



Thomas Jefferson's Farm Book: With Commentary and Relevant Extracts from Other Writings (Distributed by Unc Press for the Thomas Jefferson Foundation)

By Thomas Jefferson

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"I am going to Virginia," Jefferson wrote late in 1793. "I am then to be liberated from the hated occupations of politics, and to remain in the bosom of my family, my farm, and my books." Although Jefferson's liberation from public life was to prove temporary, in 1794 he did enjoy an extended interlude from political service. He set himself to applying the results of a lifetime of studying and experimenting with agricultural theories on his own farms. The letters, notes, and drawings that Jefferson left to posterity record his contributions to scientific agriculture.

The heart of these records is the Farm Book, a journal of plantation management that Jefferson maintained from 1774 until just before his death in 1826. The Farm Book, reproduced here in facsimile, is a wide-ranging depiction of the agricultural and industrial activities on Jefferson's plantations, primarily Monticello and Poplar Forest. In Thomas Jefferson's Farm Book, the late Edwin Morris Betts, professor of biology at the University of Virginia, embellishes this agricultural journal with illuminating commentary and relevant extracts selected from Jefferson's correspondence and other memorandum books. Organized topically, the annotations and extracts paint a uniquely complete portrait of plantation life and activity.

Jefferson's records reveal an experimental farm, implementing such innovations as horizontal plowing, a crop-rotation plan, and Jefferson's own revolutionary moldboard plow. In addition, the Farm Book is a window to slave life, containing Jefferson's notes regarding the rations his overseer distributed, the daily tasks required by particular slaves, and the number of yards he purchased for slaves' clothing. The book also portrays the industries pursued by enslaved and free

workmen, including the Mulberry Row nailery, joinery, blacksmith's shop, and spinning and weaving house.

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Editorial Review

About the Author

Edwin Morris Betts (1892-1958) was professor of biology at the University of Virginia for thirty-one years. He first became interested in Jefferson's gardening and farming pursuits while studying the trees Jefferson imported from abroad for planting on the grounds of the University. His scholarly legacy also includes his editing of *Thomas Jefferson's Garden Book*.

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