

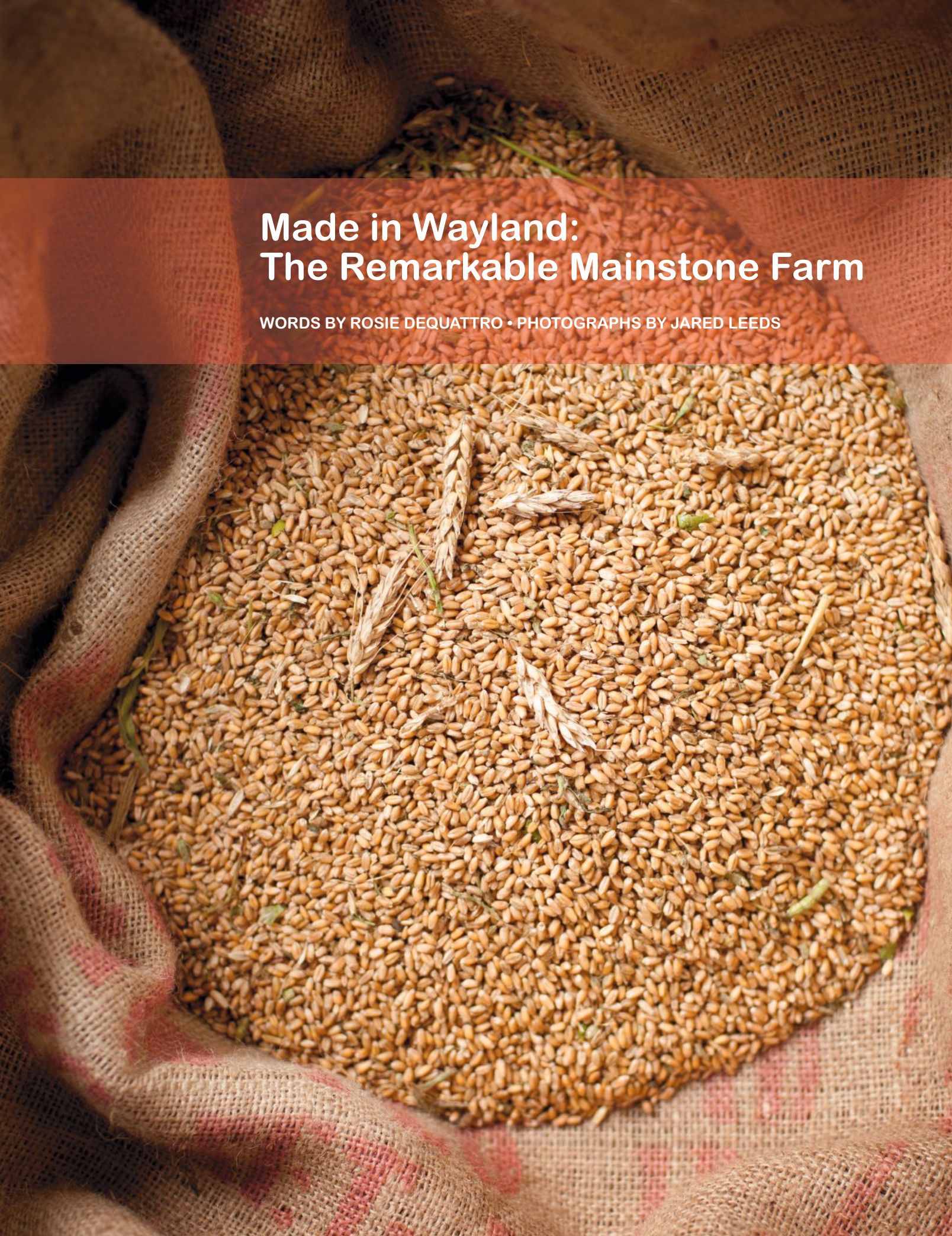
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Made in Wayland: The Remarkable Mainstone Farm

WORDS BY ROSIE DEQUATTRO • PHOTOGRAPHS BY JARED LEEDS

There once was a farmer named William Pell Perkins. In 1871 Perkins lived in civilized Brookline, Massachusetts and dreamed of owning a dairy farm. Searching for the perfect spot to start one, he found two—land in far-away Nahant, and land on a hill in the western hinterland called Wayland. Unable to decide, he tossed a coin and Wayland won. He paid roughly \$50.00 an acre, and named it Mainstone Farm after a small farm in the country of Wales. Then he sent his farm manager to the island of Jersey in the English Channel to buy a bull and seven Guernsey cows, and to bring them back to Massachusetts. Thus began the first Guernsey dairy herd in America.

Over the years Mainstone flourished, the Guernsey herd grew and supplied milk for delivery, and Perkins' progeny retained ownership of the farm. Today, more than 140 years later, the farm in Wayland with beautiful views of Mt. Monadnock and the Boston skyline, is still owned by members of the original family. Although no longer a dairy, Mainstone thrives as a diversified, chemical-free, sustainable family farm. And current owner, Dev Hamlen (short for "Devens," as in Fort Devens which was named after a Civil War General and relative of Hamlen's), the great, great, great grandson of William Pell Perkins, plans to keep it that way.

The 21st century history of Mainstone is now being created by the farm's managers, Tim and Pauline Henderson who live on the farm in the original farmhouse. In their mid-40s, the Hendersons are professional farmers. Tim is a fourth generation farmer and Pauline a third. Tim's father managed a beef farm in Hamilton, and Pauline's family farmed in Rhode Island. Land prices being what they were in the 1970s and 80s, the Hendersons never bought their own land, but one way or another they were determined to farm and raise a farming family. After 19 years at Mainstone, they have.

They arrived in 1993 with their two young sons, Tim and Tom, whose help on the farm today is essential. "While one son is irrigating, the other is cutting hay," Tim says. With them and with seasonal help from a rotating crop of reliable high school students, Tim and Pauline have overseen the transformation of Mainstone from a private estate with cattle, to a diversified, sustainable, working farm that the public can enjoy and the community at large can benefit from. They are proud of their accomplishments and fully acknowledge that "it's 12 hour days and 24/7 responsibilities." Owner Dev Hamlen is confident in Tim and Pauline's management. "They are very good at what they do," he tells me. "They both are far-sighted in what they produce, from beef to everything else. What the market wants is their decision."

In an age when some farmers attain rock star status in the media, Tim and Pauline—laconic, unassuming, independent—seem to eschew notoriety. Tim admits, "We need to do a better job of marketing ourselves...pushing ourselves out there. We really let our quality speak for itself." Word of mouth keeps them going. They don't promote themselves, and they don't advertise. But customers do come from as far away as Canton and Quincy. Pauline says she has seen some of the same customers for sixteen or seventeen years.

There is an honored commitment to the sustainable and humane treatment of animals at Mainstone, and under Tim's stewardship the tradition continues. Tim manages the 55 Belted Galloway and Red Devon cattle, which graze on the farm's own pastures. Some of the cattle are raised for beef and some kept for breeding stock. All the cattle are grass-fed only. No hormones or antibiotics are used. Tim grows the

hay the cattle eat, and they graze year round.

He also raises pigs and laying hens. These too are raised on the farm's pastures and are fed with corn and vegetables grown on the farm. All the animals are humanely processed at West Groton's Blood Farm.

Pauline is the gardener in the family and has always had a vegetable garden. Eight years ago she started growing vegetables at Mainstone—30 acres worth. At about the same time, she and Tim built a farm stand where the public can buy all that the farm produces. It's small but efficient, tucked into a lower field down near Old Connecticut Path, and easy to miss when you drive by. "When people come to the farm stand they wonder where all this stuff is growing," Pauline decorates the stand with pictures of the farm's vegetables. All season long she divides her time between the stand and the fields, hiking back and forth to restock shelves and answer questions from customers. Two greenhouses on the property allow the Hendersons to open the farm stand earlier each season. Last year it opened in March.

Besides fresh vegetables, the farm stand sells the farm's grass fed beef and pork, eggs, honey, and the farm's own maple syrup. "We have a pan in the sugar house and we boil it off there. It's small—nothing fancy," says Tim in classic Henderson understatement. The maple grove consists of about 220 trees which Tim taps, and produces 40-60 gallons every year of 100% pure, Wayland maple syrup. You can buy firewood at the farm stand, too, harvested from Tim's sustainable woodlot. Pauline says, "We're pretty much self-sustaining—I do a lot of canning."

In 2009, the Hendersons established a CSA at Mainstone with an unusual twist. Shareholders are issued what the Hendersons call "Mainstone Money." With the money, a shareholder may shop at the farm stand whenever it's open—essentially every day—and spend their "cash" on whatever they want. There are no set pick-up days and times, and no limit on how much customers can buy of any one product. Pauline says that in that way, "you get what you want. No surprises when you get home and find out there are tons of a particular vegetable your family does not eat. You buy what you want, in quantities that you need." Mainstone Money applies to anything in the farm stand including the beef, the pork, the eggs and all the specialty items. Like traditional CSA shares, these may be split, and shareholders receive a 3% or 5% "loyalty return" on their investment. At the end of the farm stand season the money expires. "We've taken a few years to fine tune what to grow based on what our customers are buying." They feel that over the years, "with one eye on the weather and one on the market," they have developed a balance, selling almost all of what they grow. What they don't sell goes to the hogs.

Another unique product at Mainstone is corn meal, grown and ground at Mainstone. The cornmeal comes from two very old varieties of corn Tim planted: Longfellow Yellow, which Tim's grandfather used to grow and dates back to the 1850s; and Rhode Island White Cap dating back to the Narragansett Indians. The Hendersons dry the white and the yellow corn cobs in separate bins in the corn crib that Tim built (using wood he salvaged from the farm's woodlot). The corn is ground on a circa 1938 grist mill which has the original North Carolina pink granite stone. The meal is sold in two pound bags at the farm stand. Mainstone's clientele is discerning, Pauline comments. They express a preference for either the white or the yellow corn meal. "People in this area are used to trying different foods. They take a genuine interest."



Dev Hamlen sees Mainstone as a working farm, a family farm—one that always has been and, with his vision, always will be. His family members live on the farm; they grew up there and they worked there. They are united in their commitment to ensuring Mainstone's future. And this then is Mainstone's best hope for survival—this fealty born of generations loyal to the land and the community. Where many families who own farms feud over whether to keep their land or sell to eager developers, Hamlen's family concurs. "There hasn't been a lot of family conflict about selling," he says. But still, it's not easy. "There are a lot of moving parts," [to consider], he adds. There is the family's ongoing support and harmony, the continuation of benefits that come from favorable tax rates for agricultural lands, and the perception of benefit to the community. Hamlen is resolute: "One hundred and fifty years in the same family and I want to keep it that way."

So if you've never been to this busy, productive farm in the middle of Metro-West, there's still time. The Mainstone farm stand will be open until Halloween with pick-your-own pumpkins through October. It will remain open after that on weekends depending on supply.

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PAULINE HENDERSON'S CORNBREAD RECIPE

- ¼ to 1¼ cup sugar
(adjust to your taste — ¾ cup not too sweet)
- ½ cup butter at room temperature
- 3 large eggs
- 2 cups water
- 2 cups Mainstone Farm's yellow cornmeal
- 2 cups flour
- 1 tablespoon baking powder
- 1 teaspoon salt

Preheat oven to 400°.

Butter a 13" x 9" x 2" glass baking dish.
Beat butter and sugar in large bowl until blended. Add eggs and beat until well blended. Mix in water and cornmeal.

Sift flour, baking powder and salt in a small bowl and add to cornmeal mixture. Stir until blended, then transfer batter to prepared pan.

Bake until bread is golden and tester inserted into center comes out clean, about 35 minutes.

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