

3-1-1966

To Florida and Back, Part I - The Southern Sharecropper Still Has a Hard Life; Why Can't He Be Free?

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Recommended Citation

Loomis, Mildred (1966) "To Florida and Back, Part I - The Southern Sharecropper Still Has a Hard Life; Why Can't He Be Free?," *Green Revolution*: Vol. 4 : Iss. 3 , Article 2.

Available at: <https://research.library.kutztown.edu/greenrevolution/vol4/iss3/2>

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THE GREEN



REVOLUTION

FOR HOMESTEADERS, ON-TO-THE-LANDERS,
AND DO-IT-YOURSELFERS

SCHOOL OF LIVING, BROOKVILLE, OHIO 45309
PUBLISHED MONTHLY

Volume 4, Number 3

March, 1966

25c per copy, \$3 per year

Some Thoughts On Homsteading As A Way Of Life In Florida

By Hal Porter

Part I

[Vigor, assurance, independence! These three qualities in Hal Porter enlivened those fortunate to hear his talk at the Florida School of Living meeting on Jan. 29 (in the American Homesteading Foundation's village hall, Melbourne Village, Fla.) Mr. Porter lives at Rt. 1, Box 1742, Port Orange, Fla. This is the talk, in five installments.—Editor]

What qualifies a man to talk on any subject? Not a string of letters after his name, or high office, or a lot of money; not even what he has read or thought about a subject. The only qualification that proves anything to me is, has he been there? At first I was doubtful of my qualifications for talking on homesteading. (I was more confident of what I know of organic gardening and natural foods nutrition.) I'm a newcomer to the homestead idea, and my homestead is small: one-half acre. But I decided that it's not length of time that counts: it's depth and extent of the experience. As to size, my half acre in Florida may equal two or three up north, since my land is working the year round. I grow as many as four crops a year in the same row in my garden.

My wife is an ardent supporter and my chief helpmate in this homesteading adventure. We got into it through a search for health. A few years ago we were both semi-invalids. She had the "miserics" in her arms and hands, legs and feet. Some call it arthritis: some call it rheumatism. My trouble was pulmonary edema and severe angina from four episodes of coronary thrombosis. At one time our bedroom

Do You Know Your Greens?

For the real greens there is no substitute for the delectable wild spring greens — garnred in the fields and hedgerows. The lowly and sometimes despised dandelion holds first place among these perennial favorites. Close rivals are wild watercress and the tender, pale green leaves of the plant commonly known as "white top." Next are sour dock, sheep sorrel (sour grass), pepper grass, wild cress, and even the tender young clusters of blackberry leaves and the pale green tufts of elder leaves.

Dandelion leaves are at their best when about six inches long, still tender but large enough to handle. This is just about the time they first begin to blossom. For easiest handling they should be cut off at the top of the root so the entire leaf cluster remains intact.

Cleaning and washing greens is something of a task but well worth the effort. Discard everything but the freshest, greenest leaves. Wash three or four times, using lots of water; pile into a large kettle, and cook as you would spinach. I like a little salt in the cooking water. Cooking time may vary according to age of plants, but will average about one hour.

Salad Too

One part of the dandelion plant is sadly neglected in some areas. The blossoms and buds, carefully discarded by many (continued on page 4)

smelled like a liniment factory, but I couldn't smell it because I was breathing pure oxygen from a tank beside the bed. We had tried all the modern chemical remedies, and got no better. Faced with the prospect of being either dead or invalids the rest of our lives, my wife and I decided that it was time we took a look at our diet.

Gardening—A Preparation

We had considerable preparation for this. For several years we had been dabbling in organic gardening and skirting the edges of the field of health through nutrition. In this we were encouraged by our doctor, Ruth Rogers. The program we decided upon called for lots of food supplements, such as brewers yeast, desiccated liver, rose hip powder, fish liver oil, and wheat germ; and more important, organically grown grains, fruits and vegetables. The food supplements and grains we could get either at our local health food store or from mail order houses. But the only place to acquire the organically grown fruits and vegetables at a price commensurate with our income—by this time I had been forced to retire on a disability pension, which in spite of President Johnson's war on poverty remains inadequate — was to grow them.

So we quit "fooling around" with organic gardening and went into it in a big way, growing lots of vegetables, particularly green vegetables to be eaten raw, strawberries and citrus fruits. Gradually we added fruit trees such as peach, pear and plum. We started trying to raise rabbits, got our own chickens for meat and eggs, and built a shed to have a goat as soon as I can locate one for milk. By the time we got through with all this we had a real genuine homestead, and, incidental to this talk but not to us, we regained a large measure of our health.

With this introduction, I will proceed with the subject of Homesteading As A Way of Life in Florida. I think I can best illustrate this by telling you about a dream homestead. Not one from a nighttime fantasy or a nightmare but a logical, well-thought-out day-dream of the homestead I would like to have. Not that there is anything wrong with the one I have except that I would want more land.

Save the Money

The dream starts with acquiring a sum of money. This would be large or small according to one's personal standards, but about the amount one would get from selling a middleclass home up North, before moving to Florida. In my case the money might come from some sucker buying my present homestead at the value the tax assessor puts upon it, or from my literary agent in New York selling one of my books and it becoming a best seller. If I were a young man I would start saving like mad, become almost a miser to get the money for such a homestead. Since it is too late for that, I dream of a windfall.

With this money I would buy land, somewhere between 10 and 50 acres, depending on luck in locating acreage in what amount and for what price. In the market bulletin land is advertised anywhere from \$100 to \$2,000 per acre, according to location and development. I would be very particular in choosing the (continued on page 3)

To Florida and Back, Part I—

The Southern Sharecropper Still Has A Hard Life; Why Can't He Be Free?

By Mildred J. Loomis

Each trip I take leaves me pondering the size, the diversity, the problems and the wonders of this country. It had been ten years since I was down South, and the chief impact now of the 16 busy, winter days spent there in January are of its contrasts: poverty and affluence, near desert and jungle, brilliance and dullness. It would take a book to describe all that we encountered of interest to Green Revolutioners, but I hope to report some of it, particularly the homesteads we visited and the ideas of some of our reader-members we saw on the trip.

Our winter at Lane's End in Ohio had been open and mild—who wanted relief from this nice weather? The School of Living meetings had been scheduled in Florida, Don and Doris Abbott of Michigan were to drive down, and would take me along. Near evening, Jan. 22, they appeared with the first heavy snowfall of the season; it really was snowing, we could be blocked in on our long lane by morning. So we arranged for them to sleep at neighbor Newbauer's on the highway, and sure enough, next morning our Volkswagen got stuck in the lane. John and I walked out with my luggage to meet them.

We drove leisurely, angled west through Kentucky and kept west of the snow-blocked mountains. Much of the way Don regaled us with sallies into the antics and foibles of human beings, as seen from his different-than-usual insight into astrology. Even I, who tend to the rational and scientific, was amazed at what he came up with. The highways were fairly clear, but it was a winter wonderland until well into Alabama.

Thoughts on Share Cropping

In that state the brick-red soil and the inadequate rural homes were all-pervading. There was a sprinkling of neat, newly-painted, small ranch homes, but the rough pine-board shacks of sharecroppers are still typical. Why is this? Why must rural-dwellers, Negro and white, live like this?

Here and there the elegant large and old plantation home—with shacks nearby — suggest what happened. Some people

THIS FAMILY in Alabama faces eviction. They can't pay \$40 a month past due for their "home."



IS THIS the end of the road for rural Americans?

"owned" the land; others didn't and had to rent or sharecrop the fields. Some persons had access to natural resources; others did not. A hundred years ago this nation fought a war to "free" the slaves, and they were turned loose from plantation owners—free!

Free? So long as the land was not free, how free were the newly "freed"?

Today, how free is the sharecropper? Today some of us say we are "free." But how free are we of the regulations caused by "government" that is now again trying to "handle" the problems still unsolved by the Civil War. Today a mighty movement is

"helping" the Negro claim his civil rights, to vote, to be educated. Today "we" are fighting a war in Vietnam to "free" people. (More than 70% of the Vietnam farmers are renters of agricultural land; 40% of the workers are unemployed.)

How much farther must we all go to freedom? Until they, and we, teach and practice new ways of holding land as a trust—equally available to all; with secure possession of it guaranteed to all who use the land, and because they use it. Until such time, is the only "out" for countless rural people a squalid street in a festering city slum?

(to be continued)

Homesteading Tips From Texas

By Effie May Neie
Box 1025, Alpine, Texas

Pinto beans are the finest flavored of all beans. I had two crops of bush beans well along, when the milk goats got into the garden and ate them all off. So I planted pinto beans for quick production, and I never before saw such a heavy crop of the finest tender beans. I raise lots of cucumbers, squash, butter beans, onions, potatoes, okra, cantaloupe, watermelons and peppers.

We like the 6-9 inch podded medium hot peppers, and the big bell-shaped hot pepper, the big sweet pepper and the slim 4 in. hot pepper. We have lots of what we call the little turkey pepper. It comes up every year from roots. We like it in eggs, meat, soups, stews and beans.

My husband, 81, does not have good eyesight, and cannot help much outdoors, but he helps greatly in canning time—shelling peas, snapping beans, skinning peppers, peeling fruit to can and dry. I never could accomplish everything without his help.

You should have seen me way up at the top of a ladder, nailing on the greenhouse top and covering. My husband always said I couldn't drive a nail straight, but not since I did all the work on the greenhouse (and built shelves in our little walk-in room for all the canned goods).

My greenhouse is 8 x 18 ft. I'd like more information from anyone who has experience in greenhouse growing. Only tomatoes and peppers in it now.

We want to get way out in the mountains where there are springs and caves. I'd be glad for letters, with information and questions too. I'll try to answer. Please include addressed, stamped envelopes. I'd like to hear from non-religious people who can think for themselves.

I think The Green Revolution is a voice of the coming new world of love and contentment, calling to those who have ears to hear. I know no paper like it, and none that could fill this need in building a new world from scratch, the only way it can be built because too few people like us care anything about the change.