheel was a model of efficiency in its time. Mary Jo took her young children on a walk one day during the first spring that they lived in town, and they searched the glen for that particular spot. What they found was open space. The waterwheel had deteriorated after the mill was torn down, and it caught fire and burned near the edge of Toney's Brook. Mary Jo's children did not seem to mind as they threw blades of grass onto what was left of it as they made their way from one end of the glen to the other. That is where the dirty shadows of the Matchless Metal Polishing Company had fallen in sympathy with the building that was torn down after the company had been relocated. All of this occurred several years before the Herbert family moved into town. All that was left behind was contaminated soil that everyone was talking about in Ridge Pointe's school yards and on the borough's sports fields.

These public locations were the preferred social choices in which the residents gathered information about town related issues. Parents would linger on black top long enough to play an adult game of phone tag in September, when many of the residents who left town for the summer had returned with fresh attitudes about small town life. This was a pattern that Mary Jo observed early on and worked to avoid by having her children walk home by themselves on most school days. Over time, she had formed an

inoffensive set of answers in response to the question of her opinions about the kind of town issues that can burn as brightly and as long as the flames in the gas lamps' mantles, but the Herberts' youngest daughter was already a college sophomore by the time they perfected the ultimate polite response. A simple shrug and wagging of the head was all it took to indicate that the issue was still under studious consideration. "We tend to keep those opinions for old standbys," she was known to say to anyone who impolitely pressed for a definitive answer on the spur of the moment. The same could be said of how they shared information about their children's lives beyond Ridge Pointe's borders. She said, "None of us lets on that we've heard them all before!"

Chapter 6

There It Is

The Herberts' fresh tulip bulbs hinted upon this good fortune when they bloomed in their debut season the following spring. It had been an ideal one for Ridge Pointe's gardeners, when the cold wind and rain took an early leave from ridge.

She passed by the library and slowed her step while approaching the corner of Ridgewood and Bloomfield avenues. It was the busiest intersection in Ridge Pointe. She still remembered the campaign by a group of mothers twenty years back who lobbied for a crossing guard in the hour prior to school starts and dismissals. A young woman spoke with a light creole accent that could not be easily recognized from past experiences on this corner. When the Ridge Pointe children heard her voice they thought it was magical. As smart as Ridge Pointe children are today, they still cannot judge the speed and distance of approaching vehicles or navigate the walk zone on their own. Even the high school students and grown-ups stayed on the curb for the most part, until they saw her signal from the middle of Bloomfield Avenue with an assuring call. It was the same one she gave to Mrs. Herbert that day on her walk to the post office. She was often called the Pied Piper of Ridge Pointe, but Mary Jo always pictured her with wings instead of a pipe.

"Hello, Mrs. Tutelary," Mary Jo called to the crossing guard on the other side of the street.

"Stay there!" The crossing guard warned her.

When the light changed this caramel skinned woman who never seemed to age walked between the white lines to stand next to Mary Jo.

"Mrs. Herbert, it's been a while," she said.

"How have you been?" Mary Jo said. It did not surprise her to see that this woman still wore a long black braid that swung in time with her head that was always looking left and right. What had changed was the way she was dressed. The crossing guard wore what could be described as street clothes by a work force that is obligated to wear uniforms. On that day, the crossing guard wore a peppermint pink crew neck sweater and gray uniform style pants. Her yellow duty gear made the outfit look like the silks frequently selected by racetrack jockeys down at Monmouth Park.

"I'm doing fine, thank you," the crossing guard said in a shared moment of nostalgia. Mary Jo could see this woman's smile in the corner of her eye as they stood side by side watching the traffic light suspended in front of them on an electrical wire. The crossing guard added, "As long as Ridge Pointe has children."

"They have always been lucky to have you around," Mary Jo replied. The crossing guard stepped off the curb once again and mouthed a careful expression that never seemed to change, "All clear to cross"---.." Mary Jo admired this woman's desire to serve this community with her good sense and competent voice equally capable of soothing children and stopping harried drivers cold in their tracks. The crossing guard offered one more comment to Mary Jo: "Their enthusiasm is still a shot in the arm," she said. "Ah," Mary Jo said on key, "Gotta get me one of those, Mrs. T!"

No one offered to help Mary Jo navigate the busy intersection where the post office, the train station, and two banks were located. She had moved farther up the line

inside to a point where she could identify the two clerks at their windows. One of them was an old acquaintance of Mary Jo's from a time when she lived on this southern part of town. The clerk's daughter had been in Mary Jo's Brownie troop. Mary Jo ran a few names through her head and settled on the correct one in this case. Her name was Jennifer Franklin. She preferred to be called Jen. Being called to her window could prove to be a double-edged sword for both of them as there was a thread or two of long ago conversations that Mary Jo and Jen revived upon seeing each other in town. That did not happen very often now that Mary Jo usually completed the task of buying stamps and mailing packages in Claremont, at the United Parcel Service store on the main floor of the same building as the Pilates studio. She would have liked to think that this happened for convenience's sake and maximizing the value of the coins she had to drop in the parking meter, but honestly, it was also a way to avoid the empty nest that Ridge Pointe had become for her.

"Forgive me for asking," Mrs. Hayes said to Jen Franklin. "Was that Mary Jo Herbert who just left?" she added. "Yes, Mrs. Hayes it was," the postal clerk responded. "Well I thought so but then she didn't say hello to me," the elderly woman said in a hurt voice. "That's not the Mary Jo Herbert that I remember," she insisted. Jen Franklin only replied with a shrug, but she had to agree with Mrs. Hayes that something was different about Mary Jo. She had stopped herself short from impulsively blurting out, "I hope she's not sick," Jen was relieved that there was a line forming around the corner. These customers became the distraction she needed to drop any more thoughts about Mary Jo Herbert. Jen found her job hard sometimes, as she tried not to look into faces in the past and imagine what was in store for them.

On the walk back from the post office, Mary Jo had to admit that her idea walk down to the post office could have gone better. She did not want to have to explain that she was not feeling well without a clear understanding of why. She had forgotten to look up and see the mural that has hung in the Ridge Pointe post office for generations. This artwork is entitled "The Glen," and it was painted by an artist of considerable talent. His paintings also hang in prominent museums across the country, from Washington D.C. to San Diego, California. She had once taken her Brownie troop on a field trip to leisurely take it in, as the postmaster knew almost as much about the mural as the Ridge Pointe historian. He did a pretty good job of explaining its origins to the cluster of girls that tried hard to sit still on the quilt she had brought along for that purpose. The postmaster was a grandfatherly type in the traditional sense. One Brownie with her sash wrapped around her head commented before he could begin. "That picture does not look anything like the Ridge Pointe glen, and I know this because we walk our dog there every day after dinner," she said with all power of one breath from her miniature lungs the way Mary Jo used to do when she was a girl, particularly to offer her around commentary on school field trips. Mary Jo knew that the Brownie's observation was accurate. She used this little whirligig's outburst as a teaching moment. Mrs. Herbert said, "Girls! Just a reminder before Postmaster Marx tells us more. Wait until he is finished before we take time for comments and questions!" She crouched down and stepped closer to the blanket to look directly into their eyes and then she asked them, "What is important for Brownies to remember about manners?" They had talked about before they entered the post office. "Brownie Scouts are never rude to others," the girls chimed in. Mary Jo knew that these seven-year-olds were all tired out from a full day of school by the way they dragged their

feet for the eight-block walk to reach the post office. She could tell by the way they ran in the direction of the jungle gym instead of the playground's side gate. Although Mary Jo thought it might be better to cancel their trip and reschedule it for another time, she knew Mr. Marx would be disappointed if they didn't show up, and the Brownie mothers would complain if their girls didn't earn their history badges this month.

Mary Jo had never expected that this short walk would dig up so many memories, but it did explain why she had avoided the town center in the last few years. As she crossed the block again past the Smiths' old house, she could see that the contractors had begun their work. It was possible that the new owners' plan was to restore this Queen-Anne style house to its original glory. She imagined three generations of a Ridge Pointe family setting off on a Sunday afternoon walk after dinner in the house's grand dining room. It might as well been the people depicted in the post office mural. Her mind called up the mural she had been fond of since before the Brownies had succeeded in earning their badges. It depicts residents enjoying an afternoon along the banks of Toney's Brook at the midway point of the twentieth century. The mill and its paddlewheel are depicted in the background of the painting, where a woman and man lounge on manicured grass. Another woman and two children can be seen in the foreground. Their light skin and hair portrayed the WASPish good looks of residents who inhabited this area after the Yantecaw Indians left the Ridge. The young girl is a perpetual thirteen year-old and is features prominently in this composition. She wears a white dress that twirls above her knees, while her mother sits on the ground a few feet away from her. The older woman's legs are modestly covered by her skirt. She looks up at the boy a head taller than the girl. He is in a quarterback stance ready to throw his football. His gaze is more in the direction

of the woman, while the young lady has an outward focus that suggests that particular artist had greater expectations for her future than the other people included in this painting. The murals' bits of clouds interrupt sky-colored perfection. Mary Jo looked up at the sky over the roof of the Smith's old Queen Anne. It was a very similar sky to the ideal one painted into the mural. She had missed her chance to wish this family her best before they left town, and had mentioned her regret about her poor manners during last evening's discussion with Mr. Herbert. "I bet they miss Ridge Pointe already," she said.

Mary Jo Herbert had spent most of her time here in Ridge Pointe without complaint, but a particular set of circumstances came to mind as she noticed the flashing light on the top of a Ridge Pointe police car that was holding up traffic in the middle of her block. The car had jumped the curb and hit the lamp post. This site reminded her of the Sunday afternoon a few years back when she arrived home to find pieces of iron and glass strewn across the edge of her lawn. It was apparent that yet another accident had occurred at the busy intersection of Ridgewood and Baldwin, just steps from the right-hand corner of her property. A boulder rested there. It dissuaded a wayward vehicle from crashing into her front porch. Mary Herbert had witnessed firsthand on several occasions how the private ambulances wailed in defiance of the traffic rules as they turned this corner. They would make their left turns in front of oncoming cars that came down Ridgewood Avenue, and complete their route to the hospital's emergency room entrance just around the bend. More than once since she had lived here, an ambulance driver's plan did not work out so well. In those cases, it was the corner mailbox that usually suffered the unexpected blows when these vehicles could not stop, but this time it was the gas lamp's turn. The utility company had already come and gone several hours before,

having sealed off the gas line but leaving a mess for someone else to clean up. Upon seeing the shattered lamp, Mary Jo felt a loss that was not at all unusual to residents in this town who were known to adopt the gas lamps in front of their homes. Mary Jo swept up the pieces of glass that were on the sidewalk and pulled others from between blades of grass where they shined. The red begonias planted around the lamp post had been tokens of her silly affection, and she felt rejected when she saw how they were smashed underfoot by someone earlier that day. She did find out the circumstances involved with the accident, although she did not expect to see any mention of the flowers' demise in the accident report. Only a few concise phrases would be written on it in the policeman's unintelligible handwriting that attempted to explain the state of this mangled pole and broken glass. As she tossed the last of the twisted metal fragments into a black plastic trash bag, she noticed that the metal had maroon auto paint rubbed on it.

More than a year later, the gas lamp was not replaced. When she called to inquire about this oversight, the supervisor of public works told her that the local utility company had told him that there had never been a lamp on that specific corner of Ridge Pointe. It took several more months to resolve this misunderstanding, and it did not happen until she presented a copy of a photograph of her home to the Mayor in good standing at the time. It was taken in 1905 by a local realtor, and there was a hand written note on the back side of it that included the date and the name of the original owner's recently built house. There was even a Ridge Pointe Historical Society logo stamped on it. The photo was shot from an angle across the street that clearly showed a gas lamp on the corner in front of these Herberts' home. The Mayor had been told by the supervisor of public works that the utility company claimed that a gas lamp never existed there, as if to shift

the blame to an anonymous person that this supervisor, the Mayor, and Mary Jo knew could never be contacted. The Mayor felt inclined to hear Mary Jo's complaint based on the amicable relationships their families shared, but also hesitated to challenge the position of the supervisor. He had hoped that Mary Jo would simply resign herself to the loss of this gas lamp in spite of the evidence she had produced. In fairness to the Mayor, he was not aware of how Mary Jo had always used that gas lamp as a touchstone. After more than two decades of living there, Ridge Pointe's elaborate conventionalities had become wrapped around her like the faux velvet bows and lengths of Christmas greens that used to decorate the gas lamps at each year's end. Instead, he was concerned about how this challenge to the supervisor's report might create a human resource fiasco for Ridge Pointe. Mary Jo did not know if this employee was the kind of man who was easily offended when called upon to admit a mistake. The Mayor needed to manage this resident-versus-town employee incident with kid gloves. In truth he was practically a saint to accept the responsibilities of this volunteer job. The Mayor and Council members in Ridge Pointe had always been volunteers, but the everyday maintenance of the town's physical appearance had become the job of municipal union workers. Mary Jo had noticed their change in attitude over the last few years when she needed to call the public works department because the garbage man had failed to collect the garbage in both industrial size cans on the side of her garage. There was a tendency for these Ridge Pointe employees to place their own needs before a resident's reasonable request. These changes were subtle at first, but Mary Jo experienced firsthand the drastically changing work in the last three years that she had been spending more time away from town.

The issue of Mary Jo's gas lamp replacement was resolved with only lingering resentment on the part of the supervisor of public works. He left shortly afterwards for a better employment package in a neighboring town, and not necessarily because of the way Mary Jo scolded him pointedly within his partitioned office. She reminded him that was paid for by her tax dollars. The Mayor was called upon to intervene and bring this issue to a civil resolution. It would end on a high note. Mary Jo was delighted to be at home on the day the lamplighter came with a crew to replace the lamp, and, by night she reveled in yellow stars dancing just outside her windows again.

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