

Natural Farmers Cooperative/Rural Life Association Records
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History

The **Natural Farmers Association** (later, Co-operative) of the St. Lawrence Valley formed in late 1977 as the result of a number of organizational meetings among small farmers, gardeners and homesteaders in St. Lawrence County. Among the core group of organizers was Alan Casline, Doug Jones and Tom & Jane Plastino. The group's aims were to foster and promote natural, organic and alternative farming, to promote a local food economy and act as a support system to small rural farmers and homesteaders. Almost immediately it became apparent that a major focus of the group would be direct marketing of local produce. In the early 1980's the co-operative hired, with the help of outside funding, marketing coordinators to assist this effort.

With the increasing emphasis on marketing, a split developed between the growers and those more interested in the concept of homesteading, resulting in the creation of the **Rural Life Association** in 1983. The Natural Farmers Co-operative essentially disbanded and the cooperative marketing of local produce was taken over by Green Growers Co-op. After several years of dormancy, the Rural Life Association has been resurrected as an information sharing organization promoting development of sustainable agriculture, preservation of small family farms and rural lifestyles in St. Lawrence County.

Scope and Content

The materials in this collection are divided into three series.

Series 1 contains meeting agendas, financial reports, newsletters and other material from the Natural Farmers Association, and the Natural Farmers Co-operative of the St. Lawrence Valley, Inc between 1979 and 1983.

Series 2 consists of meeting agendas, newsletters, membership lists and news clipping documenting the Rural Life Association between 1983 and 1990. Also included is a student research paper on Homesteading in St. Lawrence County, and duplicate copies of many of the RLA documents.

Series 3 contains miscellaneous material included in the NFC/RLA files.

Provenance

Gift of Valerie Ingram, a member of the Natural Farmer's Co-operative and the Rural Life Association.

Series 1—Natural Farmers Co-operative Records

Box/Folder Contents

- | | |
|--------|--|
| 1 1 | Natural Farmer's Co-operative letterhead
NFC Standards for Market Vegetables, July 1980,
NFC Board Meeting agendas June-November 1981
Memo, Bill Sutkus to NFC Board—Re: Separation of Homesteading & Marketing Activities
Dated Nov. 11, 1981
Presentation to 12/15/81 Meeting of Natural Farmers Co-operative
Financial report, dated Dec. 31, 1981
Report of the Activities of the Natural Farmers Co-operative of St. Lawrence Valley, Inc . January
1981-February 1982
NFC phone tree
Vista project application, Jan 20, 1982
NFC flyers seeking farm apprentices for 1982 and 1983 season |
|--------|--|

Profile of farms Requesting Apprentices in 1982
 NFC Board Meeting Agendas March, May, Nov. 1982
 Green Growers Co-op General Ledger, 7/31/82
 NFC Board Meeting agenda, Feb. 1983
 Cornell Cooperative Extension St. Lawrence County Growers Marketing Project. info sheet and participation form

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|---|---|---|
| 1 | 2 | <i>Natural Farmers' Association (Co-operative) Newsletters</i>
1979—January, March, June, August-November
1980—January, February, April, June, July, August, November, December
1981—February-June, August, October
1982—Winter, Spring, Summer, Fall
1983—March |
| 1 | 3 | Natural Farmers Co-operative Directory Sept. 1982 |
| 1 | 4 | Duplicates of NFC Newsletters |

Series 2—Rural Life Association Records

Box/Folder Contents

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|---|---|--|
| 1 | 5 | Announcements of Natural Farmers Co-operative pot luck luncheon to discuss homesteading
Homesteading Questionnaire
Agenda for Rural Life Association Steering Committee Meeting, May 1983
Rural Life Association mailing list, May 1983
Memo to Tom (Plastino) from ??, Nov. 1983
RLA Phone tree, Feb. 1984
Photocopy of New York Times article, Jan. 28, 1985 <i>Rural Homesteaders Seek Self-Sufficiency And Cherish Solitude</i>
Letter from Jon Montan to Pat Stone, Assistant Editor <i>Mother Earth News</i> turning down magazine's request for an interview on Homesteading, May 22, 1985
RLA Mailing list, 1986; 1988 |
| 1 | 6 | <i>Newsletter of the Rural Life Association</i>
1983: June.
1984: February, June, September, November.
1985: Feb/Mar., June
1986: February, June, December
1987: June
1990: Late Spring |
| 1 | 7 | Research paper— <i>The Homesteading Community in St. Lawrence County</i> , by C. Steven DeWalt, 1984 |

Unfolded File cards/List of Rural Life Association members ca. 1983

Series 3—Miscellaneous files

Box/Folder Contents

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|---|---|--|
| 1 | 8 | <i>Birdsfoot</i> poetry collection by Alan Casline
Fall 1983 NOFA-NY News
Current magazine, May 1990 (2), January 1992 (2), March/April 1992, January 1993 |
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Series 4—Additional NFC/RLA materials

donated Nov. 2021 by Jane Plastino

Box/Folder Contents

2	9	Natural Farmers Association Incorporation papers & Funding Info 1/31/1977 Action Preliminary Inquiry 1978 Vermont Northern Growers Coop Annual Report NYS Ag and Markets Circular 903—1978 Article—How to Start a Cooperative IRS Form 1028 and instructions (1979) Natural Farmers Cooperative letter to members announcing incorporation North Country Legal Services letter NFC Seeking Farm Apprentices flyer Correspondence from Comprehensive Employment Training Agency (CETA)
10		Financial information, bank statements and correspondence
11		Quality Standards; vegetable planting info
12		Clippings: Northern Light; Rural News; other local clippings
13		1979 Newsletters-Natural Farmers Cooperative
14		1980 Newsletters—Natural Farmers Cooperative
15		1981 Newsletters—NFC
16		NFC Reports, 1980; 1981-82
17		1982 Newsletters--NFC
18		1983 Newsletters—NFC; Financial Statements; Mailing list
19		1984 Newsletters—Rural Life Association
20		1985 Newsletters—Rural Life Association