

Description of the Project:  
an interpretive study of the Todd Goodell  
farm and farm family,Edinboro,Pa.

"history--purpose--significance"

For a decade and more northwestern Pennsylvania's Oil Region captured the attention of the nation--Colonel Edwin Drake's well,drilled near Titusville in 1859,signaling the beginnings of a fabulous industry.Elsewhere in the area--on the fringes of the oil hysteria--life went on largely untouched by the speculative mania only miles from country doorsteps.In Edinboro,for instance,only one well was drilled locally and though a refinery operated for a time,the community's principal resource in the 1870's and 80's was agriculture not oil. In point of fact,Edinboro (some 40 miles northwest of Titusville) was the very epitome of a dirt street town committed to serving the needs of the surrounding farmers and their families.

Its citizenry included such solid men as Layton Bentley Goodell,who had established himself as a blacksmith as early as 1836.Evidence of Goodell's prominence was his election to the first boro council and then to several terms as burgess or mayor. Not the least of his interests was the buying and selling of local real estate,a passion he transmitted to one of his sons, George Seymour Goodell--for some forty years a dealer in groceries,provisions,and notions in a store adjacent to the family home on the town's principal street.

George Goodell was especially attracted to farm properties and in 1876 he purchased the first farm east of Edinboro on the Waterford road from one of the sons of an Edinboro physician, Dr. Thomas R. Randall, who had conducted his practice from a small surgery on the grounds. Goodell did not occupy the property himself but employed a succession of individuals to live on the land and farm it for him. During these years one of his sons, Todd Goodell, was a frequent visitor and, upon his marriage in 1907, Todd brought his bride to the farm, where they set up housekeeping in the structure previously occupied by Dr. Randall. Having decided to make his livelihood by farming, the young husband worked the land utilizing teams and horse-drawn implements. It was not until 1940 that he purchased his first and only tractor, and, even then, Todd Goodell continued for a decade to plant with a team, discontinuing this practice only when the harness became too heavy for him to lift.

Upon his death in 1956 the farm came into the possession of his daughters, Carrie and Margaret Goodell, who have preserved it much as it was in the early days of the twentieth century. As a consequence, the farmhouse and barns contain a wealth of artifacts that envision the rural experience associated with an era of horse power. More to the point, the daughters of Todd Goodell can identify and detail the use of long forgotten tools and implements. Both women are conscious of the historical value of the farm, and they are ready to co-operate in a project that would detail and visualize an important moment on the local and national scene.

With their support we propose a descriptive and interpretive study of the Todd Goodell farm and farm family that would image in text and pictures the life of a farmer and his family in northwestern Pennsylvania during what has been described as farming's golden era. Initial research would focus on the story of the four generations of Goodells who have lived in Edinboro. Subsequent investigation will reconstruct the story of the purchase and development of the farm property. Successively the story of each of the farm's buildings will be detailed and complemented by a selection of photographs of present and defunct structures. Next the farmhouse itself will be subjected to scrutiny with special attention given to its lighting, heating, and furnishings.

Our thesis is that the Todd Goodell family, like farm families throughout our region, had (and has) at once a strong sense of family and of property. They knew who they were, from whence they came, and what they--as well as their neighbors--owned. Moreover, they put what was theirs to gainful use. Their compulsive utilitarianism is seen particularly in the farm buildings and the Goodell farmhouse. The former have little pretensions to style, while the latter, despite a number of modifications, exhibitss the lineaments of a countrified classicism that emphasized the functional ~~at the expense of the~~ architecturally harmonious. In a similar vein, surviving artifacts image a practical people not altogether immune to the fashions and fads of the day but content once they had brought something home to live with it

for the object's life--especially if it could be identified with a particular individual or moment in the family's history.

The Goodells were not traditionalists for the sake of tradition, but they valued and continued long established modes of farming and housekeeping. Thus our study takes a look at Todd Goodell, the farmer; at Ella Parsons Goodell, the farm wife; and at Carrie and Margaret Goodell, their children. The family, individually and collectively, is given dimension through family documents and photographs and especially through those items associated with their daily existence--from the wash boilers and meat jars of the wife to the harness and farm tools of the husband. Our goal is a verbal and visual image of the regimen of farm life as previous generations knew it.

From our point of view farm families, like the Goodells, are among the most important preservers--materially and ideologically--of our national heritage. Without conscious intention but with commitment and dedication they clung tenaciously to the well worn and the locally manufactured amid a society that demanded the new and the improved as well as the city-made. Strong in their sense of family, they honored the old people and the old ways, preferring always what had been to what might be in a progress-haunted era. To talk with a Carrie or a Margaret Goodell is to partake of a continuum--as opposed to a rediscovery--of points of view that hark back to Franklin's "poor" Richard Saunders and to Emerson and Thoreau's self-reliant individuals. To visit the Goodell farm is to step back into an era we have labeled, though scarcely accurately, the good old days.

"plan of work"

Initial research,as indicated,will focus on the story of the four generations of the Goodell family to reside in Edinboro. Once their story has been detailed from deeds and the family's extensive archives,it is our intent to develop the story of the farm property and the farm buildings.Not the least part of this effort will be devoted to assembling an extensive series of pictures of the barns and other outbuildings.Their contents will be photographed with individual items being identified by Carrie and Margaret Goodell.The farmhouse will be subjected to much the same scrutiny.Together with its contents it will be photographed in detail and its furnishings identified by the sisters.

To aid and extend the process of identification and classification,the services of five area specialists will be sought.These will include the executive director of the Warren County Historical Society,who serves as the editor of an ongoing series of publications: "Historic Buildings in Warren County." Other specialists will include individuals with an extensive knowledge of farm buildings and implements,of furniture and period household utensils as well as of lamps and toys.

Every effort will be made to develop a picture of the farmer,his wife,and children through the artifacts particularly associated with them and the routine of their days.Old family photographs will be copied and audio tapes made of the sisters' recollections of their parents,grandparents,and the family's

season-to-season activities. Toward assembling the text, pictures, and audio tape, the following working outline has been devised:

Guide to the Goodell farm and family

- I. the Goodell family in Edinboro
  - A. 1st generation
  - B. 2nd generation
  - C. 3rd generation
  - D. 4th generation
  
- II. the farm property
  - A. initial 40 acre purchase
  - B. subsequent additions
  
- III. the farm buildings
  - A. farm house
    - 1. initial structure (ca. 1850)
    - 2. subsequent additions
  - B. outbuildings
    - 1. tenant house (ca. 1855)
    - 2. girls' playhouse (ca. 1915)
    - 3. garage-coalshed (1930)
  - C. defunct structures
    - 1. windmill (ca. 1895)
    - 2. milk house (ca. 1913)
  - D. barns
    - 1. horse barn (ca. 1850)
    - 2. sheep barn (ca. 1850)
    - 3. storage barn (ca. 1860)
  
- IV. the farmhouse
  - A. lighting
  - B. heating
  - C. furnishing
    - 1. kitchen
    - 2. living room
    - 3. parlour
    - 4. bedrooms
  
- V. the farmer: Todd Goodell
  - A. as seen through family photographs
  - B. as seen through personal possessions and implements used in his day-to-day activities
  - C. as seen in photographs of plowing, harrowing, planting, and sowing; of cultivating, reaping, and threshing
  - D. as seen in the recollections of his daughters

- VI.the farm wife:Ella Parsons Goodell
  - A.as seen through family photographs
  - B.as seen through the artifacts associated with her daily life
  - C.as seen in the recollections of her daughters
- VII.the farm children:Carrie and Margaret Goodell
  - A.as seen through family photographs
  - B.as seen through personal possessions
  - C.as seen through the recollections of their contemporaries
- VIII.the rural experience
  - A.captured in a series of taped recollections by Carrie and Margaret Goodell
  - B.extended by similar taped sessions with area farmers of the Goodells generation

The end products visualized include the creation of a descriptive and interpretive essay that would image in words and pictures the look and life of a farm family in northwestern Pennsylvania.Using this document as a source,three film strips of approximately 70 frames each will be prepared.Accompanied by cassette tapes and appropriate study materials,these will focus on the Goodell farm, on the farm family and its labors,and on Edinboro as a dirt street town serving an agricultural community that included citizens like the Goodells.

"dissemination"

Six copies of the essay with its supporting visual material will be prepared and distributed as follows: 2 copies,Edinboro State College Library;1 copy,Erie County Historical Society;1 copy,Conneautee Historical Society of Edinboro;1 copy,Penna. Historical and Museum Commission;1 copy,Penna.State Library. The cassette-film strips will be distributed as follows: 3 copies each unit,the regional instructional materials center serving Erie County;1 copy each unit,Penna.Historical and Museum C mmission and the Frmers' Museum in Lancaster,Penna.

"time frame"

Because of the particular nature of the proposed project and Edinboro's peculiar climate, we are requesting what amounts to a summer grant. By way of explanation, our immediate area experiences protracted and severe winters (160 plus inches of snow, 1977-78). Travel becomes uncertain and it is often extremely difficult to reach barns and outbuildings because of drifting snow. Then, too, the latter are unheated and often without electric light. Both working in them and photographing in or around them is often counter-productive in adverse weather. To take advantage of optimum working conditions together with good natural light, we would like to accomplish our onsite study and photography between May and October.