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Elizabeth L. Angeli  
Professor Patricia Sullivan  
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Green text boxes contain explanations of MLA style guidelines.

Blue boxes contain directions for writing and citing in MLA style.

Page numbers begin on page 1 and end on the final page. Type your name next to the page number in the header so that it appears on every page.

Angeli 1

## Toward a Recovery of Nineteenth Century Farming Handbooks

While researching texts written about nineteenth century farming, I found a few authors who published books about the literature of nineteenth century farming, particularly agricultural journals, newspapers, pamphlets, and brochures. These authors often placed the farming literature they were studying into an historical context by discussing the important events in agriculture of the year in which the literature was published (see Demaree, for example). However, while these authors discuss journals, newspapers, pamphlets, and brochures, I could not find much discussion about another important source of farming knowledge: farming handbooks. My goal in this paper is to bring this source into the agricultural literature discussion by connecting three agricultural handbooks from the nineteenth century with nineteenth century agricultural history.

The introductory paragraph, or introduction, should set the context for the rest of the paper. Tell your readers why you are writing and why your topic is important.

Titles are centered and written in 12-point, Times New Roman font. The title is not bolded, underlined, or italicized.

The thesis statement is often (but not always) the last sentence of the introduction. The thesis is a clear position that you will support and develop throughout your paper. This sentence guides or controls your paper.

If your paper is long, you may want to write about how your paper is organized. This will help your readers follow your ideas.

To achieve this goal, I have organized my paper into four main sections, two of which have sub-sections. In the first section, I provide an account of three important events in nineteenth century agricultural history: population and technological changes, the distribution of scientific new knowledge, and farming's influence on education. In the second section, I discuss three nineteenth century farming handbooks in connection with the important events described in the first section. I end my paper

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with a third section that offers research questions that could be answered in future versions of this paper and conclude with a fourth section that discusses the importance of expanding this particular project. I also include an appendix after the Works Cited that contains images of the three handbooks I examined. Before I can begin the examination of the three handbooks, however, I need to provide an historical context in which the books were written, and it is to this that I now turn.

When using headings in MLA, title the main sections (Level 2 headers) in a different style font than the paper's title, e.g., in small caps.

Use personal pronouns (I, we, us, etc.) at your instructor's discretion.

The headings used here follow a three-level system to break the text into smaller sections. The different levels help organize the paper and maintain consistency in the paper's organization. You may come up with your own headings as long as they are consistent.

Headings, though not required by MLA style, can help the overall structure and organization of a paper. Use them at your instructor's discretion to help your reader follow your ideas.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The paragraph after the Level 2 headers start flush left after the headings.

The nineteenth century saw many changes to daily American life with an increase in population, improved methods of transportation, developments in technology, and the rise in the importance of science. These events impacted all aspects of nineteenth century American life (most significantly, those involved in slavery and the Civil War). However, one part of American life was affected that is quite often taken for granted: the life of the American farmer.

Use another style, e.g., italics, to differentiate the Level 3 headers from the Level 2 headers. The paragraph continues directly after the header.

*Population and Technological Changes.* One of the biggest changes, as seen in nineteenth century America's census reports, is the dramatic increase in population. The 1820 census reported that over 10 million people were living in America; of those 10 million, over 2 million were engaged in agriculture. Ten years prior to that, the 1810 census reported over 7 million people were living in the states; there was no category for people engaged in agriculture. In this ten-year time span, then, agriculture experienced significant improvements and changes that enhanced its importance in American life.

If there is a grammatical, mechanical, or spelling error in the text you are citing, type the quote as it appears. Follow the error with "[sic]."

One of these improvements was the developments of canals and steamboats, which allowed farmers to "sell what has previously been unsalable [sic]" and resulted in a

“substantial increase in [a farmer’s] ability to earn income” (Danhof 5). This improvement allowed the relations between the rural and urban populations to strengthen, resulting in an increase in trade. The urban population (defined as having over 2,500 inhabitants) in the northern states increased rapidly after 1820.<sup>1</sup> This increase accompanied the decrease in rural populations, as farmers who “preferred trade, transportation, or ‘tinkering’” to the tasks of tending to crops and animals found great opportunities in the city (Danhof 7). Trade and transportation thus began to influence farming life significantly. Before 1820, the rural community accounted for eighty percent of consumption of farmers’ goods (Hurt 127). With the improvements in transportation, twenty-five percent of farmers’ products were sold for commercial gain, and by 1825, farming “became a business rather than a way of life” (128). This business required farmers to specialize their production and caused most farmers to give “less attention to the production of surplus commodities like wheat, tobacco, pork, or beef” (128). The increase in specialization encouraged some farmers to turn to technology to increase their production and capitalize on commercial markets (172).

Use endnotes to explain a point in your paper that would otherwise disrupt the flow of the text.

Insert the footnote after the punctuation mark that concludes the sentence.

In-text citations occur after the quote but before the period. The author’s/ authors’ name/s go before the page number with no comma in between.

The technology farmers used around 1820 was developed from three main sources: Europe, coastal Native American tribes in America, and domestic modifications made from the first two sources’ technologies. Through time, technology improved, and while some farmers clung to their time-tested technologies, others were eager to find alternatives to these technologies. These farmers often turned to current developments in Great Britain and received word of their technological improvements through firsthand knowledge by talking with immigrants and travelers. Farmers also began planning and conducting experiments, and although they lacked a truly scientific approach, these farmers engaged

in experiments to obtain results and learn from the results.<sup>2</sup> Agricultural organizations



were then formed to “encourage . . . experimentation, hear reports, observe results, and

If you delete words from the original quotation, insert an ellipsis, three periods with a space between and after each one.

exchange critical comments” (Danhof 53). Thus, new knowledge was transmitted orally from farmer to farmer, immigrant to farmer, and traveler to farmer, which could result in the miscommunication of this new scientific knowledge. Therefore, developments were made for knowledge to be transmitted and recorded in a more permanent, credible way: by print.

Transitions connect paragraphs and unify writing.

Notice how this paragraph ends with a brief mention of print sources and the next paragraph begins with a discussion of print information.



*The Distribution of New Knowledge*. Before 1820 and prior to the new knowledge

farmers were creating, farmers who wanted print information about agriculture had their choice of agricultural almanacs and even local newspapers to receive information

Body paragraphs often (but don't always) have these four elements: a transition, a topic sentence, evidence, and a brief wrap-up sentence.

(Danhof 54). After 1820, however, agricultural writing took more forms than almanacs and newspapers. From 1820 to 1870, agricultural periodicals were responsible for

spreading new knowledge among farmers. In his published dissertation *The American Agricultural Press 1819-1860*, Albert Lowther Demaree presents a “description of the

Titles of published works (books, journals, films, etc.) are now italicized instead of underlined.

general content of [agricultural journals]” (xi). These journals began in 1819 and were

written for farmers, with topics devoted to “farming, stock raising, [and] horticulture” (12). The suggested “birthdate” of American agricultural journalism is April 2, 1819

Notice how this paragraph begins with a transition. The topic sentence follows the transition, and it tells readers what the paragraph is about. Direct quotes are used to support this topic sentence.

when John S. Skinner published his periodical *American Farmer* in Baltimore. Demaree writes that Skinner’s periodical was the “first continuous, successful agricultural

periodical in the United States” and “served as a model for hundreds of journals that succeeded it” (19). In the midst of the development of the journal, farmers began writing

handbooks. Not much has been written on the handbooks’ history, aside from the fact that C.M. Saxton & Co. in New York was the major handbook publisher. Despite the lack of

The paragraph ends with a wrap-up sentence, “Despite the lack . . .”, while transitioning to the next thought.

information about handbooks, and as can be seen in my discussion below, these handbooks played a significant role in distributing knowledge among farmers and in educating young farmers, as I now discuss.

*Farming’s Influence on Education*. One result of the newly circulating print information was the “need for acquiring scientific information upon which could be based a rational technology” that could “be substituted for the current diverse, empirical practices”

(Danhof 69). In his 1825 book *Nature and Reason Harmonized in the Practice of Husbandry*, John Lorain begins his first chapter by stating that “[v]ery erroneous theories have been propagated” resulting in faulty farming methods (1). His words here create a framework for the rest of his book, as he offers his readers narratives of his own trials and errors and even dismisses foreign, time-tested techniques farmers had held on to: “The knowledge we have of that very ancient and numerous nation the Chinese, as well as the very located habits and costumes of this very singular people, is in itself insufficient to teach us . . .” (75). His book captures the call and need for scientific experiments to develop new knowledge meant to be used in/on/with American soil, which reflects some farmers’ thinking of the day.

By the 1860s, the need for this knowledge was strong enough to affect education. John Nicholson anticipated this effect in 1820 in the “Experiments” section of his book *The Farmer’s Assistant; Being a Digest of All That Relates to Agriculture and the Conducting of Rural Affairs; Alphabetically Arranged and Adapted for the United States:*

➔ Perhaps it would be well, if some institution were devised, and supported at the expense of the State, which would be so organized as would tend most effectually to produce a due degree of emulation among Farmers, by rewards and honorary distinctions conferred by those who, by their successful experimental efforts and improvements, should render themselves duly entitled to them.<sup>3</sup> (92) ←

Use block quotations when quoted text runs longer than four lines once typed in your paper.

Block quotes begin on a new line, are double-spaced, and are indented half an inch from the margin. Do not add quotation marks not present in the original. The citation information (author name and page number) follows the quote’s end punctuation.

Part of Nicholson’s hope was realized in 1837 when Michigan established their state university, specifying that “agriculture was to be an integral part of the curriculum” (Danhof 71). Not much was accomplished, however, much to the dissatisfaction of farmers, and in 1855, the state authorized a new college to be “devoted to agriculture and to be independent of the university” (Danhof 71). The government became more involved in the creation of agricultural universities in 1862 when President Lincoln passed the Morrill Land Grant College Act, which begins with this phrase: “AN ACT Donating Public Lands to the several States and Territories which may provide Colleges for the



Benefit of Agriculture and Mechanic Arts [sic].” The first agricultural colleges formed under the act suffered from a lack of trained teachers and “an insufficient base of knowledge,” and critics claimed that the new colleges did not meet the needs of farmers (Hurt 193).

Congress addressed these problems with the then newly formed United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA and Morrill Act worked together to form

“ . . . State experiment stations and extension services . . . [that] added [to] . . . localized research and education . . . ” (Baker et al. 415). The USDA added to the scientific and educational areas of the agricultural field in other ways by including research as one of the organization’s “foundation stone” (367) and by including these seven objectives:

- (1) [C]ollecting, arranging, and publishing statistical and other useful agricultural information;
- (2) introducing valuable plants and animals;
- (3) answering inquiries of farmers regarding agriculture;
- (4) testing agricultural implements;
- (5) conducting chemical analyses of soils, grains, fruits, plants, vegetables, and manures;
- (6) establishing a professorship of botany and entomology;
- and (7) establishing an agricultural library and museum. (Baker et al. 14)

Periods occur before the end quotation mark if the citation information is given already in the sentence.



If a source has three or more authors, use the first author’s last name followed by “et al.”

These objectives were a response to farmers' needs at the time, mainly to the need for experiments, printed distribution of new farming knowledge, and education. Isaac Newton, the first Commissioner of Agriculture, ensured these objectives would be realized by stressing research and education with the ultimate goal of helping farmers improve their operations (Hurt 190).

Before the USDA assisted in the circulation of knowledge, however, farmers wrote about their own farming methods. This brings me to my next section in which I examine three handbooks written by farmers and connect my observations of the texts with the discussion of agricultural history I have presented above.

**Note: Sections of this paper have been omitted to shorten the length of the paper**

## CONCLUSION

Because this is a Level 2 header, the paragraph is not indented.

From examining Drown's, Allen's, and Crozier and Henderson's handbooks in light of nineteenth century agricultural history, I can say that science and education seem to have had a strong influence on how and why these handbooks were written. The authors' ethos is created by how they align themselves as farmers with science and education either by supporting or by criticizing them. Regardless of their stance, the authors needed to create an ethos to gain an audience, and they did this by including tables of information, illustrations of animals and buildings, reasons for educational reform, and pieces of advice to young farmers in their texts. It would be interesting to see if other farming handbooks of the same century also convey a similar ethos concerning science and education in agriculture. Recovering more handbooks in this way could lead to a better, more complete understanding of farming education, science's role in farming and education, and perhaps even an understanding of the rhetoric of farming handbooks in the nineteenth century.

The conclusion "wraps up" what you have been discussing in your paper.

Notes

Center the title "Notes,"  
using 12-point Times  
New Roman font.

Endnotes  
begin on a  
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Cited.  
Double-  
space all  
entries and  
indent each  
entry 0.5"  
from the  
margin. Use  
size 12  
Times New  
Roman font.

1. Danhof includes "Delaware, Maryland, all states north of the Potomac and Ohio rivers, Missouri, and states to its north" when referring to the northern states(11).

2. For the purposes of this paper, "science" is defined as it was in nineteenth century agriculture: conducting experiments and engaging in research.

3. Please note that any direct quotes from the nineteenth century texts are written in their original form, which may contain grammar mistakes according to twenty-first century grammar rules.



The Works Cited page is a list of all the sources cited in your paper.

Works Cited

The Works Cited page begins on a new page. Center the title "Works Cited" without underlining, bolding, or italicizing it. If there is only one entry, title this page "Work Cited."

MLA now requires only the publisher, and not the city of publication. The 8<sup>th</sup> edition also does not require sources to have a publication marker, (such as "Print").

Allen, R.L. *The American Farm Book; or Compend of American Agriculture; Being a Practical Treatise on Soils, Manures, Draining, Irrigation, Grasses, Grain, Roots, Fruits, Cotton, Tobacco, Sugar Cane, Rice, and Every Staple Product of the United States with the Best Methods of Planting, Cultivating, and Preparation for Market.* Saxton, 1849.

Baker, Gladys L., et al. *Century of Service: The First 100 Years of the United States Department of Agriculture.* [Federal Government], 1996.

Danhof, Clarence H. *Change in Agriculture: The Northern United States, 1820-1870.* Harvard UP, 1969.

Demaree, Albert Lowther. *The American Agricultural Press 1819-1860.* Columbia UP, 1941.

Drown, William, and Solomon Drown. *Compendium of Agriculture or the Farmer's Guide, in the Most Essential Parts of Husbandry and Gardening; Compiled from the Best American and European Publications, and the Unwritten Opinions of Experienced Cultivators.* Field, 1824.

"Historical Census Browser." *University of Virginia Library*, 2007,

 [www.mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/](http://www.mapserver.lib.virginia.edu/). Accessed 6 Dec. 2008.

Hurt, R. Douglas. *American Agriculture: A Brief History.* Iowa State UP, 1994.

Lorain, John. *Nature and Reason Harmonized in the Practice of Husbandry.* Carey, 1825.

"Morrill Land Grant Act of 1862." *Prairie View A&M*, 2003. [www.pvamu.edu/library/about-the-library/history-of-the-library-at-prairie-view/1890-land-grant-history/](http://www.pvamu.edu/library/about-the-library/history-of-the-library-at-prairie-view/1890-land-grant-history/). Accessed 6 Dec. 2008.

If a print source does not list a publisher and you can infer who the publisher is, place the publisher's name in brackets.

List the title of the source in quotation marks, and the title of the container in italics, followed by a comma and the date of publication. Since this is an online source, include the URL and date of access.

If a source has three or more authors, only the first one shown in the source is given. It is followed by *et al.*

MLA now requires URLs (when possible) when citing online sources. Omit "http://" from the address. The date of access is optional, but be sure to include it whenever possible, since online works can be changed or removed at any time.

Nicholson, John. *The Farmer's Assistant; Being a Digest of All That Relates to Agriculture and the Conducting of Rural Affairs; Alphabetically Arranged and Adapted for the United States.* Warner, 1820.