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FINDING THE SOUL IN THE SOIL: HOW WELFARE FARMS OF THE CHURCH OF  
JESUS CHRIST OF LATTER-DAY SAINTS CREATE SPIRITUAL COMMUNITIES

by

Matthew L. Maughan

A plan B thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

of

MASTER OF ARTS

in

American Studies

Approved:

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UTAH STATE UNIVERSITY  
Logan, Utah

2012

Matthew Maughan

Thesis

**Finding the Soul in the Soil: How Welfare Farms of the Church of Jesus Christ of  
Latter-day Saints Create Spiritual Communities**

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints was founded by Joseph Smith in 1830, but its connection with agrarian themes is found in all of LDS canonized scripture, implying a sense of antiquity from the time of Adam in the Garden of Eden. Scriptural examples and teachings of LDS leaders build the foundation of the Latter-day Saint agrarian theology. Valuing this connection to the land remained constant during the Church's early development, but diminished in theological focus years before the Great Depression. During the Depression, the Church proactively created a Church Security Plan (later renamed the Church Welfare Plan) to aid Church members' temporal and spiritual needs. Welfare projects provided relief through Mormonism's concepts of independence, self-reliance, stewardship, and welfare. The application of the Church Welfare Program encouraged the development of these doctrinal principles, and resulted in the creation of spiritual communities on Church welfare farms as the needs of the community were met, both LDS and non-LDS. Welfare farms, created during the Great Depression, establish an environment for the application of the agrarian theology that has existed within Mormonism since its beginnings, and acts as an ideal setting for the creation of spiritual communities.

Over the past thirty years, Mormonism's union with the land has seemed to recede into the shadows as the Church becomes globalized, and the close-knit spiritual bond that community members once felt with the land of the West has grown smaller and less frequent. Using four church welfare farms as case studies, I interviewed the Idaho Falls, Dayton Idaho, North Ogden Utah, and Fielding Utah farm managers concerning four major categories: how the farms were

established, general welfare farm practices, if they had noticed a loss of connection to the land in LDS Church membership, and how spiritual communities were formed on the farm among participants. Their answers revealed the attitudes on notions of independence, self-reliance, deification of the earth, and stewardship. I conducted these interviews in January and February of 2012, by phone and in person through a specific questionnaire, and found that the results confirmed what I had proposed; Mormonism, to a degree, has lost its touch with the land through decreased manual labor and infrequent visitation, but the welfare farm acts as a means of reconnection.

As I began looking for this elusive agricultural link, I found that Mormonism's agrarian connection is still alive, and it is established on the welfare farm. Church welfare farms are where Mormon doctrine, volunteer labor, and community spirit combine to create spiritual communities. Though not considered as sacred as temples, these volunteer-driven farms are considered special due to their "dedicated" status. According to historian Laurie F. Maffly-Kipp, "We can see [this] process of sacralization...[is] not simply in traditionally religious spaces, such as Churches or temples, but also in other overlapping or concentric sites... often sacralization includes the binary demarcation of sacred and secular sites within a given area...[or] conceptual space" (Maffley-Kipp 25). Examples of this sacralization within Mormonism include the "Sacred Grove" in upstate New York where Joseph Smith claimed to see God the Father and Jesus Christ, and the John Johnson farm in Ohio where Smith again purported to receive Divine visitations. Maffly-Kipp states, "[Groups impart] their own sacred meanings to the land through religious activities" (Maffly-Kipp 35). Thus, through religious acts wrought on the welfare farm managers and participants come to see the farm as a sacred site where miracles take place, both seen and unseen. Sacralization of church property is frequent within Mormonism through

dedicatory blessings, and individuals dedicating the welfare farm typically request the help and protection of heaven to make the farm prosperous.

Welfare farms exist for several reasons, each attributing to the development of a spiritual community. The philosophy of the welfare farm is to provide care for the poor and needy, foster self-reliance, and to encourage service in others (M. Thompson, oral interview, January 10, 2012). As Bruce Liston states, “Everything that gets done out here is to help our fellow brothers and sisters in need. We never lose track of that goal. If we can [farm] better, produce more, [and] do it more cost effectively...with less pesticide, we’re producing a better product more safely...we always keep that in mind” (Oral interview, January 21, 2012). In essence, the welfare farm is part of the bishop’s storehouse system which acts as a resource for LDS bishops to call upon to support individuals within the geographic ward boundary (both LDS and non-LDS) who stand in need of temporal assistance, and to assign volunteer assignments. The donated labor given by individuals results in a learning atmosphere where parents will often bring their children at a young age to help teach them the principles of work, compassion, and providing for those who are less fortunate (R. Stump, oral interview, February 3, 2012).

In discussing the concern and focus for providing for those who are needy, Liston remarks, “When you explain [the purpose of the food and its designated destination] to the members, you can’t believe the difference... how [much more] carefully [volunteers] pick the peaches than last year and the year before...people really care...and they want to give something to the people that are in need” (Oral interview, January 21, 2012). With the understanding of the overall purpose of the welfare farm, participants contribute to the creation of spiritual communities through donated service.

## **Section One: Theological Background**

### **A. Independence and Deification**

In his dissertation, “The Agrarian Values of Mormonism: A Touch of the Mountain Sod,” Donald Dyal asserts that, “The agrarian values of Mormonism derive from two doctrines: redeeming [or] subduing [plowing] the earth, and the doctrine of independence” (iii). Dyal addresses the concept of redeeming/subduing the earth as “somewhat complex in that it cuts across several other doctrinal ideas and is a subsection of at least one important doctrine,” being millennialism, or the belief that Christ will return to the earth in a glorious advent referred to as the “Second Coming” that will usher in a millennium of righteousness and the earth will be perfected (Dyal 112). Latter-day Saints believe that during and after the Millennium “the earth will be renewed and receive its paradisiacal glory” under Christ’s reign (Pearl 61). This first doctrine is manifest in the lifestyle of early Latter-day Saints as they worked and prepared the land, believing that their engagement with the soil helped contribute to the restoration of the earth to its “paradisiacal glory.” The Bible stated that due to Adam’s disobedience, the ground would produce thorns and thistles, creating a form of agricultural chaos. For Latter-day Saints, farming acted as a means to subdue the land, establish order, and restore the land to its Eden-like state before the Fall of Adam.

The act of gardening and/or farming partners man with God, and makes man identify with God in the creation process (Dyal 126). Individuals connect with the land as they plant, cultivate, and harvest; they feel joined to the growth and creation of the plant life. The act of dominion over the land empowered individuals, giving them confidence, and was common to early Latter-day Saints due to their agricultural community and lifestyle. “The legacy of theological Mormonism,” writes Dyal, “is that the membership of the Church [is] required to

husband the earth and its resources and to effectuate (sic) the earth's replenishment. Man is an agrarian catalyst who wields the plow not only for his own benefit or the benefit of his fellow man, but for the benefit of all creation" (Dyal 121). Dyal's usage of the term "legacy" is significant because it implies that Mormonism's lasting theological contribution will be a continual maintenance of and responsibility to the land, due to its millennialist belief. Thus, a Mormon's agricultural place within theology is to be the "agrarian catalyst," and to effect a change in the land. This change is what brings about the replenishment of the earth and ties into the millennialist belief in preparation of Christ's return before the Millennium.

The motivating force that underlies and attracts Latter-day Saints to an agrarian lifestyle is that Church members want to be like God. This doctrine of independence asserted by Dyal points toward the ultimate goal in Mormon theology: Theosis, or deification. True independence requires complete self-sustainability. LDS Church doctrine teaches that God is completely self-reliant because He has all power, and church members are commanded to become like Him (Mosiah 4:9, Matthew 5:48, 3 Nephi 27:27). Using scriptural citations in the Bible and in his own restoration scriptures (Book of Mormon, Doctrine and Covenants, Pearl of Great Price, and the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible), Joseph Smith described the process of learning and deification as a ladder where one begins at the bottom and ascends step by step until one reaches the top, long after mortal life has ended (Smith 268). The doctrine of independence acts as a sub-category, or perhaps a ladder rung, in the process of deification. In turn, the LDS doctrine of self-reliance begins with man's connection to the land.

Using biblical examples such as the creation of the Garden of Eden and God's commandments to Adam to "dress...and to keep [the garden]," Dyal asserts that God is the "author of agriculture" and that "man's highest aspiration is to follow in the footsteps of God"



(136). Adam was commanded in the garden that through his sweat and labor he would reap the produce of the land, and that ultimately he would return to the earth from which he was taken. The scriptural wording is notable because God establishes the fundamental agrarian link between man and the earth as He states to Adam, “For dust thou art and unto dust shalt thou return” (Genesis 3:19). Man’s relationship to the earth is spelled out blatantly, reminding Adam (and all Latter-day Saints) that the land will be the means of daily sustenance and corporal resting place; he will never escape his bond and duty to work the land. Connection to the soil becomes an intricate part of Latter-day Saint worship due to its relationship to self-mastery and self-reliance. The farm acts as a vicarious training ground where participants must learn (like Adam) the law of the harvest; one reaps what one sows. One may argue that planting, pruning, and harvesting contribute to the agricultural and spiritual training of those working the soil through hard work and perseverance. Latter-day Saints believe that as they strive to develop these virtues, they “follow in the footsteps of God” and climb the theological ladder of deification.

In his dissertation entitled, “Evolution and Development of the Mormon Welfare Farms,” Randall Rathjen describes the importance of the doctrine of independence as it relates to welfare farms. He writes, “Spiritual motivation to become and remain independent is exemplified in the welfare program, and the concept of independence has had several effects...the concept of independence is applied to rejecting government payments for which the individual has not in some form paid money” (47). A prophet king in the Book of Mormon declared to his people the necessity of self-reliance and absolution from governmental assistance through farming as follows: “And King Mosiah did cause his people that they should till the earth. And he also, himself, did till the earth, that thereby he might not become burdensome to his people” (Mosiah 6:7). By planting a garden or farming, Latter-day Saints believe they begin the process of self-

sustainability, which eases the pressure on government or Church resources by not becoming “burdensome to [the community or Church] people,” and fulfill the commandments of God by becoming independent. These scriptural examples influenced Latter-day Saint leaders to emphasize man’s dependence on the land and the necessity of work in relation to becoming independent.

In the Church manual *Teachings of the Presidents of the Church: Spencer W. Kimball*, Kimball illustrates the importance of this doctrine for Latter-day Saints by saying that many “have followed the counsel to have their own gardens wherever it is possible so that [church members] do not lose contact with the soil and so that [they] can have the security of being able to provide at least some of [their] food and necessities...it will bring satisfaction... and remind us all of the law of the harvest, which is relentless in life” (199). Kimball’s remarks exemplify Dyal’s assertion that Mormonism’s legacy will be agricultural, as LDS leaders, such as President Kimball, have counseled church members to maintain “contact with the soil,” which brings satisfaction, security, potential temporal safety for having food needs met. For church members, the law of the harvest acts as an eternal agrarian cadence.

This tone of definiteness within Mormonism ties into the concepts of food storage and self-reliance. Within the Bible, one finds the example of Joseph in Egypt and the seven years of plenty and the seven years of famine. In addressing the concerns of preparation for environmental disasters, the continual admonition to Latter-day Saints is found in one of their sacred texts: “If ye are prepared ye shall not fear” (Doctrine and Covenants 38:30). Thus, preparation becomes paramount for Latter-day Saints to feel security, especially as it pertains to millennialism. This preparation comes through a physical engagement to subdue the land and receive life-sustaining food and security through the harvest.

Church President Ezra Taft Benson once said that, “The revelation to produce and store food may be as essential to our temporal welfare today as boarding the ark was to the people in the days of Noah” (Rudd 375). In anticipation of natural and economic disasters, Latter-day Saints have been counseled to have large food and financial resources set aside, typically for periods of six months to a year. Self-reliance suggests not simply being able to eat in times of need, but to carry on daily functions in spite of financial hardship. This doctrine of preparation teaches Latter-day Saints to use resources wisely and the act of farming is central to self-reliance.

Kimball states:

We do reap what we sow. Even if the plot of soil you cultivate, plant and harvest is a small one, it brings human nature closer to nature as was the case in the beginning with our first parents...As a boy I saw how all, young and old, worked and worked hard. We knew that we were taming the Arizona desert. But had I been wiser then, I would have realized that we are taming ourselves, too. Honest toil in subduing sagebrush, taming deserts, channeling rivers, helps to take the wildness out of man’s environment but also out of him. (quoted in Dyal 199-200)

Kimball’s quote embodies the agricultural link between working the soil and the “taming” of one’s self. As stated, plot size or acreage does not matter. The land acts as a metaphysical or spiritual extension of the individual, and as the participant establishes order and control over the land, restoring it to its Eden-like state, one vicariously works to tame the natural self. Through the lens of Mormonism, the dominion over the soil teaches the dominion of one’s carnal desires, and the act of farming is what helps the individual develop self-mastery and progress toward deification. In discussing the nature of man, the Book of Mormon states that carnal desire, or the “natural man,” is “an enemy to God and has been from the fall of Adam, and will be forever and ever, unless he yields to the enticings of the Holy Spirit, and putteth off the natural man” (Mosiah 3:19). As man dominates the land through his physical engagement with the earth, he

subdues his carnal desires and draws himself closer to God. Church president Heber J. Grant, in a General Conference, stated:

It has always fallen to the lot of the Latter-day Saints to be engaged in tilling the soil... I believe firmly that the very best place in all the world to rear Latter-day Saints is on the farm... There seems to be strength, physical, moral, and religious, which comes to those engaged in cultivating the soil which, on an average, is superior to that of any other occupation I know anything about... Let us stay on the farm. (quoted in Dyal 179)

President Grant's words echo the ideals that Thomas Jefferson expressed about the necessity of farmers, calling them the, "most valuable citizens," due to their virtue, independence, and patriotism (quoted in Dyal 10). If farm life inspired the holistic attributes Jefferson identified and the physical, moral, and religious strength discussed by Grant, then it is small wonder that church leaders would have advised the LDS youth and church membership to remain on the farm. With Grant's words framing the farm as a virtuous training ground, it seems implied that participants of the farm flourished in innocent growth, working toward their goal of Theosis. Church members who had left the farm for the enticements of city life may have partially lost favor with Church leadership.

## **B. Stewardship**

Pioneers reached the Salt Lake Valley in 1847 and began to establish themselves and the area as they had before in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois using, "a remarkable colonization program" (Poll 1). They constructed homes, erected schools, and began work on the Salt Lake City Temple. Brigham Young had taken on the mantle as prophet leader of the Latter-day Saints and began to construct the community that his predecessor had envisioned. Under his direction, the Saints cultivated the land and began the process of subduing the desert. In his book, *The World of Nations: Reflections on American History, Politics, and Culture*, Christopher Lasch states:

In Utah, under Young's leadership, the Mormons created a self-sufficient, cooperative, egalitarian, and authoritarian economy *devoted not to individual enrichment but to the collective well-being of the flock...* Cooperation and planning caused the desert to bloom, in marked contrast to the exploitive patterns of agriculture which on other frontiers exhausted natural resources and left the land a smoking waste (67 emphasis added).

Young's way of developing the West exemplified the LDS millennialist belief by beautifying the landscape within cities and protecting natural resources from complete depletion. His leadership focused on community unity, and Young was able to teach individuals to be more concerned about the "collective well-being of the flock" than individual problems. This pattern established the prototype of the spiritual community where individuals developed bonds through service, working the land together for a united cause. Without the cooperation of the individuals scattered through various vocational pursuits, the community would have failed, and pioneers would have failed to cultivate the desert. Young sought to build a spiritual community through church doctrine and labor, wielding the "agrarian catalyst" to tame the deserts of the West. Young's consistent focus on protecting the land and only killing what was necessary for survival helped preserve Utah's natural resources and wildlife. He felt strongly that the Latter-day Saints were to be "stewards" over the land, and that "any contamination of the world and the misuse of resources [was] a form of wickedness" (Orton 241). This connection between millennialism and stewardship, taught by Young, made men and women accountable for the way they worked and shaped the land. Young's millennialist belief of being a caretaker of the land required diligent effort on the part of Church members to not be wasteful of reserves. Brigham believed that mankind would "become God's rival by needlessly destroying His creations" if natural resources were squandered (Orton 242). Richard Stratton quotes Church President Ezra Taft Benson as saying, "Stewardship in the Church is a very important matter...we are stewards over these

earthly blessings which the Lord has provided, those of us who have this soil and this water... are morally obligated to turn this land over to those who succeed us—not drained of its fertility, but improved in quality, in productivity, and in usefulness for future generations (Stratton 19). Benson’s linking of stewardship and morality gives weight to this LDS doctrine found in the teachings of Latter-day Saint leaders and within Mormonism’s sacred texts because it indicts members of the Church who destroy the environment and fail to participate in or respect the agrarian aspect of millennialism.

As Latter-day Saints cultivate and work the earth to restore it to its paradisiacal glory, they feel they partner with God by creating order through growing produce in farms and gardens. This development of independence through self-mastery acts as a rung on the ladder of deification that LDS members climb theologically and leave behind an agrarian legacy.

## **Section Two: The Church Welfare Program and Development of Welfare Farms**

The needs of the Church are based on the needs of the members, and the most visible change to the agricultural activity in the Church over the past seventy years occurred during the Great Depression. The Church Welfare Plan was officially announced in 1938 at the April General Conference of the Church, but had its beginnings several years before. The “forerunner to the Church’s security plan” was a program developed and initiated in 1932 by Harold B. Lee, the stake president over the Pioneer Stake in Salt Lake City (Goates 91). President Lee, along with his two counselors Charles S. Hyde and Paul C. Child, set about securing a storehouse for the delegation of produce, creating contracts with farmers to assist during the harvest and retain a share for those involved, and assigning workers from all wards to help with farm and industrial projects with the understanding that their families would be well supported (Goates 94). Knowing the large need that still existed among the LDS members of the Pioneer Stake and

community, President Lee requested to speak with the First Presidency of the Church. After hearing his plan, the First Presidency agreed allocation of the Church's tithing funds to supplement and provide a wide variety of "foodstuffs" for those needing the assistance of the Bishops' Storehouse. In 1935, President Lee continued to meet frequently with the First Presidency, and on March 15, 1936, he presented a plan that met their approval (Goates 94, 143-144). A month later, Harold B. Lee was assigned as the new managing director and put in charge of the new program (Rudd 42). This plan was presented in the 1936 April General Conference under the name of the Church Security Plan, with Elder Melvin J. Ballard of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles as the chairman, and Harold B. Lee as managing director. Two years later it was renamed the Church Welfare Plan (Rudd 50). Under the direction of President Heber J. Grant, and his counselors J. Reuben Clark Jr., and David O. McKay, the Welfare Plan became the Church's "primary program...under which the curse of idleness...and the evils of a dole [were to be] abolished, and independence, industry, thrift and self-respect be once more established amongst people. The aim of the Church [was] to help the people to help themselves" (Rudd 45). The Welfare Plan seemed heaven-sent to Church leaders, lay members, and the community that received its assistance as it combated the destructive psychological and economic effects of the Depression. The Church Welfare Plan became the vehicle to create a spirit of self-reliance within church and community members and fused the doctrines of subduing the earth and developing independence. The creation of an independent community became the subject preached from Latter-day pulpits as the Welfare Program utilized the unemployed in welfare projects, giving individuals a renewed sense of purpose and working the land for the temporal benefit of all. These projects increased and Church welfare farms were created.

### **Section Three: Case Study of Four Church Welfare Farms**

#### **A. The Beginning of the Welfare Farm**

When stakes were organized prior to 1983, two things were considered necessary; a High Priest group to function as the directing ecclesiastical leadership in the area, and a welfare project (typically a welfare farm). These welfare farms typically resided far away from the assigned geographic stake, and Church members were forced to travel large distances to fulfill welfare assignments (M. Thompson, oral interview, January 10, 2012). In response to the economic strain on Church membership, the Church began to group the farms together and coordinate them under professional management. Many of the farms now in operation are the result of small Church or stake farms expanding their operation through donated or purchased land, to where it would be profitable to maintain (K. Housley, oral interview, January 12, 2012). After product assessment, the Church welfare department would pick the highest quality and most needed product that could be grown for the area (M. Thompson, oral interview, January 10, 2012).

Along with the combining of smaller ward and stake farms, on rare occasions farm locations have also been selected through “inspiration.” For example, in the creation of the Fielding welfare farm, Church General Authorities were driving from Salt Lake City to Pocatello, and as Roy Stump states, “felt impressed that [the Church] needed a welfare farm right here in this area...through inspiration” (Oral interview, February 3, 2012). Bruce Liston shared a similar experience stating that his “manager could tell a beautiful story about [the] revelation [he] received to buy [the] farm...that [the decision to purchase the farm] was one of the strongest feelings of the Spirit that he had ever had” (Oral interview, January 21, 2012). These accounts illustrate how LDS Church members rely upon perceived “promptings” from Divinity,



designating these feelings as spiritual guidance referred to as “inspiration.” Thus, welfare farm locations include temporal and professed spiritual components that factor into their geographic placement and carry an implied sense of Divine approval in their development.

**B. The Crop and Food Distribution**

The flow of planting, farming, and harvesting follows the flow of regular farms. With the Idaho Falls, Dayton Idaho, and Utah Fielding farms, planting occurs in the spring with wheat, alfalfa, corn, and potatoes. Produce is grown and harvested in the fall with alfalfa and wheat being harvested all summer long. Corn and potatoes are harvested in the fall, as well as the peach crop from the North Ogden area.

**Planting and Harvesting Schedule**

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
#1 Idaho Falls Farm			W	P	C			W	C/P	C/P		
#2 Dayton Farm				A	C	A		A/W	A/W	W/C	A	
#3 N.Ogden Orchard								PE	PE			
#4 Fielding Farm			A	C		A	A	W/A		C/W		

Wheat = W  
 Alfalfa= A  
 Potato= P

Corn = C  
 Peach= PE

During the winter months the farms repair fence, feed cows, and fix equipment. Each farm is assessed by paid professionals in the Church headquarters welfare department and managers receive direction to grow specific crops to meet the needs of the church locally and globally. The farm is run by a manager, but he counsels with his direct supervisor about the direction he

receives from Church headquarters, giving the welfare farm more of a corporate structure than a traditional family owned farm. Once the crop type has been selected, farm managers decide when to grow or rotate smaller crops through different locations on the farm, depending on plant physiology (K. Housley, oral interview, January 12, 2012). For example, the Fielding welfare farm rotates its cattle across five smaller satellite farms in the fall to eat the excess alfalfa and corn stalks to feed the cattle and save money instead of buying feed (R. Stump, oral interview, February 3, 2012).

Food grown on the welfare farm is sent primarily to bishop storehouses where it is processed and distributed to individuals who obtain a bishop's order from their local bishop for either food or commodities. Proximity to a cannery plays a significant role in crop selection as Church headquarters and farm managers decide what type of produce is grown on a welfare farm (K. Housley, oral interview, January 12, 2012). The alfalfa and corn produced on the Fielding farm supports a dairy in Alberta Utah, where it feeds approximately 3,200 cows. The wheat goes to a mill in Kaysville where it is cleaned, milled, and packaged to be shipped to the bishop's storehouses, depending on the orders the storehouse receives. The Fielding farm, in an effort to provide the highest quality product possible, has raised its standards above the USDA standards for beef, all with the intent to "try to provide as much as possible for the poor and needy [the] commodities that go into the bishop's storehouse...as economically as possible" (R. Stump, oral interview, February 3, 2012). Almost the entire portion of the Idaho Falls welfare farm potato crop goes to the Utah Bishop's Central Storehouse, a recently completed building that was built to withstand a 7.5 earthquake and has 536,000 square feet under one roof, roughly twelve and a third acres. Raw potatoes are kept at the storehouse while those that are processed into flakes and pearls go to the mill in Kaysville where they are packaged with the "Deseret" logo and then

distributed to local storehouses that are in need (M. Thompson, oral interview, January 10, 2012).

### **C. Farm Labor and Volunteer Service**

One of the most significant ways welfare farms create community, and differ from the typical “one man, one farm” model, is that they are powered through minimal amounts of employees and primarily through volunteer help. Welfare farms are unique in this way, relying upon a volunteer labor base to ensure that the farm is maintained and produce harvested according to schedule. Liston says that the welfare farms “[present] a community feeling and... it’s not [his] farm, and it’s really not all the Lord’s farm, [but] it is the community farm. There are [community members] that don’t know that the Lord owns [the] farm. They just know that [it is] the community farm that everybody goes to, [to] do community service” (Oral interview, January 21, 2012). Liston’s observation shows how community members bond to the farm and feel connected to the spiritual community that exists. In the book, *Building the City of God: Community & Cooperation Among the Mormons*, Leonard Arrington describes the Mormon Welfare System from 1936-1975, stating that the program “has less tangible but important effects upon those whose volunteer labor sustains [the program]” (Arrington 356). Relating an account from a Church owned fruit orchard in the Salt Lake City area, Arrington writes, “There seemed something wholesome about the event that put urbanites-factory workers, truck drivers, college professors, and mailmen-in touch with processes that bring forth the sustenance of human life... An intangible spirit of community solidarity mingled in the sorting shed with the restrained, aristocratic scent of delicious apples” (357-358). Arrington’s use of different demographics depicts equality among participants, and illustrates the welfare farm as a leveling

field that creates a sense of inclusion and unity. While Mormon welfare farms grow produce to provide sustenance for individuals in need, both LDS and non-LDS, it is the act of farming and working the ground as a community that creates spiritual ties among participants. Arrington’s account shows an ideal snapshot of what the welfare farm is pictured to be: a small utopia where individuals from every walk of life meet together regardless of vocation, political views, gender, race, or social status, and work side by side for the betterment of the individual and creation of “community solidarity.”

Volunteer labor includes missionaries (both old and young), ward and stake assignments for local LDS members, and community members. Church employees fall into one of four categories: full-time vested, full-time unvested, part-time, and seasonal. Church headquarters receives labor requests from each farm and approves managers to hire help in the four categories as needed. The Idaho Falls farm is 4200 acres, and is run by two full-time employees plus the manager. The Dayton farm is 1600 acres and run with the manager, one full-time employee, and three to four part-time employees. The North Ogden farm, because it is a small orchard, is managed by a single part-time employee, and the Fielding farm is run by three full-time employees and two or three part-time employees due to its several locations that make up the farm.

**Welfare Farm Employees**

	Acres	FTE	PTE	S	M	V
#1 Idaho Falls Farm	4200	3	0	Varies		
#2 Dayton Farm	1600	2	3-4	Varies		
#3 N.Ogden Orchard	20	0	1	Varies		
#4 Fielding Farm	3000	3	2-3	Varies		

Full-time Employee = FTE  
 Part-time Employee = PTE  
 Seasonal Help = S  
 Service Missionary = M  
 Volunteer Help = V

How is it that such large farms can operate on such minimal amounts of employed manpower? Aside from wanting to manage financial resources wisely, LDS Church members provide a free labor base that willingly fulfills labor assignments simply by receiving them as part of the “covenant” that they make when they are baptized. When first utilized, stake labor assignments were rotated through only a limited number of stakes at a time, but as Church membership increased and stakes were split and reorganized, welfare farm assignments were delegated to an increasing number of stakes. Each manager assesses the needs of the farm and submits a request to the stake welfare committee, which is generally comprised of the agent stake president, a chairman, a safety representative, labor control, and others (K. Housley, oral interview, January 12, 2012). This committee then contacts the stake presidents within the specified area boundary who then issue the assignments through the bishops within their stakes to be carried out in their individual wards (M. Thompson, oral interview, January 10, 2012). Roy Stump recalls when he worked on the Michigan farm that he would have 16,000 volunteer hours assigned to various stakes, and so five or six hundred people would show up with their children to work. Days and weeks following their service, these volunteers would continue to call him and tell him how much they appreciated donating their time in service on the farm. He describes it as truly “catching the vision” of what helping at the welfare farm means (Oral interview, February 3, 2012).

Missionaries are called to help serve on the welfare farm and are key to establishing spiritual communities. Church service missionaries are non-proselyting missionaries who perform various functions within wards and stakes. One of these callings may be to help work on a welfare farm. Church service missionaries range from individuals who may have physical or mental handicaps that impede proselyting service, to individuals who are retired from vocational

careers and simply want to give service. Each mission assignment may differ in the assigned time of missionary service from several weeks to multiple years. Each manager interviewed emphasized what a valuable resource these missionaries are. Mark Thompson stated how his Church service missionaries have brought his electrical equipment up to standard, helped bring his trucks into good operating condition, and that the “whole operation has become better because of individuals like this, [who] take ownership and pride in it,” and are “invaluable” to him as a farm manager (Oral interview, January 10, 2012).

Bruce Liston relates a wealth of stories about the importance of Church service missionaries, and that he feels “each missionary is brought [to the farm by the Lord] for a reason” (Oral interview, January 21, 2012). He told the story of how, in the middle of harvest, an individual came up to him and stated that he felt “inspired” that he needed to be on the farm during the harvest as a missionary. Liston recommended that he speak with his bishop about being assigned to the farm for the harvest. When he returned some time later as a service missionary, Liston asked what he was able to do, and the man responded that he had done machinery maintenance his whole life. That very week, all of Liston’s machinery broke down in the middle of the harvest. The bin trailer axle split in two, hydraulic hoses broke and needed to be replaced, and one of the tractors had issues with its clutch. The service missionary was able to repair everything, and Liston felt that the man was spiritually guided to the farm to fix the equipment (Oral interview, January 21, 2012).

Liston also told the story of how the Church had purchased some land right below the peach orchard and wasn’t planning on farming it until the owners had left. The man who had sold the land unexpectedly went into a nursing home, and the family let the Church take it over instantly. The Church wanted to expand the orchard almost immediately. Liston had received

four missionaries just a few weeks prior who were “young and full of energy...and [he] needed just that kind of help,” to expand the orchard. He recalled that later on he needed a truck driver, and within a short time God (he felt) provided a missionary who had driven truck his whole life. Another time he needed someone who had experience managing a large warehouse operation because the farm had grown large enough that Liston needed someone to manage the shed. Liston states that, “the Lord sent me a missionary” who had been managing all of the Wonder Bread production plants in Utah and knew exactly what needed to be done and helped the operation to run smoothly. His final example told how he currently has a retired engineer working on the farm, and in the past year (2011) the state of Utah has been studying a specific insect that has been impacting farm production and asked that the farm create a water sensing system to monitor the benefits of lower water management. Someone would be required to follow the programs, track down the information, and check it all the time. The engineer missionary has lengthy experience and satisfaction doing those things.

Liston states that “they all come with certain skills,” and that “God sends them” to the farm at specific times for specific reasons to bless the farm (Oral interview, January 21, 2012). Sharing perceived spiritual experiences on the farm generates faith-driven labor as employees, volunteers, and service missionaries are conditioned to work with the feeling that they are “supposed” to be on the farm by Divine designation, and that their labor provides for the poor and the needy. This founding part of the spiritual community, established through the oral traditions of farm managers, creates a feeling of Divine approval within participants and they consider the labor they are donating as sacred service. Within this type of environment, participants of the farm act differently than they would on a standard farm. Language is different,

communication is different, and workers have positive attitudes (B. Liston, oral interview, January 21, 2012).

The overall goal of the farm requires the efforts of each individual and instills a sense of accountability for the service given. These perceptions, feelings, and oral traditions create the foundation for the spiritual community. At times, the volunteer labor comes from outside the local congregations by those in need or those who simply want to give service. In the interview, Bruce Liston pointed out how many people come to the peach orchard to work off community service for DUI's, felonies, high school truancies, and general community labor projects. Many work on the farm for personal satisfaction while others are mandated legally to work off court ordered service hours. But even with the mandatory obligation of giving service, many of these individuals choose to come to the farm because they don't want to pay off their obligations in any other way, preferring to work on the farm rather than picking up garbage next to the highway or a variety of other options. Liston states, "Amongst these people that are non-members of the Church... they come back again, and again, and again. There are some people who have to do community service and they don't want to do it any other way. They really like coming out here and getting their hands dirty and doing this kind of work in [this] environment; there is a different feeling here...they are drawn to [this] kind of environment" (Oral interview, January 21, 2012). The setting that Liston mentions is the spiritual community, because participants experience the feeling of partnering with God and it causes change in individuals as they work the farm with others. Liston illustrates this simply by saying that among other things, people on the welfare farm "don't cuss," because of the religious atmosphere, regardless of their background or reason for donating service (Oral interview, January 21, 2012). These individuals



continue to return to the farm and perpetuate the creation and longevity of the spiritual community.

Among those working on the farm are people who are repaying the local bishop for assistance they have received. Individuals who receive a commodities order from the bishop may be asked to work at a cannery, Deseret Industries thrift store, or a welfare farm, to repay in labor for received assistance. These individuals are referred to the farm by the bishop, but are not necessarily members of the Church, nor are farm managers aware of who is being referred to work for a bishop's order or who is simply filling a Church assignment. At other times, someone may be desperate for income and the farm manager may need help on the farm. As Mark Thompson states, "If anybody ever came to me and they were desperate, and I needed somebody, I would do all I could to hire them for a short time and help them out. That's what I believe the farm is here for" (Oral interview, January 10, 2012). As individuals work to repay what assistance they have received, they experience a renewed sense of self-worth which increases faith in the local church membership and establishes components of the spiritual community.

Some participants come to comply with Church or labor assignments, but are not always the most effective help. Maintaining the proper balance between necessary work and volunteer help is not always easy. Many of the individuals have no experience working in an agricultural setting and need constant supervision. Others have a hard time understanding what needs to be done and impede the flow of the farm work (M. Thompson, oral interview, January 10, 2012). Another problem might be an overabundance of help and the farm does not have enough work to keep the volunteer busy for an extended amount of time. Bruce Liston shares the example of asking volunteers to haul rocks off the farm by hand. Someone asked, "Isn't there a better way to do this?" and he replied, "Yes, but there's 100 of you here, so let's do it the hard way and get it

done” (Oral interview, January 21, 2012). Even when the flow isn’t perfect, or an individual needs constant direction, farm managers are grateful for volunteer help in accomplishing the farm’s goals.

#### **D. Impact on the Community**

The community surrounding welfare farms benefits from the presence of the farm for several reasons. Mark Thompson states he has noticed that the farms surrounding him are beginning to implement some of the same cosmetic appearances of his farm, such as mowing the perimeter of the farm to enhance the appearance (M. Thompson, oral interview, January 10, 2012). He shared an experience where the community held a service project on the farm and he was able to donate all of the processed potatoes to the Idaho food bank. After this activity, Thompson has had a community member of another faith come to the farm two additional times to sort potatoes because he enjoyed the work that was being done. This example shows the individual impact the farm has in the development of spiritual community, attracting the participant to return repeatedly. Along with the Idaho Falls welfare farm, Thompson has been put in charge of smaller community gardens for individuals who lacked the land to grow their own food. The first and second year he had twelve farms, which grew to twenty-four, then to thirty, and in 2010 he had forty-five. These gardens are available to all community members and are being used by a variety of individuals (M. Thompson, oral interview, January 10, 2012).

Housley describes the beneficial aspects of the farm as spiritual and not always obvious to the community. He states that alleged blessings may include increased rainfall for the year, protection from disaster, successful projects due to the faith of the community members, and other blessings that may go unnoticed (Oral interview, January 12, 2012). Because welfare farms are dedicated through prayer, farm managers (and some participants) perceive them as

sacred sites where miracles ensue. These spiritual events are often termed as “blessings,” and range from small coincidences to miraculous happenings. Individual perception plays a large role in the categorization of what is deemed as a “blessing,” and its magnitude. Oral traditions that help create the spiritual community are almost completely dependent upon a participant’s perception of a specific event; what one worker views as the hand of God blessing the farm may be meaningless to another worker. For example, Roy Stump shared an experience of how he stood out in his field and prayed that a storm would pass his farm and not destroy the crop. He stated that after his prayer, the storm went around his farm leaving his crop untouched, and laid his neighbor’s wheat to the ground (Oral interview, February 3, 2012). Depending on the perspective of the individual, this event was either a miracle of protection for the welfare farm, or a simple change in wind direction that proved unfortunate for the neighboring farm. Connection to the spiritual community depends upon individual willingness to “believe,” or perceive events through the lens of faith. Therefore, the strength or success of the spiritual community depends largely on individual perception of events and is as varied in strength as participants are varied in faith-based perceptions.

Liston explains how on a global basis, individuals who are among the poor and needy are able to receive food and the “benefit of what we do here.” He states the welfare farm creates a place where the “community gets together and does something together, [and] it forms a knitting bond [where individuals] don’t have to have a 9/11 in order to bring a country together. If [the government] had welfare systems throughout the nation, it would bring people together and we wouldn’t have to have a disaster to do that, and that’s what this [farm] does for this community” (Oral interview, January 21, 2012). Liston’s statement reveals the depth of the bond that welfare farm participants experience on the farm. The feeling of unity created in spiritual communities,

developed through service on the welfare farm, may be comparable to the unity that people experience through tragedy or natural disaster because it creates a focused purpose that requires individual participation for a majority good.

Stump shares the story of how he moved to the Fielding welfare farm from the Michigan welfare farm, and was in the process of bringing the equipment across the country with his wife, spending thirty five or forty hours on the road “burning the candle at both ends,” and his crop was suffering. He states, “Well, my neighbors came in and harvested my soybean crop [in Michigan], six, seven hundred acres. Hauled them to town, and these were non-LDS members, neighbors, but they had somehow gained a testimony of what the Church does and appreciated it enough that they did that” (Oral interview, February 3, 2012). This example shows how participants of the spiritual community unite to help one another, even when religious views differ from those of the welfare farm; the spiritual community is a non-denominational bond of service to one another. The volunteer service within the community is not simply a positive because it creates ties, but it actually helps to improve the crop. As volunteers plant, weed, thin, and harvest, the farm productivity increases the produce and the quality of what is being grown, thus aligning with the over philosophy of the welfare farm.

The community and farm are linked together in many ways, but one that is not as obvious is how working on the welfare farm helps prepare participants for natural disasters. When asked how the farm creates feelings of camaraderie between the farm and the community, Thompson, Liston, and Stump, all mentioned natural disasters and how the community is able to respond in emergency situations due to the readiness of the welfare farm participants and their ability to take action in the time of crisis. It also shows how the community would be able to band together to support one another if something catastrophic were to occur. Liston states that one of the

reasons the welfare farm still exists, instead of buying the produce somewhere else, is that it creates a “supporting togetherness and...quick organization of people at a certain time,” comparing the harvesting of peaches to a “controlled” natural disaster. He further states, “On [a smaller] scale, that happens every year at a certain time...but by doing that, our members learn to be on the ball...to take responsibility and to fulfill...responsibilities...and they wouldn’t get that if we just went out and bought this [produce]” (Oral interview, January 21, 2012). This disaster response structure works on a local level, responding to the needs of the immediate community and surrounding area. Stump mentions that if there was to be a large natural disaster or the economy failed, welfare farms are already producing high quality products, and bishop storehouses are in place to help people when “everything falls apart” (Oral interview, February 3, 2012). Stump’s apocalyptic reference alludes to the millennialist belief that major disasters (economic and natural) will precede Jesus’s Second Advent and the Millennium, which could include the collapse of the national economy. The LDS beliefs of independence and self-reliance are entwined with millennialism because they stress the importance of temporal and spiritual preparation for the prophesied disasters through personal effort. In such events, welfare farms stand as vital resources already in place for community and Church support.

The welfare farm is not always warmly embraced by the community. At times, differences of opinion arise and the purchasing, location, and other aspects of the farm may create contention for community members and fellow farmers. Some complain that the Church raises the land value and then they (the farmers) are forced to pay higher taxes, even though their land value has also increased. Farmers also comment that if they had a large volunteer force work a few hours on their farm, their crop would improve, and that because the welfare farm receives that help, the Church gets a premium for their higher quality produce that the other

farmers won't be able to receive (K. Housley, oral interview, January 12, 2012). In Ogden, the peach harvest may conflict with community events or other scheduled activities because the crop must be harvested when it is ripe and the farm needs people to pick the fruit instead of enjoying planned festivities (B. Liston, oral interview, January 21, 2012). Roy Stump states that because it is a Church welfare farm, Satan amplifies people's jealousies and misunderstandings when tensions arise. When the Church is able to buy property that others have been hoping to buy for an extended period of time and haven't been in a financial position to do it, it causes tension in the community (Oral interview, February 3, 2012).

#### **E. Creation of Spiritual Community and Individual Impact**

Not all Church or community members recognize the importance of retaining a connection to the land as taught by previous LDS leaders. This apathy begs the question, "Has LDS Church membership lost touch with the land?" Richard D. Stratton claims that "this unique and intriguing doctrine—kindness to animals and the environment—still has not taken root in the lives of many members of the Church. This, in part, could be due to Latter-day Saints' ignorance of this subtle, yet persistent teaching" (viii). Many contemporary Latter-day Saints lack this connection to the land. Kurt Housley states that one of his fears is that because farms are run with much less manual labor, "the relationship [with the land] might be getting diminished...because the next generation...might not have as much of that kind of experience to draw upon," and because the work now is so mechanized individuals do not really engage with the land and the "feeling has been lost" (Oral interview, January 12, 2012). He attributes this disconnect to the infrequent visits people make to the farm due to the loss of manual labor and the increased use of mechanized equipment. Where individuals used to fill ward assignments, "every month or three times a year," they now come, "every other year or once every five years."

Because participants lack consistency in farm attendance, they do not feel the connection to the land that previous generations experienced. The welfare farm helps people to get in touch with the land and regain a feeling that has been lost (K. Housley, oral interview, January 12, 2012).

Stump agrees with Housley, feeling that if you interviewed the U.S. general public, perhaps up to half of the public has lost touch with agriculture enough that they wouldn't know where their food comes from, or how it's processed (Oral interview, February 3, 2012). When asked about how farming connects people to the land, Stump mentioned that individuals who live in homes with paved walkways, have cars, and who don't toil or sweat for their food, don't fully appreciate where their food comes from because they don't experience the daily engagement with the land like farmers do, regardless of mud, manure, dust, or weather. In all of this, a farmer's connection to the land creates a proximity to God because the dependence is so much greater. As he states, "You're... constantly praying for the crops, the cattle, for yourself to stay safe. You're praying for your men to stay safe and not get sick, and in all of this you are humbled... You know, the land helps you keep from being prideful... [Otherwise] you get out of touch with the land" (Oral interview, February 3, 2012). Stump's wording is important in describing how working the land engenders humility. Farm work makes participants aware of their dependence on God, and encourages the development of the virtues of humility, prayer, charity for others safety, and faith that it can be done; all components strengthening the spiritual community. Stump's comments echo those of President Kimball's, describing the development of humility and connection to God received through taming the land, as farmers and volunteers tame their pride or the "natural man."

Bruce Liston has also seen this loss of union with the land. He states that the North Ogden community has lost part of its agricultural tie to the land due to the reduction of fruit

orchards that once covered the hillsides. Many neighbors have remarked to him that if the farm is ever sold and developed, they will be moving, because they enjoy feeling a part of the orchard. He also expressed that because America has gone from an agricultural society to an urban society, “[It] has lost something...People don’t know how to grow things anymore...and we offer that...tie to the agricultural situation” (Oral interview, January 21, 2012). He goes on to say that, “When a person can do something physically [on the welfare farm], they...have a chance to interact with their brothers and sisters...for that bonding experience, and it’s the same as if somebody in the neighborhood is in the middle of an emergency and they have to go help that person...People grumble, but when they leave, it’s just cool to watch the transformation that takes place, and how it relieves a burden from their lives, and you just see that happen” (B. Liston, oral interview, January 12, 2012). How does welfare farm work relieve burdens from participant’s lives? Liston’s comments about “transformation” are significant because they depict a noticeable change in attitude or behavior seen among the welfare farm participants after giving service. Manual labor is important in the transformation process because participants feel joined in the creation process by working the land with their own hands, partnering with God. It gives people satisfaction to be the agrarian catalyst and increases unity among participants because they are working together to achieve the community goal. This spiritual community affects worker’s personalities, creating a positive influence in the community.

### **Oral Traditions**

It is interesting to note that the development and continuation of the spiritual community lies largely in the oral traditions of those who have previously worked on the farm. These recollections are shared in group settings in church buildings and on the farms, and create a perceived spiritual history of God’s dealings with individuals on the farm. All four farm



managers I interviewed view the welfare farm as a place where Heaven literally meets earth, and where miracles occur. Seen through the lens of Latter-day Saint faith, these managers classify extraordinary situations as both blessings and miracles. Bruce Liston, in talking about the many events that have happened and continue to occur on his farm describes why, for him, the farm is such a spiritual place. He claims he sees the hand of God in everything, and he recounts five major events that he deemed as miracles sent to bless the farm. The first perceived miracle occurred his first year when freezes were killing off all the crops in the area. He and the manager began to inspect the buds on the trees and found almost all dead. He and the manager had seen this many times before on their own farms and both knew the crop was in trouble; he estimated five percent had survived. He had a meeting at the stake building and mentioned to those in attendance that the farm needed their prayers because of the failed crop. A week later, the buds were alive and well, having supposedly come back to life (Oral interview, January 21, 2012).

The second miracle, according to Liston, happened last year. The farm had the largest fruit picking day in its history, and the manager was concerned that if the volunteers didn't stop picking, the excess fruit picked wouldn't be able to fit into the cooler at the Ogden cannery and it would go bad. They wouldn't be done until three or four in the morning. Thirty minutes later, a rainstorm came that lasted twenty minutes, and all the volunteers went home. The fruit was fine, and when they took it to the cannery, they fit 170 bins in the cooler with room for two more bins, each bin being 500 pounds of fruit (Oral interview, January 21, 2012). Liston's story of Divinity guiding the fruit picking to a specific amount so that none would be wasted, inversely parallels the New Testament biblical account of Christ blessing and multiplying the loaves and fishes to adequately feed the multitude that followed him. The accounts deal with Divinity either providing or limiting food abundance to meet the needs of the occasion.

After a hailstorm one year, Liston thought the peaches were being destroyed by worms because they were so badly damaged. After taking some to Utah State University, Liston was told that the damage was caused by hail, not worms. He worried it would be the worst crop the farm had seen due to the extent of the damage, but the fruit grew out of it and it ended up being a great crop. That was the third professed miracle (Oral interview, January 21, 2012).

Liston states the fourth and fifth miraculous events both included receiving help from individuals at Utah State University that resolved farming problems. He had an outbreak of earwigs, (which he had never dealt with as a farmer) and no one he talked to could tell him when to spray, or how to know how bad the infestation was. Several university professors showed up on a research trip and were able to tell him the extent of his problem and how to resolve it. He sprayed immediately, only a few weeks before harvest, and it took care of the problem. He saw this as divine intervention to save the crop. The last perceived miracle involved USU professors showing up again, unexpected, and diagnosing why the 900 trees in the newly planted orchard were dying off. They determined that roots of the trees were rotting from lack of drainage, and Liston had to use “completely different” techniques to grow the same trees twenty to fifty feet down the slope due to the landscape. Without the aid of these professors, the farm’s crop would have suffered greatly on two separate occasions. Liston felt there was nothing coincidental about the timing of the unexpected visits, but that the professors were “inspired” to visit the right place at the right time to save the crop with their knowledge (Oral interview, January 21, 2012).

Mark Thompson states that he believes that people who work the soil feel closer to God because they experience the law of the harvest (or reaping what one sows), and that life on the welfare farm acts as a training ground to teach people how to care for church and community members, physically and spiritually (Oral interview, January 10, 2012). Ultimately, the service

rendered through any assignment results in growing food that feeds those who are in need, and this creates a harmony and unity among participants as they work for a common purpose. Retelling the stories and memories of past events is pivotal to the creation of the spiritual community. Kurt Housley recalled a time when a group of young men and women were picking up rocks on the farm and stopped for a break, they began to ask questions about where the commodities ended up. After explaining the typical process for the goods, Housley also explained that much of the grain grown on the farm was made into Atmit (a porridge made of sugar, powdered milk, oat flour, and a vitamin/mineral mix) to feed people in Africa suffering from malnutrition and the effects of famine (Weaver, “Ethiopian Aid”). He also mentioned that the Church had sent “corn to Korea to divert a famine,” and that the youth enjoyed those types of stories and were excited to be able to help (Oral interview, January 12, 2012). This example of oral tradition shows how storytelling makes volunteer service attractive and perpetuates the effects of the spiritual community on the welfare farm. Individuals serve, contribute to the cause, and then pass on verbally what service they were able to provide, which attracts others to volunteer at the farm and the cycle continues with new participants.

Part of the creation of the spiritual community occurs within the walls of ward meeting buildings. Kurt Housley states that many times the reminiscing that goes on occurs after individuals have completed a labor assignment, both on the farm and during Sunday school meetings. Participants will share during the meeting how they felt and what they learned through the assignment. Often people will mention memories of doing the same work as a child or a similar assignment they filled in previous years; how hard the work was, how fulfilling it felt when it was finished, and how people cherished the time they spent with family and other ward members (Oral interview, January 12, 2012). Liston states that he, “feel[s] bad [for]

those...[who] don't have the opportunity to experience a welfare farm...[because] everybody who had a welfare farm when they were a kid always talked about going...and doing service...and what kind of community, or structure it presented for them." He continues, "There're some non-members that won't have anything to do with the Church, but they'll come here and work on the farm. That happens all the time" (Oral interview, January 21, 2012). Those who differ in religious or personal views feel a connection to the other members of the community through the farm work as they mutually work the soil.

Housley states that, "as people work on the farm and exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, then [their service] builds their faith and...it has a ripple effect on the community...[and] the people who render that service are blessed and the community is blessed [in ways] you can't always see" (Oral interview, January 12, 2012). The farm acts as a training ground where members of the LDS faith believe they are able to apply the doctrinal teaching of service in the creation of the spiritual community. Housley states that in the LDS Church, service is "one of the pillars of the gospel," and that while members may live or fulfill the other commandments, if they, "don't care for the poor and needy... [or] serve anybody or give back to [the] community, then [they] are failing" (Oral interview, January 12, 2012). It stands to reason then, that service would be an intricate part of the spiritual community. Participants of the farm establish bonds as they serve together, with the primary purpose of helping others. One of the unseen "blessings" that Housley describes is the friendship that people develop as they help each other. Housley states that the farm brings to "people's awareness that there is a service that needs to be rendered... and it can make a big difference somewhere in the world... [the farm] helps...members of the Church...live that gospel" (Oral interview, January 12, 2012). Housley's statement that service "needs to be rendered" ties into the LDS concepts of duty and the

responsibilities members agreed to through baptismal covenants. Thus, LDS members have an ecclesiastical obligation to render service to support people in need. This type of service helps to build the faith of Church members on the farm and provides a means to (as they believe) fulfill the commandments of God in the community.

Liston states that he feels the farm creates a bond of brotherly kindness and charity, and that it “does something spiritual for people...because they’re out here all the time [and] I see it in the lives of people who come out [to the farm]” (Oral interview, January 21, 2012). As an example, Liston states that people of all different vocations come out to the farm and work side by side, like his dentist who has visited the farm for years and states that he comes and serves on the farm because the blessings he receives from heaven are worth more than his time of donated labor. In addition to this, Liston mentions that this volunteer (who is also a LDS bishop) has taken care of the trees on his Church building property “perfectly” because he’s spent so much time on the farm as a volunteer. This bishop told Liston that he came out to the farm “because it [did] something for him personally” (Oral interview, January 21, 2012). This example shows how the farm has an individual impact upon participants that extends out into the community agriculture, tying into the millennialist belief of restoring and beautifying the land to its paradisiacal state.

Stump believes that the welfare farm, because of its purpose and what it does, is divinely protected from types of natural influences that would otherwise ruin the crop. He recounts the time he was on his farm in Michigan and a storm threatened to destroy his wheat, and he stood in the field and prayed, “and petition[ed] the Lord to let the storm go around [me], and the neighbor’s [field was] laid flat on the ground...and the storm just kind of [went] around us, so you see things, blessings, that just don’t happen across the fence” (Oral interview, February 3,

2012). Liston agrees that the welfare farm is somewhat protected at times due to its divine purpose of providing temporal help to people. He recalls how a few weeks before Thanksgiving in 2010 there was a strong freeze. Many of the farmers in Willard lost large portions of their orchards to the cold and the welfare farm went on to have the second largest crop it has ever had since its beginnings.

Stump shares an example of how spirituality occurs and perpetuates the creation of a spiritual community among participants on the farm by stating, “Heavenly Father seemed to always make it rain whenever work days were and we’d be in the mud, and the humidity high, and it would be hot, and people would be sweating, and you’d just have people bear their testimonies. I remember one guy say... ‘I can’t go to the temple...but I can get the same feeling here with the Spirit when I work on this welfare farm,’ [and] the people benefit from the service... [and] the neighbors got to feel it too” (Oral interview, February 3, 2012). Stump’s example is important because it shows how LDS participants of the farm claim that they feel as close to God on the welfare farm as they do in LDS temples, which they believe to be the most sacred places on earth. In his interview, Mark Thompson said something almost identical. He stated, “We [the welfare farm] are literally a spiritual thing; meeting the temporal needs before meeting the spiritual needs...I’ve been told by some of [the volunteers] that it’s almost like the same feeling they get when they go to the temple...it’s kind of a sacred feeling” (Oral interview, January 10, 2012). It is significant to note that these two managers had both witnessed LDS participants compare welfare farm service to temple worship; temple worship being one of the highest forms of Latter-day Saint worship. According to LDS beliefs, temple work provides the opportunity for LDS members to perform ordinances vicariously for the deceased in their progression toward spiritual salvation. In a similar fashion, welfare farm work allows

participants to vicariously feed the people of the community and the world, providing a type of temporal salvation. The fact that participants state temple service and welfare farm work provide the same spiritual feelings exemplifies the significant impact that welfare farming has on Latter-day Saints, and the type of spiritual community that is created as they participate with others working the soil.

### **Individual Impact**

The spiritual community begins on an individual level, and Liston states that the welfare farm has a lasting effect on participants who frequently give service. He notes how for example, those in the North Ogden area who have trees in their backyards, and those who are beginning to promote more tree production in the community, are “almost always” people who have volunteered on the farm and developed the knowledge and techniques to thin, prune, and nurture their personal trees “vicariously” through their service on the farm (Oral interview, January 21, 2012). This type of pride and ownership leads individuals to increased faith as they create something together, both LDS and non-LDS community members who live in the area. They are engaged in a “feeling of caring for something together,” and after the work is finished, they will spend almost an equal amount of time talking and creating “brotherly bonding and goodness” (B. Liston, oral interview, January 21, 2012). Housley mentioned how he received a young man on his farm that had learning disabilities and other things that he needed to work through, and that through working on the farm he made “incredible progress in what he was able to do,” and was able to serve a mission without any restraints. The young man later told Kurt that, “working on the Church farm was one of the best things that he had ever done because of the skills...and the abilities he had gained were all from the farm (Oral interview, January 12, 2012).

In addition to the volunteers of the farm, the service missionaries, and the community members, the farm has had significant impact on the managers that operate the farms. Because these men are managing the farm, they set the pace for what needs to be done, and they contribute to the creation of the spiritual community. Mark Thompson feels that the ultimate goal of the farm is “the worth of an individual... [and] to provide a place for people to come and do service that feeds more” (Oral interview, January 10, 2012). Kurt Housley states that after dealing with corporate politics, he sought to work on the welfare farm because he wanted to make a change in who he was as a person, how he did things, and the way he treated people. The farm has helped him to change the way he interacts with people and provided a way that he feels he can give back to the community (Oral interview, January 12, 2012). Bruce Liston’s description of Church welfare farming as “farming in the celestial kingdom... [or] perfect farming” emphasizes the heavenly connection that he believes exists on the farm, and his feelings that things “just seem to work out” on the welfare farm as compared to the difficulties he’s experienced in the past on his personal farm. This is one of the reasons he is a “part-time farmer that works full-time,” and he feels the Lord has trained him to be a better farmer through the welfare farm, increasing his faith in the church and the community (Oral interview, January 21, 2012). Roy Stump states that the welfare farm has shown him how the Holy Ghost has influenced the way he approaches problems and the power of prayer and pondering in his farm work (Oral interview, February 3, 2012).

Each of these managers, when asked what effects the welfare farm had on them, responded in a way that implied increased growth in their perceived spirituality. The spiritual community comprises all participants of the farm and knits community relationships tightly together to form a strength and unity that supersedes personal or cultural barriers and impacts



people on an individual level. Housley's example of coming to the farm as a source of redemption to, "change who he was," echoes Liston's comments about the farm relieving personal burdens and transforming participants as they engage the land in the effort to serve others.

### **Epilogue: Where Mormon Welfare Farming is Headed**

A reoccurring question from the Church headquarters welfare department to the welfare farms is, "Are welfare farms worth keeping?" Liston mentions how the Church was going to close a large peach orchard in Hurricane, Utah in 2011. From a financial point of view, the farm was not making it, but the church and community members fought to keep it open, even if they were required to run it without a professional manager. The twenty stake presidents in the area knew what a benefit the welfare farm was to its members and the bond it created within the community, so they petitioned Church headquarters to keep it open and succeeded (Oral interview, January 21, 2012).

Liston's example shows one of the existing tension points between the welfare farm and Church headquarters. While the goal of the farm (as established by Church headquarters) is to provide for the poor and needy, establish self-reliance in its participants, and to encourage service in others, the farm must provide enough profit to justify its continued existence. This leads one to ask, at what point does the financial aspect of the welfare farm outweigh its spiritual philosophy, or can it? In the religious context, is it justifiable to decrease potential spiritual growth among farm participants in order to better control resources? If the welfare farm is attributing to stronger community ties and indeed creating spiritual sub-communities, is the underlying philosophy important enough to keep the farm running although financially it is in the red? A possible solution to this problem includes the Church purchasing food through other

vendors, and while some may feel that this accomplishes the most important aspect of the welfare farm's goal, Bruce Liston states that the participants could no longer experience the professed spiritual benefits or community bonding that takes place. This corporate approach to the farm is also evident as major decisions (such as crop selection, equipment purchases, large scale problems, etc.) are relayed back and forth between the welfare farm and Church headquarters in an almost tennis-like approach, ultimately ending with what headquarters wants done, whether or not the decision is consistent with what the farm manager desires vs. the traditional farm where the farmer knows the farm, makes the decisions, and implements change as he sees fit (Roy Stump, oral interview, February 3, 2012). This corporate model was also evident as I tried to gather information from various persons, trying to locate which individual was in charge of the farms I was using as case studies, and who, ultimately, had the information I was seeking. One of the limitations of using the four welfare farms as case studies was that some of the questions asked needed to go to "the next level" where someone over the farm managers had more information and could provide answers.

As time passes, will church welfare farms proliferate, or will they be closed down? In his interview, Mark Thompson discusses the future of welfare farming:

If you envisioned a circle on the board and within that circle were all the Utah farms, and then another circle that goes around the perimeter that goes around that circle, and within that [second] circle are all of the farms within the United States, and then a third circle that encompassed all of those circles that was even bigger yet, that circle would encompass all of the international farms... Brazil... England... Australia... as pressure's being put on the Church to allow people to develop those farms... they will buy more acreage in the second circle, and possibly even in the third circle. (Oral interview)

This bulls-eye approach to understanding how the church will increase its farms illustrates how rapidly global church membership is accelerating. As property value increases on church welfare farms and membership grows, the Church will sell Utah farms to generate money to buy

additional farms nationally and internationally. Breaking with the traditional “one man, one farm” model, church welfare farms would continue to be run through extremely low labor costs, using volunteer service as the primary means to power the operation, as opposed to other farms where the labor is paid. Through this research I was able to identify a wave-like pattern showing how community interest in farming increases during periods of economic weaknesses as individuals cut costs by learning to grow produce in gardens. When the economy strengthens, agricultural focus decreases.

Considering the positive effect of the church welfare farm on communities and LDS membership within wards and stakes, is shutting down any welfare farm the right choice? In their book, *Restorative Commons: Creating Health and Well-being through Urban Landscapes*, editors Lindsay Campbell and Anne Wiesen explore the positive impact that community gardens have on participant health and community culture. These urban gardens resemble the spiritual community of welfare farms because participants garden for the benefit of others aside from themselves (Campbell 72-73). These community gardens were instituted to provide food for the poor, educate schoolchildren, create job programs for the unemployed, and provide produce during times of shortage (Campbell 127). It is significant to note that most of these gardens are run by volunteer efforts, almost identical to the LDS welfare farms. One of the most unique aspects of the New York case study pertains to the use of gardening in the rehabilitation of people serving jail time. This chapter analyzes how individuals who connect with nature through manual labor, “begin to assume a measure of control over their lives,” and “the individual learns the simple connection between work, responsibility, care and the benefits associated with cultivating not just the garden, but themselves” (Campbell 183). This statement is almost identical to LDS Church President Spencer W. Kimball’s statement about youth “taming

themselves” as they worked to tame the desert land. As identified in Campbell’s work and the welfare farm interviews that I conducted, the farm/community garden creates common areas where community members gather for multiple purposes, and decreases crime through a higher awareness and increase in community member associations in the geographic area surrounding the site.

According to Mark Thompson, at one time a third of the LDS membership was on welfare and the Church was able to care for approximately four percent, which has increased since then (Oral interview, January 10, 2012). Additionally, the Utah Bishop’s Central Warehouse has 100,000 square feet of space sitting vacant with the estimation that it will be utilized as storage within the next fifteen to twenty years (Mark Thompson, oral interview, January 10, 2012). It seems that welfare farms will not be shut down to supplement other welfare department projects but may be sold in an effort to generate necessary funds to buy additional farms for increased food production and community building on a global scale. This welfare resource will act as a cultural buffer for missionary work and establish friendly community feelings toward the Church.

Welfare farms, created during the Great Depression, establish an environment for the application of the agrarian theology that has existed in Mormonism since its beginnings, and acts as an ideal setting for the creation of spiritual communities. The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints has established an effective model for the construction of spiritual communities by incorporating connections to an agrarian theology, establishing independence and self-reliance among Church members, and relying upon a voluntary work force that finds fulfillment in establishing community ties by feeding the poor and the needy. As community participants join together and engage with the land, they find their soul in the soil.

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## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS



APPENDIX A  
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

**How does the farm begin?**

1. How is the area for a welfare farm picked?
2. What is the planting, farming, and harvesting schedule?
3. What is the overall goal of the welfare farm?

**Food designation – what is grown and where is it sent?**

4. What type of food is grown, and where is it processed and taken?
5. Is the church looking into expanding land use for additional welfare farms, or have other plans into creating additional farms?

**Farm Labor – who runs the farm?**

6. Is volunteers aren't LDS, do you provide training about the goals/aims of the farm?
7. How many employees run the farm?
8. What are the volunteer assignments/managerial assignments?

**The Creation of Spiritual Community**

9. What examples of community have you seen during your time as a farm manager?
10. What benefits does the community receive from having these welfare farms around?
11. Can you remember any outstanding stories of community that stand out in your mind?
12. What effects has welfare farming had you, personally?
13. Has the welfare farm ever been a source of contention in the community?
14. Have volunteers ever caused any large or lasting problems?
15. What is the most beneficial aspect of the farm?

APPENDIX B

IDAHO FALLS WELFARE FARM INTERVIEW WITH MARK THOMPSON

## APPENDIX B

### IDAHO FALLS WELFARE FARM INTERVIEW WITH MARK THOMPSON

T: Hello this is Mark.

M: Hi Mark, its Matt.

T: Hi Matt.

M: How are you doing?

T: Good.

M: Is this a good time?

T: Yep, this is a good time.

M: Okay, well I sure appreciate your willingness to give me some time and help me out with my thesis here to collect some information.

T: You're welcome.

M: I've got a list of about 18, 19 questions, and I guess, just kind of pick your brain, and I'll fire away and you can give me feedback, and give me answers, and if you've got any questions for me I'm more than happy to explain my assignment a little more if you're curious, or however you want to proceed.

T: Okay.

M: So my first question is more or less, when the church is looking at a welfare farm, how do they decide which area to use?

T: Okay, um, it's really interesting Matt, they've purchased these farms, and...do you know the history of those farms?

M: Slightly, using Elder Rudd's book Pure Religion, I've looked into a couple dissertations and stuff, but, not a huge history, no.

T: Well, you know, originally a stake didn't think it was a stake until they had two things organized. One of them was a welfare project, and the other one the High Priest group. And so what would happen is that these stakes would go, because they didn't have a farm really close, they'd go sometimes across a state border, or they'd go forty miles away, which was economically not very good for a stake to ask its members to go forty miles away to do a project.

And when the Church took back over that in 1983, and assessed that, and originally the stewardships that were let out, geographically, they would pick the product that they needed from the area that produced the best produce. And so if you had corn, it would be a corn place, if you had beans, it would be a bean place, if you had potatoes, it would be a potato place, and interestingly enough, when they did that there was a farm that had a lot more potato equipment than this farm, and my person who was over the farm, the committee chairman, he said, “You guys aren’t going to raise the potatoes, we’re going to raise the potatoes,” and so he says, “you just transfer all that to us,” and he told the Church, he says, “We’ll raise the potatoes for you.” So they transferred all the potato equipment to me and then we started raising [potatoes], you know, on a regular basis, putting the potatoes into the Church. And so that’s kind of how that happened. Well, we’re the best, I think, potato place, that you can get potatoes from. And so that’s how I got the assignment. Does that answer your question?

M: So how long have you been doing the Church welfare farm?

T: Twenty-eight years.

M: Wow. So you’ve seen it from its start to where it is currently.

T: Yea, we used to sort the potatoes down in a cellar and we stacked the potatoes against a wall and then physically we’d load the truck by hand, you know each fifty pound box, and I started putting them on pallets with a front end loader, and as you brought those outside and put them on a truck, you know a front end loader, the hydraulics on a front end loader were so touchy with two thousand pounds on it that they’d go whipping around, so I developed a piece of canvas that I could strap around there and keep them from flying all over, and then I had a year that was frozen and they didn’t want any of them, and they didn’t want me to wash them, and I said, “Just let me wash one load,” and so we washed one load and it just took off from there, and then we’ve evolved from there from kind of an old old way to do it, ..and we’re not really modern, we’re not near as modern as some of the warehouses, but it’s fast, it’s efficient, and it’s what the welfare system wants.

M: Okay, awesome. So as far as planting, farming, and harvesting, what kind of schedule does the farm run on?

T: I used to depend on quite a bit of labor for planting, but I don’t anymore. I use Church Service Missionaries and there are two full time employees on the farm. And so, we usually start planting wheat the last two or three days of March, and the last two or three weeks of April. And then we go right in and get ready for corn and potatoes. We plant to corn and potatoes usually around the same time and that’s the last week in April or the first week in May.

M: So, how big is the farm?

T: It is 4200 acres.

M: It's a lot bigger than I was thinking.

T: And then when we start the harvest, we start harvesting the wheat and this year we actually had three machines, three grain combines, we've got two others off of other farms and we brought three machines in and harvested the wheat, and we harvested the potatoes. [With] my potatoes, I use almost 100 percent volunteer labor except for the full time help that I told you about, I have a couple boys that help me too occasionally, and the rest are missionaries and there are 13 stakes, there are actually 16 stakes now that share in the harvest labor.

M: Okay. Alright, And that's kind of the main focus of where I'd like to head but I've got a few questions before we talk about the volunteer work. So what is the overall goal of the welfare farm, or where does the food, I know you've mentioned corn and wheat and potatoes, and that's where it's grown, and so as far as the overall goal of the farm, where does it go or what is it used for primarily?

T: The goal of the welfare farm is [to provide] care for the poor and the needy, foster self-reliance, and encourage service in others. That's our guiding purpose. And so, as I look at that, we started out ten years ago, we probably had 3000 hours, and I've tried to increase the amount of donated hours using people who want to come and drive tractor, who want to come and drive truck, individuals who want to be church service missionaries, and my church service missionaries are really just starting to get going. I'm just learning how to do that, and it's kind of a process in that, "what do they do?" and "how can they help me without interfering," but yet take some of the meaty things off of my plate so that I can manage better and that's been a real struggle for me Matt. You know it's really hard because some of them just come and kind of stand in front of you and they want to be told everything to do and I try to tell them and I say, "okay, I want you to come, I want you to see what's going on, and I want you to just feel what needs to be done, and I want you to come to me, if we need to talk about it, you know if there's a project you just take off and do it, and that way I'm not watching over you, you report to me but, it's your project. And I've got a long ways to go before that happens but I've got some missionaries that have really shined. And I've got one that's a returned electrician and he helped me bring all my electrical stuff up to standard; I've got one that's a retired truck mechanic and he's helped me bring a lot of the trucks up to a really good operating condition. He's invaluable to me; he's done things for me that would have cost me a lot of money. And I think our whole operation is becoming better because of individuals like this, they take ownership in it and take pride in it. And they start to do things that they can sense need to be done, [and] that really helps me.

M: Wonderful. So once the food is grown does it go primarily to bishop storehouses or is it allocated through other, I don't want to say agencies, but other venues where it gets to people, or is it just primarily through the bishop's storehouse?

T: There's another place that maybe you haven't heard about, it's called the Utah Bishop's Central, have you ever heard of that?

M: I haven't.

T: All of my potatoes, except for a few here in Idaho Falls go to what's called the Utah Bishop's Central Storehouse, and that, right now it's the brand new one. You need to go there. It's a brand new, state of the art; it is 536,000 square feet under one roof. That's 12 and a third acres under one roof.

M: And this is in Salt Lake?

T: Yea, it's in Salt Lake. It's on 56 west and I-80, it's just off of that. If you're headed west, take that exit, 56 west exit, go over the over pass and I think it's like the last turn on the left, and you're there.

M: Ok.

T: And it's huge, it's phenomenal! So all of my stuff goes there as well as many of the other products, the flakes go there, and so what I do is I supply all of the church for all of the flakes and the pearls and the raw potatoes that go into the bishops storehouse. Or the raw ones are fresh, and those are eaten as fresh produce and then I supply all of the raw material to accompany and they process it for price and they give it back in the form of flakes or pearls and then those go into, they go actually to the mill at Kaysville. And they package them into our packages with our Deseret's logo on it and then they go to the bishops storehouse, the Utah bishops storehouse and their stages there until they get an order for them and then those are filled and then those go out and are distributed to the local bishop's storehouse

M: Oh, that's quite the operation.

T: Oh, it phenomenal, it's incredible and just to see that building, that building is built to withstand a 7.5 earthquake.

M: Wow. Ok well, I'll be taking a trip down to Salt Lake to check that out. With everything that the welfare farm does, do you know, is the church looking into creating additional welfare farms, or do they have plans for future locations that you are aware of, or are they content with where it's at now, or do you see future expansion?

T: Okay that's an interesting question, because they will have different welfare farms in the future. And the reason why is because if you envisioned a circle on the board and within that circle were all the Utah farms, and then another circle that goes around the parameter that goes around that circle, and within that circle are all of the farms within the United States, and then a third circle that encompassed all of those circles that was even bigger yet, that circle would encompass all of international farms, we have farms in Brazil. We have farms in England. We

have farms in Australia that I know about. Okay, and what I was taught is that the Utah farms I mean it's just comical, those farms are worth a hundred twenty five thousand dollars an acre, it's really hard to hold onto something that's worth that much money and you just produce food with that. So as those farms go away, as pressure's being put on the church to allow people to develop those farms, then they will take that consideration and they will buy more acreage in the second circle. And possibly even in the third circle.

M: That's interesting

T: And the reason why is so that we can maintain what we've got. There used to be that a third of the Church's population was on welfare and we had the ability to take care [of] about four percent. It's increased from that right now, and I don't know where we're at. But I do know that the Utah Bishop's Central Warehouse was built with the idea that it could expand our need for the next twenty five years. So it has about 100,000 square feet of space that is not being used right now, but within next 15-20 years and yes, it will come right into production and we will have to add on. It will already be there and they built with that in mind.

M: Wow, okay that's very interesting. That's good information. That helps me a lot to know where they are headed. As far as your laborers; you've got two full-time employees, and the rest are volunteers. Are they all LDS, or do you have non-LDS come?

T: I could have non-LDS if I had seasonal workers, people who came for a short time and then left, but right now mine are all temple-recommend worthy. And that's because I hire them back every year, or I want the ability to hire them back every year. There are actually three categories. There's full-time, then there's, well, there's four. There's full-time vested, full-time un-vested, then there's part-time, and then there's season, and I think there might be another category but those are the ones that I deal with.

M: Okay, and typically you can hire within those categories. If there is anyone who is not LDS; I mean obviously it's not like you seek them out or try to establish who is and who is not, but if there is anyone who is non-LDS, do you explain the program, do you explain the goals and aims of the farm, and try to educate I guess?

T: I would yes. If anybody ever came to me and they were desperate and I needed somebody, I would do all that I could to hire them for a short time and help them out. That's what I believe the farm is here for.

M: Now those that are hired, do they work for the full season? Or is it a month to month?

T: It could be for the full season, like the full growing season, or the harvest season, or plating season.

M: Ok. So as far as the volunteer assignments, how are the delegated to the ward, or how does a church member receive the assignment and then they show up to you? Is it on a rotation schedule?

T: Um, that's how it started out. We rotated through three stakes then we kind-of burned them out. Then we went from three stakes to twelve stakes. Then we included another stake because one of the stakes was split, and now we just included three more, so we're up to sixteen stakes I believe. The assignment is actually given from an area authority seventy, but it didn't used to be that way so we kind of did the assignments in reverse. We knew what we needed and we went back to the area authority seventy and we say we need this stake for this many hours... we need this stake for this many hours, then he turns around and he made it a priesthood assignment to those stakes that we asked for

M: Ok, so with doing this, well my project, deals a lot with what I call the creation of community on the welfare farm and how that happens between the strangers who are on the farm, these laborers, members, non-members, everybody. And I was curious if you had seen examples of community during your time as the farm manager that stood out in your mind

T: As community? Ummm...

M: If I defined that enough, if I've explained that well enough. Meaning, I guess more as... and I could define it as bonds, maybe made through service, just kind of that spirit of community and camaraderie that happens. Have you seen examples of that on the farm?

T: I haven't seen an example on the farm yet, and I think it would take a disaster for that to happen. I'm convinced it would happen immediately. But you know I saw an example with my neighbors, we helped with a funeral; the other women, my wife went to the people she knew was helping with the funeral and she offered our relief society and so many dishes of potatoes and so many salads and so many desserts. The lady started to cry; "I had no idea you people were like this"; but I haven't seen that on the farm. I'm trying to think back in the last 28 years. My neighbors pretty much watched me and did the exact opposite of me.

M: OK.

T: And now they're watching me, and they're paying attention. And that's just because of practices that we have, the way the farm looks nice. I've seen also other farms oh, they're perimeters, we started mowing our perimeters a long time ago and I see a few more farms every year a few more farms mowing there perimeters because it makes their farm look so pretty. I don't think that's what you're looking for but...

M: Well, that partially ties into it. That plays into my next questions. What kind of benefits does the community receive from having the welfare farms; and as you've said the impact that it's had where it's influencing other farms, not only the appearance but where they are starting to watch



you and follow your practices or to ask perhaps for some education on how to farm more effectively and that's going on?

T: Um, let's see. I forgot what I was going to say. This is a really good area to do that on because I think that some of the more critical crops like potatoes really kind of drive a lot of things to happen in this area. But I haven't really come together with the community in something that needed really desperately to be done or to be able to help. Um I've helped put out a couple of fires, a tractor in a ditch. Stuff like that, but I have not really..... Okay what we did, oh, here's an example I guess. There was a bank that wanted to have a Christmas party out here. They wanted to do a service project. And I said you know I'm just thinking, I didn't want it to be just another service project, and so I called him right back and I said, "Hey, here's an idea. Why don't you bring your whole bank, and non-members out to my farm and help me for three two-hour or two and a half hour periods and then get your members to buy some of those potatoes and donate them to the Idaho food bank," and so they did that and had a wonderful time. And since then I've got one guy from that food bank or from that bank that's not a member, he's been out here twice to sort potatoes. And maybe that story you could tell. I don't know what the ramifications are. I asked them, I said okay now these potatoes they are in our box with our logo, but they essentially bought the potatoes that went in there. But they donated those to the community, so those went right into the community, not to our bishop's storehouse; to the Idaho food bank.

M: No, that's exactly what I am looking for because that shows the fact that he could come back and the kind of the community also that's what I'm talking about is how does the welfare farm create new communities, whether they be spiritual communities on the farm, or if they create you know, not typically physical community but kind of like you said, these relationships that are built on the farm through service and through working the land. And so that's something interesting I'd like to; I don't know how I would but I'd be curious to talk to him and ask him why he continues to go back.

T: Yes, that would be the feeling he got

T: Okay another example are these gardens, Bret maybe told you about the gardens. Okay um, three years ago, four years ago, um, we wanted someplace for a family to go that didn't have the means to grow their own garden. That didn't have a little piece of land, or they didn't have any. And so, we petitioned off a small acreage, and it was very small, and I think I had twelve gardens the first year. And the second year I had about the same, the third year the stake president told me to double them. I had thirty gardens. And last year we had forty-five gardens. We opened that up to member and non-members. There are at least two Spanish families that are not members who come out and they have a garden and they produce a lot of the food for their families out of those gardens. And that's been a really fun project. My neighbor doesn't like them. He's not a member. He doesn't have any more of the privacy that he used to have; he can't go up and down with the four-wheeler without one of the gardeners worrying about hitting

him or something like that. But overall it's just been a phenomenal thing. The church actually did a small video on it.

M: Is that the one called Sam Charlie's garden?

T: No, it's Idaho Gardens.

M: Ok I'll look that up; Idaho Gardens

T: I think that's what it's titled. It's about a gal by the name of Carolyn Neely and my supervisor was going by one day and they just stopped and talked to her. And she said she had lost her job and she was feeding three kids that were going to college out of that garden and pretty much produced the food that they would eat all summer long.

M: Ok, so aside from your neighbor with the four-wheeler, has there been any sources of contention in the community or any problem, um either with the welfare garden or problems, you talked a little about volunteers kind of being more in the way rather than helping?

T: Uh, no they used to cut signs down every year on this farm, but they've never done it since I've been here.

M: Ok.

T: Um, what else...once in a while they'll go out and turn donuts in my field, um but that's just kids having fun. They've blown my mail box up when I was a bishop three times. I think that was my own members.

M: Good to know.

T: Ha ha ha

M: Well then, in your experience. How do you think the work on the farm connects members of the faith to the community? And do you think is there a relationship between working the soil that helps people feel closer to God?

T: Oh, absolutely because you get to experience the law of the harvest.

M: Uh huh.

T: When you get out in the earth and produce things; the food is healthier, it's not processed, [and] you know you are eating healthy. You know where that food came from and you've literally experienced the law of the harvest; which is one of the greatest things you can experience.

M: And so in your opinion the welfare farm increases faith in church members.

T: Yes. I've been told by some of them, that it's almost like the same feeling they get when they go to the temple. Because they know they feed so many people when they come. It's kind of a sacred feeling. Matt have you ever been inside a bishop storehouse?

M: Yes.

T: Well I think there's a special spirit when you go in. If you are reverent when you go in and if you just sit and feel for a minute, you experience a feeling that I don't think you'd find anywhere else.

M: So in your opinion, do you think part of that ties into the doctrine of service for the members? Not only are they, I mean working the land. I mean ultimately I think it comes down to their serving others. They are giving their service to help grow the food, to help provide this crop that's going to help other people.

T: Oh absolutely it is tied right back to the Atonement. I mean that what we learn how to do in this life. We learn how to atone for others; either in a physical way or a spiritual way. We are learning the same process or the same thing that the savior learned and so if you look at it that when somebody's tummy is not full or they do not have the clothes that they need, then they essentially curse God. They curse Him. He doesn't like that. So when we are helping to fill their tummy and to help put clothes on them then they can worship like we worship. But until then, they can't. And so we [the welfare farm] are literally a spiritual thing; meeting the temporal needs before meeting the spiritual needs. Yea, the author of pure religion. He said it's not temple work that will bring people in to the church. It's not missionary work. It's welfare. When you take care of the basic needs you emulate the love of the Savior. And when you emulate his love, that's when they'll come.

M: So with that, and with the things that you've seen on the farm, can you think of perhaps an outstanding stories that sticks out in your mind of service, of kindness, of community among the participants working on the farm?

T: Um, I just know how people feel when they come out here and they don't express it a lot but they really feel fulfilled when they come out here. A few years ago when potatoes were just so rock bottom, cheap, they told me that they were going to push some of them through humanitarian and literally 40 semis went through; went out of here in humanitarian trucks. And they went to orphanages, catholic relief funds, all kinds of places; all over the United States. And um, people were just so tickled to get them, but one of the things that we don't do, is we don't advertise, we don't gloat, we just kind of sit back [and] do our thing, and so I don't know if you know, the stories I don't know any really incredible stories from this farm that I can think of right away, but I'm thinking. Um, I just know how the people feel and how they think when they come out here and maybe that's because it's... I'm not an end result. I don't get to watch them come into the bishop's storehouse and take a box of potatoes and how that box of potatoes makes them feel, you know, and they leave. I don't know that.

M: Ok, well just down to my final question and it's a personal one, if you're willing to answer it. But, just what effects have welfare farming had on you as the manager of a welfare farm?

T: Oh man. I think that the worth of an individual is really what you can give to somebody else. And I just want to give more. Because I, you know, I feel that my work is not done here. I have a lot more work to do. And part of that work is to create an even better farm that can supply food for the poor and the needy. I see so many people who come and these are the same people every time. Some are indignant; some have come for years and years and years. Some are troubled by the assignment they have and they want to get it over with and get back home. But there are some who want to come and enjoy the moment and provide food for somebody and usually if I create a situation where they come and work hard and go home tired and they feel like they fed a lot of people and that really to me is the ultimate objective or goal of the farm. Not only be able to feed the poor but to be able to provide a place for people to come and do service that feeds more. I hope I answered that, I don't know.

M: No you did, definitely. Um, I just want to say thank you for your time today Brother Thompson; for your willingness to share some of your experiences and your insights of the church welfare farm as I go through and prepare this. Obviously I've been recording this so I can do a transcript and be able to use some of it for the thesis. But it's been very insightful and helpful. I just want to say "thank you" for your time.

T: You're very welcome.

M: So If I've got any follow-up questions would it be ok to contact you in the future?

T: Yes, just call me on my cell phone.

M: Thanks again so much. Have a good one.

T: Bye.

APPENDIX C

DAYTON IDAHO WELFARE FARM INTERVIEW WITH KURT HOUSLEY

## APPENDIX C

### DAYTON IDAHO WELFARE FARM INTERVIEW WITH KURT HOUSLEY

H: Hello.

M: Hi Mr. Housley, how you doing?

H: Okay.

M: Well, I sure appreciate your time today, and just spending some time and chatting with me. I didn't know if you wanted any background of my project is or what I'm doing.

H: Yes, a little bit.

M: So, it's a master's thesis and what I'm trying to do is show how welfare farms establish communities among themselves. Among the people who are participating. So how they more or less establish communities of service and kind of the bonds that people develop though the service they give on the farm. So if it's okay, what I'll do is record this so I can type it up later for a transcript.

H: That's fine.

M. And I'll just fire questions and you can give me responses and feedback and we'll just proceed. So my first question is, with the welfare farm, when the church is deciding which area to use, how did they decide which area to use for the welfare farm?

H: Well, interesting questions but I'm probably not the one to really answer that real knowledgeably. In the past the church welfare system used many little farms. Each stake had a farm, in fact, a long time ago. And what's kind of happened there, where they were so many little teeny stake farms that they weren't very profitable. The stakes wound up spending a lot of money to just keep them up; just running. So the church welfare system decided that they would group the farms together, put them in one spot and then they would make some farms that were larger that they could afford to get some professional management for them and things like that. And so a lot of what the farms are, are they are farms that were somewhat larger and they sold small church farms or stake farms and bought ground closer to a farm that they decided would be one of the better places. So they've done a lot of that. Kind of grouped them together so that all the land will end up in one place and one manger can manage it. So this farm that I have right here it is three different stake farms that they had up here in Cache Valley and they bought other ground with other you know, in-between the little stake farms to make it profitable. So that's what they've done. So as far as deciding exactly where, I don't know of any farm that they've just gone out and purchased... Well, that's not true. When they purchased one in Fielding and that was, they didn't own very much of that. But maybe they owned some of it when they

started but they haven't just gone out and said; here's a good spot. We want to have a church farm here, but the geographic location does make a difference. The closer you are to a cannery the more chance you have of doing a low crop, greater operation that could support a cannery. The farther away you get from the cannery and the people the more of a commodity type farm it is when you grow corn or wheat.

M: Ok, well thank you. As far as the planting and harvesting schedule, when does that start on the farm?

H: When is it decided?

M: When do you begin planting and what crop do you plant?

H: As far as when we plant things, it depends on the crop that we're going to grow. The Church, the welfare system, they assess me for wheat. I grow wheat for the welfare system. The wheat we grow is hard red winter. That's specified by them. That's a winter wheat so we plant it in the fall. We'll start planting that about oh, first of September, we try and have it all planted by the first of October but usually that goes to October 15<sup>th</sup> or something before we get her all in. We do grow corn at the spring crop. We plant that about the second week in May. We have alfalfa. We either plant that in August or early in the spring as soon as we can get it in the ground. First week or second week in April. We grow grass hay. And we plant that in the fall. That's a dormant plant, so we plant that in November generally. As far as the decision of when to plant, I mean the growing season is quite short here in Cache valley. We do it all by calendar. The big question is what are you going to plant or grow. What are you going to put on this or that acre, so that's the bigger question. Once it's decided what's going on the acre, it's decided by the plant physiology and things like that.

M: Okay, and how many acres is your farm?

H: This farm's just over 1600 acres.

M: So, then within the farm, what's the overall goal of the welfare farm?

H: Well, the overarching goal is to feed poor and needy people, so, everything we do we try to fit into that goal, and as far as what we do here, the welfare system in Salt Lake, they assess us for the wheat, so that's what we grow and give to them. The other crops that we grow here are multi-rotational crops, so it's left to my discretion as to how I want to do that, what can be profitable, what acre in what year, there's considerations for fertilizer, and insects, for diseases, so all those have to be considered when you make a crop rotation, so you can rotate the crops through that minimizes the pesticides and fertilizers that you have to use, it gives you a better quality crop and a better quantity, so, you know, the ...do you need more than that?

M: No, that's great. I'm just looking for the general purpose which I assumed that was.

H: Okay, so anyway, that's commodities that we grow there, the rest of the other things we do here, we do, and we are a part of the bishop's storehouse system, so we're a part of the bishop store house. And the bishop's storehouse tries to have a resource for people, for bishops, so when the bishop needs something he can call upon the bishop's storehouse to help provide for the needs of the needy people that he has in his ward. By doing that, we do have work projects here so we do have volunteers that come and work on the farm. We also, the bishops can refer somebody to the farm if they have a specific case that they would like somebody to, or person that's receiving welfare from the bishop, that he would like to pay or you know, give something for what he's receiving. So, there are referrals that way. Although we don't have very many of them here, that has happened.

M: OK, um so the food that you grow is that taken to a local cannery and then processed right there, or is it shipped down to SLC and processed through the main bishop's storehouse?

H: We don't grow cannery items here because we are so far away from a cannery, the cannery items are grown a lot closer to the canneries. They have a cannery in Murray, and most of those things are grown down on the Wasatch Front, they are not grown in Cache Valley. They don't have a cannery in Cache Valley, a wet pack cannery that is, they have a dry pack cannery at the bishop's storehouse, but we don't do anything with that other than we send the wheat to Deseret Grains, they might send it back to the bishop's storehouse in dry pack cans, but you'd have to ask the grain people about that.

M: Okay, so is the church looking into expanding land use for additional welfare farms? Or do they have any plans for creating additional farms?

H: Well, I don't know all the plans they have, um, they, this location they've been over time added acres as they became available, and things like that, and this is the welfare farm but there's a for profit farmland reserve that has ground here close. By that they rent out to people in the community. But as far as strategic planning goes, um, if there's something available here then I refer it to my technical manager in Salt Lake and ask if he's interested in looking at the property or what, and he'll usually ask me my opinion on what kind of ground it is, and if it's something we'd like to look into.

M: Okay, good to know.

H: I think the questions should be on a level higher than I am, because I don't know about all Church farms. And sometimes I don't even know about here until someone's approached the Church and indicated they want to sell.

M: So, as far as labor on your farm, you indicated that those who don't have can fill a bishop's order and they can come and give service on the farm to earn what they've been given, so I'm assuming obviously all of your volunteers are not LDS.



H: Well, yeah, as a matter of fact, they don't all have to be, and we've had people come to this farm that have volunteered that were not members of the church, but as a general rule they are. I don't know, I'm not a bishop, so I don't know exactly who has asked for bishop's help from a ward or the church, but all those people that are referred to here, would come through a bishop, so generally that would be church membership, however if there was somebody who was not a church member and was talking to the bishop and receiving assistance from him he might refer them. In that case, we'll, there'll be a job for them to do no matter who they are. We do have ward projects, we have an agent stake that supports us, and we draw from other stakes around, so we do have a volunteer labor work force that are not anybody that receives assistance necessarily, and those are assignments that are given out through the ecclesiastical line of authority, and those people fulfill those assignments, and if the ward has somebody that's not a member that wants to participate, we do that. So we have had people here that weren't members of the church that worked on the farm.

M: And do you explain the program to them? The goals? Or do you just explain the work and they jump in and that's it?

H: Well, I don't do a lot of education that way as far as the goals of the welfare farm go, but you have a safety training where everybody comes so they do get that part through the training, but no, we don't try to explain the welfare system to them. We don't do that.

M: So how many full time employees do you have, or have many employees do you have running the farm?

H: There's one full-time employee, and I had this last year, I had four part-time, one didn't work all summer, but I started out with four part-time and ended with three part-time this summer.

M: Okay, and then like you said, all the volunteer assignments are delegated through the wards, through the bishops who fulfill a number of service hours, is that correct?

H: Yea, what usually happens is that there's a committee and it's the agent stake president, and a chairman, a safety man, a guy in charge of the labor, and so when we go to committee meeting, if I have a need I'll bring the need to the committee meeting and tell them what I have and we'll discuss it, finalize any ideas, then the ecclesiastical line, they'll decide who they want to give that assignment to, and then they'll assign it to them. And when I tell them what I need I have an estimate of how many man hours it will take, so they try to fill those assignments according to how I have the project set up to do. And sometimes they want to do it differently than I've suggested, and they've done that before, and that's okay.

M: Okay, so then in your opinion, trying to come to the meat of what I'm looking for in my thesis, these bonds of service, these bonds that people develop working together on the farm, um, do you, if you can think of any, do you have any examples of how community, or this service, this relationship of service, happens? Have you seen any examples of that on the farm?

H: How it happens...um...how the bond happens?

M: Yeah, as people are working together, have you ever heard conversation or any stories of how service on the welfare farm, I don't want to say changed somebody, but made a lasting impact on them?

H: Oh yeah, yeah, there's quite a bit of that discussion that goes on, in fact, a lot of it happens when I'm not there because I'm in a ward, and we've received assignments, so that usually happens in a priesthood quorum, and the quorum when they get an assignment for the welfare farm, there's usually someone without exception that says, "oh yea, I remember when I was a kid," or "I remember two years ago," or you know, there's quite a bit of reminiscing ideas that are exchanged there. But even on the church farm when they come to work, the talk will be about, you know, we'll have a work project like cleaning rocks out of a field, and while they're doing that, you know, somebody there will say, "I remember when I was a child, I came out here with my dad and we brought the team of horses, and we brought the old tractor and wagon, and we picked up rocks all day long, and how hard it was, and when we got done, we felt good and it was a good experience, and I remember that, I cherish that time I spent with my dad, and with the ward members," so there's quite a bit of that that happens. One of my fears is that because of the way that farms are run now, they're not run with manual labor like they used to be, manual projects, there aren't as many as there used to be, so that relationship I think might be getting diminished as far as, "when I was kid we did that" because the next generation, they might not have as much of that kind of experience to draw upon to make those conclusions, you know what I mean? Because some of those people when they were young, I mean to go to the church farm was something they did every month or three times a year, but you know, now, some of these people that come to the church farm, they might come once every other year, or once every five years, so there's not near the manual labor that there used to be.

M: Do you think there's a difference in how people feel when they actually engage with the land versus using a machine like you said, because it's no longer as manual as it used to be, do you think that perhaps some of the feeling has been lost because it's not as manual as it used to be.

H: Yes, I think so, I think that feeling has been lost. That's why people do pioneer tracks, and why they like to go camping. They like to go camping to get away from it all, away from where they've been, where their modern conveniences are, I think one of the reasons people do that, are people are trying to get in touch with what people used to do, and how things used to be, and it's the same thing with boys scouts, they take you out in the wilderness, and you deal with nature. And a lot of times, that's a better platform to work on then YMCA cafeteria kind of thing, where you're inside looking in a book or outside dealing with whatever you have to deal with, so as far as relationships and people go, we don't have the manual labor like we used to.

M: So then in your opinion, what benefits does the community receive from having welfare farms around?

H: Well, there is all the things you can measure, like how many service projects and how many hours and there's all those things and they can be measured and there's a benefit to it. But, there are other benefits that aren't measured and people out in the world might not understand. What some of those benefits are because they are spiritual benefits. They are things that you know, they are hard to measure because they don't look like they came from the fact that there's a church farm in the area. So, as people work on the farm and exercise faith in the lord Jesus Christ, then that builds their faith and so if somebody did any kind of faith-building experience that adds to their faith. And it has a ripple effect on the community. But not only that, but the people render that service then they are blessed and the community is blessed and you can't always see all those blessings. Maybe the blessing is an increase in the rainfall for the year, maybe the blessing is in um something that you know, that didn't or did happen. For example in the irrigation companies working on a project they want to happen and they've been working on it for a long time and because of the fact that the church farm is there and there's people that are exercising their faith and having a desire for the church farm to be successful that there are things that happen with the irrigation project that make it successful instead of a failure. Does that make sense? So there are those kinds of things and so just the fact that there's a church farm in the area makes a difference. And I don't know how you write that and tell people that aren't members of the church that don't see that spiritual side of everything; I don't know how you tell them that. But those are the kinds of things that happen.

M: Ok, so then what do you think is the most beneficial aspect of the farm?

H: The most beneficial thing of the farm? The biggest benefit that people receive from having it being here? Well, our community being predominantly LDS I would think the one of the biggest benefit that they have for having a church farm here is the fact that the gospel teaches that to take care of people and to serve other people is one of the pillars of that gospel. See if you live all the other commandments but don't care of poor and needy people and don't take care of anybody you don't serve anybody or give back to your community then you are failing. Okay? And so, one of the things that the church farm does is it keeps bringing that to the people's awareness that there is a service that needs to be rendered and there is a service that can be done and it can make a big difference somewhere in the world. I think that's probably the biggest positive of having a church farm is it helps those people that are members of the church that are trying to live the gospel, it helps them to live that gospel.

M: And so it connects them, it builds their faith. If I am hearing you correctly; it builds their faith not only in what they are doing on the farm, but in the community. It ties them in because they feel like they are helping and blessing the lives of others.

H: That's correct.

M: Okay. Has the welfare farm ever been a source of contention in the community or any problems caused by volunteers that have been lasting?

H: Um, there's been a few points of you might call contention. At one time there was a large land purchase made in the community and the price paid was more than what the local farmers around thought it should be. They paid more for the ground than the farmer next door thought it should be. So they complained that the church farm had raised the land value and therefore they had to pay more taxes. And I tried to point out to them, "Yea, it might have raised the land value, so therefore you're more valuable, if you had to pay more taxes, I'm sorry, but your farm is worth more if you decide to sell." It increases the value of that land. So, there's been that complaint, there has been a complaint from the irrigation company here have some improvement projects they're trying to do, and when they first started the projects I was on the projects and so I supported them; however as time went on there was quite a bit of opposition with some of those improvements, therefore the church has; there was never a formal statement of agreement on the changes, I was the manager of the farm and said, "Yea, I'd like some more water and a better water system," and so somebody tried to get the church to either say yes this is a good thing, or no this is a bad thing, and the church wouldn't do that, they had a neutral stance on that issue. So they don't take sides on that irrigation project anymore. So that was a point of contention. But other than that, I've had one man, we used to grow beans on the farm, and one day we were weeding beans and there was a gentleman who came to the farm and he stood at the end of the row and looked at all the people out there in the field pulling the weeds out and said, "Oh, if I could just get this many people to come to my farm and spend an hour free without being paid, my beans would be as good as your beans, but now your beans will be better, and you'll probably get a premium that I won't get. And so, you know, that might be true, and the gentleman stayed there and weeded a few rows of beans, and wasn't too upset or angry like that, he was just making an observation that the church had an unfair advantage.

M: What I also see is that you have this spiritual community that's willing to come out and give service, and what's interesting is that because of their service, it increases the produce, the quality of the produce.

H: Yes, I would agree. That's true.

M: So, that kind of service and that community helping each other over all is a positive because it not only helps them create that community of service and bond and friendship, but at the same time it's making the crop better.

H: That's true, but contentions come from people's perceptions. The perception is that there's an unfair advantage, and they voice that, and that's where the contention comes from. It doesn't come from whether it's right or wrong, or if it's good or bad. The contention comes from somebody's perception of it.

M: Okay, in your time, and I didn't ask you at first, but how long have you been the manager of the welfare farm?

H: Um, at this farm, I've been here eleven years at this farm.

M: And were you at a welfare farm before this one?

H: Yes, I was in a lot of welfare farms before this one. In West Point Utah.

M: So you've got plenty of years of experience

H: I was there for five years and here for eleven, so yeah, but this is my third career so...

M: Okay, so in your time, are there any memories that you can think of or stories that you may have witnessed on the farm of outstanding experiences as far as kindness, or service, or listening to people talk about the difference or the impact the farm made on them that day? Do you have, by chance, any memories of any individuals really going into detail perhaps on how the farm affected them while they were there?

M: Well, I'm not thinking of a volunteer who would come for a day or an hour. We've had some people who've worked on the farm that were paid. I had one young man that had a learning disability and he came to the farm, and he had some issues that we had to work through and things, but he worked on the farm for two years and made incredible progress in what he was able to do. He eventually went on a mission to North Carolina and when he was on his mission, they didn't give him any restraints, they treated him just like an average missionary, so he made great progress that way. He told me later that working on the church farm was one of the best things that he had ever done because of the skills he had gained and the abilities he had gained were all from the farm. The volunteer labor, there's always people that tell you that the time is worth it, they always tell you that it feels good to be part of something that's big enough and makes a big enough difference in other people's lives, they'll always tell you that. I don't know, the last time I had people on the farm, we were picking up rocks and we stopped for ten minutes and were resting there, and they started asking me about what the church does with the commodities that we produce, and we talked about the regular things with them, they take wheat and grind it into bread in welfare square, they bake bread every day, but it was the young men's group so they liked the fact that the wheat that grew on this farm was made into Atmit and sent to Africa to feed people in Africa in a famine. Now then we talked about the welfare system one time sent corn to Korea to divert a famine there, and those kinds of projects, they like those types of stories. So, I don't know as far as, I haven't had anyone cry lately, before I came to this farm, on the farm I was at before, we had a lady and her family sent a missionary and they couldn't make ends meet, she came to the farm and she did the payroll and some office work and she said once she started working on the farm then everything was easy, all the bills got paid, and everything just fell into place. So, she was thankful for that opportunity to work on the farm, because it helped her and her family so they could keep their missionary out but that was a long time ago.

M: Well that works. That works. I guess I have just one final question and it's kind of personal so it's your choice if you want to answer it, but what effect has welfare farming had on you, personally?

H: What effects has it had on me? Well, it's had a lot of effects on me. Before I came, I was a single man before I came to the welfare farm. I wasn't married, but it was something I wanted to do. I wanted to have a family. I worked for a company that, we played a lot of corporate politics and I didn't like who I was, and how I lived, as far as what I was doing with other people and the corporation, it was all competitive and dog eat dog kind of thing, so you know I played the politics game and I decided I wanted to be something different, I didn't want to be what I was, what I had turned into, and I didn't want to be that. I wanted to be something different. And so, I tried, because I was single, I had a lot of resources at my disposal, and started shopping to buy a farm and thought I'd be a farmer, always been an interest and always something that I wanted to do, and so I shopped for about two years for farms, but I couldn't find anything that I liked or wanted to buy. And then, one day my dad who was a bishop said, "You know Kurt, they got a manager job at the church working on the welfare farm, you ought to go look at that." So that's how I got to be a welfare farm person, and I did it so that I could change who I was, and how I did things, and what I did to other people, and how I did it to other people. The gospel teaches you that you've got to serve others, and you've got to take care of other people, especially people that are less fortunate, and so it's made an awful big change in my life because I've been able to change the way I act, and the way I act toward people, and I'm not perfect, but I do a lot better than I used to as far as me giving something back to the community and to the people, and in the meantime I found a wonderful woman I married and I have kids, and I have things that I before didn't know if I'd ever have, Now I have those blessings in my life. And so, it's been a big benefit to me and to what I wanted out of life, to come work on the church farm.

M: Okay well thank you very much, that's it for my questions, but I wanted to know if I had any follow up questions if it would be alright to call you in the future.

H: Yea, that would be fine.

M: I really appreciate your time and the material you've provided. You've really given me some good stuff that illustrates what I'm trying to show in my thesis so I thank you very much.

H: Alright, well thank you.

APPENDIX D

NORTH OGDEN UTAH PEACH ORCHARD WELFARE FARM INTERVIEW WITH  
BRUCE LISTON

## APPENDIX D

### NORTH OGDEN UTAH PEACH ORCHARD WELFARE FARM INTERVIEW WITH BRUCE LISTON

M: (I explain the purpose of the thesis before I test the recording).

L: It's interesting that you should mention what you're doing, this is really important research, and the reason it's really important in because there is a philosophy amongst welfare farms that if we can buy this material, this produce or whatever, cheaper, than why are we continuing to produce it ourselves? There are several reasons for that to happen, and one of those reasons is like you're saying, community. And in gaining community and supporting community, and supporting togetherness and the need for quick organization of people at a certain time. You see, we have to create a disaster in order for something like that to happen, but why should we have to create a disaster, let's just have a crop that has to be picked right now, and can't wait until tomorrow to be picked. And that's the kind of situation we have here. About every two or three years we have a situation that's very much like that. It has to be done, and be done right now. On smaller scales that happens every year at certain times, but by doing that our members learn to be on the ball and to take responsibility and to fulfill those responsibilities and that kind of a thing. And they wouldn't get that if we just went out and bought this stuff. You see, we've closed down grape orchards, we've gone from 700 or 800 welfare farms down to 30 or 40 welfare farms in the church welfare system, and it's kind of sad, even though we produce as much in some instances or more than we used to by our one dairy farm, that one farm produced what the other 34 dairy farms used to produce, [but] still, I feel bad because those members don't have the opportunity to experience a welfare farm and everybody who had a welfare farm when they were a kid always talked about going to the welfare farm and doing some service on the welfare farm, and what kind of community, or structure it presented for them.

M: So, then you feel like there's a disconnect, and that members of the church are losing something because they aren't engaging with the land like they used to?

L: Oh, very much so. This is the only orchard left in Weber County. A county that used to have lots of fruit farms, including ours. We had a huge fruit farm around the corner here. Now we are the only major fruit farm left, and that only being 20+ acres. It's small, but it's the only fruit farm left in Weber County. And in Brigham City those farms are going away too, so we're transferring from a society that's involved in production of fruit and food and we're gone from agricultural to an urban society, and as a result of it we've lost something there. And people don't know how to grow things anymore. They come to me with questions that never would have been asked, even fifteen years ago. Questions that every farmer and everyone in the area used to



know the answers too, and they are just simple questions, and they come to me with these questions to me and it's good that we still exist, because not everybody can call a savior on KSL on Saturday morning and ask him these redundant questions, and so it's good for them. And there are a lot of people who'd grow more if they knew more. And we offer that kind of a tie to the agricultural situation. You'll find that if you were to go through the community and see who has trees in their backyard, it will almost always be people who are involved with the farm, have trees. Because they're not afraid to grow the trees because they do all the work out here, then they go home and do it on their own little farm in their backyard, and it promotes a lot of that. There are six stakes involved with this farm, and three old stakes that were involved in this farm, those people have a huge volume of peach trees and fruit trees, and that's because they know how to prune, thin, and take care of the trees because they've done it out here and they're not scared of it. So, they go out and do it. Where I've noticed that in these other stakes that individuals didn't have the farm, and a lot of the fruit trees have been pulled out and destroyed. It's fun to watch because I'm starting to see them put fruit trees back in their yard and in their areas. And that's because they're now learning how to do it vicariously on what they're doing it here.

M: So, as a follow up question, what kind of impact do you feel the farm has on the people? As you're saying, they're starting to put trees back in, how do you think the farm impacts people who are serving on it, and do you think it helps them build faith?

L: Oh definitively, it helps them build faith. It helps in lots of ways. The stakes that were initially involved with this farm, they owned it. It was their farm. They personally loved it, and cared for it, and took care of it, and they don't even want to be moved from their areas, but we pulled their areas away from them as if we were pulling them away from their cold dead hands. We had to pull it away from them saying, "You've got to let someone else in here, because someone else needs the blessing." We've since added three stakes in this same area and so they have half as much to do and they complain, "Well, our old trees that were given to this new area, they've ruined them. They haven't been pruned the way they need to be pruned," because they took pride in it because they were their old stomping grounds and they were their trees, and complained about having to train people to take care of them because they love their trees, and the longer that they're involved in the farming business, the more personal care they take of their particular area, and the pride they take in those trees. But then it creates something else inside the ward, it gives those members and people in the area a feeling of caring for something together. They come out and they're able to do this work together, and then they stand around and they'll come out and do the work and they'll spend another, almost as much time, just talking. And it creates brotherly bonding and goodness. This last year we had a situation here we couldn't get everything picked. Here it is Saturday, I'm getting nervous because when our Alberta peaches come on, they have about three days and then they're gone. They literally came on in a day or two, you'll think it'll be a week or two, and in three or four days, we're there. It comes on quick and the people who're supposed to take care of it, and they didn't show up in great numbers

because there wasn't enough urgency, and they didn't think we were there yet, because the green is a couple days before, and then they were ripe. And now, we're desperate. And so, we said, "We need to pick on Monday." And one of the stake presidents wasn't excited about that idea, but I called the young single adult stake from Ogden here, and they came out in hordes, huge numbers, and then some of the other stake presidents said, "We're going to come out and do it for family night," and it created this entire family night thing. 2000 people just showed up and picked everything in just two hours. And it was huge, meaning we had to pick the entire orchard, because part of the entire orchard was ripe all at once. And that's the kind of thing it does, it says "We can in the middle of an emergency, we can call on people and they will chat, they will take care of this. And there were cars parked on both sides of the road that stretched on and on...and so, it creates that kind of feel. Those people that came out said, "We brought our kids, and that's the best time we've ever had out there on the farm. Can we do Monday night all the time? And we said, "Well, we're not completely sure about that," but that's what it does for people to have a farm. And it not only promotes more production around the community as far as trees, and as far as growing stuff, but promotes this brotherly bond between wards and stakes, there is never a year that goes by that we don't have some ward that jumps in and helps another ward finish. I mean, that's common, almost with everything that we do. I see this group of people that come over and see that another group needs help because they're struggling, and so they'll go down there and help them out. Or they might say, "We're short on pickers today, can we have someone come down and help us tomorrow?" Well, tomorrow's not a normal picking day but, yea, we'll get a group out here and we'll get the picking done.

M: So what do you think the difference is between people doing the work manually versus mechanized equipment doing the work? How does that change their experience?

L: Well, that's a two part question. The first part is the machine part. Most of farming is going to mechanical production. The Church, the row crop guys, the wheat guys, the grain guys, all of those productions are done mostly by machine. And as a result of that, they have our four orchards and one vineyard, [and they] have more service hours than all the other parts put together, and that's only five entities amongst thirty or forty. They have more service hours than all the others put together. And of course you could get that data from Salt Lake. We see, and of course the vineyard sees this in a huge way, cause they have people come out in the thousands, when a person can do something physically, they then have a chance to interact with their brothers and their sisters, they have a chance for that bonding experience and it's the same as if somebody in the neighborhood is in the middle of an emergency, and they have to go help that person. The nice thing about our emergency is that we can usually project in ahead and say, here's when the emergency is going to happen, we're going to need thirty or fourth out there from the ward on this day, and when they come out, it's just like any project you come to. People grumble, but when they leave, it's just cool to watch the transformation that takes place, and how it relieves a burden from their lives. And you just see that happen. And the people who come out here all the time just love it, this farm has a feeling, it has a feeling and it creates a feeling of

brotherhood, but there's a special feeling out here on the farm that doesn't exist anywhere else. And the people who work out here enough can see it. Myself as a farmer, having been a farmer for thirty years running my own farm, I see it on a daily basis. I've never had so much help. And not just help from myself, but help from the other side. There are things that we do out here all the time, me and the brethren that work out here, that we have a bad day, we get tractors stuck, and I say, that's a normal day on our farm. We just don't understand. We don't have normal days out here, miracles happen and people and things just happen through reason and you just see the hand of the Lord all the time out here. For instance, now a big hand of the lord experience, all the other farmers in the area had freeze outs this last year. The last couple weeks before thanksgiving in 2010, there was a terrible freeze. It went from 60 degrees the whole fall and all a sudden, it went down to below the teens. We were into the 5 degree range. And that will usually kill trees, and some of the farmers in Willard had large portions of their orchards die. And they had freeze outs. It was a bad year for them. Here, at this farm, we had the second largest crop we've ever had, almost the largest we've ever had, and that's just a blessing from the Lord. And yes, I had the members come through and prune just a week before bloom so we could prune off everything that wouldn't bloom, and so we left it a little longer. And that's an advantage we have over those farmers, they can't do that because it takes too long, but we can prune a farm in two to four days because we have such a good volunteer work force. But above and beyond that, the Lord just protects this place, he just protects it and makes it happen. The Hurricane farm, which is a larger peach orchard than us, they were going to close it this last year, and those twenty stakes that were involved in the hurricane farm went to the church and said, "We can't let this happen." And the Church said, from a financial point of view your farm is not making it." They replied, "We will make it, if we have to run it ourselves without a professional manager we will make it." And they would not let them close it because of what it does for their members, but that's why they wouldn't let it be closed, because of what it does for the members. But there are very few instances where that has been the case. Usually for economically reasons they will close they farm, but they recognize the need for the service and what it does for their people, how it creates a bond between the community and amongst themselves, and those stake presidents recognized that and wouldn't let it happen.

M: That's impressive.

L: Yes it is. People who come here from outside the Church, I have it all the time, I have youth groups and the Layton track team, they come out here and do service because their coach says, "We do service and we do track." So, they come out here, they're not all members of the church, and I explain to them "A large portion that a large portion of our crop went to Haiti a few years ago, before that, almost the entire crop went to fill orders at food banks in Georgia about four years ago and so it doesn't all go to the Church welfare system, it goes to disaster relief and everyone else and their dog and cat." People love to come out and serve and do this kind of

thing. There're some nonmembers that won't have anything to do with the church, but they'll come here and work on the farm. That happens all the time.

M: Those who are not LDS, do they come here to work off hours for bishop orders they receive, or do they come to volunteer because they enjoyed the experience; do you know some of the backgrounds?

L: I've had everyone from community service for DUI's or did some felonies; I've had all those kinds out here. The high school sends kids over here to work off service hours; these are not all members of the church. And they come out here and work alongside my missionaries, and we do that and we have people who come out for bishop orders, people who come out for all kinds of things.

M: Now when they're out there, have you noticed, I don't want to say repeat offenders, but people who have willingly come back because they've enjoyed it so much, or while you're out and about have you heard examples of conversation and dialogue while they're working on the farm, a sense of fulfillment that they're having, or have you heard examples of that kind of conversation going on?

L: Well, amongst these people that are nonmembers of the church, I know they like coming back because they do. They come back again and again and again. There are some people who have to do community service and they don't want to do it any other way, they really like coming out here and getting their hands dirty and doing this kind of work in an environment where people aren't cursing, there is a different feeling here, and there's people who like that kind of environment. They are drawn to that kind of environment. So yea, it does happen. They'll come out here and I have a couple boys that came out and raked the whole farm under every tree, and they did it for the school service, and then the school says, oh no we can't accept that service because those guys aren't authorized for us to do it, so I went to the school and got authorized to do the service and said, "I can go to bat for you boys," and they said, "Oh no, we had such a good time doing it with the missionaries." And my missionaries are a bunch of fun, go-lucky guys, and they can feel that, that feeling, you know? It makes people happy to be here.

M: So here on this farm, how many full time employees do you have?

L: Me, I'm on the only part time person. And we do that to keep the expense down, you know the church doesn't spend their member's or their donated money poorly. This is an organization that spends their money wisely and so I work here part time and everyone else volunteers. And I have between six and twelve missionaries. But when I first came here we didn't have any. Now we've got a bunch of missionaries that pretty much run the place, and I manage.

M: Are they service missionaries, or generally young men or older missionaries?

L: Both. I have a 73 year old out here and he does certain tasks that he enjoys doing, and then a lot of my missionaries are in their 60's, and they like doing everything out here. Most sign on for one year and they like it so much that they come back and work and I've got one that's on his fourth year now.

M: So, [they stay] during the summer or harvesting, or all year long?

L: They are all year long missionaries, but in the months of November and December and January and most of February we don't do much at all. They go ice fishing. But during the other part of the year, we work about fifteen hours a week and during harvest it's about forty to fifty a week, so they put in a lot of time during the harvest. Some of them put in more time than others, and we just let them just put in whatever they want, I had a missionary out here who was full time and served a two year mission out here, and he was handicapped and this was his service mission. And he brought a special spirit. He was mentally challenged and brought a special spirit into this place and we all hated to see him go. He knew where everything went and where it should go, so we all got lazy because we didn't put it back where it was supposed to go. Now it's a chore and they all think I'm their mother because I pick it up and put it away. (laughing) But you know, each missionary is brought here for a certain reason. I had a missionary who came in the middle of harvest and said, "I really feel like I need to be here, and can I go to my bishop and talk to him about it, and become a missionary?" And I said, "Yes, by all means, if you feel like you're supposed to be here, than you probably are." So he went and talked to his bishop and he got set apart as a missionary and came back and said, "I'm all set apart," and I said, "Great, what can you do?" and [he] said, "I've done maintenance on machinery my whole life," and he had. And just that week, all my machinery broke down in the middle of harvest. My bin trailer axle split in two. And I wouldn't have known how to do it correctly. He knew how to make that thing true and perfect, absolutely perfect. I would have welded it back together, but nothing like he was able to do. Then I had hydraulic hoses break, then I had another problem with a tractor with the clutch, and we had some other problems and he solved them all. He was brought here for that reason to solve those mechanical problems. Two years ago, I didn't know that we were going to put in an orchard. I got to about three or four missionaries, and they were young guys that had lots of energy and the church bought this property down below us with the idea in mind that that gentleman was going to stay there the rest of his life and then they would eventually make it into a farm, and he slipped and hurt himself and went into a nursing home, and the family let the church just take it over and begin farming it. It came right on me all of a sudden, and they wanted it put into an orchard right away, they didn't want it to sit there and that kind of a thing, so low and behold I had these missionaries, and I needed just that kind of help. And yet I needed a truck driver and the next thing I know I get a missionary from one of the stakes and he's been a truck driver for forty years and knew everything about it. So they all come here with certain skills, the farm became large enough and our production became large enough that I really needed someone who could manage this shed, the Lord sent me another missionary who had been managing all the wonder bread production plants in Utah, and he knew exactly how to

move the troops, exactly what to do. I didn't have to explain a thing. He saw what needed to be done and he would do it, and that was that. And things ran smooth.

M: That's pretty amazing.

L: It really is.

M: How does the church decide what area to use for a farm and what type of crop to grow?

L: Well, the Presiding Bishopric and the Prophet sent down, asked all the stakes in the area, and started these welfare farms years ago. The Ben Lomond Stake, which took in half of North Ogden, they decided they were going to buy an orchard. And so they were looking around for an orchard and this orchard became available, so they came out here and prayed about it, and Brent Chugg, my manger could tell you a beautiful story about that revelation they received to buy this farm, and he says that it was one of the strongest feelings of the Spirit that he had ever had, was buying or purchasing this farm. And he was on the High Council at the time. And so they bought this farm and it's stayed in the church system ever since. And that's how a lot of the church farms got started. A lot of the farms were more affordable outside of Utah, such as tomatoes and grapes, but this is a particularly good place to grow fruit because we've only had one freeze out in 30 years, we have no wind machines, and instead of putting up hundreds of thousands of dollars in wind machines, it's just a natural flow of air. This exposure that we have here is just natural for fruit growing. It's one of the reasons that they keep this place.

M: As far as the planting, farming, harvesting schedule of the peach orchard, how does that flow?

L: Well, it's a small place and we have lots of volunteers. We try to make it flow as well as possible, there are times that we have too many volunteers for how small our farm is, we just get such an overabundance of people out here, and most of the time we need them so we're glad they're here, but the flow is not always perfect. We've changed it and changed it, and I think we're getting better, but we'll be changing it again this next year, I'll be having a meeting with all the stakes next Sunday, a week from Sunday, on the 29<sup>th</sup>, and we'll be making some changes then. So we're trying to hone it, trying to change it all the time. But we have people that check all the members in, they go up there and get a little sticker, and stick it on their hand, and then they come down and they check out and they hand the sticker back, and it seems to work out pretty well. One of those areas where people could probably do a better job.

M: What's the overall goal of the welfare farm?

L: Well let me say on your last statement too, all of the labor is dictated by the stakes. So, I tell them what we're going to do, and I call up my committee chairman who is the stake high council representative, and they bring me the labor hours that I need. All the labor is driven by

the volunteers, and they bring family and their friends, and their neighbors, and they all come out and do it. Okay, now your next question.

M: Overall goal of the welfare farm.

L: The overall goal is to help the poor and needy. We always keep that in mind, everything that gets done out here is to help our fellow brothers and sisters who are in need. We never lose track of that goal, if we can do it better, produce more, do it more cost effectively, and we will do that. If we can do it with less pesticide, we're producing a better product more safely, and a better product, that's what we'll produce. We always keep that in mind. And with the economy the way it is, every peach is valuable. And when we explain that to members, you can't believe the difference. How much goes on the ground in past years, and after explaining that to members, how little is on the ground and how [much more] carefully they pick the peaches than last year, and the year before. They make sure nothing is bruised, they care. People really care, and you don't see that in this world anymore. People really do care. And they really do want to give something to the people that are in need. And you see that all the time. So we have gone from spraying all kinds of pesticides to spraying one a year. We are producing a far healthier product.

M: What benefits do you see the outside community receiving from having a welfare farm here?

L: Well, on a global basis, the people in disasters and needs get the benefit of what we do here. And like I said, they're not all members. As far as the poor and needy having something to eat, the benefit to the community around here, people feel more a part of a community. When a community gets together and does something together, it forms a knitting bond. And it's an unfortunate thing that we don't have more situations where that can happen in a safe environment. You know, you don't have to have a windstorm or hurricane or something terrible to happen to bring the community together. You don't have to have 9/11 in order to bring a country together. If we had welfare systems throughout the nation, it would bring people together and we wouldn't have to have a disaster to do that. And that's what this does for this community, it brings them together and I see it all the time. On that Monday when we needed everybody out here, there were people that came from every stake that I had out here, Even the stake that wasn't going to come, those people came because they heard about it through their friends and their neighbors. Members would discuss with other ward and stake members and basically recruited the effort to get everyone involved and they just love that. And it presents a community feeling and now it's not my farm, and it's really not all the Lord's farm, it is the community's farm. There are nonmembers that don't know that the Lord owns this farm, they just know that's the community farm that everybody goes to do community service. Funny, huh?

M: I think we've touched on this, but what do you think the most beneficial aspect of the farm is?

L: It's probably brotherly kindness and charity and I think it does something spiritual for people. I think it's done a lot in the lives of our missionaries, I think it's helped them in all kinds of

ways, and I see it most in their lives because they're out here all the time. But, I see it in the lives of people who come out here. I have some people come out here like my dentist for instance, I didn't know he came out here all the time, I'd only been the farmer out here for five years, and he's been my dentist since I was a kid, and I told him, "You come out here all the time." And he said, "I could not *not* come out here. The blessings I receive from coming out here and working on the farm are huge." And now he's a bishop over one of the wards and his trees are always done perfectly and his picking and trimming is done perfectly because he was always a volunteer out here and spent a lot of time out here. Why? Here's a man that makes enough money, he doesn't need to come out here and do this, because it does something for him personally. And that's true with a lot of the people that come out here.

M: I was going to say from that comment, I think you could have dentist, a lawyer

L: oh yea, we do

M: Somebody from any vocation yet when they come to the welfare farm, everybody is on the same playing ground, there's a sense of equality where people just help each other.

L: Even amongst my missionaries, I have management guys, I have government people, I've had people say, "This is the hardest I've worked in my entire life," or "I wouldn't work this hard for anyone else but the Lord." I have one [missionary] who is an engineer, he was another one sent to me, who would have known that this past year this little pernicious bug would come to Utah and all this research would have to be done on it, and who would have known that the state would have brought in all these water sensors and said, "Please, use these machines and put together a water sensing system so we can show all the benefits of lower water management," and that kind of a thing. Well, I needed someone to do all of that and follow all of that and do the programs, to track it down and check it all the time, and my engineer just loves that. Thank heavens he came. They all say that, they say thank heavens he came. (laughing) But, it brings the level of self-esteem up and gives them a brotherly bonding, and in a smaller way it does that to everyone who comes down here.

M: Well it makes me think, as you're speaking, it gives them a sense of purpose.

L: I agree, it really does. For some of my missionaries and a lot of members. For a lot of the members, this is the most work they do all day, or maybe all year. But a couple of them come out here and say, "I worked so hard on this farm!" And it gives them a sense of purpose. Very much so.

M: Wonderful. On the flip side, has the welfare farm here ever been a source of contention for the community or caused any problems?

L: There have been a couple of times where we planned a harvest on top of some other event that was happening, but harvest comes when harvest comes. It's been hard for these new stakes to get



them to think that way, and so we've tried different avenues so that it wouldn't be a conflict with their schedules. And we've had to move things around because they had social events, like stake get together days, and that kind of a thing, but I haven't seen it that much. There was one contentious man that came out here, and they called me up on the phone and said, "Hey, we've got somebody down here at the barn and he's telling everyone what to do," and I said, "The Lord will take care of that, give him about five minutes." Well, he was on the fork lift and ran into the barn. Took out the side of the wall of the barn. He never said a word after that to anybody. That's the problem with working out here, you'll have people who've done trees for fifty years of their lives and think that they know everything about what they're doing, and that's when you get humbled. The Lord's in control. This is His farm and we're just helping him out, and if you get too high and mighty, He'll just take care of that right away. And I think that's why the contention doesn't exist out here. The city has been really good to us, I know that hasn't always been the case with every farm, but the city is good to us, maybe because half the city workers are out here working all the time. We're the only fruit farm. This used to be a huge fruit area, and we're all that's left. It's the only tie that this community has to its roots, because this whole hillside used to be orchards. All of these areas used to be orchards. My great great grandfather planted this orchard, and the one next to it where all the houses are. This all was orchards in here. And the community has lost that agricultural part of it. This community desperately wants that to stay. They're really happy it's here, and the neighbors couldn't be happier. Lots of them have told me that the day the farm is sold, they'll sell their homes and move, because they love having a farm in the backyard.

M: Any other stories of service, kindness, or community that stand out in your mind over your years of experience that you've had here?

L: I can tell you some miracles that have happened. The first year I was here there were some freezes. The manager and I were going through and splitting open the buds and looking at them and seeing if they were alive. They were deader than a doornail. We had about a 5% crop. The bishopric was having a meeting with the stake, and I was asked to do a presentation from the scouting point of view, I was there as a scout leader. And I said, "We've got a problem on the farm. We were looking at the buds on the farm, and we need your prayers, and your support. Because we don't have a crop out there. And for my farm, if it was my farm, it would have been a dead crop. I had seen this before. It was nothing new. (laughing) A week later, all of them were alive. Now how do buds go from being dead to being alive? And both of us looked at them and said, "We don't have a crop here." And it was just the faith of that stake in making that happen. It's just that faith. That happened last year also, we should have had a freeze, and we didn't. There was one day out here; it was the largest picking day we've ever had, the manager before me said "We can only pick X amount of fruit in one night." And I said, "No, that's because you only put out X number of bins one night. That's why you only pick that much." He disagreed, but I told him that if we put out more bins that night, we'd fill them all with fruit in one night. So he says, "Fine, we need to pick this whole part of the orchard and it'd be nice if it got picked

tomorrow.” So I said, “Fine, I’ll put out more bins than you’ve ever put out in one day and we’ll just see.” And we put out all the bins, and the volunteers picked too much! I told him, “Here’s all these people and we’re picking too much. We have a problem, we’re not going to be able to put this all in the cooler.” We were storing the picked fruit in the cooler at the Ogden Cannery. And he says, “Really? Have they really picked that much?” He was at the barn managing things and I told him that we were in trouble because we were going to be there until three or four in the morning if we even got to bed that night. Just thirty minutes later a downpour rainstorm came. It came, lasted twenty minutes, and everybody left. It wasn’t enough to wet the fruit really, it was just a quick downpour and everybody left, and we were able to put all the fruit in the cooler with the exception of two bins. We put everything in there and still had room for two more bins in the cooler. The Lord picked our fruit right down to two bins. I think it was like 170 bins.

M: How big is a bin?

L: A bin is 500 Pounds of fruit. So, we picked it right down to within two bins to filling that cooler. If we’d picked all night, we wouldn’t have been able to put it into the cooler and it would have sat out and gone bad. Those are the kinds of things that happen when you work for the Lord. When you’re on his errand, it just happens that way. And I could tell you other things but I don’t know if it would be right, but I’ve seen miracle after miracle after miracle out here.

M: And all because the overall purpose is that it goes to feed the poor and the needy, and so He takes care of it.

L: It does, and so He takes care of it. We had a hailstorm one year. I thought I had worms in my peaches and took them up to Utah State, and they told me they were damaged from the hail. I thought, “I can’t send damaged fruit like this in.” They were all damaged. This was two years ago. And in fact, USU did an extension service letter on and took pictures of the fruit and did an article in their IPN letter that went out to everybody because they wanted everyone to know that it was not pest damage, it was damage due to hail. And so, I thought “I’m going to have the worst fruit crop.” No, these peaches grew out of it, there was not a sign of it left by the time the crop came, and they were bruised pretty deeply, sap was coming out of them, and I thought I had a ruined crop. No, they healed and were perfect in the end without problem. Last year I had an outbreak of earwigs. No one could tell me at what point I should spray the earwig to get rid of them. It just so happened by complete accident that we had a field trip here and they came and said, you’ve got problems with the earwigs. I said, yes, I don’t know who to talk to about this. Well, I had all the Ph.Ds. at USU telling me, “You need to spray these things right away to take care of them,” and this was only a few weeks before harvest. So, I sprayed them the next day and sure enough, it took care of the whole problem. But what would have happened if they had not said that to me, it wouldn’t have been enough time to spray the crop, number one, number two, I wouldn’t have known that I had that bad of a problem. I knew I had a problem, but I didn’t know how bad it was and nobody could tell me. Now I knew how bad it was. I should have known that after all the years of being a farmer, but after all those years I had never dealt with an outbreak of

earwigs. Never. I didn't know. Another problem we had down here in this little crop down here below us, we planted this new little orchard, 900 trees, they came out for their USU thing and I said, "You've got to look at these trees, they're dying off on me. We've watered them, watered some more," and they pulled them up and said, "This is root rot. You've got root rot here." But we don't have it up above because it gets drained, this is the first time that it flattens out down there, completely different way of growing a tree 20-50 feet down the row because of the drainage. I had to grow them completely different. I had to treat them with different stuff, so it saved about half our crop and half our trees down there by having them come here. It saved half those trees, the other half we had to replant.

M: Well, there's just one more question and it's somewhat personal, so answer if you want, but what kind of effect has the welfare farm had on you, personally.

L: Oh, ...I'm a part time farmer that works full time, and I work two other jobs. Okay? I work a lot of hours and I do that because I love this place. I just love this place. I get to see the hand of the Lord in this place every day and I probably should keep a better journal. I've written down some things I've seen, but we used to struggle as farmers. Things would break down, things would just happen. Not out here. It's so fun to work out here and work with these brethren and to have the very best job in the whole world, and to have kindness around me all the time, and to be able to have fun. This is farming in the celestial kingdom. This is perfect farming. It doesn't get better than this. I just love it. I just absolutely love it. Working here is a testimony of the gospel, a testimony of the Church, every single day. That's the beauty of being a farmer for the Church. It's worth sacrificing a lot to be able to do this. And to see the generosity of people, their willingness to do this for the Lord, it's huge. I just love seeing that. There's no task I can't ask of them. In fact, I have to be careful to not take advantage of people because you can. For example, you can go buy something, and when people realize it's for the welfare farm, they'll try to give me a discount. You have to be careful that you don't overdo it because people are just too willing, you don't want to take all of their time, but they are so willing it's unreal, and they'll do the weirdest things that you ask them to do. For example, pick up rocks by hand and haul them off. People will ask, "Isn't there an easier way to do this?" and I'll say, "Yea, but there's 100 of you here, so let's do it the hard way and get it done." (laughing) They're just so willing and so good, and it's just fun to see that happen all the time. It's fun to see the group come out here. I had a situation where my missionaries left for the end of the year, and things needed to be cleaned up around here, and I could call them and have them comeback, but a youth group just showed up all of a sudden and asked if there's something they could do to help. They took care of everything and cleaned it all up, and everything was perfect for my inspection the next day. Things like that just happen all the time. It's just fun. The Lord has trained me to be a better farmer.

M: Through this?

L: Yes, rather than finding things out on my own and slamming my head against the wall, all I have to do is pray and he shows me what needs to be done. He shows me what I'm doing wrong. I had one member out here who came out and I needed him to prune the trees a specific way. He said he'd pruned trees for 50 years and was going to prune them the way that he had his whole life, and I told him again that we needed to prune them a specific way. He got really awnry and I said to him, "I've been doing this as a full time professional for this long, blah blah blah," I turned around from him and the Lord chastised me and told me, "You go back and you apologize to that brother, and you beg his forgiveness right now." It's the only person I've ever offended out here, and I went back there and apologized and begged his forgiveness. I work for that man. I work for the Lord, and he'll tell you whether it's good or bad, and I have to watch myself that I don't offend anybody, because I don't want that chastisement. That's worse than any boss telling you what you're doing wrong!

M: Well, I think we've covered everything I was going to ask, that's it for the interview portion. Thanks.

L: No problem.

APPENDIX E

FIELDING UTAH WELFARE FARM INTERVIEW WITH ROY STUMP

## APPENDIX E

### FIELDING UTAH WELFARE FARM INTERVIEW WITH ROY STUMP

M: Hey Roy, this a good time?

S: Sure.

M: Um, do you want any background information on what I'm doing or more information about my project.

S: No, just ask your questions.

M: What I'd like to do is I'm going to record this so I can go back and type it up later if that's okay with you.

S: Yes.

M: Okay.

M: So, in talking about welfare farms, how is an area assigned or how is it picked?

S: I think they are just some of them have been here forever. Are you asking how did it originate?

M: Yes.

S: Yes most of them have just been here forever. I'm not sure how or who chose. Now the one that I've got; one of the General Authorities was going either up to Pocatello or somewhere around here and felt impressed the we needed a welfare farm right here in this area, and I'm sure probably all of them were maybe that same way; maybe through inspiration. But I don't know that, but I know that's the way this one was picked.

M: How big is your farm?

S: Well it started out of course just 2 or 3 individual farms, now here in Fielding we're probably at 2000 acres, ah not quite. They already had a farm at Boswell forever; and it's about 600 acres and I worked it; then had one at Wellsville forever. It's about 1600 Acres. I'm working it, and they just acquired one out at Hansel valley for this operation and it's about 2000 acres. You add it all up; it's just a little shy of a 3000 thousand acres.

M: Now it's that Wellsville just here next to Logan, can I get an address for that? Do you have an address.

S: No, I don't.

M: Can you tell me where it's located by chance?

S: Um, You know where that road is that takes you from Mendon to Wellsville to Mendon to Mt. Sterling. You just stay on it; you'll cross the main road from Logan to Brigham. You'll stay, I recon that's south on the road. Uh, you'll cross a county road as your cross that I don't know what they call that divided highway; but you cross a county road after that and then you go down about a mile and the road splits and you take the left hand split and it's just down there about a half mile on both sides of the road.

M: So, on all of these farms, what are the crops that you grow?

S: I grow a lot of alfalfa and it goes down to the dairy. It supports the dairy in Alberta. They have probably, it's still growing but last I heard it was about 3200 cows and then I grow corn; a couple hundred thousand bushel that goes down there. Then wheat. Kaysville has a mill where they clean and mill and package. All our wheat goes there. And then I have cattle; then they go into a welfare feed lot and they are killed and end up in the bishops storehouse.

M: For Beef?

S: Yes.

M: So as far as the planting farming harvesting schedule, do you just rotate the crops or do you grow different crops on the different locations and harvest at the same time, how do you do it?

S: Mostly you figure out what you got, what your resources are and you try to utilize them and try to make everything fit. Two ways, one, is according to what the church needs, two is how you can optimally affect your operation and best balances out your crop rotation is the third too, you can't put everything in one crop because you don't have enough labor at one time. You'd have to hire a lot of extra labor. So, you kind of balance out your work load also. So, like us in the spring time, early, we'll start we'll plant our alfalfa first because it needs to be planted, then move to corn, and we'll get through planting corn and start harvesting alfalfa most of the summer. Sometime in that period, well... before we plant the alfalfa we camp out in February and march out of Hansel valley because it's a real dry location and it works better to cattle on dry ground then on mud, and soon we move through the alfalfa and corn and then we start harvesting the alfalfa and then during that time we have five satellite farms that we put the cattle on, then we'll distribute those cattle at that time as the grass starts growing, and cows and calves. Then we'll harvest wheat in the summer time, and you're still harvesting alfalfa until fall, then your corn, and then we'll bring the cows and calves in and put them on the corn stalks to utilize that cheap feed, and then if we have any alfalfa that is two to six inches tall we'll move the cattle across that to utilize that cheap feed because you can't harvest it when it's that low. But the cattle can, and they do it pretty economically. We sell corn, we sell wheat, we work our ground, about that time we'll get through working the ground and get our cows up and wean the calves and move them

to a back grounding operation, and then in winter time we feed cows and build fences, and fix equipment.

M: Okay. So, as far as you know, is the church looking into expanding land use for additional welfare farms, or if they have any plans to create additional welfare farms.?

S: I'm not privileged to that, they don't really tell us that.

M: Okay, how many full time employees do you have on your farm, and volunteers?

S: It's just myself and two guys, and then we have some volunteers. We have some part-time.

M: So three full time, a few part time, and volunteers?

S: Yes.

M: If you have volunteers who aren't LDS, do you explain the welfare program or the welfare farm to them and kind of the aims and goals of the farm?

S: Oh, I'm a convert, and so missionary work is always kind of at the front of everything we talk about. So yes, to your question.

M: So in your words, what is the overall goal of the welfare farm?

S: It's got several purposes. Donated labor, we try to teach compassion, we try to teach while we're here and you'll see the parents bring the kids out and try to teach them the same thing, and help provide for those that are less fortunate, so it's instilled in our children at a pretty young age. We try to provide the highest quality product that we can, like the wheat or the beef, I've been involved in that with a feed too in Michigan, and our standards are above the USDA standards for beef, we try to provide as much as possible for the poor and needy and commodities that go into the bishop's storehouse, and probably fourth on that list we try to do it as economically as possible.

M: So the corn you harvest, does it go to the Ogden cannery or where does it go?

S: No, that corn goes down to the dairy cows.

M: So the corn and alfalfa goes to the dairy.

S: Yes.

M: Okay. How long have you been the manager of this farm?

S: I started back in 1986, so 25 or 26 years, whatever that makes out to be.

M: And during your time as a manager, what are some of the benefits you think the community has received from being around a welfare farm?



S: Well, we haven't quite caught the vision here in Fielding, but in Michigan we'd have 16,000 donated hours a year, and so on work days you'd see five or six hundred people come out with their kids, and after they closed that farm down, I still have people call me back from Michigan and talk about how they really appreciated it. Heavenly Father seemed to always make it rain whenever work days were and we'd be in the mud, and the humidity high, and it would be hot, and people would be sweating, and you'd just have people bear their testimonies. I remember one guy say that "I'm not worthy to go to the temple" or maybe he said, "I can't go to the temple, but I can get the same feeling here with the Spirit when I work on this welfare farm." And so it's all those kind of things that are the spiritual side that you can't put a monetary value on. That people benefit from, the service, they benefit from that just like the scriptures say, and the neighbors, it's not impressive, that's the wrong word, but the neighbors got to feel it too. One time when I was moving out here in the fall, and I was trying to put together this farm, and my wife and I were driving equipment out here from Michigan on trucks, and back there my farming neighbors could see what was going on and I was getting behind harvesting crops there and trying to work ground here and move stuff, and you know, it's about thirty five or forty hours on the road with a truck between Michigan and here, so we were just burning the candle at both ends. Well, my neighbors came in and harvested my soybean crop back there, six , seven hundred acres, hauled them to town, and these were non-LDS members, neighbors, but they had somehow gained a testimony of what the church does and appreciated it enough that they did that.

M: So then, obviously it seems like the work on the welfare farm kind of connects people in the community whether LDS or non-LDS and if I'm hearing you right, it helps build the faith of the members.

S: Oh sure, I think it helps the faith of non-members. I think the nonmembers softened their hearts, and you know how missionary work is sometimes, it's tough. Sometimes people listen and sometimes they don't, but those who open their hearts enough to let things sink in as you talk to them, they begin to understand the importance of the work we do here.

M: As you've seen examples of individuals working the welfare farm and increasing their faith, do you think Mormonism is losing its touch at all with the land? Some of the other welfare farm managers I've talked to have expressed that because so much of the work is mechanized instead of manual labor, and volunteer come less often than they used to, they feel like church membership is losing something there. Losing that touch with the land, and I didn't know if you'd seen any of that, or kind of your thoughts about that.

S: Well, when you say that just in general, farms and farmers are what, 3.5 percent or three to four percent of the whole population of the US? I think people in general, I bet if you interviewed the general public, half of the people wouldn't have a clue where their food comes from or where it's made, or any of the operations that we go through and stuff like that, so people in general are just out of touch with agriculture. My wife is in the relief society, and one

of her big things is trying to get people to grow gardens. I know people that don't grow gardens. That's sad to say. We've raised ten kids, so just because we've loved gardening or out of necessity, we've always had a big garden, and freeze stuff and canned. People just in general are away from that. They'll go to the store and buy a can of peas for 33 cents and say, oh, this is a lot easier than raising peas in a garden, but they have no regard or no idea how good the garden peas taste compared to the canned peas out of a grocery store. So, in general, the whole thing is kind of going backwards. And yes, around us our own people are probably doing the same things as the rest of the world.

M: So , how do you think that physical engagement with the land, or how farming helps people connect, not only to church doctrine, but how does it help people connect to God through the farming process?

S: Well, let's just back up one other deal. The other thing I forgot to mention as far as our labor. We have service missionaries that come out and they're called from the stake president and they come out and they're working here also. I forgot to mention that. I don't know why, or why it comes to my mind, but I have two full time service missionaries that are called and this year it will probably go up to four or five. Now to get to your question, I think it's real hard, I think you live in town and you walk out of your house, and you walk on a paved concrete gravel walkway, you get in your car, you start it up, you drive on a paved road, you don't get your hands or feet dirty, you don't toil or sweat, or do anything to make you appreciate anything that you get as far as your food, as far as just in general. Farmers have to work against the elements, against the mud, or cow manure, getting it all over us, or dust, or heat, or all winter work. We don't miss a day outside in the wintertime whether it's cold, raining, snowing, so you feel all that, and you're always constantly praying for the crops, the cattle, for yourself to stay safe, you're praying for your men to stay safe, and to not get sick, and in all of this you are humbled and then built back up, and it's a process. You know, the land helps you keep from being so prideful. And I'm not saying that all city folks are prideful, but they have no way to really understand or even appreciate what goes on anymore, and through that process of farming or agriculture, whether Heavenly Father does it on purpose or it's a natural occurrence that happens, which I guess that's probably what it is, but you are humble, you are humble when insects eat your crop, you are humble when it rains so much that you can't harvest your crops or it washes your crops away, or things like that, so you get out of touch with the land, I think there's something there, but that's my opinion. You don't read that in the Book of Mormon, but there's something there.

M: During your time on the farm, has the welfare farm ever been a source of contention in the community or caused any problems?

S: Oh yea, it's just like everything else. People have their jealousies, people have their misunderstandings, and when the church is around it probably amplifies a little bit. Satan is real, Satan knows us better than we know ourselves, so as we come in and buy a farm that a neighbor has farmed right beside it his whole life wishing and hoping that one day he'll be able to buy that

farm but his financial circumstance don't let him. Sure, that causes contention, that causes not all the time, we have great neighbors that support us, and they'll help us, and we have neighbors that I frankly don't care for. And so, yes, all that affects people. There's a factor that I believe in, on Heavenly Father's farm things go a little bit better. I farm myself personally, borrowed money and own land, both before and after I had joined the church, before I started working for the welfare system, and you see things, blessings, that just don't happen across the fence. Storms come up and you're out there sometimes in the middle of Michigan where storms come through and I've got an enormous fill of wheat, and you stand out in your field and pray, and petition the Lord to let the storm go around you, and the neighbor's [field] is laid flat on the ground, his wheat field, and the storm just kind of goes around us. So, you see things like that and whether you believe that or not, I simply believe that our farms are favored by Heavenly Father more than normal farms.

M: Because of the purpose that they're there for, because they're welfare farms?

S: I sure hope so. Yes, I would say so.

M: Well in your time again as manager, can you think of any times where you were on the farm and you heard dialogue between people or conversation about the impact welfare farms have had on them, or kind of talking about their farm experience and how it changed or impacted them for the better?

S: I probably have, I just can't recall. I'll think of twenty things after we get through with our conversation, but I probably can't think of anything. I mean, people, we try to be good neighbors, we don't jump out and use our equipment on everybody's farms, but if a neighbor is sick or if something happened, I've helped them and they've been appreciative of that, I just can't think of nothing that's coming to me.

M: Now with the volunteer effort, are the majority of assignments through the wards, or do you ever have people come who are making up hours for a food order or for a bishop order?

S: Yes, we have both. We have the bishop send people. In Michigan we had five stakes and a district which was almost the whole state of Michigan, they'd come to the farm for donated labor, and then we've had bishops that would call me up and say, "This family needs to come out and work," or "This brother or sister needs to come out," and so we've accommodated them in that way too.

M: This brings me to my last questions, and it's somewhat personal so you can answer it if you like, but what effects has welfare farming had on you personally?

S: Well, personally, I've seen some things are far as blessings as how I do things. I've seen how the Holy Ghost has influenced me as far as coming to problems and situations, like you move

from Kentucky to Michigan, there's such a swing in techniques and all the water that Michigan gets and so either you pray if you're humble enough, and you try to figure out how to farm in that situation and from Michigan you move to the desert, it's such an opposite learning curve, you do about a 180, and so as I pray and try to figure out how to do this or how to do that, that's probably the testimony that I have of prayer and pondering, and the Holy Ghost influencing me as far as farming goes. It's probably the number one thing that I've seen. Getting closer to Heavenly Father than I think I normally would.

M: Thanks, that does it for my questions. Would it be okay if I had further questions down the line I could give you a phone call?

S: Sure, or if you listen to this tape and say, "What did he mean by that?" or you just feel influenced by the Holy Ghost to say, "I think there's more there than that."

M: I appreciate it. Thanks. Some of the other managers have said that there's been talk of closing the farms down because they aren't as price effective as some would like them to be.

S: Sometimes people think it'd be easier to just go buy the commodities at the supermarket. And sometimes they can buy it cheaper, but I think we're doing an excellent job from the numbers I've seen. I think at one point we were at .66 cents on the dollar. In other words, if we took a dollar and bought peas off the shelf or whatever, we're doing it for .66 cents. So, that's probably a good number if the right people bring that out to the right people, if we can convey that message to the General Authorities of the church, and they understand that, another thing is just by sheer, when things fall apart, when you read the book of Mormon and it says they will, or you even look at right now, how this thing could fall apart so quickly, we're in place, we're there, we're already producing high quality products, and we have our trucks, our whole system in place to get things, the storehouses; when things fall apart, I'm afraid it could happen. As far as the church going to a grocery store and buying stuff, the farm is there, and it's in place, that's the part that I'm afraid everyone's not looking at.

M: Well I appreciate your time and willingness to talk with me about some of these things, you've given me some great information so I'm very appreciative. I'll call you if I have any further questions.

S: Sure, Bye.

M: Bye.

