Documenting Agriculture

- Organic farming
- Gardening and garden history
- Small farms
- Rural life
- Landscape architecture
- Beekeeping
- Entomology
- Heritage breeds
- Conservation
- Sustainable living
- Back to the land movement
- Sheep culture
- Dairy industry
- Botany and horticulture
- Food production
- Environmentalism

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Agriculture
Horticulture
Rural Life
Even before it had acquired a library, Massachusetts Agricultural College was acquiring rare and important works in the history of agriculture. In accepting H.K. Oliver's offer of a small collection of early works in apiculture, the newly founded College signaled a commitment to its mission of promoting agricultural education among the people of the Commonwealth and its desire to support the varied research and instructional needs of its faculty and students.

As the college evolved into a university, its collections sent roots into core subjects ranging from botany and horticulture to gardening, genetics, animal husbandry, entomology, and rural sociology. As steward of these collections, the Department of Special Collections and University Archives (SCUA) oversees rich holdings of printed materials dating from the 16th century to the present and manuscript holdings of corresponding depth and value.

Today, SCUA cares for thousands of volumes on the theory and practice of agriculture and related disciplines. Focusing on Massachusetts and western New England, the department collects materials relating to scientific and progressive agriculture, botany, entomology, gardening, landscape design, and agricultural businesses, documenting individual farms and industries, agricultural education, the extension service, and a variety of organizations that support farming, conservation, and food production. SCUA specializes in those areas that resonate with its collecting interests in social change, including small farms, the “back-to-the-land” movement, land use and preservation, environmentalism, heritage breeds, organic farming, and sustainable living. From Italian bees to Merino sheep, silviculture to floriculture, SCUA is committed to preserving the written record of agriculture and rural life in our region.

How you can help

SCUA welcomes support for our efforts to preserve the history of our region and we are pleased to accept donations of personal papers, organizational records, photographs, memorabilia, and other materials with historical or research value.

Among other materials of prime interest are:

- Letters, diaries, essays, or lectures concerning farming, gardening, and rural life
- Papers of farmers, botanists, horticulturists, landscape designers, gardeners, agricultural geneticists, ecologists, soil scientists, apiculturists, and entomologists
- Farm accounts, planting schedules, and other records relating to organic farms, small farms, and the conservation of farmlands
- Material documenting communal life and approaches to sustainable living
- Records of businesses and organizations involved in food production, promotion, or distribution
- Books, periodicals, flyers, newspapers, posters, and pamphlets
- Videos and films, sound recordings, scrapbooks, sketchbooks, and photo albums

Whom to contact

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