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# Markets and Composite Farms in Early America

Richard Lyman Bushman

THE market revolution, the interpretive construct that figures so prominently in current historiography of the nineteenth-century, may be distorting our understanding of eighteenth century farm life. The idea of a market revolution requires a “before” to contrast with an “after,” and the eighteenth-century “before” of the market revolution clashes with important aspects of colonial farming. On the opening page of a recent collection of essays on the subject, a single sentence sums up what the revolution supposedly wrought. In early nineteenth-century America, the editors say, “a largely subsistence economy of small farms and tiny workshops, satisfying mostly local needs through barter and exchange, gave place to an economy in which farmers and manufacturers produced food and goods for the cash rewards of an often distant marketplace.”<sup>1</sup> That statement conceives of colonial farmers producing mainly for themselves, bartering with neighbors to augment their own production, and trading tiny surpluses for store goods. The proponents of a market revolution associate these household producers with the *longue durée* of traditional agriculture and the older moral economy that preceded modernization. Self-contained and entrenched, this eighteenth-century rural economy resisted the invasion of market forces that threatened local production systems.<sup>2</sup>

This picture of eighteenth-century farming is at best only partially true. Beyond doubt many farmers did produce largely for themselves and relied on

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<sup>1</sup> Melvyn Stokes and Stephen Conway, eds., *The Market Revolution in America: Social, Political, and Religious Expressions, 1800–1880* (Charlottesville, 1996), 1.

<sup>2</sup> The synthetic study of 19th-century social and political change is Charles G. Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815–1846* (New York, 1991). For a recent statement of the conventional view see Daniel P. Jones, *The Economic and Social Transformation of Rural Rhode Island, 1780–1850* (Boston, 1992). For examples of the notion of resistance to the market see David P. Szatmary, *Shays' Rebellion: The Making of an Agrarian Insurrection* (Amherst, Mass., 1980), 16–17, and Paul Boyer and Stephen Nissenbaum, *Salem Possessed: The Social Origins of Witchcraft* (Cambridge, Mass., 1974), 86–109. The standard historiographical essay on 18th-century agriculture is Allan Kulikoff, “The Transition to Capitalism in Rural America,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d Ser., 46 (1989), 120–44. Two highly influential essays are Michael Merrill, “Cash is Good to Eat: Self-Sufficiency and Exchange in the Rural Economy of the United States,” *Radical History Review*, No. 3 (1977), 42–71, and James A. Henretta, “Families and Farms: *Mentalité* in Pre-Industrial America,” *WMQ*, 3d Ser., 35 (1978), 3–32.

barter to augment the deficiencies in their household production. They did refer to products sent to market as a surplus, implying that they aimed to feed their families first. Still, other farmers, large and small, grew crops for town consumption and the Atlantic trade. They benefited from extensive marketing systems radiating from the port towns and from Britain. They purchased labor at considerable expense to enlarge production. Many—not just an insignificant minority—prospered. Colonial market farmers figured in their societies as prominently as nineteenth-century cotton planters figured in the South. Eighteenth-century commercial farming cannot be dismissed as incidental while household producers are considered typical.<sup>3</sup> Yet the idea of a market revolution leaves market farmers out of the picture. To claim that the market revolution transformed American society as a whole implies that commercial agriculture amounted to little before the early nineteenth century. How are we to reconcile the reality of colonial market farming with the idea of a market revolution?

The concept of a market revolution hinges on the division of farms into two types, once termed “subsistence” and “commercial” and now more commonly called “household producers” and “market producers.” As well as representing individual farms, the types stand for periods, one dominant before the market revolution and the other after. The division goes back to the first serious agricultural histories of the early twentieth century and Percy Wells Bidwell’s “Rural Economy in New England at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century.” In Bidwell’s narrative, farmers cast off their retrograde habits in the early nineteenth century and entered the modern world. Bidwell’s work came out of the agricultural college tradition and the ethos of the United States Department of Agriculture, whose social scientists idealized efficient production for the market and the advanced farmers who maximized production and profits. Under the influence of Frederick Jackson Turner’s stages of civilization, Bidwell and John I. Falconer, his co-worker in writing the *History of Agriculture in the Northern United States*, believed that as one journeyed away from urban centers and the orbit of the market, the quality of agriculture declined. Frontier subsistence farmers mercilessly depleted the soil to reap the greatest fruits with minimum effort, while commercial farmers adopted the best fertilizing techniques in the interest of profit. “Farming appeared at its worst on the frontier, where the scarcity of labor and capital favored predatory methods, and at its best in the neighborhood of the commercial towns, where ready markets stimulated intensive use

<sup>3</sup> For a comprehensive statement on commercial agriculture in the colonies see Jack P. Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness: The Social Development of Early Modern British Colonies and the Formation of American Culture* (Chapel Hill, 1988). For a similar discussion and an attempt to distinguish colonial marketing from market society see Stephen Innes, ed., *Work and Labor in Early America* (Chapel Hill, 1988), 34–39, and Fred Block and Margaret R. Somers, “Beyond the Economic Fallacy: The Holistic Social Science of Karl Polanyi,” in Theda Skocpol, ed., *Vision and Method in Historical Sociology* (Cambridge, 1984), 47–84. Edwin J. Perkins, “The Entrepreneurial Spirit in Colonial America: The Foundations of Modern Business History,” *Business History Review*, 43 (Spring 1989), 160–86, makes the case for an entrepreneurial attitude in most segments of the colonial economy.

of the soil."<sup>4</sup> Life in general improved when the degraded subsistence agriculture of the eighteenth century yielded to progressive commercial farming.<sup>5</sup>

Agricultural historians in the past quarter century have sharply revised this conceptualization of agricultural change but have retained the two-part typology. The rejection of "subsistence" in favor of "household production" signifies the realization that no farm family could provide everything for itself, nor could it survive without exchange. Bettye Hobbs Pruitt's close study of Massachusetts farms in 1771 revealed systematic deficiencies in the resources of individual farms, requiring virtually every farmer to trade hay, fuel, or corn with neighbors, sometimes plowing a field or lending an ox as part of the barter.<sup>6</sup> In addition, a family had to produce a surplus to exchange at the store for salt, molasses, liquor, metal goods, and fancy fabrics plus something more for taxes. This habit of trade and exchange, as Christopher Clark has shown, made families susceptible later on to market involvement and employment in small manufacturing operations when capitalism came to the countryside. Rather than fighting the market, Clark's farmers collaborated in its conquest of rural society. Qualifications of this sort reduce the stark contrast of subsistence and commercial with which agricultural history began in the early twentieth century, but the two-part typology remains. The structure of Clark's sophisticated and subtle study of western Massachusetts agriculture in the first half of the nineteenth century still hangs on a division of farms into local family producers in the eighteenth century and market farmers by the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>7</sup> There is no escaping some such conception when the market revolution is used as the master concept for understanding agricultural change.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Bidwell, "Rural Economy in New England at the Beginning of the Nineteenth Century," Connecticut Academy of the Arts and Sciences, *Transactions*, 20 (1916), 241-399; Bidwell and Falconer, *History of Agriculture in the Northern United States, 1620-1860* (New York, 1941; orig. pub. 1925), 84 (quotation), 115, 164-65, 198. Somewhat earlier, Orin Grant Libby, writing in a radical tradition, proposed a similar division in "The Geographical Distribution of the Vote of the Thirteen States on the Federal Constitution, 1787-88," *Bulletin of the University of Wisconsin*, 1 (1894), 1-116.

<sup>5</sup> Bidwell and Falconer worked in a tradition going back to 18th-century reformers who scorned the backward ways of traditional farmers and lauded the achievements of improving husbandmen. The great agricultural achievements were the work of rational experimenters, who kept careful records and practiced business principles. See Christopher Grasso, "The Experimental Philosophy of Farming: Jared Eliot and the Cultivation of Connecticut," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., 50 (1993), 516-18, and G. E. Fussell, "The Farming Writers of Eighteenth-Century England," *Agricultural History*, 21 (1947), 1-8. More recent writing neutralizes the judgment about the value of the two types and even reverses Bidwell's and Falconer's preferences. If less progressive than market farmers, household producers are seen to have enjoyed greater independence and cooperated more with their neighbors in the exchange of work and produce.

<sup>6</sup> Pruitt, "Self-Sufficiency and the Agricultural Economy of Eighteenth-Century Massachusetts," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., 41 (1984), 333-64, does not hold with the distinction between subsistence and commercial production.

<sup>7</sup> Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca, 1990). Equally subtle and insightful are the essays in Henretta, *The Origins of American Capitalism: Collected Essays* (Boston, 1991).

<sup>8</sup> Bidwell's and Falconer's simple typology has been complicated by the addition of the "transition to capitalism" to the discussion, adding an analysis of labor relations and a change in

Although prevalent in recent writings, the two-part typology is not completely stable. Signs of its mutability surface in the market revolution historiography itself. The difficulty in locating the time of transition suggests an uncertainty. "Revolution" implies a sharp break when obvious manifestations of the new order can be seen supplanting the old. But the time of the market revolution is difficult to determine. Clarence Danhof located the transition after 1820.<sup>9</sup> Clark sees commercial relationships changing soon after 1800. James A. Henretta places the crucial period in the 1780s, when farmers and merchants seemed to be gaining greater control over the production process and maximizing profits in the aftermath of the Revolution. Instead of merely exchanging goods with farmers, Henretta finds, merchants began to hire farm families to make shoes or textiles. Entrepreneurial farmers in the Middle States and South hired laborers or rented out slaves and invested in new productive processes in search of greater gain. Up and down the coast he detects calculation, risk taking, and profit maximization governing the economy in the fourth quarter of the century, a time when Clark's household producers remain entrenched in household production.<sup>10</sup>

The reason for the shifting periodization is clear: so much of the old continues into the new, and so much of the new existed amid the old that the time of change can slide back and forth. Eighteenth-century market production is acknowledged as an obvious condition of the colonial economy, and household production most certainly continued into the nineteenth century.<sup>11</sup> The blending and mingling of the two types of farming blur the sharp distinctions that analysis requires. In short, there is more continuity amid change in the nineteenth century than the concept of the market revolution accounts for.

Winifred Barr Rothenberg has been more successful than anyone in fixing the exact moment of transition. By assembling systematic information about farmers and markets from a sample of a hundred farm account books, she was able to prepare a striking visual display. On one graph she plots the ups and downs of Massachusetts commodity prices as gleaned from the

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values. See Kulikoff, "Households and Markets: Toward a New Synthesis of American Agrarian History," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., 50 (1993), 342–55. But market farming and the employment of wage labor hired in a labor market do not necessarily go together. Merrill makes a case for separating the transition to capitalism from the market revolution in "Putting 'Capitalism' in Its Place: A Review of Recent Literature," *ibid.*, 52 (1995), 315–26. He argues that market production did not bring farmers under the sway of capitalism. They were affected only when capitalists threatened to drive them off the land. The question of how to distinguish the colonial economy from capitalism has been debated at great length. See Rona S. Weiss, "Primitive Accumulation in the United States: The Interaction between Capitalist and Noncapitalist Class Relations in Seventeenth-Century Massachusetts," *Journal of Economic History*, 42 (1982), 77–82, and Michael A. Bernstein and Sean Wilentz, "Marketing, Commerce, and Capitalism in Rural Massachusetts," *ibid.*, 44 (1984), 171–73.

<sup>9</sup> Danhof, *Change in Agriculture: The Northern United States, 1820–1870* (Cambridge, Mass., 1969).

<sup>10</sup> Clark, *Roots of Rural Capitalism*, chap. 3; Henretta, "The Transition to Capitalism in America," in *The Transformation of Early America: Society, Authority, and Ideology*, ed. Henretta, Michael Kammen, and Stanley N. Katz (New York, 1991), 218–38.

<sup>11</sup> Clark, *Roots of Rural Capitalism*, 273–77.

account books. Above and below it she charts New York and Philadelphia commodity prices. By placing a ruler vertically on the page, one can see that around 1780 Massachusetts price fluctuations came into conjunction with price changes in the two other North American markets. Shortly after the Revolution, Massachusetts fell into step with New York and Philadelphia, whereas before the prices in little villages all over the state had risen and fallen independently of the larger market. Rothenberg designates this moment as the time when the national market overtook Massachusetts. Before 1780, farmers may have traded in local marketplaces; after 1780, their trucking was embedded in a market society in which prices of the same goods and services rose and fell together. The farmers may not have immediately produced vast quantities of goods for sale in Boston—though Rothenberg finds the volume of production rising—but the large urban markets hovered over and controlled the economies of remote rural villages from then on. The small town economies were tied into a larger, continental market, making them players in a market economy.<sup>12</sup>

By grounding her analysis in systematic data, Rothenberg nails down the elusive moment of transition better than any of her colleagues. But she does not resolve the problem of the market revolution in its entirety, for she restricts herself to Massachusetts when the arena under consideration is the United States. Returning to her charts of three price indexes, we can see that New York and Philadelphia price fluctuations were already synchronized in 1750. Prices in the two cities were moving together. Were these two places embedded in a market society at midcentury and with them the hinterlands whence their farm commodities came? Rather than fixing the moment of the overall market revolution at 1780, the chart only marks the time when Massachusetts villages joined a game that Philadelphia, New York, and their hinterlands were already playing. Farther south, we know Chesapeake planters responded to international tobacco and grain prices much earlier. At midcentury, Virginia and Maryland planters made a massive shift from tobacco to wheat in response to deviations in prices. If we select the convergence of price fluctuations as the marker of revolutionary change, much of North America was involved in a market society by 1750 or before, and the 1780s market revolution was a New England affair.<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Rothenberg, *From Market-Places to a Market Economy: The Transformation of Rural Massachusetts, 1750–1850* (Chicago, 1992). Rothenberg creates other indexes of market embeddedness besides wage and commodity prices, including growth of contract labor and increased use of credit instruments.

<sup>13</sup> As an economic historian, Rothenberg defines market economy more precisely than social historians usually do. By her definition, selling a single staple such as tobacco in a world market did not in itself establish Virginia in a market economy. That happened only when the prices of many other commodities in Virginia tended to converge with prices in the broader market so that these market prices influenced production in the Chesapeake. Until a local market's prices responded to prices outside itself, "those Smithian processes of output growth, achieved through specialization and division of labor," would not go to work. Her goal, like most economic historians, is to explain changes in rates of growth; *ibid.*, 21. A similar interest in rates of change underlies Daniel Scott Smith, "A Malthusian-Frontier Interpretation of United States Demographic History before c. 1815," in *Urbanization in the Americas: The Background in*

To work our way toward a reconceptualization of farmers and markets in the eighteenth century, we cannot have small, backcountry Massachusetts farms stand in for all of North American agriculture. We must look broadly at British North America, beginning with its Atlantic context. We must remember that most of the first English settlers came to the colonies from a country that was undergoing its own transition to commercial agriculture. Keith Wrightson has said of seventeenth-century husbandmen in England that "very few small farmers were isolated from the market, and for most, market opportunities were the first factor to consider in their husbandry."<sup>14</sup> Coming from this society, English migrants undertook to extend market agriculture to the New World, not to set up little subsistence farms. They went in the largest numbers to the colonies where market opportunities were the greatest. In the seventeenth century, more English migrants set sail for the West Indies sugar islands, where the most intensive commercial agriculture in the world prevailed, than shipped for New England, the Middle Colonies, and the Chesapeake combined.<sup>15</sup> Virginia attracted settlers only after it had identified a profitable staple crop. Once tobacco flowed across the Atlantic, large numbers of people came, prompted by the need for labor to grow the crop.<sup>16</sup> These migrants did not need an education in commercial values to prepare them for market production. Even the Puritans who went to Providence Island in the 1630s struggled to find a cash crop.<sup>17</sup>

Once tobacco took hold, Chesapeake farmers were as market driven as any farmers in our history before the twentieth century.<sup>18</sup> Lois Green Carr, Lorena S. Walsh, and Gloria L. Main have found very few wool cards, flax hatchels, or looms in Maryland inventories before 1680, suggesting that all cloth was imported.<sup>19</sup> Robert Beverley complained in 1705 that Virginians

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*Comparative Perspective*, ed. Woodrow Wilson Borah, Jorge Enrique Hardoy, and Gilbert Arthur Stelter (Ottawa, 1980), 15–24, with significant qualifications entered by Henretta, "Wealth and Social Structure," in *Colonial British America: Essays in the New History of the Early Modern Era*, ed. Greene and J. R. Pole (Baltimore, 1984), 272–75. Because the market revolution historiography, which is concerned more with individual farm strategies, uses "market economy" more loosely, the looser usage prevails here.

<sup>14</sup> Wrightson, *English Society, 1580–1680* (New Brunswick, N. J., 1982), 134. For a summary of English agricultural conditions in the 17th century see *ibid.*, 128–39, and for some of the literature on the subject see Greene, *Pursuits of Happiness*, 219 n. 3.

<sup>15</sup> The numbers are roughly 190,000 to the West Indies versus 165,500 to the mainland; Nicholas Canny, "English Migration into and across the Atlantic during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries," in *Europeans on the Move: Studies on European Migration, 1500–1800*, ed. Canny (Oxford, 1994), 64.

<sup>16</sup> Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York, 1975), 404.

<sup>17</sup> Karen Ordahl Kupperman, *Providence Island, 1630–1641: The Other Puritan Colony* (Cambridge, 1993), chap. 4.

<sup>18</sup> For estimates of the return from tobacco exports see Lois Green Carr, Russell R. Menard, and Lorena S. Walsh, *Robert Cole's World: Agriculture and Society in Early Maryland* (Chapel Hill, 1991), 77–80.

<sup>19</sup> Carr and Walsh, "The Planter's Wife: The Experience of White Women in Seventeenth-Century Maryland," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., 34 (1977), 562; Main, *Tobacco Colony: Life in Early Maryland, 1650–1720* (Princeton, 1983), 73.

were too lazy to make their own clothing, but in reality they were so busy with their market crop they had no time for spinning and weaving.<sup>20</sup> The planters were calculating and risk taking, too. The immense growth in Chesapeake tobacco production per worker in the seventeenth century came about only because of their attention to management and improved methods. Equally assiduous Carolina planters experimented with rice, indigo, and hemp production until they produced marketable crops.<sup>21</sup>

The spread of slavery is itself an index of market production. Southern planters purchased slaves primarily to produce market crops. Farm families did not need help in obtaining a subsistence. They could meet their needs without the trouble and expense of slave labor. Yet by 1782, 57 percent of the households in Orange County, Virginia, an upland district adjacent to the Blue Ridge, owned slaves, indicating that farmers there planned for the market. The figures for Lunenburg County on Virginia's Southside are the same.<sup>22</sup> The expansion of slavery, one of the signal economic developments of the first half of the eighteenth century, presumed a vigorous market for southern farm products.

Eighteenth-century migrants from the Tidewater and Lowcountry into the Piedmont and the Great Valley behind the Blue Ridge may have been cut off from markets for a few years, but they established links with the Atlantic trade with surprising rapidity. Shenandoah Valley farmers were producing for the international market within one generation of settlement.<sup>23</sup> The steep rise in wheat prices after 1745 stimulated a vast increase in production.<sup>24</sup> Wheat was soon pouring out of the Great Valley on its way to grain-deficient Europe. In the same fashion, upcountry South Carolina plunged

<sup>20</sup> Beverley, *The History and Present State of Virginia* (1705), ed. David Freeman Hawke (Indianapolis, 1971), 155. In the 1660s, more than half the expenditures from Robert Cole's Maryland plantation went for imported goods, mainly cloth, clothing, and shoes; Carr, Menard, and Walsh, *Robert Cole's World*, 81.

<sup>21</sup> Peter A. Coclanis, *The Shadow of a Dream: Economic Life and Death in the South Carolina Low Country, 1670-1920* (New York, 1989), 48-110; Rachel N. Klein, *Unification of a Slave State: The Rise of the Planter Class in the South Carolina Backcountry, 1760-1808* (Chapel Hill, 1990), chap. 1; Richard R. Beeman, *The Evolution of the Southern Backcountry: A Case Study of Lunenburg County, Virginia, 1746-1832* (Philadelphia, 1984), 60-80; Roger A. Ekirch, "Poor Carolina": *Politics and Society in Colonial North Carolina, 1729-1776* (Chapel Hill, 1981), 30-33. Joyce E. Chaplin argues that, besides practicing market agriculture, planters in the Lower South absorbed a capitalist and modernist ethic—though not without misgivings—in *An Anxious Pursuit: Agricultural Innovation and Modernity in the Lower South, 1730-1815* (Chapel Hill, 1993).

<sup>22</sup> John Thomas Schlotterbeck, "Plantation and Farm: Social and Economic Change in Orange and Greene Counties, Virginia, 1716 to 1860" (Ph. D. diss., Johns Hopkins University, 1980; University Microfilms, 1988), 30; Philip D. Morgan and Michael L. Nicholls, "Slaves in Piedmont Virginia, 1720-1790," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., 46 (1989), 215, 217; Beeman, *Evolution of the Southern Backcountry*, 165. The figure on proportion of slaveholders seems to hold for most southern wealth holders; Alice Hanson Jones, *Wealth of a Nation to Be: The American Colonies on the Eve of the Revolution* (New York, 1980), tables 7-9.

<sup>23</sup> Robert D. Mitchell, *Commercialism and Frontier: Perspectives on the Early Shenandoah Valley* (Charlottesville, 1977).

<sup>24</sup> On the wheat market see Paul G. E. Clemens, *The Atlantic Economy and Colonial Maryland's Eastern Shore: From Tobacco to Grain* (Ithaca, 1980), chap. 6.



into tobacco and indigo production in a very few years.<sup>25</sup> In the Chesapeake, Scottish firms established trading posts at the fall line and beyond to pull in tobacco from the Piedmont.<sup>26</sup> Even in the remote hill country, market involvement, varying from district to district and even from farmer to farmer, was not unknown. Slaveowners moved in almost from the beginning, and the percentage of slaveowning farmers steadily increased through the century, indicating that market production was feasible and practiced by at least part of the population. In a single upcountry county, both slaveholders and family farmers worked the soil. Although not to be classed with the Tidewater in the production of market crops, these patchy upcountry regions were not solely the province of household producers detached from the market.<sup>27</sup>

The literature on the Middle Colonies has never made much of a distinction between commercial and noncommercial farming. The demand for wheat in New York and Philadelphia assumed the existence of energetic production to supply that need.<sup>28</sup> Tenant farming, in the cases where rents were actually collected, required production of marketable crops for the same reason as slavery: there had to be a net profit to reward the landowner.<sup>29</sup> The owners of the huge patents along the Hudson River not only collected rent but also sent their agents through the countryside to buy grain for the New York market.<sup>30</sup> By the early eighteenth century, farmers up and down the river had learned to bargain for the best price in the spirit of capitalist calculation.<sup>31</sup> After midcentury, the wheat belt that stretched from central Virginia to New York was producing grain and flour for the West Indies, much of Europe, and cities along the North American coast.<sup>32</sup> By 1768, the value of grains and grain products exported from the colonies equaled 80

<sup>25</sup> Klein, *Unification of a Slave State*, 15–36.

<sup>26</sup> Jacob M. Price, *Capital and Credit in British Overseas Trade: The View from the Chesapeake, 1700–1776* (Cambridge, Mass., 1980), and “The Rise of Glasgow in the Chesapeake Tobacco Trade, 1707–1775,” *WMQ*, 3d Ser., 11 (1954), 179–99.

<sup>27</sup> Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry, 1850–1890* (New York, 1983), chap. 1.

<sup>28</sup> James T. Lemon, *The Best Poor Man's Country: A Geographical Study of Early Southeastern Pennsylvania* (Baltimore, 1972), 27–31.

<sup>29</sup> Lucy Simler, “Tenancy in Colonial Pennsylvania: The Case of Chester County,” *WMQ*, 3d Ser., 43 (1986), 558–59; Innes, *Labor in a New Land: Economy and Society in Seventeenth-Century Springfield* (Princeton, 1983), xvi–xvii, 6–9.

<sup>30</sup> Lemon, *Best Poor Man's Country*, chap. 6; Sung Bok Kim, *Landlord and Tenant in Colonial New York: Manorial Society, 1664–1775* (Chapel Hill, 1978), 158.

<sup>31</sup> Cathy Matson, “‘Damned Scoundrels’ and ‘Libertisme of Trade’: Freedom and Regulation in Colonial New York’s Fur and Grain Trades,” *WMQ*, 3d Ser., 51 (1994), 408–12.

<sup>32</sup> Customers of two merchants in the Kingston, N. Y., area between 1774–1820 divided into large producers, who shipped agricultural goods and barrel staves to the New York City market, and smaller farmers, who sold in a local market, according to Thomas S. Wermuth, “‘To Market, To Market’: Yeoman Farmers, Merchant Capitalists, and the Development of Capitalism in the Hudson River Valley, 1760–1820,” *Essays in Economic and Business History*, 9 (1991), 20–34. His data can also be read to show the existence of a thriving local market that absorbed the production of even small farmers. Because Kingston was in close touch with New York City, city prices would influence the local market.

percent of the value of tobacco exports and, if the domestic market is taken into account, likely exceeded them.<sup>33</sup>

Considering that this map of colonial agricultural regions is not really contested, where are the household producers who form the baseline for the market revolution? They have been imagined as settled around the fringes of market-farming areas or stuck in the interstices between market farmers, working poorer lands in otherwise productive counties, and above all concentrated in New England. New England is the heartland of the household producer; hence the significance of Rothenberg's convergence of price fluctuations in the 1780s. The case for a market revolution rests heavily on an image of the pretransition New England village that has been part of American lore from at least the nineteenth century.<sup>34</sup> That image was refurbished by the town studies of the 1970s, which, although they said almost nothing about the economy in their preoccupation with rural society, drew a picture of inward-looking communities where people were most concerned for the preservation of family and the maintenance of social harmony.<sup>35</sup> Backed by these studies, social historians imagined New England as a land of communal covenants, hostile to the disruptions of trade and competitive individualism, and defensive when the market economy disrupted their lives.

That dominant image of colonial New England, however, does not account for much of the region before 1780. Even in the first years of settlement in Massachusetts Bay, farmers at Plymouth found a market for their livestock among the migrants flooding into Boston after 1630. William Bradford lamented the scattering of his little flock as people sought more land to pasture their herds. By 1650, one-fifth of the Massachusetts Bay population was concentrated in Boston, where it could produce only a small part of its own food.<sup>36</sup> The town depended on nearby farmers for wood, meat, and grain. In the Connecticut River valley, William Pynchon presided over a diversified economy with many small manufacturing enterprises supported by commercialized agriculture.<sup>37</sup> Throughout the remainder of the colonial period, cities and towns contained populations that had to be fed and warmed. In the late eighteenth century, 20 percent of the population was not laboring on the land, and the 80 percent who farmed had to produce their food, requiring that a quarter of farm production on average go to market.<sup>38</sup>

<sup>33</sup> James F. Shepherd and Gary M. Walton, *Shipping, Maritime Trade, and the Economic Development of Colonial North America* (Cambridge, 1972), 211–27.

<sup>34</sup> Carolyn Merchant relies on data from inland mountain towns in New England for her analysis of subsistence farms in *Ecological Revolutions: Nature, Gender, and Science in New England* (Chapel Hill, 1989), 175–85.

<sup>35</sup> This tendency was most pronounced in Michael Zuckerman, *Peaceable Kingdoms: New England Towns in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1970); Kenneth A. Lockridge, *A New England Town: The First Hundred Years: Dedham, Massachusetts, 1636–1736* (New York, 1970); and, in its 17th-century sections, Richard L. Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690–1765* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967).

<sup>36</sup> Darrett B. Rutman, *Winthrop's Boston: Portrait of a Puritan Town, 1630–1649* (New York, 1965), 179.

<sup>37</sup> Innes, *Labor in a New Land*, xvi–xxi, 4–14.

<sup>38</sup> For the proportion of people making their living from farming see John J. McCusker and Menard, *The Economy of British America, 1607–1789* (Chapel Hill, 1985), 248, and Stanley Lebergott,

Farms closest to the bigger towns likely commanded the larger portion of these sales and so sent even larger proportions of their production to market.<sup>39</sup>

In addition to the townsmen themselves, the ships that were essential to New England's balance of trade, fishermen's families, and the visiting British fleets required supplies.<sup>40</sup> Besides provisioning its towns and shipping, New England supplied the West Indies with food after the development of sugar plantations in the 1650s. The primary leg of those complex Atlantic trading voyages was Boston or New London to Barbados or St. Kitts. Cargoes for these voyages were assembled by merchants from the produce and meat flowing in from the New England countryside.<sup>41</sup> Around Narragansett Bay, the mild climate permitted the development of large horse farms manned in part by slave labor and aimed at sales in the sugar islands.<sup>42</sup>

In short, New England had a geography of commercial farming around centers like New London, New Haven, Newport, Boston, Salem, Gloucester, Marblehead, and Newburyport and along the navigable stretches of the major rivers.<sup>43</sup> The first settlers of New England had come with the intention of integrating their settlements into the international economy, and in parts of the countryside they succeeded. Without a substantial measure of market production in the first half of the eighteenth century, the external trade of New England would have looked far different.<sup>44</sup>

These port towns and their immediate hinterlands must have been incorporated into broader markets before 1780. Newport's shipping in the eighteenth century expanded primarily by increasing its coastal trade, which composed 15–30 percent of all trade in the 1720s and 1730s and swelled to 65 percent in the 1760s.<sup>45</sup> Ships sailing between New York and Boston brought

"Labor Force and Employment, 1800–1960," in Conference on Research in Income and Wealth, *Output, Employment, and Productivity in the United States after 1800* (New York, 1966), 117–204.

<sup>39</sup> Karen J. Friedmann, "Victualling Colonial Boston," *Agricultural History*, 47 (1973), 189–205.

<sup>40</sup> On home markets see Max George Schumacher, *The Northern Farmer and His Markets during the Late Colonial Period* (New York, 1975), 105–21.

<sup>41</sup> Rutman, *Winthrop's Boston*, 184–87; Richard Pares, *Yankees and Creoles: The Trade between North America and the West Indies before the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956); Bruce C. Daniels, "Economic Development in Colonial and Revolutionary Connecticut: An Overview," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., 37 (1980), 434–38; Terry Lee Anderson, *The Economic Growth of Seventeenth-Century New England: A Measurement of Regional Income* (New York, 1975).

<sup>42</sup> William Davis Miller, "The Narragansett Planters," *American Antiquarian Society, Proceedings*, 43 (1933), 49–115; Christian McBurney, "The South Kingstown Planters: Country Gentry in Colonial Rhode Island," *Rhode Island History*, 45 (1986), 81–93.

<sup>43</sup> Christine Leigh Heyrman, *Commerce and Culture: The Maritime Communities of Colonial Massachusetts, 1690–1750* (New York, 1984); Daniel Vickers, "The Northern Colonies: Economy and Society, 1600–1775," in *The Cambridge Economic History of the United States*, ed. Stanley L. Engerman and Robert E. Gallman, I (Cambridge, 1996), 221–22.

<sup>44</sup> Howard S. Russell, *A Long, Deep Furrow: Three Centuries of Farming in New England*, abridged ed. (Hanover, N. H., 1982), 57–65.

<sup>45</sup> Lynne Withey, *Urban Growth in Colonial Rhode Island: Newport and Providence in the Eighteenth Century* (Albany, 1984), 21, 29.

back price information that was necessarily conveyed to the merchants' rural suppliers in Rhode Island and southeastern Massachusetts. How could the farmers ringing the port towns have sealed themselves off from knowledge of coastal markets? Households in the hill towns of central and western Massachusetts may have set prices in their local marketplaces, but not farmers driving cattle to markets in Boston or Newport.

The convergence of price fluctuations in Rothenberg's index may reflect the extension of price information from coastal regions into isolated hinterlands rather than a sudden conversion of Massachusetts as a whole. Rothenberg draws information for pre-1765 prices from twenty-two account books. Seven of those books came from Franklin County on the upper Connecticut River at the Vermont border. Would the charts look different if the prices in the sample had been taken solely from the seven account books listed for Essex County just north of Boston and covering the ports of Salem, Gloucester, and Newburyport? Farmers in Essex County would have fallen under the influence of city markets to a degree that those in towns upstream from two falls on the Connecticut River could not realize in 1750. Essex County price fluctuations were far more likely to have converged with Boston-New York-Philadelphia markets before the Revolution than towns buried in the backcountry. The map of market influences in New England was probably as mottled as the map for the colonies as a whole.

If the two-part typology is to be retained, the configuration of New England agriculture suggests a spatial, not a temporal, analysis. Rather than search for the moment in time when the economy converted from local marketplaces to a national market society, the change should be located geographically. Along the coast, near port towns, and adjacent to navigable rivers, farmers were attuned to Atlantic markets from the beginning. The Chesapeake was in the grip of the European tobacco market from 1620 on. Boston supplied the West Indies after 1650. New York and Philadelphia shipped grain and flour by the end of the century. The Carolina Lowcountry had identified its staple exports by 1720. As population expanded, farmers farther inland may have been cut off from the markets, but sooner or later they joined the larger economy, sooner in the Shenandoah Valley, later perhaps in the Massachusetts backcountry and in the southern piedmont. Following the logic of the household-market typology, the market can be envisioned as a rising tide that gradually inundated more and more regions, not as a switch turned at some moment for the entire continent.<sup>46</sup>

But should the two-part farm typology be sustained, even in this modified form? Its very simplicity is its strength and its weakness. Simplicity has the advantage of clarity. The household-and-market-production model evaluates hundreds of thousands of farms hundreds of miles apart, in differing

<sup>46</sup> Kulikoff, "Households and Markets," 342–55, also suggests that different regions passed through the stages of the transition at different times, although this insight has not been absorbed into the historiography that tries to explain many forms of political, social, and religious conflict by a revolution in one brief span.

climate regions, and following contrasting crop regimes and casts them into two categories based on a single criterion—involvement in market production. That single idea accounts for varied forms of farm behavior from the way women and children were employed to the ethos of farm life. On a grander scale, it provides a master narrative for agriculture during a two-hundred-year period. In the household-to-market-production story, the communal world before the market revolution gives way to individualistic market production afterward. The typology and the narrative gain strength because they satisfy the needs of various systems of thought: the Marxist transition to capitalism, post-World War II modernization theory, and Bidwell and Falconer's spread of progressive agriculture. This simple clear typology performs a lot of work for historians.

Simplicity, however, easily becomes oversimplification. Can all these variegated individual farms be divided conclusively into household producers and market farmers? At the extremes of a thousand-acre tobacco plantation and a newly opened tract in a Berkshire County hill town, the difference may be obvious, but what about the great majority in between? Was a farmer who sent 20 percent of his crop to market a market farmer? Did 30 percent or 40 percent indicate a commitment to profit maximization? Where lies the great divide?<sup>47</sup> It is commonly argued that the motive behind production rather than its volume makes the difference. Households produced for their own use rather than exchange. Even the extensive barter that went on among neighbors, so it is said, grew out of the intention to produce for family consumption and was qualitatively different from exchange production that passed through storekeepers into broader markets. But that distinction is hard to maintain. Exchanges with storekeepers scarcely differed from exchanges with neighbors. The storekeeper collected labor from farmers as well as grain and meat. Virtually all storekeepers, like artisans, owned land and worked farms on the side. In many instances, they had to have a farm to make the payment useful. In the cash-poor economies of rural New England, farmers often paid in labor, and a farm enabled a storekeeper to use that labor. The storekeeper was simply one more player in the intricate network of village exchange. Daniel Vickers, who has looked carefully at eighteenth-century farm journals, concludes that the "distinction between production for use and production for sale was sometimes recognizable and sometimes not, but it was never a matter of significance."<sup>48</sup> Farmers

<sup>47</sup> Daniel Scott Smith, "Malthusian-Frontier Interpretation of United States Demographic History before c. 1815," 15–24, calculates that 20–30% of agricultural production was exported in 1710. He also argues that this proportion declined during the 18th century and that this was part of a trend continuing into the 19th century as the local market absorbed more and more of farm production. T. H. Breen argues that the sense of commercial exchange was strong enough to sustain an imagined community of buyers and sellers who acted politically in the nonimportation agreements in "Narrative of Commercial Life: Consumption, Ideology, and Community on the Eve of the American Revolution," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., 50 (1993), 471–501.

<sup>48</sup> Vickers, "Competency and Competition: Economic Culture in Early America," *WMQ*, 3d Ser. 47 (1990), 7. Vickers bases his judgment on the study of the Caleb Jackson farm in Rowley, Mass., in the 1790s. The type of farming they practiced was common, however, in New

produced all they could for themselves and then in ingeniously complicated interactions with neighbors and fellow townsmen purchased, bartered, or worked for the rest. Production for exchange with the storekeeper and production for use with their neighbors were indistinguishable.

The presence of storekeepers in the village exchange networks meant that exchange and use production co-existed in most New England villages. In every hamlet with a store, farmers exchanged their products for imported goods. By 1771 in the more settled parts of Massachusetts—in the Connecticut Valley and in all towns east of Worcester—80 percent of the towns had stores; in the mountains west of the Connecticut River and in the hilly middle of the state, 42 percent of the towns did.<sup>49</sup> The stock of these little shops was modest—rum, cloth, salt, iron, buttons, hats—but they provided goods that every farmer wanted and needed. Payment could be made in goods and sometimes in labor, but ultimately the payments had to be transmuted into cash through sale at a market. Carole Shammas's research on colonial imports suggests that a substantial amount of trade was going on, even in the inland towns. Colonists on the average may have spent as much as a quarter of their total incomes on imported goods. Every gallon of rum and yard of cloth in a country store represented production for exchange beyond subsistence.<sup>50</sup>

In other words, even in the heartland of communal agricultural villages—the inland New England town—production for use and production for exchange blended imperceptibly. William Cronon has argued that Europeans looked for commodities in the ecosystem from the beginning. Indians thought of the land as supplying food and fuel, meeting their human needs; Europeans looked for “resources,” by which they meant things to sell. “The landscape of New England thus increasingly met not only the needs of its inhabitants for food and shelter but the demands of faraway markets for cattle, corn, fur, timber, and other goods whose ‘values’ became expressions of the colonists’ socially determined ‘needs.’”<sup>51</sup> In Cronon's reading, nothing else can account for the colonists' exploitation of the land, far in excess of the Indians' more frugal use. European colonists cut trees, fenced land, and ran cattle in volumes that were inexplicable to the Indians. Cronon acknowledges expansion of the market in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, but he argues nonetheless that “the abstract concept of the commodity informed colonial decision-making . . . from the start.”<sup>52</sup>

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England during the whole of the previous century. He discusses the issue at length in *Farmers and Fishermen: Two Centuries of Work in Essex County, Massachusetts, 1630–1850* (Chapel Hill, 1994), 206–19.

<sup>49</sup> Bushman, “Shopping and Advertising in Colonial America,” in Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert, eds., *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century* (Charlottesville, 1994), 239–40.

<sup>50</sup> Shammas, “How Self-Sufficient Was Early America?” *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 13 (1982–1983), 247–72.

<sup>51</sup> Cronon, *Changes in the Land: Indians, Colonists, and the Ecology of New England* (New York, 1983), 167.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, 168.

How then are we to speak of the vast numbers of middling farmers who produced for their families and yet engaged with the market through storekeepers or drovers and in the nonstaple regions could not differentiate between use and exchange production? Is there a workable way to characterize eighteenth-century farms and relate them to what came after? As Allan Kulikoff notes in a useful essay on the "Transition to Capitalism in Rural America," the European debate "is conceptually clear, dealing with the transition *from* feudalism *to* capitalism," but that clarity fails in America. "Although all agree that feudalism did not reach these shores," Kulikoff writes, "the social order, economic system, or mode of production that preceded capitalism in America is rarely specified." The feudalism-capitalism polarity offers no middle term for American farms through most of our history. "It is evident," Kulikoff concludes, "that the American economy survived for several centuries in a transitional state—clearly not feudal and not yet fully capitalist."<sup>53</sup> But, can we be satisfied with a conceptual scheme that offers no useful description of economic conditions for several centuries? To call this time "transitional" is excessively teleological, deriving significance from changes many decades in the future. The term implies that a farm was not what it was but the embryo of something it was going to be.

A realistic understanding of eighteenth-century farming must recognize the porous boundary between household production and market production and all the other complexities of the rural economy in early America. In what can be termed "composite farming," most farmers simultaneously produced for the farm family and for the market.<sup>54</sup> A number of interlocking yet distinguishable economies operated on composite farms. 1) The husbandman devoted a large part of his effort to raising the meat and grain his family needed for their subsistence. 2) The housewife had her own productive system of chickens, dairy products, vegetables and fruits, and sometimes textiles and other products. Housewifery aimed primarily at family sustenance, but like the husbandman's labors could be directed to the market or enter into neighborly exchanges when the opportunity arose.<sup>55</sup> 3) In the South, slaves

<sup>53</sup> Kulikoff, "Transition to Capitalism," 133, 140. For an effort to label and describe this transitional farm see Kevin D. Kelly, "The Independent Mode of Production," *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 11 (Spring 1979), 38–48.

<sup>54</sup> Other historians have arrived at something near this common sense conclusion. Among them are McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, 297–301; Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors: The Revolutionary Settlement on the Maine Frontier, 1760–1820* (Chapel Hill, 1990), 77; and Vickers, "Competency and Competition."

<sup>55</sup> Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, "Martha Ballard and Her Girls: Women's Work in Eighteenth-Century Maine," in *Work and Labor in Early America*, ed. Innes, 70–105; "Housewife and Gadder: Themes of Self-Sufficiency and Community in Eighteenth-Century New England," in *To Toil the Livelong Day: America's Women at Work, 1780–1980*, ed. Carol Groneman and Mary Beth Norton (Ithaca, 1987), 21–34; and "Wheels, Looms, and the Gender Division of Labor in Eighteenth-Century New England," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., 55 (1998), 3–38; Adrienne D. Hood, "The Material World of Cloth: Production and Use in Eighteenth-Century Rural Pennsylvania," *ibid.*, 53 (1996), 43–66; Joan M. Jensen, *Loosening the Bonds: Mid-Atlantic Farm Women, 1750–1850* (New Haven, 1986).

also produced for their own use and exchange, in a distinguishable economy that was essential to their sustenance.<sup>56</sup> Growing out of these three productive systems were 4) the barter economy with neighbors and 5) the exchange economy for sales outside the community, through storekeepers, drovers, merchant millers, factors, or other agents of continental or international commerce or both.<sup>57</sup> These various economies, interacting with each other and the world beyond, made up the composite farm.<sup>58</sup>

The first priority of these productive units was the family's welfare. Recent scholarship rightly emphasizes household production and the preeminence of family values. The farm family provided for its own needs and for the descent of property down through the generations before taking chances on commercial undertakings. Household producers were cautious about any marketing venture that jeopardized the main enterprise of family support. The eighteenth century's own term for this attitude and the related agricultural practices was "competency."<sup>59</sup> Historians' recognition of the preeminence of family values came in reaction to scholarly work in the post-World War II period that depicts farmers as aggressive entrepreneurs, profit-seeking businessmen with their eyes on the main chance, grasping at every opportunity to make money whether through land speculation or adoption of the latest agricultural craze.<sup>60</sup> Henretta recognized the error in this caricature, which resulted from one of the historiographical enthusiasms of the 1950s. He saw that, because farming was so precarious and markets so remote, farmers had to meet their own needs first and only then send the surplus to market.<sup>61</sup>

Devotion to family sustenance did not imply aversion to market production. Although many farmers lacked the land, the animals, the labor, or the implements to produce in quantity for the market, some fruits of the farm family's labor had to enter exchanges with neighbors, storekeepers, and the tax collector. The family could not survive otherwise. Farm families developed market goods whenever they could. Farmers near to the Pennsylvania and Maryland iron furnaces cut and hauled wood. Connecticut and Long Island farmers grew flax when the Irish linen industry wanted to buy American-grown seed. Between 1736 and 1756, exports of flaxseed from

<sup>56</sup> Philip Morgan, "Work and Culture: The Task System and the World of Lowcountry Blacks, 1700 to 1880," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., 39 (1982), 563-99.

<sup>57</sup> This formulation of the composite farm economy has been worked out by Claudia Bushman for her forthcoming study of John Walker, a 19th-century Virginia small planter.

<sup>58</sup> The multiple economies of the composite farm are close to Kulikoff's judgment that colonial farmers created "dynamic and modern social formations tied to the world market but not fully of it" in *The Agrarian Origins of American Capitalism* (Charlottesville, 1992), 27.

<sup>59</sup> The best explication is Vickers, "Competency and Competition." For the 19th-century South see Gavin Wright, *The Political Economy of the Cotton South: Households, Markets, and Wealth in the Nineteenth-Century* (New York, 1978), 62-74.

<sup>60</sup> Charles S. Grant called the settlers of 18th-century Kent Connecticut "aggressive opportunists" and entitled one of his chapters "The Drive for Profits" in *Democracy in the Connecticut Frontier Town of Kent* (New York, 1961), 53-54, chap. 3. The same note is struck in Lemon, *Best Poor Man's Country*, xv-xvi.

<sup>61</sup> Henretta, "Families and Farms." For the literature on the debate that followed Henretta's article see Kulikoff, "Transition to Capitalism," 124.



American farms increased sevenfold, becoming Connecticut's second most important commercial activity. Farmers in Massachusetts hill towns hauled sand to the Connecticut Valley when housewives started to sand their floors. They produced broom handles when broom corn production boomed. In Maine, folks hunted pelts and logged. In South Carolina, Eliza Pinckney's ingenious experiments added indigo to the repertoire of commercial crops. Whenever market opportunities arose, people were quick to seize them.<sup>62</sup>

Market production implied, not the abandonment of family values, but the reverse. Far from going reluctantly to market for fear of undermining their families, farmers went precisely to sustain and advance them.<sup>63</sup> Market production not only raised the level of family comfort but was essential for family perpetuation. In no other way could farmers accumulate land for their children except by selling farm goods. One family farm was not enough for the average American family. If every son was to receive a farm and every daughter an adequate dowry, the farm parents had to acquire property beyond the requirements of day-to-day living. Tabulations of farm property by age of owner show the acreage swelling through a farmer's forties and fifties and then shrinking in his sixties, as he distributed land to his offspring.<sup>64</sup> The accumulation of property for the rising generation required strenuous effort, even with all members working together. That many families only partially succeeded, or failed altogether, does not diminish the significance of land purchases in the overall family economy. The family had to maximize market production at certain points, not to relish the pleasures of profit or even to enjoy more comforts and conveniences, but to provide for their children.<sup>65</sup> Debt increased dramatically after 1720 as older systems of

<sup>62</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *Voyagers to the West: A Passage in the Peopling of America on the Eve of the Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1986), 246–48; Gregory H. Nobles, "Shays's Neighbors: The Context of Rebellion in Pelham, Massachusetts," in *In Debt to Shays: the Bicentennial of an Agrarian Rebellion*, ed. Robert A. Gross (Charlottesville, 1993), 370 n. 20; J. Ritchie Garrison, *Landscape and Material Life in Franklin County, Massachusetts, 1770–1860* (Knoxville, 1991), 79–89; Thomas M. Truxes, *Irish-American Trade, 1660–1783* (New York, 1988), 48, 109–13; Taylor, *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors*, 77; David L. Coon, "Eliza Lucas Pinckney and the Reintroduction of Indigo Culture in South Carolina," *Journal of Southern History*, 42 (1976), 61–76; Coclanis, *Shadow of a Dream*, 56, 61–63. Vickers's Essex farmers mysteriously did not raise more cattle per capita in the decades before the American Revolution, even though the amount of cleared land nearly doubled and the county's port towns needed provisions. His data, however, did not permit him to measure increased production of specialized crops such as hay that Essex farmers produced after the Revolution in response to the same market stimulus; *Farmers and Fishermen*, 211–15, 293–99.

<sup>63</sup> For this family strategy on the frontier see Nobles, "Breaking into the Backcountry: New Approaches to the Early American Frontier, 1750–1800," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., 46 (1989), 655–56, and Taylor, *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors*, chap. 3.

<sup>64</sup> Jackson Turner Main, *Society and Economy in Colonial Connecticut* (Princeton, 1985), 117; Lee Soltow, *Patterns of Wealthholding in Wisconsin since 1850* (Madison, 1971), 42, 46. In Essex County, the dropoff came in a farmer's seventies; Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*, 227.

<sup>65</sup> Vickers says that the responsibility to bestow land on children "could be serious enough to provide the organizing principle for a life's work" in *Farmers and Fishermen*, 245. Jackson Turner Main, *Society and Economy in Colonial Connecticut*, 375, says the parents succeeded somehow in acquiring land for children in Connecticut. For the relationship among family values, debt, and market production in a later period see Sue Headlee, *The Political Economy of the*

dispersing land at minimal cost gave way to auctions and sales by large speculators.<sup>66</sup> Farmers had to incur debt to buy land for the rising generation; if the fathers did not go in debt, the sons would.<sup>67</sup>

Composite farming thus proceeded under the double mandate of providing first for daily living and then for cash to buy the next generation's land. That double purpose resulted in one part of the farm being devoted to the mixed crops necessary for the family's food, clothing, and fuel—a part that was much the same from Maine to Georgia—and another part for market production. In the subsistence portion, all farmers grew corn and maybe another grain crop. They all grazed cattle and let hogs roam in the woods. Woodlots provided fuel and timber for simple construction. More in the North than in the South, they harvested apples for cider. Closer to the house, the women kept kitchen gardens and probably chickens, though these creatures left few tracks in eighteenth-century records. This family provision component of the composite farm looked much the same on all colonial farms.<sup>68</sup>

The market component, the second element of composite farming, distinguished one farm from another going from North to South and even from farm to farm within a single region. In the North, the market component was frequently a "surplus" beyond family production: more pork or beef than the family could eat or cure, or one of the grains, or butter and cheese. Northern farmers also produced potash from burned trees, or barrel staves, or flaxseed, or maple sugar, or tanned hides, or coffins and chairs made in the off-season—all for the market and not an incidental surplus. Fifty percent of the estates in a sample of Essex County farm inventories taken before the Revolution contained looms, shoemaking kits, tan yards, mills, or smithing implements.<sup>69</sup> The returns may have been small and only a fraction of the farm's entire production, but in the family economy by-employments played a critical role.<sup>70</sup>

In the South, the market crops tobacco, indigo, and hemp met no family need and were not surpluses in the New England sense; rice, although consumed in the household, was grown in quantities far exceeding family require-

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*Family Farm: The Agrarian Roots of American Capitalism* (Westport, Conn., 1991); for 18th- and 19th-century New England see Merchant, *Ecological Revolutions*, 185–90, and Clark, "Economics and Culture: Opening Up the Rural History of the Early American Northeast," *American Quarterly*, 43 (1991), 279–301.

<sup>66</sup> John Frederick Martin, *Profits in the Wilderness: Entrepreneurship and the Founding of New England Towns in the Seventeenth Century* (Chapel Hill, 1991), argues that profits were being made in land sales from the beginning of New England settlement.

<sup>67</sup> William Cooper went to great effort to find markets for his purchasers, knowing they could never meet the annual 7% interest payment, much less repayment of the principal, without a commercial crop; Taylor, *William Cooper's Town: Power and Persuasion on the Frontier of the Early American Republic* (New York, 1995), 102–10.

<sup>68</sup> This condition is well documented in Lewis Cecil Gray, *History of Agriculture in the Southern United States to 1860* (Washington, D. C., 1933), and Bidwell and Falconer, *History of Agriculture in the Northern United States*. See also Clemens, *Atlantic Economy and Colonial Maryland's Eastern Shore*, 82–83, 172–74, and David Klingaman, "The Significance of Grain in the Development of the Tobacco Colonies," *Journal of Economic History*, 29 (1969), 268–78.

<sup>69</sup> Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*, 314.

<sup>70</sup> For an illuminating explication of diversification in Pennsylvania see Mary M. Schweitzer, *Custom and Contract: Household, Government, and the Economy in Colonial Pennsylvania* (New York, 1987), 57–79.

ments. But the obvious market orientation of southern planters should not obscure the powerful subsistence component of their agriculture. Vast amounts of labor on tobacco farms went to the production of food, the preparation of cloth, and the practice of crafts to keep the large household in operation.<sup>71</sup>

Farming for family subsistence may be construed, erroneously, as intrinsically hostile to the market.<sup>72</sup> We assume that commercial farming drove out subsistence production, that as one increased, the other decreased. In reality, commerce seems to have fostered composite farming. Commercial farmers are known to have increased their subsistence production at the same time they were heavily involved in world markets. One striking instance is the creation of mixed farms in the most commercial section of the colonies in the seventeenth century, the Chesapeake tobacco region. Until the end of the nineteenth century, no area in all of North America exceeded the seventeenth-century Chesapeake in its devotion to a single commercial crop. At first, planters raised their own food and cut their own wood but imported leather, cloth, pottery, and iron goods, while the entire labor force concentrated on tobacco production. Near the end of the century, when tobacco prices fell, planters began to divert resources to once-neglected aspects of subsistence.<sup>73</sup> Carville V. Earle's tabulation of implements from estate inventories measures the increasing incidence of spinning wheels, churns, and other tools for family production in the first half of the eighteenth century.<sup>74</sup> These highly commercial farms grew more and more self-sufficient during the eighteenth century.

The reasons for the change in strategy are easily understood. When the returns on a market crop fell, the natural reaction was to reduce costs. If expenditures could be reduced to a minimum, declining prices for the staple would be less painful. If prices fell too far, the planter might be driven to rely entirely on his own production for survival. Not the smallest but the largest planters—the ones most heavily involved in the market—followed this strategy. Their very dependence on market production made them more eager to buffer the ill-effects of falling prices. Only later did smaller farmers follow suit. By the early nineteenth century, agricultural writers advised all farmers to feed their families first before carrying goods to market. In 1841, Henry Colman

<sup>71</sup> The rice planters may have partially emulated those in the sugar islands in concentrating on their staple and purchasing food from inland growers. They were the exception on the North American continent. See McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, 183–84. For a summary of the literature on South Carolina self-sufficiency see Coclanis, *Shadow of a Dream*, 147, and Philip Morgan, "The Development of Slave Culture in Eighteenth-Century Plantation America" (Ph. D. diss., University College London, 1977), 20–47.

<sup>72</sup> For comments on the blend of use and exchange values and for the best analysis of 18th-century rural cultural values see Vickers, "Competency and Competition."

<sup>73</sup> Carr, "Diversification in the Colonial Chesapeake: Somerset County, Maryland, in Comparative Perspective," in *Colonial Chesapeake Society*, ed. Carr, Morgan, and Jean B. Russo (Chapel Hill, 1988), 342–88; Clemens, *Atlantic Economy and Colonial Maryland's Eastern Shore*, chap. 6; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves: The Development of Southern Cultures in the Chesapeake, 1680–1800* (Chapel Hill, 1986), 99–104.

<sup>74</sup> Earle, *The Evolution of a Tidewater Settlement System: All Hallow's Parish, Maryland, 1650–1783* (Chicago, 1975), 122–23.

claimed "it must be considered as an established principle in domestic economy that every farmer should look to his farm for all that his farm can furnish him." Part admonition, part description, Colman had good reason to advocate domestic production. "Abandoning self-sufficiency was risky," Gavin Wright observes, "because households had to eat regardless of the outcome of the season's yields and prices."<sup>75</sup>

The composite farm did not disappear as commercial farming increased. Instead, it flourished even in later periods of intense commercialization. Mixed farming protected growers against the terrifying price oscillations that went with market production. Prices could vary 10–20 percent from year to year, and, in addition to market ups and downs, the farmer's own yields could deviate by at least as much. Lower yields might mean higher prices for all farmers, but an individual farmer—a victim of pests or bad weather—could suffer from a decline in both yield and price. How could he survive these wrenching reverses that were almost entirely out of his control? For simple survival, he required a subsistence foundation that would guarantee food and warmth whatever the fluctuations in the market.<sup>76</sup>

The utility of a subsistence base was as important in the nineteenth century as it was in the beginning. The first cotton farmers concentrated almost wholly on their immensely profitable staple until the 1840s, when declining prices brought them to their senses. After the suffering of that decade, they learned to produce the basics for themselves. Heavily commercial farms transmuted into composite farms, prompted by the market itself.<sup>77</sup> In the four decades before the Civil War, John Walker, a planter with fifteen slaves and more than 500 acres in the wheat belt of tidewater Virginia, not only grew corn and hogs to feed his large household but also planted cotton and raised sheep for wool. He hired a woman to spin and weave the fibers and another to cut clothing for his people. He even had a suit made for himself from this homespun cloth. As the years went by, he brought the spinning and weaving and eventually the tailoring on to his own farm, employing a resident weaver. He had his slaves tan leather and make their own shoes. His strategy was to minimize household consumption expenditures at the same time that he was selling wheat in Norfolk, Baltimore, and New York, investing in railroad stock, buying machinery, and renting out a skilled slave in Richmond. Every inch a commercial farmer, Walker worked as hard at producing for family consumption as for the market.<sup>78</sup>

<sup>75</sup> Colman, *Fourth Report: Agriculture of Massachusetts* (1841), quoted in Bidwell and Falconer, *History of Agriculture in the Northern United States*, 255; Wright, *Political Economy of the Cotton South*, 62–74, quotation on 63; Carr and Walsh, "Economic Diversification and Labor Organization in the Chesapeake, 1650–1820," in *Work and Labor in Early America*, ed. Innes, 181–82.

<sup>76</sup> For a discussion of the relationship of markets and self-sufficiency see Rothenberg, *From Market-Places to a Market Economy*, 33, 46–48.

<sup>77</sup> John Hebron Moore, *The Emergence of the Cotton Kingdom in the Old South West: Mississippi, 1770–1860* (Baton Rouge, 1988), 21–27; Alfred Glaze Smith, Jr., *Economic Readjustment of an Old Cotton State: South Carolina, 1820–1860* (Columbia, S. C., 1958), 53–111; Earle, *Geographical Inquiry and American Historical Problems* (Stanford, Calif., 1992), 258–99.

<sup>78</sup> Walker, "Diary," entries for Oct. 27, Nov. 15, Dec. 7, 1825, Jan. 15, June 13, 1827, May 8, 1829, Apr. 1, Nov. 9, 1833, June 6, Nov. 2, 29, 1834, Nov. 5, 1836, in Virginia Historical Society,

As late as the 1850s in the South Carolina tidewater, small yeomen farmers with up to 150 acres of improved land were still producing heavily for themselves and diverting only their surplus production of rice and cotton to the market, according to Stephanie McCurry. In one of the most heavily commercialized regions of the country, the supposed market revolution still had not eliminated household production among farmers with lots of land and slaves. If those farmers remained unaffected, we have reason to question the end of family production everywhere in the nation.<sup>79</sup>

Composite farming was a basic American practice from the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries and even after then in a modified form. Many changes occurred in farm operations over those years, but the fundamental strategy of producing both for self and for sale persisted.<sup>80</sup> Composite farming weathered the storms of commercial expansion with remarkable durability. No matter how rapidly the urban population grew, American farmers supplied the cities' agricultural needs. No famines, grain shortages, or subsistence crises threatened the nation's well-being. Nor did food prices skyrocket as the urban population soared; at most, prices mildly inflated. American farms produced food to sustain unprecedented urban growth. At the same time, American farmers benefited from commercial sales when they could and lived off the land during bad years. Except on newly opened frontiers, the rural population rarely suffered from hunger. The composite farm was the "transitional" type that carried American farm families through two centuries of social change.

The idea of composite farming enables us to recognize the continuities in the rural economy from the eighteenth to the nineteenth centuries, but does it underestimate the amount of change? If the two-part typology of household production and market farming exaggerates the transformation wrought by a presumed market revolution, does the composite farm flatten out the differences? We know the farmers' world changed in the nineteenth century; how are we to describe what happened? In my opinion—and taste in historical explanation enters in here—the belief in an axial turning point should be abandoned. We have conceived of the market revolution as working a great transformation when the economic organization of the world changed. Conceptually, the market revolution resembles a journey from the Mississippi to the Pacific. At the Continental Divide in the Rocky Mountains, all the rivers flow in another direction. Farmers may have raised the same crops after the market revolution but for wholly different reasons.

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Richmond, and Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill. For examples of other farmers see Philip N. Racine, ed., *Piedmont Farmer: The Journals of David Golightly Harris, 1855–1870* (Knoxville, 1990), and Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*, 207.

<sup>79</sup> McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations, and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York, 1995). On the self-sufficiency of individual southern farms in the 19th century see Gallman, "Self-Sufficiency in the Cotton Economy of the Antebellum South," *Agricultural History*, 44 (1970), 5–23, and Raymond C. Battalio and John Kagel, "The Structure of Antebellum Southern Agriculture: South Carolina, A Case Study," *ibid.*, 25–37.

<sup>80</sup> Garrison, *Landscape and Material Life in Franklin County*, 45, 56, 60, 160, finds this true for Franklin County, Mass., in 1855 when commercial production was common. So does Vickers, *Farmers and Fishermen*, 295, for Essex County in the 1830s.

Alternatively, we can think of historical change as a journey from North to South rather than from East to West, from Canada to Mexico rather than from the Mississippi to the Pacific. Going south, the landscape, the climate, the topography, the flora and fauna keep changing until at the end we have reached a region at great variance from our starting point, yet never do we cross a boundary where the fundamental geography is reoriented all at once. Change is evolutionary rather than revolutionary.

In practice, the North-South version of historical change gives more weight to the many changes over time than does focusing exclusively on a single big transformation. The market revolution tends to overshadow seventeenth- and eighteenth-century developments that may have affected farmers as much as nineteenth-century events. If the crest of the Rockies is the goal, the foothills fade in importance. But think of the major passages in agriculture before the 1780s. In the seventeenth century, Chesapeake farmers searched for a variety of tobacco that satisfied English taste, worked out a routine for growing and curing it, increased the productivity of labor by a factor of eight or ten, and collaborated with English merchants to sell their product in Britain and on the Continent. Those innovations shaped Chesapeake agriculture for two centuries and led in turn to the introduction of captured Africans to work the plantations, making possible the growth of farming operations four and five times as large as any in the seventeenth century.<sup>81</sup> The purchase of slaves and the expansion into the interior was financed by the emergence of transatlantic and local credit markets that provided the capital to purchase land and develop it, all the while implicating farmers in the debt that shadowed their existence from then until now. Southern planters owed their English agents, and all over the North the number of debt cases per capita rose sharply after 1720, paving the way for the fights over paper money that continued right down to the Populist movement.<sup>82</sup> The increased consumption of amenities and luxuries, the first of the consumer revolutions, accounted for a large part of the increasing debt to storekeepers, and much of the rest was probably the result of land purchases and the improvement of new farms.<sup>83</sup> As the seventeenth-century systems of headrights and town grants gave way to auctions conducted by provincial governments and purchase from large speculators, land prices rose in an active market. Between 1750 and 1770, land prices dou-

<sup>81</sup> For changes in the Chesapeake agricultural system from the 17th to the 18th centuries see Menard, "Economic and Social Development of the South," in *Cambridge Economic History of the United States*, ed. Engerman and Gallman, 1:261-73.

<sup>82</sup> Bruce H. Mann, *Neighbors and Strangers: Law and Community in Early Connecticut* (Chapel Hill, 1987), 33; Bushman, *From Puritan to Yankee: Character and the Social Order in Connecticut, 1690-1765* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967), 297; Szatmary, *Shays' Rebellion*, 29; Main, *Society and Economy in Colonial Connecticut*, 212, 215; Herbert Alan Johnson, *The Law Merchant and Negotiable Instruments in Colonial New York, 1664-1730* (Chicago, 1963); Deborah A. Rosen, *Courts and Commerce: Gender, Law, and the Market Economy in Colonial New York* (Columbus, Ohio, 1997), 34-55, 82-85; Peter Charles Hoffer, "Honor and the Roots of American Litigiousness," *American Journal of Legal History*, 33 (1989), 295-319. On the growth of debt in the Chesapeake see Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 128.

<sup>83</sup> Carr and Walsh, "Changing Life Styles and Consumer Behavior in the Colonial Chesapeake," in *Of Consuming Interests*, ed. Carson, Hoffman, and Albert, 59-166; Carson, "The Consumer Revolution in Colonial British America," *ibid.*, 483-697.

bled and tripled.<sup>84</sup> Throughout the eighteenth century, warfare required farmers to supply the armies without the help of hands recruited to march into battle. The French and Indian War, with its great influx of British funds, stimulated the northern economy, and the American Revolution was even more effective because American farmers supplied the armies on both sides.<sup>85</sup>

Although no one denies the reality of these changes, they tend to fade in the bright light of the later market revolution. We forget that European farmers in North America had to cope with far-reaching and disruptive change almost from the moment they set foot on these shores.

The emergence of the composite farm can be added to the list of important changes taking place in the eighteenth century. Doubtless the combination of self-sufficiency and modest market production existed in England and was found in all the early North American colonies. But not until the drop in tobacco prices in the 1680s did Chesapeake planters adopt the balanced strategy of the composite farm in an effort to buffer market swings. In the North, the sequence was reversed. The commercial side of the composite farm strategy was weaker in the seventeenth century. After 1700, the demand for New England farm products grew substantially when the French sugar islands opened up and coastal markets improved.<sup>86</sup> The steep rise in grain prices after 1750, caused by population growth in Europe, further improved the market for farmers in both North and South, making possible the balanced blend of commercial and subsistence farming necessary for competency. This combination of factors made the eighteenth century the time when the composite farm came into its own in all sections of Britain's North American colonies.<sup>87</sup>

These developments and changes should not be thought of as stages, marked by paradigmatic transitions or shifts in economic regimes. They are better regarded as strands woven into a rope, adding to and changing its character as they started and ended. The nineteenth century brought more than its share of new strands. The growth of large urban populations made a significant impact on farm management. Nearby urban markets, compared to the distant markets of Europe and the Caribbean, presented the surrounding farmers with commercial opportunities unknown earlier, especially in the North. Staples like flour, wheat, and barreled meat that were easily shipped across the

<sup>84</sup> Mitchell, *Commercialism and Frontier*, 52, 79–80, 83; Perkins, *The Economy of Colonial America*, 2d ed. (New York, 1988), 57; Main, *Society and Economy in Colonial Connecticut*, 206–07; Kim, *Landlord and Tenant in Colonial New York*, 139–40; Kulikoff, *Tobacco and Slaves*, 132.

<sup>85</sup> McCusker and Menard, *Economy of British America*, 364; Richard Buel, Jr., *Dear Liberty: Connecticut's Mobilization for the Revolutionary War* (Middletown, Conn., 1980).

<sup>86</sup> Jackson Turner Main believes that, in the last quarter of the 17th century, Connecticut farmers moved into the pattern that was to hold for the remainder of the colonial period; Main, *Society and Economy in Colonial Connecticut*, 368. For increased agricultural specialization and the growth of shipping tonnage in 18th-century Connecticut see Daniels, *The Fragmentation of New England: Comparative Perspectives on Economic, Political, and Social Divisions in the Eighteenth Century* (New York, 1988), chap. 1.

<sup>87</sup> Greene makes a similar argument in *Pursuits of Happiness*, chaps. 3–4. For simultaneous growth in self-sufficiency and market involvement in New York see Rosen, *Courts and Commerce*, 19–29. For New England see Ulrich, "Wheels, Looms, and the Gender Division of Labor in Eighteenth-Century New England," 6, 16; For women's involvement in the market see Gloria Main, "Gender, Work, and Wages in Colonial New England," *WMQ*, 3d Ser., 51 (1994), 39–66.

Atlantic or into the Caribbean gave way to specialty crops such as the peaches that enriched the Delmarva Peninsula in the mid-nineteenth century, or New England hay for the mushrooming urban horse population in Boston and New York, or cheese, butter, and milk for all the cities and towns, or broom corn and brooms to meet new standards of housekeeping. Farmers changed their methods to make the most of the new opportunities, cultivating all of their land continuously rather than leaving the bulk of it in fallow as they had done traditionally in America. Peter D. McClelland finds the interest in new farm equipment surging between 1815 and 1830, just as urban population growth took off. By the middle of the century, northern farmers were investing large sums in expensive equipment to increase efficiency.<sup>88</sup> During the next half century, elaborate marketing mechanisms were worked out to grade, pack, and distribute farm produce.<sup>89</sup> Meanwhile, manufacturers and factories offered new forms of employment to wives, sons, and daughters. In the South, the entire labor system was overturned as slavery gave way to sharecropping. The decline in world cotton prices at the end of the century blighted the prospects of white and black farmers alike. Amid changes like these, the ambient conditions of farm life constantly modulated even while the basic strategy of composite farming continued. Hal S. Barron calls the period 1870–1930 “the second great transformation,” and the rest of the twentieth century has brought still more change—the chemical revolution of pesticides and new fertilizers, the biological revolution of hybrids and new varieties, the New Deal’s introduction of crop controls and price supports, and the rise of corporate farming.<sup>90</sup> Agricultural change has never ceased.<sup>91</sup>

Among the changes is the phasing out of the composite farm. The strategy of producing for both family and the market gradually eroded over many decades, worn down primarily by demands from the consumer culture.<sup>92</sup> Like so many other changes, subsistence production did not end suddenly, nor was it always in decline. The goods that farmers produced for themselves rose and fell, but generally the subsistence segment of farming diminished over time. In the first years of settlement, farmers already were purchasing metal goods, most ceramics, and finished fabrics. After a surge in home production of cloth in the eighteenth century, northern farm wives gave up spinning and weaving almost entirely in the second and third decades of the nineteenth century, and

<sup>88</sup> McClelland, *Sowing Modernity: America’s First Agricultural Revolution* (Ithaca, 1997), x, 9. Farmers in the South did not adopt this practice. See Wright, *Political Economy of the Cotton South*, 53–54.

<sup>89</sup> Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York, 1991).

<sup>90</sup> Barron, *Mixed Harvest: The Second Great Transformation in the Rural North, 1870–1930* (Chapel Hill, 1997).

<sup>91</sup> Thomas Dublin, “Women and Outwork in a Nineteenth-Century New England Town: Fitzwilliam, New Hampshire, 1830–1850,” in Hahn and Jonathan Prude, eds., *The Countryside in the Age of Capitalist Transformation* (Chapel Hill, 1985), 51–70, and see also the other essays in this volume; Cronon, *Nature’s Metropolis*; Bushman, “Opening the American Countryside,” in *Transformation of Early American History*, ed. Henretta, Kammen, and Katz, 239–56; Danhof, *Change in Agriculture*; Clark, *Roots of Rural Capitalism*; Barron, *Mixed Harvest*.

<sup>92</sup> On the gradual shift to purchasing goods and giving up home production see Jeremy Atack and Fred Bateman, *To Their Own Soil: Agriculture in the Antebellum North* (Ames, Iowa, 1987), 204–08, 272–74.



southern women followed a few decades later. As rural society came to feel embarrassed by its rusticity, farm families required finer clothing and furnishings, more genteel flourishes in houses and gardens, and costly educations for the young. The desire for comforts and conveniences enjoyed in town and the need for legal and medical services added to cash expenditures. Retailers like Montgomery Ward and Sears Roebuck targeted rural customers with their famous catalogues. Finally, in the twentieth century, farmers felt they had to buy an automobile, and rural electrification brought a train of expensive appliances in its wake.<sup>93</sup> As purchases increased, the family provision component of the composite farm failed in its designated purpose. When homegrown and homemade would not suffice, farmers had to maximize their cash returns in order to purchase the desired goods. By World War II, the doom of the composite farm was sealed. Full-blown commercial farming took over.<sup>94</sup>

Composite farming thus is one current in a flow of continual change on the rural landscape. For the purpose of writing agricultural history, it is a conciliatory concept. It overcomes the tension between the hypothesized dominance of household production before the market revolution and the actual existence of extensive market production in the same period. In the multiple economies of the composite farm, subsistence and market production co-existed. The concept does not force a sharp division between farm types but allows for varying shades of market involvement. It accepts that farm families seized on market opportunities while pursuing family goals—and for the very purpose of achieving family stability. It helps us recognize the succession of changes that took place in the rural economy from the beginning of European settlement until now without exaggerating the importance of one short span. We see that great transformations stretch over decades and centuries rather than being crammed into a few years. Above all, the idea of composite farming permits us to understand how farm families coped with continual economic change and managed still to feed themselves and the developing nation.

<sup>93</sup> The coming of consumer culture to the rural North is analyzed in Barron, *Mixed Harvest*, chaps. 5–6. Barron reports an increase in the number of automobiles on U. S. farms from 85,000 in 1911 to 9,724,950 in 1930 when 58% of American farms had at least one car (p. 195). For other aspects of rural consumption see Bushman, "Opening the American Countryside," 239–56; David Paul Blanke, "Sowing the American Dream: Consumer Culture in the Rural Middle West, 1865–1900" (Ph. D. diss., Loyola University, 1996); Susan Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market* (New York, 1989); Mary Neth, *Preserving the Family Farm: Women, Community, and the Foundations of Agribusiness in the Midwest, 1900–1940* (Baltimore, 1995); and Michael L. Berger, *The Devil Wagon in God's Country: The Automobile and Social Change in Rural America, 1893–1929* (Hamden, Conn., 1979).

<sup>94</sup> For a different explanation of the end of self-sufficiency in the South see Wright, *Political Economy of the Cotton South*, 164–76. Wright's figures show that small and medium-sized farms still planted only about half their land in cotton, with the rest presumably devoted to subsistence crops. The same proportions or even larger corn-to-cotton ratios obtained in upcountry Georgia; Hahn, *Roots of Southern Populism*, 150.